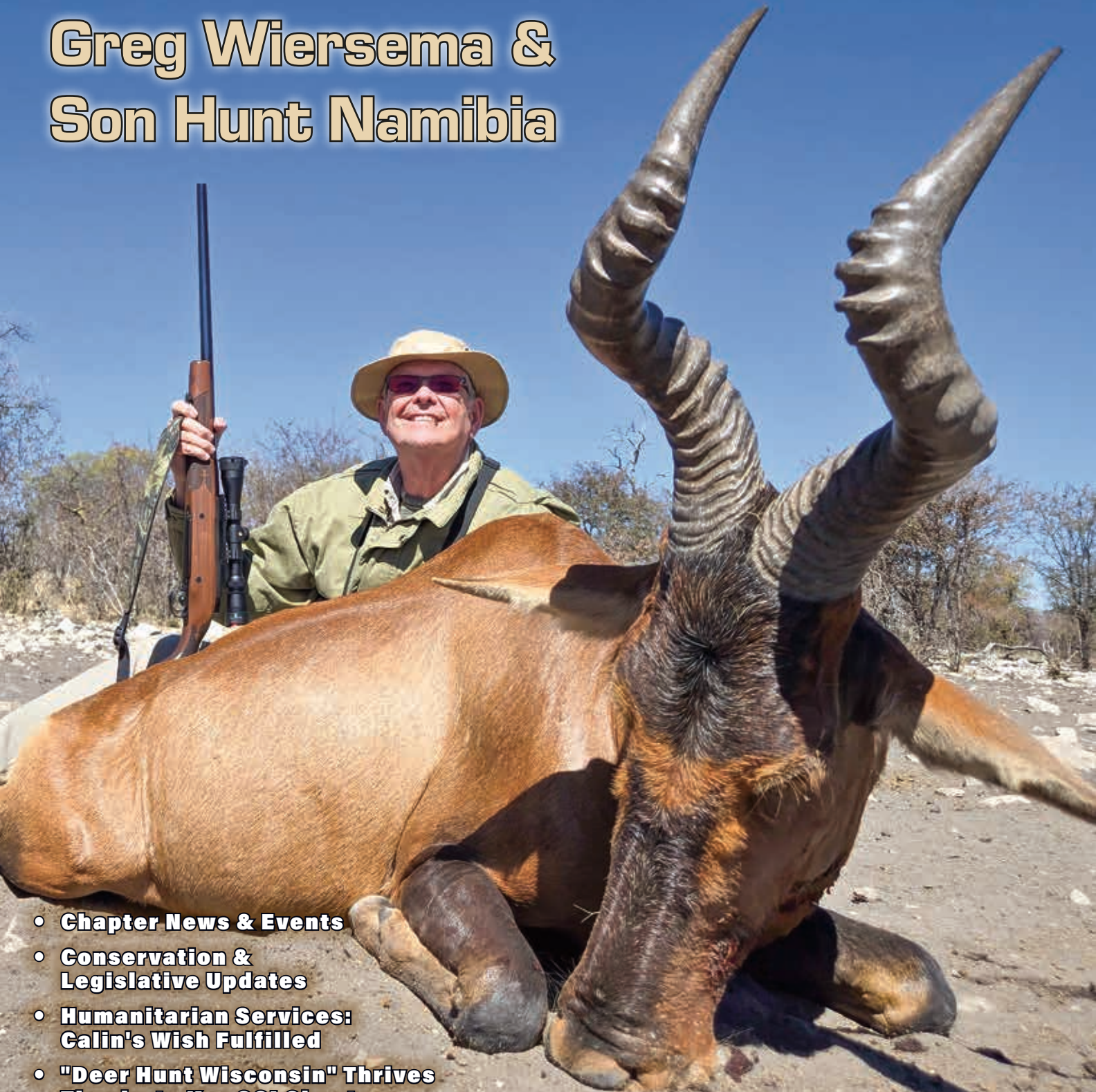


HUNTERS

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF SCI CHAPTERS IN WISCONSIN AND ILLINOIS
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2025

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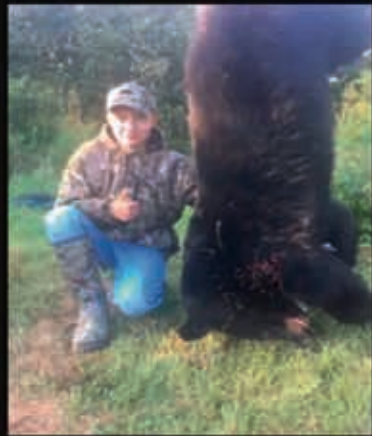
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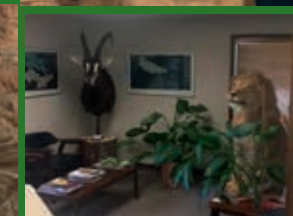
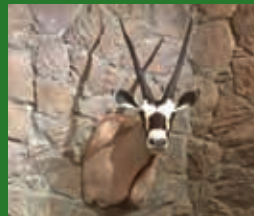
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January/February	November 20
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May/June	March 20
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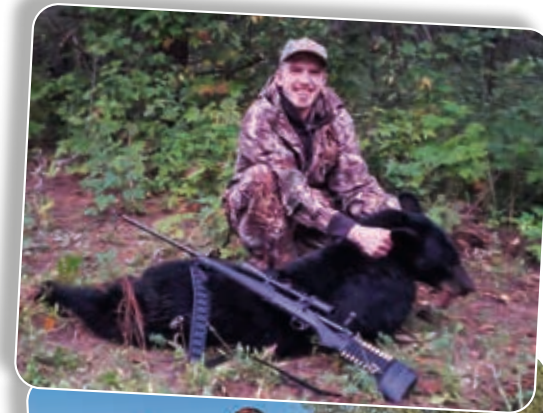
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HUNTERS

Official Magazine of SCI Chapters in Wisconsin and Illinois
November/December 2025

On the cover: Greg Wiersema's safari in Namibia was extra special because his son Luke joined him and had quite the success, just like dad.

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Charmaine Wargolet

charmainew@ameritech.net

SCI Region 16 Report

by **Charmaine Wargolet**,
Regional Representative

While back I was chatting with Mark LaBarbera about some projects coming up and I also said I knew I owed him my Regional Rep article, but with the things going on in my life I was a little behind. I went through my woes at the time, and he said, you know, Charmaine, you ought to write about the life of a volunteer. Now I know a number of you will feel me when I tell my story and it is not that I am looking for sympathy, but I think it might remind folks to appreciate the hard working volunteers in this organization. On August 10th in West Allis where I live in an apartment building, we had 10 inches of rain in two hours, and the city sewers were unable to handle all of the water that backed up on the street and filled our underground parking garage with about eight feet of water. Both my Jeep Cherokee and my husband's three week old Dodge Ram truck were a complete loss. We were without power until September 12th, and as of September 15th when we broke our lease and moved out, the elevators were not expected to be fixed for at least another 4-6 weeks. So, the move was a nightmare. The move was on the 18th-19th and my chapter meeting was on the evening of the 18th with my son-in-law speaking, so I had to be there. We were living 30 miles out of town for the five weeks of no power, while still working full time, trying to



perform my SCI duties, purge and pack for the move, fulfill social obligations, deal with insurance companies, look for new cars (ugh), and whatever else that came along. Like I said, I really am not looking for sympathy as I know we were very lucky. There were folks that lost a major portion of their belongings and, in some cases, their homes. We were good in that respect.

But my whole point is that there are folks that work really hard at putting on their chapter's major fundraisers, other events throughout the year, and all of the requirements of being an officer and director of a chapter, committee chair, etc., and they make it look so easy that others do not realize how much these volunteers give of themselves. (Dan Trawicki is a great example when you see him drive 3-5 hours to represent us at Sen. Stafsholt's home district event and then drive back the same night.)

So, I just ask that next time you see some of these hard workers, just please say thank you and let them know you appreciate all that they do. And if you can find time to help your chapter by volunteering to lighten the load of other heavy lifters, please know that even an hour or two of extra help can make a huge difference.

Did not mean to climb on a soapbox so please forgive me if it sounded like it. My chapters and their members mean the world to me!

The fall hunting season is in full swing, and the holidays are upon us, so I want to wish you all a very successful hunt, the happiest of Thanksgivings, and the most blessed Christmas!

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

SE WI Bow Chapter Report

by **Dan Trawicki**, President

As we finish the year celebrating our 25th anniversary, we had another incredible wild game dinner. The Golden Mast restaurant in Okauchee once again put on a fantastic spread for our guests. With over 125 people attending, you could tell that bow season was on everyone's mind! Gun and bow boards along with our regular bucket raffle made for a fun night. This event is designed to give our members and guests a fun night and great introduction to the beginning of fall.

The bow chapter has made great strides in the past few months. From updating and getting approval for our bylaws, creating and establishing board positions and planning for future events. Our March fundraiser was our most successful to date, and feel we have a lot to build on.

When this chapter was first established over 25 years ago, we decided

one of our main priorities was to be involved politically to move forward our pro-hunting agenda. As a 501(c)4 we are allowed to lobby and donate to elected officials. Essentially, we support those candidates and elected officials that support us. We do so on a regular basis. The Northeast Wisconsin Chapter is the only other 501(c)4 SCI Chapter in the state, and they also provide to the Statewide conduit hunt I administer.

In that regard, we are watching very carefully the Governor's race that will happen next fall. With Governor Evers deciding not to run, it will be a very interesting open race. We intend to get very involved in that election, by providing considerable financial support to whichever candidate aligns most closely with our values and hunting heritage. I would encourage all of our members to also become involved. Without a Governor that embraces and supports the outdoors our future is bleak. Stand up and be counted! If



you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem! I will keep you posted. For now, I'm thrilled to be back in a tree with my vertical bow! I will be hosting two of our members that bid on my donated hunt in Buffalo County. I promised Steve Cripps and Mark Jablonic a great time and plan on delivering!

Have a great fall, hunt safely and take a kid or potential new hunter out with you!

Northeast Wisconsin Chapter Report

by **Kathryn Thede**, President

Well, it is almost Wisconsin's favorite holiday—Gun Deer Hunting! A time when generations gather together to share stories of yesteryear and keep traditions alive. My favorite tradition takes place the night before opening day when three generations of Thedes head up to the cabin to enjoy a fish fry with all the fixings, reminisce of deer harvested, and dream (and gentle rousing) of calling dubs on the latest big buck.

