

HUNTERS

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF SCI CHAPTERS IN WISCONSIN AND ILLINOIS
MAY/JUNE 2024

HISTORIC 1st: Izzy's ELK



- **OHEC/SCI HELP PASS IT ON**
- **GOVERNOR'S FISHING OPENER**
- **CHAPTER NEWS & EVENTS PHOTOS**
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Editor/Publishers: Mark & Coni LaBarbera

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HUNTERS

Official Magazine of SCI Chapters in Wisconsin and Illinois
 May/June 2024

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SCI Chapters welcome you!

New members and your families are always welcome at SCI. Visit these websites and join a chapter to start your adventure. Members enjoy great fun, meet new friends, make a difference in their community and help the future of hunting, plus you will discover new deals and opportunities that improve your hunting skill and enjoyment. We invite you to join online today.

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SCI Region 16 Representative

Charmaine Wargolet

charmaw@ameritech.net

SCI Region 16 Report

by Charmaine Wargolet, Regional Representative

The fundraising season in Wisconsin and Illinois runs from February through April. And what a season it was! As I write this, I have attended Badgerland, NE WI, SE Bowhunters and Wisconsin Chapter's fundraisers. I will be attending Illinois/Chicago and Lake Superior chapters in just a few weeks. But the four I have attended so far have been amazing! Attendance was up, profits were up, which is all good for SCI! I am confident Illinois and Lake Superior will have the same results.

Many thanks to the banquet committees for all their hard work and dedication to making these events the best that they can be and huge thanks to all of you who attended and opened your hearts and pocketbooks to help support SCI's efforts to save hunting. I saw people having a great time and talking about their past and future adventures!

In March, two of our chapters teamed up to have a booth at the Open Season Sportsman's Expo held at the Kalahari Resort in Wisconsin Dells. Wisconsin chapter members set up and manned the booth all weekend long and Badgerland sent a couple of guys to help out on Saturday afternoon. It was



a great show! Last year only one membership to Badgerland was sold the whole weekend. This year a couple were sold for Badgerland and four, three-year memberships were sold for the Wisconsin chapter. It shows that having a presence and telling hunters what SCI can mean to them, actually pays off. SCI has such a great story to tell, and we need to keep telling it, and working together, we are so much more effective. SCI is currently well over 47,000 members strong and we keep growing! Through the pandemic we were down to below 37,000, so we have come quite a ways in just two and a half years. Let's keep up the great work!

Hope everyone has a great turkey hunting season and as always, shoot straight, be well, and God bless!



Ben Laskowski and Monte Whitaker at Kalahari.

SE WI Bowhunters Chapter Report

by Monte Whitaker, President

Well, this is probably my last column as Bow Chapter President. I simply want to say thank you to everyone who pitched in for the SE WI Bowhunters banquet March 22nd at the Golden Mast. Proceeds from the auctions, bucket raffle, gun and bow boards, and other raffles will help our legislative and educational efforts as we protect and promote bowhunting specifically, but also conservation and hunting in general.

The food at our Golden Mast events never disappoints, including my favorites like the perch fillets and bacon-and-jalapeno-wrapped pheasant breast bits.

I wanted to take a minute at the end of my term as Bow Chapter President to look ahead to our ongoing support of legislative and educational initiatives, but I also wanted to mention a bit about our heritage.

Our chapter was founded in 1998 by a group of friends who were passionate about the outdoors and protecting our sporting heritage, especially here in the great state of Wisconsin. That group of friends was looking to form an organization that would push for improving whitetail deer hunting and for managing the deer herd in a responsible, sustainable way. Knowing SCI's longstanding history of fighting for hunting rights and for smart conservation, it was clear that

becoming an SCI chapter would be the way to go. The founders laid out the following:

- Support research on deer diseases and how they affect overall herd health;
- Improve the understanding of predation on prey populations such as Wisconsin's deer and elk herds;
- Provide opportunities for youth to experience the outdoors and conservation;
- Advocate for preservation of existing and further expansion of hunting opportunities;
- Fight for hunting and fishing access across the state, including railroad crossings along the Mississippi River;
- Increase hunter recruitment and retention;
- Promote academic research on Wisconsin wildlife habitat and populations;
- Ensure hunter education instructors have the tools necessary to train today's youth;
- Direct youth to take the step from archery programs to learning to hunt; and
- Advocate legislatively for hunting rights, opportunities, and herd best management practices.