Whether you are gathering with family, friends, or celebrating with people you've just met. I hope this year's hunting season is full of tradition (old or new), memories that make you smile, and the opportunity to share your passion with someone who hasn't been blessed to experience what we all love (either with stories, a little venison, or getting them out there to really experience it in person.) Sometimes all it takes is a person willing to share their passion and take the time to expose someone who may be on the fence to see what all the excitement is about. You may be just the person to get

somebody hooked on a lifetime addiction of hunting. (There are worse things that could happen.)

Wishing each of you many reasons to be thankful this year, Happy Thanksgiving and good luck hunting!

December is right around the corner and SCI memberships make the perfect gift – guaranteed that one size fits all (and don't forget to include the local chapter membership so you get ALL the perks!) If you are looking for a stocking stuffer feel free to reach out to a Northeast Wisconsin SCI board member and buy a raffle ticket for our chapter rifle, the drawing will take place during our banquet in February.

Speaking of our banquet, the board members are hard at work behind the scenes doing all the things that it takes to make The Wisconsin Hunting and Fishing Expo and NE WI SCI banquet happen. Be sure you mark your calendars and plan to join us



February 27, 28, and March 1, 2026, in Green Bay.

Keep your eyes on the mailbox for our yellow fliers that contain upcoming member meetings and other important information. Also check out our Facebook page and/or NEWISCI.org to stay up to date on what is happening with our chapter.

As always please feel free to reach out to me with any questions, concerns, or hunting photos and stories. I pray that your hunting season is memorable and that your holiday season is blessed with amazing company, safe travels, peace, and the love and friendship of those around you. Merry Christmas and the happiest of New Years!

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Wisconsin Chapter Report

by Dean LePoidevin, President

As the whitetail rut kicks into gear, I trust many of you have already filled your bow tag and are anxiously awaiting the magic of the deer gun season.

As the November winds turn colder it is only appropriate we share highlights of our recent monthly member meetings, one of which featured a bourbon tasting at Revere's Well Street Tavern in historic Delafield, WI. As many of us may already know, enjoying your favorite beverage the evening of a successful hunt is a rare treat.

Local bourbon aficionado Peter Tourville demonstrated the proper methods of tasting and appreciating bourbon, including how to visually inspect and take in the savory aroma with your nose and open mouth.



Tourville discussed the many ways bourbon is made, including how charred wooden barrels influence taste, and how bourbon may be toasted to enhance flavor. Chapter members were

treated to eight different bourbons as part of the demonstration.

After the presentation, several of the sampled bottles were given away to attendees.



Meeting attendees were also treated to a revolving slide show of dozens of member trophy photos and descriptions throughout the evening.

The SCI WI October meeting featured an entertaining discussion led by Michael Betters



as he described his family's fishing trip to Belize.

It is certainly not too early to set aside Friday and Saturday, February 13 & 14, 2026, for the annual SCI WI Grand Banquet held again at the Brookfield Conference Center. Stay tuned for more details, including a special celebration of Valentine's



Day for all couples in attendance on Saturday evening.

From all of us at the SCI WI chapter, our fondest wishes to you and your family for a wonderful holiday season.

Hunters' Rights:

European Bowhunting

by Dan Forster, VP & Chief Conservation Officer, ATA

The Archery Trade Association stands in full support of the European Bowhunting Federation and its tireless efforts to defend and restore bow-hunting traditions across Europe. Their fight is not only about protecting access to an outdoor pursuit but also about safeguarding an ethical, sustainable and scientifically grounded wildlife management tool that benefits hunters and non-hunters alike. That is why ATA has consistently provided financial and other support to EBF for many years.

The story of bowhunting in Europe should serve as both a warning and an inspiration. Decades ago, bans were imposed quickly — fueled not by facts, but by emotional arguments and misconceptions about cruelty and poaching. While some nations have fought to restore bowhunting, the process has taken years, and the losses have been profound. France regained bowhunting in 1995 and Spain regained it in 1997. Belgium, including Flanders and Wallonia, the Netherlands and Luxembourg have very recently been

authorized to include bows and arrows as legal hunting tools and that was only after rigorous testing. This slow progress underscores an important truth: when hunting rights are taken away, they are incredibly difficult to reclaim.

Bowhunters in the United States must take this lesson seriously. As the EBF has highlighted, opponents of hunting are advancing similar narratives here, painting bowhunting as "cruel," "unnecessary," or "unethical." These messages, designed to appeal to uninformed voters, threaten the future of hunting in North America just as they did in Europe. Silence is not an option.

The facts are clear. Bowhunters commit countless hours to honing their skills and pursuing game in the most challenging and intimate way possible. Studies show recovery rates for bow-shot game match those of rifle hunting, disproving the myth that archery is less ethical. Moreover, the idea that bows encourage poaching has been thoroughly debunked both in Europe and the U.S. Archery equipment is simply not the tool of choice for criminals.

What bowhunting represents is far from reckless — it embodies patience,

dedication, and deep respect for wildlife. In Europe, mandatory skill testing ensures hunters are prepared and ethical. In the U.S., hundreds of programs like Virginia's urban archery initiative already demonstrate how training and regulation can ensure high standards. These practices strengthen — not weaken— public trust in hunting.

The ATA believes strongly in the EBF's message: Our collective future depends on advocacy and education. Every bowhunter has a role to play. We must share our stories with friends, neighbors and community leaders. We must demonstrate, through both our words and our actions, that bowhunting is not only a time-honored tradition but also an essential part of conservation.

The attacks on bowhunting in Europe are not isolated events; they are part of a global movement. The lessons learned overseas remind us that hunting rights, once lost, are nearly impossible to regain. Together with the EBF, we will continue to advocate, educate and defend bowhunting so that future generations may experience the honor, challenge and conservation impact of our sport.



Kevin Casey shared this photo of Mitchell Hooker with a northern pike in Ontario.

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Badgerland Chapter Report

by Randy Mayes, President

A I hope you're having a fun and productive hunting season! With any luck, you've been able to stock your freezer with a little bit of "nature's bounty." How blessed we are as hunters to be able to enjoy such a wonderful heritage. There are so many benefits when you think about it.

Hunting forces you to be in "reasonably" good condition. If your goal is to hunt in the mountains, hunting forces you to be in good enough shape to make that happen. Going after upland birds? Unless you're on a driven pheasant hunt in Europe, the birds aren't going to come to you! You have to get out and find them. Sometimes many miles a day, trudging through thick brush. Almost all aspects of hunting are more enjoyable if you're able to at least get around some.

I'm not exactly Cameron Hanes... far from it. I'm just saying that if we didn't have such a priority of hunting in our lives, we may not have the incentive to

pass on that second bowl of ice cream or NOT have that donut EVERY day! I know... baby steps. Cameron would probably say no donuts and no ice cream but c'mon now!

Another benefit is the "bounty" itself. The most healthy, lean, meat around. Free range, grass fed, organic...you pay dearly for all of these terms in the store. Not that we don't end up paying dearly in the end for the meat we bring home, but it's just another way to make us "eat healthy". It's probably best not to put a pencil to how much per pound you end up paying for your game meat!

As hunters, we get more of a chance to "air our head" than non-hunters. What better way to put news, politics and all of the crap going on in the world today to the side than sitting in a tree stand or duck blind or sitting on a mountain top glassing for elk or deer. This has to bring one's stress level down a few notches (at least until that giant buck walks under our tree!).



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Kevin Casey (with son Sean) and Mike Austin, retired longtime Vortex employee, shared a great elk hunt in Alberta.



Jon and the Big Deer-Season Coyote

by Glenn Helgeland

Some guys can be beaten on the target range, but put hair and swift-moving hooves on a target, and the same guy will shoot its lights out. Same for other fleet-footed targets that get lined up in that shooter's crosshairs.

My brother Jon was one of those "shoot your lights out" guys. Younger brother Lee would often shoot a better group than Jon on a paper target. During deer season, however, generally the tide turned. (I never was in the competition. I think they could have out-shot me with their eyes closed.)

Jon didn't miss. He had excellent hand-eye coordination. He appeared to have ice water in his veins. He wouldn't get flustered or excited. He simply shot when and where he should shoot, sometimes at a running target. He never rushed a shot. He simply had cool confidence when shooting at game.

Our father, who was not easily impressed, saw Jon – back when Jon was a high school senior – make a couple of shots that left Dad shaking his head.

The coyote shot happened during deer hunting season in northwestern Wisconsin, east of Gordon. Dad and Jon were walking from camp down a typical widened fire-lane road, heading toward a couple of different stand sites they were familiar with. This area was mostly jackpines of all sizes, small to medium. (There are NO big jackpines, as far as I recall, in that area.) The smaller jacks, when thick enough, can block a hunter's view back off the road.

The morning seemed warm for the third week of November. "We weren't hurrying," Dad said, "and we were relatively relaxed, but we knew that deer sometimes suddenly burst out of the jacks, heading for more or better cover or just to cross a road. Sometimes they

seemed to appear from anywhere, so you never got totally relaxed. It was, after all, deer season."

As they walked, a branch cracked close behind them to the south. Dad turned, just in time to see a large coyote burst seemingly in overdrive from the small jacks. Dad's attention was on the coyote as it cleared the jacks, leaped the small ditch, and landed on the south rim of the road.

As the coyote gathered itself to begin its next stride, a rifle shot to Dad's right startled and distracted him. (Jon carried a .308.)

The coyote's momentum permitted it to finish the leap it was beginning, but instead of instantly disappearing into the small jacks on the north side of the road, the animal fell dead into the north ditch. Just that quick.

"The whole thing happened in less than a second," Dad said. "Jon turned quicker than I did or could..., bringing up

his rifle as he turned... expecting to see a moving deer target, not a flying coyote. He got the rifle to his shoulder so fast... adjusted mentally to seeing a coyote instead of a deer...got his scope's crosshairs instantly on the coyote's chest... swung with the coyote's movement... squeezed the trigger instead of jerking it in haste...and killed that big coyote so quick that it landed in the north ditch stone dead. It never twitched.

"I had seen good shooting lots of times, but I'd never seen a shot like that."

Retelling/recalling it all, Dad's expression still looked amazed as he remembered the scene. He relived it as he mentally and verbally went through it step by step...

"Jon turned instantly...locked his eyes on a completely unexpected target instantly... found the coyote in his scope instantly... got his crosshairs on the coyote's chest instantly (and kept them there as he swung with the coyote's movement)... never lost his concentration or focus through all that and kept the crosshairs where they belonged as he squeezed – not pulled – the trigger."

"That wasn't one second ...it wasn't even one heartbeat. It seemed like it was over as soon as it started. When I said 'instantly', I meant instantly," Dad said.

"I know there are many hunters who can react quickly when a shot opportunity arises, but this instance arose so quickly and was finished so quickly, it was almost like it didn't happen. I know it did, because there lay the dead coyote. It was running as fast as it could run when it cleared the south ditch and fell dead in the north ditch. Just that quick!"

The big coyote weighed more than 45 pounds. It measured 40 inches, nose tip to base of tail, and 57 inches, nose tip to tip of tail when stretched out. We debated whether it should be called a coyote or a brush wolf, as big coyotes in a wooded terrain often are called in our neck of the woods.

No matter. Its skinned pelt now lies on the second-floor stair rail in my house. I walk past it every day because

my office is on the second floor. I inherited the pelt years later when Jon was killed in a single-vehicle car wreck. Dad didn't want the pelt. After all, Dad was there when Jon worked his quick-as-lightning reaction time and dead-on shooting on the coyote... and two other times when Jon did the same thing. It was too personal a reminder of a lost son for Dad.

An earlier quick-as-lightning-shot involved the flushing of a cock pheasant as we walked slowly between the rows of an October cornfield. The bird flushed straight up, as they often do, not 10 yards in front of Jon. He shot it so quickly that the bird wasn't even at the top of its rise. His 16-gauge round caught the bird full in the center of the shot pattern. The bird sort of exploded in a clump of feathers and fell within four steps of Jon. This was his first over-as-soon-as-it-began shots.

Dad examined the bird, looked at Jon, and said, "This bird is so full of lead I'm tempted to leave it here. It will be full of #6 shot, with little, bitty pieces of feather stuffed deep in each BB hole. But we will take it with us and find out what's salvageable."

The breast had so many pellets we couldn't dig them all out. We had extremely hard, lumpy chewing with every bite. It essentially was inedible. Jon had killed it deadier than dead instantly. I don't recall how the cat fared when we fed it the inedible remains. It either didn't eat them or it coughed a lot when it swallowed.

The other incident was on a running fox in mid-winter in the middle of a 60-acre field west of our house and barn. Dad had seen the fox cross the road from the turkey farm north of us and called to Jon. Jon fetched his rifle

quickly and sat on the back-porch steps, elbows on his knees, his .308 nestled in both hands.

A running red fox, more fur than body, is not much of a target, especially when it is nearly a quarter-mile away.

Jon's first shot kicked up a bit of dust as it ran across a bare plowed field. He jacked in a second round. His second shot bowled over the fox.

Dad walked out to the fox and retrieved it. Why did he do that? Jon shot it, not him.

"I wanted to verify the distance so I could talk about it. Jon hit that fox on only his second shot. He needed only one shot to make a correction. That's shooting," Dad said.

What was the distance?

"It was 420 yards, on the nose," Dad said.

How did he know?

"I measured it with a yellow 50-foot tape; I didn't pace it off. I wanted to be certain."

Editor's Note: This excerpt is from Glenn Helgeland's new book "My Brother Jon, Outdoor Memories in Wisconsin" available at www.targetcommbooks.com.



Lake Superior Chapter Report

by President Scott Olson

Hello and Happy Autumn to everyone! As I get more experienced (old), the time seems to go by faster. It was just summer wasn't it? I recently sent an email out to the Lake Superior Chapter board and realized that the National convention is four months away and most of the regional banquets are too! The Lake Superior Chapter is working hard to make our 26th annual event successful. Hunt donations are coming in; we are searching for speakers and entertainment too. All items every chapter does every year. It really is an incredible amount of work that we volunteers do. I strongly encourage anyone who wants to help, please seek out your local chapter and offer a hand.

On a lighter note, a few of us at the Lake Superior Chapter were joking around about squirrel hunting last fall and we came up with a fun idea. We call it SHITT an acronym for Squirrel Hunting International Trophy Team. We created the Squirrel Slam which

consists of a chipmunk, red squirrel, grey squirrel, black squirrel, and a either a fox squirrel or ground squirrel. At our 25th Anniversary event in April, we had t-shirts for sale and even had a squirrel scoring seminar. All great fun! We also sold (6) \$1,000 trophy squirrel hunts at Chasin' Dreams Whitetails in Danbury, WI with the proceeds going towards youth programs. We plan to have an awards ceremony at our 2026 event recognizing all documented Squirrel Slams. Someone might win a big prize!

On behalf of the Lake Superior Chapter, please have a safe and successful fall season. See you in Nashville or at your local fundraiser in 2026!



Good Win!

SCI Illinois & Chicago Chapter Past President Brandon Goodwin added Capra and Zenith Awards to his legacy as one of

the world's most successful hunters. At the awards ceremony, the screen behind MC J. Alain Smith showed Brandon's Beceite Ibex from his hunt with Corju Hunting, see ad pg. 9.



Education:

Oh heck, yes, this matters!

SCI/OHEC education partner NASP hits historic high

For the first time in program history, archery lessons were taught in over 10,000 schools in a single academic season through the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP), which has received support from SCI chapters in Illinois, Wisconsin, and elsewhere, and from Outdoor Heritage Education Center nonprofit group. The 2024-2025 school year marked a monumental achievement.

NASP extends a huge thank you to SCI, OHEC, DNR, school educators, and coaches for their incredible efforts, including SCI and OHEC donations that put dozens of bows and other gear in schools to engage more students than ever in the shooting sports.

"We intend to continue providing critical funding to support the DNR's expansion of school archery and Explore Bowhunting programs," said Charmaine Wargolet, SCI Region 16 Representative covering Illinois and Wisconsin.

Since its inception in 2002, NASP has worked to bring safe, standardized archery curriculum into schools across the United States and internationally. Designed for students in grades 4-12, the program offers an inclusive opportunity for youth to discover archery through their physical education classes and beyond.

Participating schools identify an interested educator to undergo Basic Archery Instructor (BAI) certification. These certified instructors then integrate archery into the school day, using the 11 Steps to Archery Success to teach not just aim and form—but also focus, discipline, and confidence.

During the 2024/2025 school year, archery was taught in 10,000 schools. That means 10,000 gymnasiums, 10,000 classrooms, and countless moments where students found focus, confidence, and belonging—because an educator, administrator, and coordinator said "Yes, this matters."

In 2017, NASP introduced an annual reporting requirement for all certified instructors. These reports have become a crucial tool for tracking the program's reach and effectiveness—and this year's

data confirmed what many already felt: NASP is growing, thriving, and making a lasting difference.

This success is the result of a collaborative effort across every jurisdiction. NASP state and provincial coordinators play a critical role in supporting schools, training instructors, and ensuring consistency in the program's delivery. Their dedication has been essential in helping NASP expand into more schools, reach more students, and maintain high standards of safety and quality.

"We could not be prouder of our coordinators and educators who push each day to provide in-school archery programming for our nation's youth. They are the backbone and real MVPs of the largest archery program in the world, and together we are making an incredible difference in the lives of students while growing the shooting sports. This milestone is a direct reflection of their hard work and dedication," shared Tommy Floyd Ed.D., president of NASP.

The growth isn't slowing down. In addition to reaching 10,000 schools, NASP continues to see increased demand for instructor training, equipment grants, and student participation at the local, state, national, and international levels. With continued support from educators, coordinators, parents, and industry partners, NASP is well on its way to empowering future generations of archers and student leaders



Victoria Falls Safari Services

Soaz-ZTA registration# 312

Quality traditional fair chase dangerous game safaris in the Matetsi East RFC and Gwayi ECA hunting units of Western Zimbabwe. Matetsi and the Gwayi are located just south Victoria Falls near Hwange National Park and is home to abundant elephant, leopard, buffalo, lion, crocodile, hippo and plains game.

2026 10 day Gwayi Forrest Cape Buffalo Safari \$13,995.00
2025 7 day Guaranteed exportable Bull Elephant \$18,500.00

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How to Choose Best Scope Rings & Bases

courtesy Vortex Optics

There are a bazillion different kinds of guns out there, many of them tricked out to meet the SCI member's exacting demands, so it's impossible to lay out what rings and bases are needed for every single setup, but we'll go over a few of the classics we see all the time.



Traditional Bolt Gun (No Handguard Or Other Accessories Covering The Barrel)

A one piece Picatinny rail, which we can almost guarantee you can find from our friends at EGW (Evolution Gun Works) for a reasonable price for almost any gun, is the best base. On top, get a two-piece ring set in the absolute best quality you can afford. Heck - skimp on scope if it means you can get a nicer set of rings.

For darn near any riflescope and traditional bolt gun setup, medium height rings will work just fine. Don't fall under the idea that the scope MUST be mega low to the barrel - the differences are moot performance-wise, and if you get it so low, you're always smashing your face into the stock just to see through the scope, you've put yourself at a disadvantage. Only go high for clearance reasons - a scope that's mounted too high will also result in an uncomfortable and inconsistent cheek weld.



AR-15 And Similar Flat Top Carbiners (With Handguards Over The Barrel)

Use a one-piece cantilever mount rather than a two-piece ring setup. One-piece cantilevers allow you to keep the whole mount back over the receiver, so none of it must mount to any portion of the handguard, which is often a separate piece and could present alignment issues if used with two-piece rings. Cantilever mounts also raise the scope up high enough for a comfortable cheek weld with the stock directly in line with the receiver, and they push the scope forward far enough to get proper eye relief for the best optical quality and most forgiving eye box when shooting.

It's important to note some people really want to keep a set of backup irons on their gun, even though backup irons are solely developed to be a backup aiming device for red dots and holographic sights which, if their battery dies, have literally no point of aim at all. Any riflescope or prism scope with a physical reticle, whether illuminated or



Cantilever Mount

Longtime supporter of SCI and sponsor of Dan Small's and Mark LaBarbera's "Deer Hunt Wisconsin" annual TV special, Vortex Optics now offers 30mm and 34mm cantilever scope mounts for your sporting rifle. The range is calling, and this mount is your answer. The 2" offset gets your head position and eye relief dialed, while leaving plenty of real estate on your rail. Lightweight, but with the power to stand up to recoil and the rigors of range day, these mounts get you shooting faster and easier, with performance you can believe in.

Features include:

not, doesn't need this kind of backup, because if a battery dies, then you still have the reticle as a point of aim. If the whole scope is destroyed beyond the point of being any use, then you probably have bigger fish to fry besides taking it off and using your iron sights anyway.

Regardless, if you MUST use backup irons, then be mindful of the mount height as well as your eyepiece diameter in order to clear that rear sight. If you have a set of low-profile irons, then you should be good with a normal cantilever mount). If you have a bigger, bulkier rear backup sight, then you may need to take some measurements and compare against the dimensions given on the riflescope and mount manufacturer's websites.

As always, if you have any questions about rings, optics, or you just want to share a great build, give one of our experts a call at 1-800-426-0048.