As I become a Past President, I am proud that the future for the SCI SE WI Bowhunters Chapter will continue to



allow us to leverage the vast majority of our fundraising locally and with minimal overhead. This means we can be a voice for Wisconsin sportsmen and women to advocate for the issues affecting us all in this state. Many other conservation organizations must send the majority of their funds to a national headquarters to be redistributed-often times to other areas of the country. While the work other organizations do should not be disregarded, the key to our success over the years has been directing our support to the issues that matter here in Wisconsin, including recruiting resident youth and adults to discover bowhunting.

I personally like anything that will get more people in the woods!

Badgerland Chapter Helps You Add to Your Conservation Legacy

For over 25 years, Badgerland SCI has been awarding scholarships to UWSP students majoring in wildlife and having an outdoors/hunting/fishing background. During this period, we have typically awarded one or two \$1,000 scholarships annually to well-deserving students.

Badgerland SCI has also been contributing to an endowment fund over this time. Our ultimate goal has been to build up the endowment fund to over \$25,000. Which would be enough for the fund to sustain itself and

also award at least 1 scholarship annually in perpetuity through the interest earned by the fund. We currently have about \$19,500 in this fund.

The Badgerland Board of Directors would like to offer you a chance to join us in being part of a legacy which would enable this scholarship program to continue for the foreseeable future. Your tax-deductible donation for this program would entitle you to your name or your company's name on our new Badgerland SCI website as well as recognition at our annual Hunter's

Expo. If you would rather keep your donation "anonymous", that can be done as well. If we receive funds that surpass the \$25,000 goal, that will enable us to increase the scholarship amounts or give additional scholarships each year.

If you would like to join us in being part of this legacy, please go to our web page where you can make a donation to this fund under the UWSP banner image. No contribution is too big or too small, and all contributions over \$100 will receive recognition.

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Badgerland Chapter Report

by John Martinson, President

SCI Badgerland Chapter had their best Hunter's Expo earnings ever this year with the generous leadership of Clint Woodman and all his dedicated crew and of course all the great donors that contributed to our mission of protecting our hunting rights, Conservation- (Wings over WI-marsh restoration, black bear research UWSP, and Wisconsin wolf/ elk study), Humanitarian Efforts- (Wounded Warriors United of WI., Mad City Gobblers food drive, Adaptive Sportsmen Disabled Turkey and Pheasant Hunts, Oconto River Kids -for children with life threatening illnesses to go hunting and fishing, and Take A Vet Fishing), Education-(Midwest Outdoor Heritage Education Expos, National Archery in the Schools Programs, Fall

River Gun Club Youth Shoot, UWSP Scholarships, Rio Conservation Club youth trap shooting, Friends of Mead/McMillian Archery program, Dan Small Outdoors, Raised at Full Draw Wisconsin, and Montello Gun Club Youth programs). Hunters Rights-(Dan Trawicki).

SCI Badgerland is looking for more great donation opportunities that fall within our mission guideline to fund money wise. Please feel free to contact John Martinson at 608-628-2633 or scibadgerland@gmail.com to give your suggestions.

Hope you can join us for the annual Shoot for Adventure sporting clays shoot Saturday August 3rd, 2024 at the Rio Conservation Club from 9am to 4pm. In addition to sporting clays there are several other fun shooting games



and at the end of shooting for the day we have great prizes including guns to give away, along with the Big Five-gun raffle. As always, we encourage Youth and non-members to join us.

Have fun and safe adventures!

Wisconsin Chapter Report

by Sean Coykendall, President

The Wisconsin Chapter is set up for a busy summer. This is my last chapter report as President of the Wisconsin Chapter. Dean LePoidevin will be taking the over the President role this summer and I couldn't be more excited to see where he takes the chapter. He has elevated the chapter's marketing efforts already and it has shown amazing results. We are always looking for additional board members, so if you're passionate about the outdoors and protecting our right to hunt, please reach out to see how you can get more involved.

We will be hosting a golf outing on June 3rd at Legend at Brandybrook. This is an amazing course and is sure to be a great event for our chapter. You can find registration and sponsorship information online.

Our annual sporting clays outing will be on July 13th at Wern Valley. Wern Valley Sportsmen's Club has been a long time supporter of the Wisconsin Chapter, and we are excited to bring our



event back to their great club. You can find registration and sponsorship information online.

Being my last report, I want to thank all of the board members, donors, sponsors, chapter members and the SCI community for allowing me to lead this amazing chapter. This has been an amazing experience for me and also opened my eyes to what all SCI does for our local community and globally.