- Design offset to eliminate
 - Commonality between fasteners and components for one-tool mounting
 - Horizontally split for easier mounting
 - Lightweight, under 5.5 oz. to keep your rifle portable without sacrificing stability
 - Type 2 Low-Glare Matte Black Anodized
 - Laser Engraved Torque Specifications; and
 - 6061 Aluminum
- Learn more at your local dealer or VortexOptics.com.

Legislative Update

by SCI Lobbyist Dan Trawicki

While the heat of summer continues on, we are just beginning to have our early hunting seasons start. Early goose and Teal, along with the archery opening have us all getting excited. The lobbying has been very active on several different topics. The sandhill crane issue and Knowles-Nelson stewardship have been very active issues for me. Many of us have put in long hours on trying to get a sandhill crane hunt here in Wisconsin. I have to say the meetings I have had with legislators have for the most part been very positive. In taking with the chairs of the sporting heritage committee Sen. Stafsholt and Rep. Pronschinske I feel very good about having a hearing this fall. I will definitely keep everyone informed about that situation. I recently travelled to Hudson Wisconsin for Sen. Stafsholt's annual fundraiser. It gave me an opportunity to not only speak one on one with the senator, but meet with other officials on this issue. Again, I came away from that fundraiser with some very positive feedback. It was during this same time frame I was able to schedule an in person meeting with Sen. Hutton on this same sandhill crane issue and also Knowles-Nelson that I will talk about a little later. Sen. Hutton was very informed on both topics and gave some great insights.

The main question of course is the willingness of the Governor to sign such a bill should we get it that far. I honestly don't know the answer to that. I do think it was a good sign the Governor allocated money in his proposed budget to help farmers by adding funding to reduce crop depredation. While we do

have a constitutional right to hunt and fish in this state, and every biological study has concluded we could and should have a hunt, it still is in question.

For those of you not aware the Knowles-Nelson stewardship fund was established in 1989 to acquire land for public use and access, as well as improving existing conservation projects. The fund is currently set to expire after June of 2026. SCI as well as most outdoor organizations across the state have lobbied to continue the funding for another four years. Quite recently there has been a Democratic bill introduced which may help the potential for the continuation of funding. Its not often we get both sides to agree with a topic and both groups trying to move it forward. The program is currently funded at 33 million per year, and as I mentioned set

to expire in June of 2026. The program was not part of the Governors proposed 2025-2027 budget.

I also recently attended the National assembly of sportman's caucus held just north of Madison. This was a sporting clays event in which legislators and staff were invited to shoot and experience the thrills of clay shooting! For me, it once again gave me the chance to chat with Legislators about key issues. Bee Frederick from National SCI was also there which was great. At that event I had an opportunity to talk with Rep. Pronschinske and Dem. Rep. Miresse who was one of the main authors of the Democratic bill on Knowles-Nelson. I thanked him for his efforts on behalf of all sportsman. Its at functions like this that you get an opportunity to meet with legislators and staff and propose ideas on an informal basis.



Lobbyist Dan Trawicki represented SCI at fundraisers with State Sen. Rob Stafsholt (above) as well as State Rep. Treig Pronschinske and SCI HQ's Bee Frederick (below).



Sue Connects Kids and Nature

Sue Johansen-Mayolett's office is approximately 1.6 billion years old. She regularly kayaks on a lake formed in an abandoned valley of an ancient river. She also helps youth, families and visitors of all ages to the Wisconsin State Park System's most visited state park connect with the natural world, conservation, and their outdoor heritage. And every year she pitches in elsewhere to help the SCI-supported Midwest Outdoor Heritage Education Expo recruit, retain, and reactivate anglers, hunters, and other outdoor enthusiasts.

As the Naturalist at Devil's Lake State Park, Sue provides a wide range of programming, holds nature hikes, leads field trips and so much more. These opportunities are a great chance for Devil's Lake's more than two million annual visitors to learn more about the

beloved state park. Members of all SCI Chapters in Wisconsin and Illinois have been to her park, and she welcomes all SCI members from Region 16 and other parts of the country as well.

Sue may tell you that she fell into her role as a Naturalist accidentally, but if you ask those who have worked with her they will tell you that the role comes second nature.

After graduating from college, Sue took on a part-time job as a naturalist in northern New Jersey. A series of part-time positions in naturalist roles followed. "I guess I never looked back," she says.

Visitors to the nature center at Devil's Lake build a relationship with the outdoors thanks to the wide array of hands-on educational and outdoor recreation programs Sue presents. Her motto, "taking people into nature is

insufficient; caring adults must teach themselves how to think in nature," demonstrates the way she approaches her job.

From a hike on Tumbled Rock Trail if you only have an hour, to a day spent hiking one (or both) of the bluff trails, Sue has no shortage of recommendations for ways to enjoy the park.

"Watch the sunset from the south shore or from on top of the east bluff. Enjoy the unique Wisconsin scenery and the ancient geology," her list goes on. If you're lucky, you may even snag a spot on one of her kayak tours of Devil's Lake.

In addition to year-round naturalist programs, visitors can enjoy nearly 30 miles of hiking trails, lakeshore picnic areas, swimming beaches and paddling opportunities.

Calin's Wish Fulfilled

by Pat Scuzzin

Guide Mike Fuge watched closely as Calin Volsencek carefully focused on the scope's crosshairs and target while squeezing the trigger. The rifle recoiled and Calin lost the sight picture for a second. He looked up at his bear hunting mentor.

"Good shot," said Fuge, "You're right on target. Do the same thing in the bear woods and you'll have bear meat in the freezer by the end of the week."

Sighting in his rifle at the Northwoods Wildlife & Wetlands Club near Mercer, Wisconsin, was only part of the prep-

aration during Calin's Learn to Hunt Bear experience hosted by Mike & Angela Fuge and the charitable nonprofit Outdoor Heritage Education Center (OHECyes.org).

The whirlwind adventure began only a few months earlier in late May when OHEC (pronounced OH'-heck) received a call from Scott Kirchoff, a hunter education instructor and learn to hunt mentor who, dating back more than a decade, has used OHEC loaner guns and gear for students. He explained that one of his adult students from years ago called looking for a Make-a-Wish

Foundation contact. Jeanette Volsencek was hoping Make-a-Wish would grant her son's wish for a Wisconsin black bear hunt before his recently discovered brain tumor would end any chance of Calin's dream coming true.

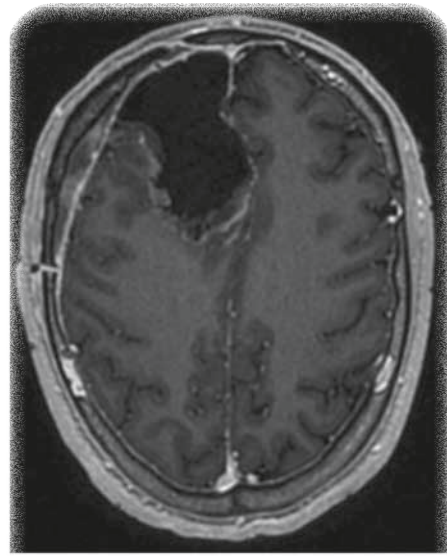
Kirchoff said Calin had been vomiting and suffering headaches for about two weeks in March before collapsing and being rushed to the emergency room and then to an operating room.

"He underwent an emergency craniotomy to remove a very large mass and stop his brain from herniating," said Kirchoff. "He has been diagnosed with



Calin wore his lucky cap from friend and hunting mentor Brian Knusta who died at a young age. Calin still grieves the loss but believes Brian watches over him on hunts and in life.





4/21/2025.
a grade 4 Astrocytoma brain cancer. This is an incurable, terminal condition. He is receiving six weeks of daily chemo and radiation five days a week. He is an avid hunter, and his wish is for a bear hunt."

share the news that Make-a-Wish had stopped sponsoring hunts more than 20 years ago.

But Calin's wish did not die there.

LaBarbera agreed to personally explore some potential options even at this late date. He scrambled to find a way to bring together all of the pieces quickly for Calin to be able to hunt black bear over bait when the season opened a few months later. Calin was 24 years old when diagnosed.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' R3 program was a key first step. Emily lehl explained requirements for receiving a Learn to Hunt Bear tag. Sydni Albrecht handled a lot of the details in the weeks that followed.

The next call was to Mike Fuge, Izaak Walton League of America Wisconsin Division President, who happens to be a lifelong bear hunter and registered guide that hosts purple heart veterans through the Kniestedt Foundation (kniestedt.org). He and his wife Angela agreed to host Calin in September after the veterans left camp. They agreed personally to keep working the baits.

New Life Taxidermy's Troy Piotrowski of Amherst agreed to mount the bear if Calin was successful. He reached out to McKenzie Taxidermy Supply for a discount on a full mount bear form.

IWLA Bill Cook Chapter member Randy Schubert agreed to discount the weekly cost of comfortable modern cabins at his beautiful Northwoods Flowage View near Butternut, and Balsam Ridge Lodging, Mercer.

OHEC reached out to familiar partners and



received help to cover major costs from SCI Northeast Wisconsin Chapter, SCI Wisconsin Chapter's Big AI Fund, the Tri-State Gobblers Chapter of National Wild Turkey Federation, and Pete Papageorge of SE WI Pheasants Forever. Special thanks to Mark Snyder, Rick Rollo, Charmaine Wargolet, Brian Dalsing, and their fellow leaders and members.

Kirchoff and his brother agreed to help as needed, plus host morning fishing outings if Calin had the energy before the afternoon hunts.

With key pieces in place, OHEC notified everyone that Calin's wish for a bear hunt would happen already this year if he was physically able to participate. Calin celebrated his 25th birthday in June. News of the dream hunt becoming reality was a great gift.

Meeting Mike and Angela Fuge was another life-changing gift. They hauled their trailer loaded with drums of bait back and forth to Mercer 18 times, using cellular trail cameras to monitor bait activity on private and public land, and to replenish or move bait sites as needed. Mike checked with Calin and Jeanette to coordinate online lessons, a meeting with the conservation warden, rifle range sight-in, and field training as part of the Learn to Hunt. The family embraced the opportunity to learn and to participate in the bear baiting work on two separate occasions and experienced a taste of the work involved on those hot, sweaty summer days where mosquito headnets can only protect so much as you haul buckets and gear over and around blowdowns and slashings. It was amazing how Calin especially savored the work.

Calin's mom said, "We learned so much from Mike about bears and other animals and plants during our trips and all those hours in the woods. Calin's sister Mikayla and girlfriend Alyssa enjoyed the bear baiting trips too."

The family turned each baiting trip into an extended bonding experience, making memories to last a lifetime, which means different things to different family members.

"We were the ultimate tourists," Jeanette said. "We tried everything from zoo visits to go-karting to boating and fishing, campfires, sight-seeing, hiking, and dining."



One night around the campfire at the local hotel the Volsencek family met Dustin and Kevin, a couple of young workers from outside the area. They

discovered a mutual love of the outdoors and became instant friends. Alcohol lubricated the campfire conversation and led to gentle ribbing like you'd expect among longtime friends. Everyone was having fun and joking around when Calin tossed his empty can into the fire.

Dustin reacted, "Hey, man, you're gonna give us cancer."

Calin's family fell silent, and then Calin took off his cap to show his shaved head and said, "Too late!"

Dustin and Kevin were shocked, but Calin and his family laughed and set their new friends at ease.

Still around the campfire about 3am, things were winding down, and everyone was staring at the dancing embers when suddenly something caught Jeanette's attention. A deer was walking toward Calin. It was only a few feet away when Calin saw Jeanette's reaction and he turned. Calin and the deer shared a gaze before the deer took off.

"It was chilling, kind of spiritual," Jeanette said, adding, "One of many special memories for our family made possible because of this bear hunt."

Throughout the weeks of baiting, Fuge continued to send trail camera images and reports about activity, foliage, natural food sources, and other elements that can affect the hunt as well as fuel enthusiasm for both first time bear hunter and others.

The family arranged for chemo treatments to be delayed slightly so Calin could be between treatments for the hunt, with enough time after the prior one to not too drained physically or emotionally.



Jeanette said Calin's doctor during a checkup the week before the hunt commented about his patient's high energy level and positive outlook. She said, "Calin told him, 'I'm going bear hunting!'"

Calin's family, including his hunting mentor Uncle John, plus Kirchoff, arrived Friday, September 19, in camp, as well as LaBarbera and the Fuges.

Mike shared that he wanted the focus to be on Calin having the most meaningful, safe experience and best chance of success, and for Calin's full focus to be on the hunt. So, plans were



set for Mike, Calin, and LaBarbera to go to the rifle range the next morning, then replenish one other active bait, before hauling bait and gear to a special site near Saxon where they would hunt from about 3pm until shooting hours closed.

Fuge's great, great, great immigrant uncle fought for the North in the Civil War and was given 20 acres near Saxon along with his citizenship. This special property has been passed down in the Fuge family for generations, and Mike has been hunting deer and bear on it for most of his life. The fact that he shared this special place and worked to fulfill Calin's wish says a lot about Fuge as a person and about how Calin touches the lives of others.





were committed to three nights on the Saxon bait.

When Calin was forging ahead of us, with empty buckets and a bounce in his step, back to the truck from the other bait site, Fuge turned to LaBarbera, smiled and said, "This is where we all need to be this week!" He explained that, sure, it was good for Calin's mind and body, but it was also good for the souls of all who pitched in for Calin's Wish. It

Fuge also invested in a special accessible Hjort Hunting Blind and mounted it permanently on a low trailer so hunter, mentor, and photographer or guest could all fit comfortably in the quiet blind. Fuge cleared enough space on this special parcel to be able to unhitch the trailer blind not far from the active bait site. Bears continued to hit the site even on delivery day. Thanks to Fuge, all of the elements for success were lined up for Calin.

In the blind on Day 1, Calin shared CT and MRI images of what was growing inside him. He talked about his girlfriend and health insurance and, in his own way, the sanctity of life. A sow and three cubs interrupted whispered discussions in the blind, as the bears put on a show.

At one point, the sow came to full alert, stared beyond the blind, and ran off. Three human hearts pounded in anticipation of a bigger bear approaching.

But the three cubs remained calm and did not follow the sow, which seemed odd. The sow never came back to the bait. With each passing minute and fading light, the hunter's attention returned to the cubs with no other bear in sight. Then suddenly, behind the bait where the swamp begins, there was movement.

Was it the sow?

Was it another bear?

Calin said, "We were the ones now at full alert." At least until Fuge announced it was the end of legal shooting hours and time to unload the gun. Three cubs ran off, and three guys hiked out to the truck.

On Day 2, those guys baited another site in the morning even though they

was a reminder of what's important in life: Faith, Family, Friends.

That afternoon in the Hjort Blind, they might have been joking and laughing too much about LaBarbera eating everyone's chocolate chip cookies and other treats because no bear came in. During the drive home, Calin, exhausted, closed his eyes and



thought about each of the new sights, sounds, and smells of this bear hunting adventure so far. Bear or no bear, he fully embraced and cherished the experience. Tired, happy, and lulled by the sound of truck tires on pavement, Calin smiled as he drifted off to sleep on the ride back to the cabin.

On Day 3 and 4, Calin and Mike left the Italian Cookie Monster behind and, sure enough, watched a bear come in early and feed on the bait on that fourth afternoon. Calin later talked in his own way about the powerful experience of being immersed in nature



and being able to observe an apex predator in close proximity. It was a healthy, healing, inspirational feeling that moves people to think about our place in the natural world.

"I don't know many people who can say they sat and watched a black bear so close to you that you could hear it chomping down its food," Calin said.

During one of those healing moments of awe, the bear he was watching suddenly ran away.

Calin learned from Mike to pay attention to what direction a bear suddenly leaves a bait, and to look in the opposite direction for what scared it away. Sure enough, a bigger bear was coming in from that other direction. Adrenaline spiked and nerves tingled. At one point, the bigger bear walked 10 feet from Calin on its way to the bait.

Once the bear was focused on the bait, Calin was in position to shoot. Now Calin was the one

focused on making his own dream come true. He controlled his nerves and



did not let the adrenaline or the excitement of the moment distract him from doing what he had dreamed of doing for years. Not knowing if he would ever have another chance to fulfill his wish, Calin understood that everything now relied entirely on him making the shot.

He put the crosshairs on the spot Mike had taught him to visualize, not the whole bear. He controlled his breathing as he squeezed the trigger.

Calin's shot rang out.

Perfect shot, the bear didn't go 20 feet, dying instantly, within sight, and making for an easy recovery.

A quick photo session, calls and texts to family and friends followed. There would be even more time later to savor the moment. One of the first calls from Fuge was to his wife: "Angela, bring the bags of ice. Calin got his bear!" The warm weather motivated Fuge to get the bear cooled down quickly and properly care for the meat.

Big Al and Fuge's ancestors must have been smiling from above. Big Al's legacy of giving which included fundraising pheasant hunts at Wern Valley Sportsmen's Club in Waukesha has helped underwrite many hunts and other great outdoor education initiatives, but Calin's Wish was special.

As LaBarbera told Big Al's son Rick Rollo and others, "I wish everyone could have felt the love and excitement throughout Fuge's long trips up north for baiting and stand prep, especially two of those excursions when Calin's mom, sister, and girlfriend joined Mike and Angela and added other fun activities outdoors. They loved everything the Mercer area offers." LaBarbera baked two chocolate cakes for camp



Record Bear Applications

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources said, this year, over 32,000 people applied for one of the 13,110 bear licenses available. Nearly 114,000 more people opted to purchase a preference point to improve their chances of drawing a license in a future lottery. With over 146,000 people applying for a license or purchasing a preference point, this year represents a new record high for bear hunting applications.

Wisconsin has a thriving and expanding bear population estimated at around 24,000 animals. The resident bear population covers more than half the state, primarily in the forested regions of northern and central Wisconsin, with a continued trend of slow southward expansion.

Careful and regulated public harvest of bears is the primary tool used to help keep bear numbers in balance with available habitat across the state. Hunting also plays a critical role in black bear research, the science behind bear management.

All bears must be registered by 5 p.m. the day after recovery, and hunters must submit two upper premolar teeth to the department. These samples provide important data used to monitor and ensure the health of Wisconsin's bear population into the future.

The DNR's Bear Hunting webpage provides general information about hunting bears, regulations and hunting hours.

and decorated one with a huge bear and the words "Calin's Wish." The other one captured everyone's sentiments: "Thanks Mike & Angela!"

The bear is at Geiss Meat Service in Merrill with the hide and skull going to Troy at New Life Taxidermy.

As Calin and his family basked in the warm afterglow of his success, Mike and Angela had one more thing planned to add to everyone's experiences and memories. They all loaded up and drove the short distance to Lake Superior, a few miles from the special Saxon site. On the shores of one of America's Great Lakes, they searched for a flat rock on which the bleached bear skull could be

mounted. Calin and girlfriend Alyssa found the perfect specimen.

"The best part of that day may have been watching Calin skipping stones," said Fuge. "He and Alyssa were in a special place with special people, living in the moment, full of life and joy, and not burdened with thoughts of what lies ahead."

Calin is still on Cloud 9 from the whole experience, and when asked how he would like to sum it all up, simply said, "Thank you to everyone for making my wish come true."





2-Year Quest

(part 2)

by Jay Trudell

As I wrote in part one, My goal was to harvest a Rusa or a Hog deer. I was unsuccessful in that quest but was able to harvest a beautiful Dall Sheep and Cheri got a super cool one horned Catalina Ram. We were hunting the famed 777 Ranch in Hondo, Texas. A hunt that we won at an SCI Badgerland Banquet and Auction.

My hope was to return the following year. I kept in touch with my guide, Les at the 777 and learned that nobody harvested the giant Hog

Deer that I missed on our first trip. All I could think about was how much bigger he'd be next year. Only problem was I had another hunt booked for the following year. I thought that I could possibly swing two hunts in one year. Cheri thought otherwise! Then I found out early in the fall that someone harvested the big Hog Deer I'd hoped for. The decision was made quickly to wait a year and return to the 777 the next year.

I kept in touch with Les, my guide, and found out that with the big Hog Deer gone,

I needed to focus on my Rusa deer goal. He told me there were some very big ones roaming the hills of the property. I wasn't sure about getting too excited about it, remembering just how nocturnal the Rusa bucks can be. So, I sent him a wish list of other animals I'd like to hunt, just in case.

Summer flew by and our October hunt was upon us. We traveled to San Antonio, Texas where we hung out for a few days prior to the hunt. It's beautiful in San Antonio. We spent our time exploring the Riverwalk area down-



town. It has shopping and lots of restaurants to eat and drink at. We visited the Alamo, The Hard Rock and Seaworld. There's a lot to do in San Antonio! One of our favorite destinations, if you get a chance, go there.

We woke up the morning of the hunt and traveled from San Antonio to Hondo Texas where the 777 Ranch is located. We got there in time for lunch with my guide, Les. Les was excited to see us and had great news. He'd been scouting the Rusa Bucks and had located a big one that was daylighting in the evenings on a hilly area not far from the lodge. He set up a ground blind where he had seen the buck and was hoping we could sneak in there that afternoon. We finished lunch quickly and went to our cabin to get ready.