Pelican's Acres & Access Protected

SCI members can use nearly 70,000 acres of Pelican River Forest in Oneida, Forest, and Langlade counties under easements approved by Governor Evers.

Diverse conservation partners worked with state and local officials to conserve one of Wisconsin's largest conservation projects in history. The state's largest privately owned forest was purchased by The Conservation Fund in 2021. It has 68 miles of streams including headwaters to the Wolf and Wisconsin Rivers for recreation, plus clean drinking water for more than 40,000 people living downstream. It also remains as a working forest.

In March 2022 the DNR paid the Fund 4.7 million from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund for a conservation easement on a 12,496 acre portion of the forest. On January 24th, 2024, Governor Evers announced he approved a conservation easement of 54,898 acres in the Pelican River Forest after about 1,300 acres were removed from the plan in order to satisfy local officials who hope to develop that land along Hwy. 8 and other routes.

SCI Legislative Successes

SCI lobbyist Dan Trawicki and others celebrated recent passage of a number of bills passed by the Wisconsin legislature and signed by Governor Tony Evers in March.

"Starting with this fall's seasons, hunters will be able to use airguns during firearms seasons to hunt deer, bear, elk, and other large game" according to Keith Warnke of the Midwest Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, "Special thanks for this advancement go to Senator Rob Stafsholt, Representatives Treig Pronchinske and Paul Tittl, Mitch King with the Airgun Sporting Association, Mark LaBarbera, Dan Trawicki, and Joel Kleefisch for Safari Club International, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, and Governor Evers."

As Chair of the Senate Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage Committee, Rob Stafsholt said about Senate Bill 587, "Current law does not define 'muzzle-loading firearm,' yet refers to it in statute as 'any gun other than a rifle, shotgun, or handgun that is a firearm with a solid breech plug attached with threads and capable of being loaded only from the muzzle.' This wording is not only cumbersome and confusing, but it also inadvertently prohibits the use of newer, safer, and more accurate muzzle-loading technology in Wisconsin.

Senator Stafsholt added, "This bill, Senate Bill 587, simply defines 'muzzle-loading firearm' as 'a firearm that shoots a projectile loaded exclusively from the muzzle.' This definition is clear and concise, while also allowing for the use of new muzzle-loading technology that is impervious to temperature and moisture like older technology is, leading to a safer and more accurate shot."

The Governor also signed important DNR wetlands and airgun legislation welcomed by SCI members and hunting conservationists across Wisconsin, plus licensing identification, clean water, and waste recycling bills. March 14 he signed:

- **SB 310 /AB 306** Relating to: access to Department of Transportation records to establish residency for approvals issued by the Department of Natural Resources.
- **SB 99 /AB 100** Relating to: funding for reduction of infiltration and inflow in connecting laterals and sewer lines.
- **SB 624 /AB 492** Relating to: method for establishing proof of financial responsibility for municipal solid waste facilities; payments for closure, long-term care, and corrective action costs for certain solid or hazardous waste facilities; extending the time limit for emergency rule procedures; providing an exemption from emergency rule-making authority; and making an appropriation.
- **SB 866 /AB 958** Relating to: changes to the electronic waste recycling

program and granting rule-making authority.

• **SB 586 /AB 633** Relating to: hunting with an airgun, providing an exemption from emergency rule procedures, granting rule-making authority, and providing a penalty.

• **SB 587 /AB 632** Relating to: defining muzzle-loading firearm for hunting purposes.

"This change will allow many hunters another option for big game hunting; one that provides effective knock down power with less recoil and noise. For young and new hunters entering the sport, these changes will afford them a way to start hunting during firearms seasons with a gun that is easy to use and easy on the shoulders and ears compared to regular big bore rifles," says Mitch King, President and CEO of the Airgun Sporting Association.

The changes are effective this fall for hunters interested in pursuing big game during firearms seasons in Wisconsin. Airgun and hunting enthusiasts are encouraged to send the Senator, Representatives, and Governor a note of thanks for their efforts.



SCI's Joel Kleefisch, Mark LaBarbera, and WI Chapter Secretary Kyle Schmidt are pictured here along with Rep. Paul Tittl and his staff, plus Keith Warnke of the Midwest Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, Kevin Perry, VP of Development for Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation as Governor Evers signs the bill.