Les picked us up at our cabin and we drove out to the area with the blind. He put out some alfalfa and corn within bow range of the blind hoping the big Rusa would partake in an evening snack. We slipped into the blind and got ready for a long sit till dark. I don't think we were in the blind for a half hour when this normally nocturnal Rusa buck slipped out of the thick cover. When I first saw him, I about lost it. I was surprised, he showed up so early! He was also huge and still in velvet, simply a breath-taking animal! He was already within 50 yards when we first saw him, and he came directly at us. This was

happening super-fast!

As he was closing in he saw the bait. Les had set this up perfectly! The big buck started feeding immediately upon arrival. At first he was facing us, so we waited for him to turn, which seemed like it took forever. Slowly he turned broad side at 25 yards, I drew my bow. I took a deep breath, settled the pin behind his shoulder and squeezed the trigger. The shot

looked great! We even got it on film and thought the same when we replayed it. We decided to give it the customary 20 minutes and go recover him.

We got out of the blind and I was pumped to go find him! We found blood quickly and started the track. After about a hundred yards or so, the blood trail trickled out. We found some tracks that made it look like he was headed to a big pond. We searched all the way around that pond, looked in and out of the thickets and came up dry. It was very disappointing to say the least! But we were all convinced he had to be there somewhere due to the filming of the shot. It was getting dark, and we decided to wait till morning and recruit some more eyes to help look.

It was a sleepless night for me. It seemed to take forever, so I spent a lot of time praying. Morning finally came. A couple more guides came along to help us look. We decided that

once we got there we'd split and grid the area. We decided to start at the pond where we had left off the night before. We started looking at the sand around the pond, hoping to pick up a track. We weren't halfway around when one of the guides said there he is! He was floating in the pond! He wasn't doing that the night before, so all we could figure is he had sunk and floated to the top overnight. I was relieved and excited as I watched the guides wade into the pond and float my buck to shore! Once we got him out and realized just how big he was, I was even more excited! We got him out and dried him off, did a photo shoot and celebrated with an awesome breakfast at the lodge.

Back home I scored the buck and was shocked to see he was a top ten animal. I knew I needed a SCI Master scorer, so I called Joe Koback. We made arrangements and I made my way to Joe's home. To my delight, Joe scored the buck, and he wasn't only top 10, but he is number 5 overall and number 1 with a bow! This is a dream come true for me to hold a number 1 ranking! I was truly blessed and a prayer answered in a big way when we found this big buck floating in the pond!



Hunter Success!

Member Jason Kratochwill presented at the October Badgerland Chapter meeting about his bird and big game hunting adventure in Texas as well as his caribou

hunt in Alaska. At the September meeting, Erik and Lisa Mikkelsen presented about their New Zealand trip that included red stag, tahr, chamois, elk, and fallow deer



Jason's caribou.



Jason's Texas blackbuck.



What in tahr-nation? Erik & Lisa doubled!



One of Erik's New Zealand trophies.



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SCI HUNTER'S BANQUET,

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AND LIVE AUCTION.

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Hunt Report:

NAMIBIA

by Greg Wiersema

My son Luke and I had a great adventure and wanted to share this report and photos with fellow SCI members.

It was my third time hunting with Mopani Hunting Safaris in Namibia, and they have always treated me very well. Accommodations are very comfortable, and food is excellent. Mopani likes to promote that it is always, "Catering to the discerning outdoorsman. Specializing in tailor made hunting and fishing safaris." Hunting was a combination of hunting from blinds near water holes along with spot and stalking.

There was a group of five of us with three PH's, although I mostly hunted

with Professional Hunter Marius Burger. A great time was had by all over our eight days of hunting.

Besides seeing lots of quality game and many different species, I want to mention how the overall experience with Mopani added to the memories, especially because Luke and I shared this adventure and will remember it forever.

Luke harvested a springbok, Burchell's zebra and very nice oryx. I took a giraffe, duiker, springbok, warthog and red hartebeest.

One final note: When you book with Mopani, you won't regret bringing friends and relatives.

You can email Marius at burger-marius375@gmail.com or call him at +264 81 869 9589.



Luke, left, and Greg with springbok.



Luke stands behind Greg and a nice gemsbok.



PH Marius Burger.



Greg also shot a hartebeest...

...and a warthog.

HuntStock Coming to Wisconsin!

SCI members prepare for an unforgettable outdoor experience

Great news is on the horizon and SCI members are getting an early heads-up thanks to our longstanding relationship with the Outdoor Heritage Education Center organization. OHEC Executive Director Ruth Ann Lee shared news that OHEC is helping HuntStock founder Patrick Guyette expand the east coast event into Wisconsin, and offer cool incentives for friends of OHEC and SCI to be a part of the inaugural event as key volunteer leaders. Email ruthann@OHECyes.org for volunteer incentive details.

OHEC's Touch of the Wild sensory safari trailer(s) will be at the July 16-18, 2026, HuntStock festival at the Dodge County Fairgrounds in Beaver Dam, and possibly the Explore Bowfishing education trailer in collaboration with Travis Gill of Rough Fish Assassins.

This exciting development promises to bring together hunting enthusiasts, outdoor adventurers, and conservationists for a weekend packed with engaging activities, educational seminars, and community-building opportunities.

What Is HuntStock?

HuntStock has rapidly grown into a must-attend event for anyone passionate about the outdoors. Known for its interactive exhibits, live demonstrations, gear showcases, and networking opportunities, HuntStock offers a unique platform for hunters and outdoor aficionados to connect with

industry experts, manufacturers, and like-minded individuals. Whether you're a seasoned hunter or new to the field, HuntStock is designed to inspire, educate, and entertain.



Why Beaver Dam?

Free from big city traffic congestion, Beaver Dam is a vibrant community nestled in the heart of Wisconsin, recognized for its welcoming spirit and stunning natural landscapes. The city's rich hunting traditions and deep appreciation for outdoor pursuits make it a perfect setting for HuntStock. SCI members and other attendees can look forward to exploring the area's lakes, woodlands, and wildlife habitats while enjoying all the amenities that Beaver Dam has to offer.

What to Expect at HuntStock

- Industry Exhibitors: Meet leading brands showcasing the latest in hunting gear, apparel, and technology.

- Expert Seminars: Attend workshops and panel discussions led by renowned hunters, conservationists, and outdoor professionals like Dan Infalt.
- Live Demonstrations: Experience hands-on activities, including archery, marksmanship, and tracking techniques.
- Networking: Connect with fellow SCI members and others to build lasting friendships within the hunting community.
- Family-Friendly Fun: Enjoy activities for all ages, making HuntStock a perfect event for families and youth programs.

Why SCI Members Should Attend

As an SCI member, attending HuntStock is an excellent opportunity to deepen your knowledge, expand your network, and celebrate your love for hunting. The event aligns closely with SCI's mission to promote sustainable hunting, wildlife conservation, and ethical outdoor practices. Whether you're looking to learn new skills, discover cutting-edge products, or simply enjoy the camaraderie of fellow enthusiasts, HuntStock in Beaver Dam is the place to be. Whether you email ruthann@OHECyes.org for volunteer incentive information or simply mark your calendar and stay tuned for more details about schedules and registration, don't miss your chance to be a part of this exciting event!

Book Review;

River Gold

by Mark LaBarbera

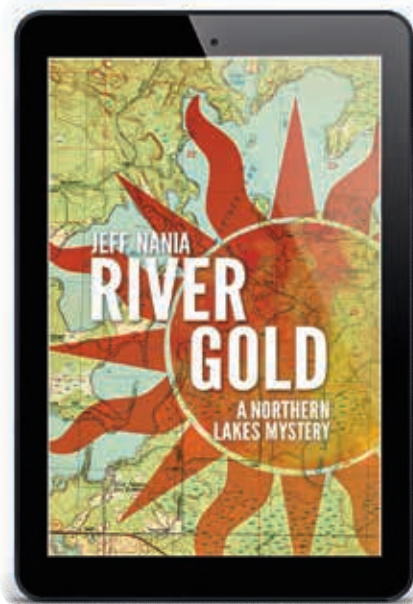
After reading author Jeff Nania's other Wisconsin-based books in his Northern Mystery Series, I was waiting eagerly for his next outdoor thriller. Well, it's here and it's great. While waiting for him to write yet another one, I'm killing time sharing this "River Gold" review with you and our fellow SCI members, who are kindred spirits with the good guys in Nania's series.

For readers who find their peace in the rustle of leaves and the hush of dawn over water, Jeff Nania's "River Gold" is an invitation to step into the heart of Wisconsin's wild spaces. The tale follows former law enforcement officer John Cabrelli, whose quiet, rural life is upended when a mysterious gold discovery draws trouble into his backyard. Nania's storytelling is crisp and unpretentious, his prose steeped in the rhythms of the land—every cedar stand, river bend, and morning mist is

rendered with the authenticity of someone who knows the woods not just as backdrop, but as character.

"River Gold" is as much a mystery as it is a tribute to outdoor life. SCI members and other hunters will appreciate the book's nuanced understanding of conservation, the balance between vigilance and respect for wildlife, and the camaraderie that grows between people who share the woods. Nania draws on his own background as an outdoorsman, infusing the story with details about land stewardship, ethical hunting, and the interconnectedness of nature and community.

There's plenty of suspense as Cabrelli's investigation unfolds, but the real gold here is the honest depiction of rural life and the solace found in the wild. "River Gold" is perfect for SCI members and other hunters who crave more than just a good story—you'll find echoes of your own passion for the hunt and all things wild woven through every



page. It's a satisfying read that lingers like the memory of a perfect sunrise on opening morning.

Learn more at your favorite bookseller or visit feetwetwriting.com, where you can buy the latest title or a bundle of books in the series to catch up and then join us in waiting for the author's next northwoods mystery..



Three generations celebrated this Eau Claire area buck arrowed by Josh Rabska, including his 3- and 9-year old sons and Josh's dad.



REDUCING THE ILLEGAL TAKE OF WILDLIFE BY INVESTIGATING THE MOTIVATORS, EVALUATING THE ASSOCIATED CONSERVATION COSTS, AND IMPROVING DETECTION RATES OF POACHING.

The visibility and notoriety of illegal wildlife take exacerbate the public's tendency to equate "poaching" with "hunting," further undermining the positive conservation benefits derived from lawful take. In 2016, the B&C launched a comprehensive effort to combat illegal take and clearly differentiate it from lawful, regulated hunting. The findings from Phase 2 of this multi-year research yielded the following:

POACHER TYPOLOGIES & MOTIVATIONS

- Poacher typologies identified in this study include Trophy Poachers, Commercial Poachers, Subsistence Poachers, Backdoor Poachers, Recreational Poachers, Protective Poachers, Tradition or Protest Poachers, Challenge Poachers, and Thrill-Kill Poachers.
- According to officers, trophy poaching (57.6%) was the most common behavior, followed by peer-pressure and opportunistic poaching (43.9% each).

STAKEHOLDERS

- Stakeholders (hunters, landowners, officers) have concerns about the impacts of poaching at the state (>85%) and national (>90%) level as well as the negative biological/social impacts (>70%).

JUDICIAL & PROSECUTORIAL BARRIERS

- Prosecutors (48.0%) agreed that the illegal shooting or killing of animals whose replacement value exceeds \$2,500 should be treated as felony theft (unlawful taking of a public resource).
- The top three factors deemed most important for a successful prosecution by prosecutors was the type of animal illegally taken, the number of animals illegally taken, and witness testimony (often the officer).
- Prosecutors identified the confiscation of equipment used in the crime (60.6%) and the suspension or revocation of hunting licenses (56.7%) as the most effective measures to deter poaching.

DETECTION RATES

- Our mean estimated detection rate is 3.92% (dark figure=96.08%), with a 95% credible interval of 2.66% to 5.41%.
- Detection rates for other (non-wildlife) crimes are: aggravated assault (57.1%), rape and sexual assault (46.0%), burglary (42.7%), robbery (42.4%), simple assault (40.9%), and larceny/theft (24.8%).
- We set a conservative 5% benchmark for the detection rate (95% dark figure) when calculating conservation costs associated with illegal take of big game.

CONSERVATION COSTS

- A 95% dark figure (5% detection rate) translates to a minimum nationwide loss of \$302.6 million in fines and \$1.13 billion in replacement costs each year.
- The total calculated conservation cost resulting from the undetected levels of illegal take of big game was more than the total 2023 Wildlife Restoration apportionment (\$1.185 billion) for all 50 states combined.
- The total calculated conservation cost resulting from the undetected levels of illegal take of big game was more than the total gross revenue for 2023 hunting license sales in the U.S. (\$1.015 billion) for all states.
- A 95% dark figure (5% detection rate) translates to an average state level loss of \$6.1 million in fines and \$22.7 million in replacement costs for each state annually.
- The average conservation cost associated with the illegal take of big game exceeds the total 2023 Wildlife Restoration final apportionment for 34 states.
- The average conservation cost associated with the illegal take of big game exceeds the total 2023 gross revenue from hunting license sales in 39 states.

THEORETICAL & PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS TO REDUCE POACHING

- If there is no capable guardianship, potential offenders will have low perceived certainty of detection.
- Poachers may downplay their actions through denial of injury or victim, portray themselves as victims, or argue that their actions are victimless crimes because they do not harm anyone.



SOLUTIONS FOR REDUCING LEVELS OF ILLEGAL TAKE OF WILDLIFE - IN BRIEF

INCREASE "BOOTS ON THE GROUND"

Officers believe that manpower is the most effective factor for increasing detection and citation rates, while reward/financial incentives, anonymous poaching hotlines, and public education campaigns were most important in increasing reporting rates.

CREATE EASIER PATHWAYS & INCENTIVES TO REPORT INCIDENTS

Hunters and landowners ranked poaching hotlines to turn in illegal take of wildlife as the most important factor. The increased presence of law enforcement, monetary incentives, and non-monetary incentives were the next most important. They ranked covert anti-poaching units and Internet searches for poaching activities as least important.

RECLASSIFY CRIMES FROM MISDEMEANORS TO FELONIES

Elevating certain illegal activities from misdemeanors to felonies, which may involve mandatory minimum sentences, could deter all poacher types.

USE RECIPROCAL LICENSE SUSPENSIONS THROUGH INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE VIOLATORS COMPACT

License suspensions across multiple states are less effective for subsistence and backdoor poachers, who typically engage in illegal activities near their homes.

PUBLIC SHAMING OF THE PERPETRATORS

Public perception and offender shaming may deter all poacher types.

EDUCATING PROSECUTORS AND STAFF

Prosecutors need to have a better understanding or awareness of wildlife crime for themselves, and they need personnel specifically dedicated to or trained in environmental and conservation issues.

EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

Officers identified public education as most effective factor in boosting conviction rates for illegal take, followed by the establishment of court dockets dedicated to wildlife or environmental crimes, and the hiring of specialized prosecutors focused on these offenses.

DEVELOP CONSISTENT AND JUSTIFIABLE REPLACEMENT COSTS

Develop scientifically defensible replacement costs that are consistent across states and reflect species rarity and ecological value in the jurisdiction.

READ THE FULL REPORT, AND GET MORE BACKGROUND ON B&C'S POACH AND PAY PROJECT



BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB POACH AND PAY RESEARCH

Deer Hunt Wisconsin Tradition Thrives

SCI members produce longest running, award-winning outdoor show

by Pat Scuzzin

For decades, "Dan Small's Deer Hunt Wisconsin" has been a staple for hunters and outdoor enthusiasts across the Badger State. As anticipation builds for the 2025 hunting season, the TV special is once again ready to bring viewers the latest deer forecast, news, and timeless tradition of deer hunting in Wisconsin. The show produced by SCI member Dan Small and life member Mark LaBarbera is made possible by the support of select sponsors in the outdoor industry and a robust network of TV partners.

Among the best known and most trusted personalities, Small is a legendary figure in Wisconsin's outdoor community, who has guided viewers through the changing landscapes and rich traditions of Wisconsin deer hunting. With amazing footage and timely, informative content, the 2025 show will once again share stories from the woods, highlight conservation efforts, and honor the spirit of Wisconsin hunting. (LaBarbera and Small are inviting viewers to share their deer and deer hunting videos now for next year's show.)

Thank the 2025 Sponsors

The 2025 airing of "Dan Small's Deer Hunt Wisconsin" is made possible by the generous support of its sponsors as listed here and in the DHWTV Tune-In Ad running multiple times in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota Outdoor News. Longtime sponsors like MEC Outdoors, Outdoor News, SCI, Wild Eagle Lodge, Vortex Optics, and Wildlife Research Center have been joined recently by more great sponsors as DHWTV continues to grow.

- Cherish Wisconsin Outdoor Fund, wisconservation.org/cherish

- Hawkeye Rescue & Imaging, "Official Drone Service," hawkeyerescueandimaging.com
- Hunting Beast Gear, huntingbeast-gear.com
- MEC Outdoors, a division of Mayville Engineering Co., mecoutdoors.com
- Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Sports Show, jssportsshow.com
- Outdoor Lifestyles, facebook.com/ODLifestyles/
- Outdoor News Publications, outdoornews.com

- Vortex Optics, vortexoptics.com
- Waukesha County Conservation Alliance, service-life.com/wi/wcca
- Wild Eagle Lodge, "Official Host Location," wildeaglelodge.com
- Wildland Properties, alexweber.firstweber.com
- Wildlife Research Center, wildlife.com
- Wisc. Hunter Education Instructor's Assoc., wheia.com

Cherish What We Have

It's easy to take for granted folks like Dan and Mark who have a way of making good things happen year after year as they pass along our outdoor heritage and promote the positive role of hunters in conservation.

The same is true for free access to public lands and waters. Wisconsin is blessed with more than a million acres of public land, including forests, wildlife areas, and more that can be used by anyone. For our entire lives, Wisconsin land has been our land to use and enjoy. It's publicly owned, meaning all of us. It's a mistake to think of it as the government's land instead of land that belongs to all of us who love the outdoors. It's a bigger mistake to take it for granted.

Thankfully, in 2012 the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin created the Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors to create permanent support for the care and management of lands and waters loved by hunters and others.

This endowment provides a permanent source of funding to care for Wisconsin's public lands for generations to come. The Fund was established to protect, restore, and improve habitat. It is also an opportunity for all



- SCI Southeast Wisc. Bowhunters Chapter, sciwiBowhunters.com
- SCI Badgerland Chapter, scibadgerland.com
- SCI Northeast Wisconsin Chapter, newisci.org
- SCI Wisconsin Chapter, sciwi.org
- Serpent Arms, serpentarms.com
- SPYPOINT, spypoint.com
- Stormy Kromer, stormykromer.com
- Swift Lift Outdoors, swiftliftoutdoors.com

of us citizens to invest in the public lands and waters where we recreate.

The Cherish Fund is built through voluntary contributions made when people purchase hunting and fishing licenses or make a donation directly to the Fund. When you buy your deer license or other licenses, and when you register your boats and UTV or ATV, answer "YES!" when the online Cherish question pops up or when the in-person sales agent asks if you want to donate \$3 or some other amount to the Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund. And if the agent skips the question or tries to answer for you, let them know you want to donate to Cherish.

This helps ensure the future for Wisconsin's public lands and waters. This fund guarantees that your children and grandchildren have the opportunity to hunt, fish, and enjoy Wisconsin.

Consider this: 1.5 million people purchase a hunting or fishing license each year in Wisconsin. If each of them gave \$3 when they renew annually, that would mean an influx of \$4.5 million to improve our state's public lands every year! And if we could convince non-

hunters who use public lands and waters to also contribute, Cherish would achieve new heights and be able to do even more to enhance our public access to more citizen-owned land.

Milwaukee Sports Show

at Cherish question when they buy licenses at the DNR booth at the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Sports Show at State Fair Park in West Allis. It's their tradition, just as the Sports Show has been a family tradition for decades of outdoor enthusiasts. The show is a sponsor of Deer Hunt Wisconsin TV, giving back to the hunting community.

The Show's Stephen Buzza has been working with Small and LaBarbera for years to host the Milwaukee Sports Shows youth and family activities, including West Town Archery Range, Daniel Boone Conservation League Airgun Range, Trout Unlimited's Fly Tying Area led by Bob Haase, and the Outdoor Heritage Education Center's Touch of the Wild sensory safari education trailers supported by SCI.

This year Buzza has worked with industry leaders to enhance the show.

There's nothing like meeting face-to-face with successful professional hunters and anglers, guides, outfitters, resort owners, manufacturers and marketers to get straight answers to your questions. Buzza constantly updates the jssportsshow.com website with the latest details as you plan your days at the show.

Looking Up-Hawkeye

A new sponsor this year is Hawkeye Rescue and Imaging, the "Official Drone Service of Deer Hunt Wisconsin 2025" and an amazing company founded by chief pilot Daniel Lee. His skills and equipment are featured, including a thermal drone and camera with 200x magnification for recovering deer that hunters could not find. Lee's quick response usually results in a lot of saved venison for the freezer, but he also helps find lost people and pets. Others use his aerial imaging services to inspect roofs, towers, and solar panels or survey crops. With his state-of-the-art aerial gear, Lee also offers beautiful photographic images from above, including frameable prints.