Northeast Wisconsin Chapter

by Marty Witczak, President

The NE Wisconsin SCI Chapter experienced a remarkably successful banquet and live auction on Saturday February 24, 2024, at the Stadium View in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Approximately 380 guests mingled, enjoyed a fabulous meal and participated in the live auction along with those folks on-line, by bidding and purchasing those hunting, fishing, or vacationing packages that numerous outfitters from around the globe had donated. It was an exciting and successful night to be sure and one I will remember with fond memories.

I have enjoyed my last five years as the NE WI Chapter President. I was sworn in as president in May of 2019 and have served in this role with honesty and integrity. I have been instrumental in achieving a growth in membership these last several years for our chapter and forged many new friendships. My first year as president in 2019 I was able to share my first international hunt with Ken Whiley of Gamka Safaris which took place in March of 2018 with all of you. My wife and I really enjoyed our first taste of international hunting, did not mind the long plane ride, and had a successful hunt, and my wife now has a beautiful zebra rug to show off! And oh yes, we got to visit and see some beautiful African country and attractions including visiting the most south-western point of the African continent, the Cape of Good Hope, and the impressive Table Mountain

near Cape Town. From this first African adventure these trophies adorn our home walls, a gemsbok, an impala, a blue wildebeest, a springbok, a blesbok and the zebra rug is the final addition to our safari room.

My wife and I had the opportunity to attend the national SCI convention in Reno, Nevada January of 2019 before I was sworn in as president. It was truly a remarkable and memorable experience for us to walk the many booths and admire the talents, craftsmanship, and the numerous mounts of the attending outfitters and professional taxidermists that were scattered throughout the convention rooms. Attending the convention is one experience neither myself nor my wife will forget!

In early March of 2020, we returned to Africa with outfitter Jannie Otto where I shot my beautiful kudu, sable, and a huge eland. What a fabulous trip and one to remember as the onset of COVID hit us and cancelled the remainder of our trip and a plan to visit Victoria Falls. Our vacation was shortened to return to the US before we were stranded in Africa for who knows how long!

I have had the pleasure of taking numerous other hunting trips in the US including Alaska, a horseback trip in the mountains of Idaho, traveling to Washington State and my latest adventure with Twisted Wind Outfitter Kansas with Jake Everson and his partner Nathan for snow and blue geese. Jake is one of our newest SCI members and

outfitters and has donated to our live auction. One of the most memorable hunting trips was the Scotland red stag hunting trip with Michael and Danielle Grosse, owners of International Adventures Unlimited another outfitter that we have become great friends with, and they also donate several hunt packages to our auction. We were wine, dined and while I was hunting my red stag, white fallow deer and roe deer, my

wife was touring the Scottish countryside, shopping, and visiting castles. After our week of hunting, we went on to tour the beautiful Ireland countryside as well, before we arrived back home. Our outfitters know how to take care of us hunters and our partners but, once again, it was great to get home after a fabulous trip!

God has blessed me during my lifetime with the "gift of gab" and it has served me well in my role as the NE WI Chapter President. With this gift, I have helped to increase our membership enrollment which earns our chapter points from National SCI headquarters, and they present our chapter with an SCI National Life Membership. We can auction this membership off at the banquet for profit to our chapter to fund some of the many groups our chapter donates to. Another accomplishment I am quite proud of is the addition of outfitters to our chapter. I mentioned earlier the outfitter, Twisted Wind Outfitters Kansas, whom I have had the pleasure of hunting with the last two years in March.

I also had the opportunity to work with a new logistic shipping business owner from New York City when arranging for my mounts from the 2nd African hunting trip to be shipped to my home. Matt Mayers is the owner and operator of Genus Logistics Inc. and donated three Trophy Clearance Certificates to auction off. This year my wife and I had the opportunity to take advantage of one of the vacation packages offered by our friends Drake and Sarah Dawson, owners of Safari Unlimited. Looks like we are off to vacation and fish in Belize in 2025! I have enjoyed my time and experiences as being the NE WI Chapter President, but it is time to hand over the reins to another individual who will continue as the newly elected president in May and begin their duties in July.

Enjoy the article in the July/August edition of the Hunter Magazine as the new president introduces themselves. I will never forget the friends I have made and the hunting trips I have gone on. I still plan to continue my membership with SCI, experience more hunts and hopefully attend the annual banquet and live auction in February if my schedule permits it to see and visit with many of the new friends I have made. Until we meet again, always stay safe!