Grill Alex Weber

New sponsor Alex Weber of Wildlife Properties Land and Home welcomes questions about buying and selling rural property and more. He is an expert when it comes to understanding the value of lands and waters, and he shares his tips freely. You may recognize this trusted realtor and advisor from his articles in SCI HUNTERS and elsewhere.

You Need a Swift Lift in the Rear

In this year's show, you'll hear from southwestern Wisconsin deer hunter Ryan Knight about what happened last season when he stayed in his stand when other hunters were heading back for a noon meal. Don't kick yourself if you were one of those hunters who later discovered that a nice buck came through your spot while you were out to lunch. Think on the bright side, you didn't have to get your knife or hands dirty, and you didn't need to lift or drag that monster.

Ryan wasn't worried because Uncle Mark LaBarbera had recently purchased a Swift Lift during the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation auction. The unit fits in the hitch receiver of a truck or ATV/UTV and has a built in winch and lift bench. Roll your deer or other big game (or generator, air compressor, etc.) onto it, and Swift Lift raises your load to tailgate height where you slide the deer in and close the tailgate.

Hunting Beast Supports DHWTV

Another new sponsor this year is Hunting Beast Gear, featuring USA designed and manufactured stands and climbing sticks with unparalleled tree gripping ability. Before checking out their website and video links, I had no idea how much thought, engineering, and testing went into making stands and sticks, especially when they are among the lightest gear out there for those who want to be super mobile.

Beast Gear includes saddles and harnesses as they perfect mobile hunting. Owner Mario Trafficante gets it. He brings expertise and insights, but he also listens to you and other hunters willing to share their wish list of gear or ideas for improving products that elevate our hunting experience.

If you already use their precision machined components and want to

share your hunting video for future Deer Hunt Wisconsin TV specials, notify mlabarbera57@icloud.com.

Why WHEIA?

Whether you're using Beast Gear or other products, one of DHWTV's new sponsors wants to make sure you are doing it safely. Tree stand and firearms safety are key teaching points for members of the Wisconsin Hunter Education Instructors Association (wheia.com). In classes across the state and at the annual Midwest Outdoor Heritage Education Expos (OHECYes.org), these volunteers epitomize what DHWTV stresses about safety and our outdoor heritage. WHEIA's John Janik, Jr. is president and a longtime volunteer instructor who stresses three points of contact when you're climbing into your stand, and TAB-K at all times. Treat every firearm as if it's loaded, Always point the muzzle in a safe direction, Be sure of your target and what is beyond it, and Keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.

Serpent Arms Not Full of Hot Air

Joel Braun and his team build compressed air rifles and shotgun in Juneau, Wisconsin. These cool firearms of full of air and they are the hottest new thing, but this team of experts is not full of hot air. Members are a reliable source for ballistics and performance in warm weather or cold as you add the challenge of air gun hunting to your quest for adventure.

DHWTV viewers may recall Dan Small and the folks from Serpent Arms using these reliable airguns on various

hunts. But some hunters still don't know that the law changed to allow air guns for big game and turkey, in addition to what had been legal for small game, etc.

DHWTV has been following developments and sharing updates for years, including the latest news in this year's show.

Where to Watch

To reach audiences across Wisconsin and beyond, "Dan Small's Deer Hunt Wisconsin 2025" will air exclusively on the following networks beginning Nov. 11 at 7pm. Check local listings for final dates and airtimes.

- FanDuel North (western WI, plus MN, ND, SD & IA)
- FanDuel Wisconsin (formerly Fox Sports then Bally).
- PBS Wisconsin
- PBS Milwaukee
- Community Media local public access channels in communities all across Wisconsin
- YouTube Deer Hunt Wisconsin Channel

Don't Miss the Adventure

Whether you are a seasoned hunter or newcomer, "Dan Small's Deer Hunt Wisconsin 2025" promises to deliver an unforgettable experience. Mark your calendars, thank this year's sponsors, check local listings, or go online and tune in for the latest chapter in this beloved tradition.

With gratitude for great sponsors and broadcasting partners, and with the passion of Dan Small's storytelling at its core, the 2025 edition of Deer Hunt Wisconsin is sure to inspire old and new generations of hunters.

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Watch Deer Hunt Wisconsin TV Special!

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

FanDuel SPORTS WISCONSIN
FanDuel SPORTS NORTH
PBS WISCONSIN (Wisconsin Channel)
MILWAUKEE PBS (Flagship Channel)
Wisconsin Community Media Stations
 Throughout November & December!
 Check local listings for dates & times.

Mark LaBarbera & Dan Small

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

See Deer Hunt Wisconsin Facebook Page for updated air times and stations





Second Shot at Success

by Matthew Crawford
WOCA/OHEC Scholar

My heart was beating out of my chest as I heard the gobbles again, now much closer than the last time. It was just a few minutes past sunrise, and I could already picture myself taking the shot at one of the three large turkeys I had seen strutting in this open field the day before.

Since this was only my second turkey hunt, and my overwhelming excitement made it tough to fall asleep, I was up hours before first light to begin the hunt. My hunting partner, Paul (who graciously invited me on this trip), made the trek with me across the dark field and into the woods, which would give us some cover to hide in. According to Paul, these birds had better eyesight than I thought.

Not long after we sat down a few yards back into the woods, we began to hear gobbling close by. The birds continued to gobble, and it was exciting as we could hear them moving closer. Although it was rough waking up so early, I felt like my effort was about to pay off as I sat in the woods and patiently waited for the birds to come into the clearing. Just then, BANG-BANG----BANG – three shots rang out from the direction the gobbles were coming from. No surprise here, the gobbling ceased. Paul and I feared for the worst; our target turkeys had just become the wall hangers of hunters in the neighboring field. Around thirty minutes passed, and my hopes were slim that I'd get another shot at the second turkey of my life on this cold and dreary spring morning.

Paul then asked, "Well, Matt, what do you want to do?" Being new to the art of turkey hunting, I was already having a hard time sitting still just an hour or two into our morning. As I assumed all hope was lost, I suggested to Paul that we wander around the woods a bit to see if we could get lucky and stumble upon some other birds. Keep in mind, I'm not a very stealthy hunter due to my inexperience, so walking through the heavy brush in the woods seemed like a certain death sentence for my turkey dreams. We began to push our way

through the woods, with Paul constantly reminding me to stay low and move quietly. It was somewhat frustrating, as I already felt I was being as quiet as possible. Though to the turkeys, it probably sounded like a herd of elephants was tearing through the trees. After minimal sightings of wildlife in the woods, we decided to walk around the woods along the tree line next to the open field.

As we enjoyed the much easier walk along the outside of the woods, I was constantly looking through the gaps in the trees in hopes of spotting a bird before it spotted me. I noticed a clearing in the woods with some fresh, tall grass growing. I said to Paul, "Hey, that looks like a good spot for a turkey." Not a second after I had finished the word

"turkey," a loud burst of gobbles suddenly sounded from just past the clearing I was observing!

Paul harshly whispered, "Matt, get DOWN!" We both dropped to the ground and peered over the ridge into the clearing. As we waited for the turkeys to appear and listened to their gobbles, it became clear that they were posted up roughly 50 yards away from us but were not yet visible. Being so close to the birds, we stayed low and did our best to communicate quietly about our next move.

Paul grabbed a call from his backpack and attempted to lure in the birds. Though they immediately responded to his calls, it became increasingly frustrating as we could hear the birds gobbling from the same location every



time. They weren't moving toward us to give us hope, but they weren't wandering away with disinterest, either.

After probably 30 minutes of calling back and forth to the flock, I noticed one bird distinctly sounded closer to us than the rest. I figured this meant it was game time, so I got excited and said to Paul, "He's liking that, keep doing that!" Paul hushed me and reminded me that if the turkey heard us, he would change his travel plans to include a one-way ticket to the next field over. Luckily, the bird continued to gobble, and the noise got louder and louder as it made its way toward us.

Finally, the bird was so close to us that I could feel the ground vibrating. He was that close to us!

At this point, the bird was right around the corner, with just a slim section of woods in between us. I knew that if this fired-up turkey took just a few more steps, he would round the corner, and I'd have to quickly take the shot before he spotted me in my poor attempt at camouflage. Just as I finished that thought, I saw something dart sideways out of the corner of my eye. I snapped my head around and was met with the stare of a tom turkey who was looking for the hen he had been talking to for the last 30 minutes.

In the blink of an eye, I raised my gun and lined up his head with the sights and fired. I watched as the bird tumbled over and stayed put. Victorious, I shouted, "boom, baby!" as if the gunshot

wasn't enough of a boom already. The bird was about 30 yards away when I took the shot, and that one shot was enough to take it down.

Paul and I hooted and hollered and high-fived to the point where you would have thought I had just taken down a state record bird. At just under 25 pounds, it was no small bird, but what meant the most was the persistence it took to make it happen.

Although we considered going home when the early morning gunshots rang out, sticking it out and putting in the extra effort made the experience incredibly rewarding.

Thank you, Paul, for a memorable and successful hunt. time.

WOCA OHEC Scholarship

If you know an undergraduate or graduate student with an interest in outdoor recreational communication who is enrolled in a Wisconsin-based college or university, please tell them about this \$2,000 scholarship opportunity from the Wisconsin Outdoor Communicators Association (WOCA) and Outdoor Heritage Education Center (OHEC).

Applications must be postmarked no later than April 1, 2026. Send questions or application to Laurel F. Steffes, WOCA Secretary, 33 Stacy Lane, Madison, WI

53716 or emailed to laurel.steffes@gmail.com. The winning student will be notified on or before May 1, 2026. Recipient is urged to attend the WOCA annual meeting at Trees for Tomorrow in Eagle River to receive the scholarship award. Conference fees, room and board will be paid by WOCA.


Student will receive: A \$2,000 one-time scholarship; a one-year WOCA membership and paid attendance at the annual conference where the award will be made. Student may also be offered a shadowing experience with a working

outdoor writer or radio or television personality and is invited to a potential WOCA-organized fishing outing. Visit wisoutdoorcommunicators.org.

Charitable nonprofit OHEC connects, recruits, and retains youth and adults. Founded in 1998 by SCI & Sables Life Member Mark LaBarbera, OHEC's mission is to increase the public's understanding, appreciation and sense of stewardship for natural resources and professional resource management, including outdoor activities like hunting and fishing. Visit www.OHECyes.org.



From left, Art Barlow, Mark LaBarbera, Matt Crawford, Laurel Steffes, and WOCA President Patrick Durkin.




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