In Memoria:

Tom Bergholz

November 24, 1952 - March 20, 2024

Yesterday was our hardest goodbye and heavens most beautiful hello as Tom passed away peacefully at home from liver disease with his family by his side. He is now in a place filled with fields of deer, valleys of turkeys, and skies with geese and ducks.

Tom was so proud of the businesses he and Julie ran, so many wonderful friendships and memories. Tom built a legacy and gave so many people the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors!

While many of you knew him as Tom from Tom's Guns, Fire Chief Bergholz or Turkey Tom, we knew him as a hard-working husband, proud dad and World's Best Papa!

Tom, it is going to be hard to live life without you, but you always lived by your favorite song "Pass It On" and your legacy will continue.

Thomas Bergholz, age 71, born to Eldon and Shirley Bergholz in Madison, was one of three children. He married high school sweetheart Julie (Fankhauser) in 1975. That year they bought the family business, Bergholz Grocery. They also ran T & J Deer Processing for 35 years.

They started selling guns and in 1999 converted the store into Tom's Guns, where Tom lived his lifelong passion of selling guns and sharing hunting stories.

No doubt Tom's pride and joy were daughters Josalyn and Jenelle. He was quick to talk about their accomplishments, especially ones in the woods. Later stories included grandchildren Kenzie, Keldon, Chesney and Maddie. Tom was very fond of his sons-in-law Aaron and Justin. It didn't matter if he was on the pontoon up north or feeding bears in Gatlinburg, Tom loved time spent with family.

To say he was passionate about family and the outdoors would be an understatement. He left a conservation legacy remembered by many. He and Julie helped introduce more than 2,000 individuals to hunting through their mentoring programs that meant so much to him. He spent countless hours

volunteering for Wings Over Wisconsin, Ducks Unlimited, National Wild Turkey Federation, Whitetails Unlimited, Marshall Fire Department (where he served as the Chief), and many more. His canine companions were dear to him as well. Although he was a fan of all dogs, there was no question that his Chesapeake were his favorite.



Kaz Honored Again

SCI member and former chair of the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board Greg Kazmierski received another honor recently for his decades

of dedicated volunteer service and outstanding leadership. The Wisconsin Bowhunters Association named Kaz its "Member of the Year!"



West Texas Whitetail

by Kellan Wandtke

Shortly after the sun broke the horizon, I was faced with my first challenging decision of the hunt: do I use my first shot on a hog or a whitetail? The sunrise cast light across the red clay littered with cacti and mesquite. Before I could fully appreciate the surrounding scenery, I noticed movement on either side of me. From the right, a small hog was trotting in for its first meal of the day. From the left, I could make out the body of a whitetail deer roaming behind some shrubs. I decided to wait for the deer. My decision paid off, as the buck lifted his head and revealed a beautiful nine-point rack. The buck slowly stepped into the open, providing a perfect broadside shot. Shortly into the trip, I had my first Texas harvest.

The excitement was just getting started, as Betsy Wandtke put a perfect shot on a massive hog that same morning. We navigated the expansive network of trails around the ranch throughout the afternoon. The clay trails led us around wheat fields, through thick shrubs, past watering holes, and atop the edge of a canyon. While on the journey around the ranch, I became witness to Dan Harrison's skillful marksmanship. Dan showed his pinpoint accuracy when he subtracted two feral hogs from the destructive local population.

After getting my bearings for the property for a couple days and witnessing a variety of wildlife, I thought I had surely taken the largest buck on the property. That notion was soon proven incorrect. Despite limited movement due to a brief bout of cold temperatures and high winds, I was in the right place at the right time to one-up myself. I had returned to the same spot which I sat for

the first buck of the hunt. From the same direction as the first morning, I saw the large body of a whitetail making its way through the brush. I knew this deer had potential despite not being able to distinguish its rack. Time moved slowly as seconds felt like minutes while the deer leisurely strolled towards me, head down the entire time. I could hardly believe my eyes when the buck stepped into a clearing, exposing its beautiful 11-point rack. As much as I wanted to admire the wide spread and incredible length, I knew I needed to line up my shot before I squandered the rare opportunity. Minimal tracking was required after a precise shot courtesy the .270-win mag. My heart was racing as I knew I just put down my biggest buck to date.

The entire hunt, start to finish, was incredible. Between taking down two magnificent deer, seeing picturesque sunrises and sunsets each day, and sharing laughs with Betsy and Dan, I could not have asked for a better time. I was fortunate to absorb wisdom from great hunters and experience the outdoors in a new part of the country. I am also very appreciative of John Caddell for letting us hunt his property. My first West Texas hunt was a blast, and I hope to get back someday.



AI for Wildlife

by Mark LaBarbera



Artificial intelligence with facial recognition software already is being used by wildlife researchers to identify individual animals.

Trail camera photos and images supplied by volunteers as well as

scientists compare facial features, such as on this lion in the WildMe database. Experts say the rosettes help identify particular leopards and patterns on other spotted cats can serve like fingerprints. Hundreds of images of cats

are already in the WildMe database, according to National Wildlife magazine.

The technology also identifies spots on fish and whale sharks, as well as other species.

SCI Members Give to Cherish

Are you renewing your fishing or hunting license? You and other SCI members invest in the places you cherish by donating to the Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund (which has an SCI connection) when you purchase your license through Go Wild. The question pops up online and you check the donation amount, like \$5. If you buy licenses at a store, be sure to tell the agent you want to donate to Cherish.

By donating, you'll be helping to improve habitat at the state-owned

fisheries, forests, prairies, streams, and lakes across Wisconsin.

The Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund is a public-private partnership between the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. SCI Life Member Mark LaBarbera has served on the NRF Board for the last 12 years, including as Treasurer, VP, President, and Chair.

The fund provides permanent support for the care and manage

ment of lands and waters loved by anglers, hunters, hikers, birders, and others. It is built through voluntary contributions when you purchase your license or donate directly. The fund was created to last lifetimes because access to Wisconsin's lands and waters must last lifetimes.

Your donation helps support Wisconsin's natural resources for generations to come.

You can also donate directly to the fund at wisconservation.org/cherish.



PIO—Outdoor Mentors Group Thanks OHEC, Renews Successful Collaboration in Wisconsin

Following last year's successes and years of laying the groundwork strategically and sustainably to recruit, retain, and reactivate hunters and other shooting sports enthusiasts, the two groups behind this Wisconsin collaboration are inviting SCI and others to fund its expansion.

As reported in this publication last year, Outdoor Heritage Education Center, a charitable non-profit organization (founded by an SCI & Sables Life Member) based in Wisconsin and Pass It On - Outdoor Mentors of Wichita, Kansas, have been working together to expand a Shooting Sport Outreach Program targeting all Wisconsin regions. The initiative is being funded in part from one of four multi-year R3 grants awarded statewide by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. DNR is paying Pass It On more than \$80,000 per year to help in Wisconsin, including hiring full-time program coordinator Quinn Erdmann. OHEC does not rec those funds from DNR or Pass It On, said OHEC Executive Director Ruth Ann Lee, who noted that additional funds are needed to support the collaboration's recruitment of new hunters and shooting sports enthusiasts.

"Youth target shooting programs are rapidly growing, currently engaging more than 6,000 Wisconsin students in shooting sports. Our Shooting Sports Outreach Program works to bridge the gap between the shooting sports and hunting," stated Brittany French, CEO for Pass It On - Outdoor Mentors. "We have proven that our model works. In 2022 we coordinated over 500 events in both Kansas and Iowa. That resulted in over 1,200 youth out hunting and fishing! Wisconsin is proving that we can expand to other states that have vibrant youth shooting sports programs and well-connected local on-the-ground partners like OHEC to help guide our efforts."

According to Lee, "Like so many of our OHEC partners who already help us connect people to the outdoors, Brittany and her team continue to be a great fit. We like working with collaborators who can work with entrepreneurial speed to address urgent needs facing shooting

sports recruitment, retention, and reactivation as well as other outdoor education challenges that threaten the future of our outdoor heritage."

OHEC hosts the big Midwest Outdoor Heritage Education Expos in Poynette and Milwaukee, reaching more than 5,000 students, teachers, and parents each May. It operates a fleet of Touch of the Wild hands-on education trailers that crisscross Wisconsin, and for decades it has help teach new hunters and anglers as well as help launch and support school archery and clay target teams. Lee said OHEC historically has funneled students and adults to various Learn To Hunt programs, mentored programs, hunter education classes, and safety training. She said OHEC will add its Pass It On—Outdoor Mentors collaborative events to support the growing demand.

Pass It On - Outdoor Mentors launched its Shooting Sports Outreach Program in Kansas in 2019, coordinating 89 hunts for over 220 youth. Since then, they have doubled the number of events and youth served year after year.

"We want to see these student athletes hunt a variety of species, engaging them and their families with dove, deer, duck, geese, upland, small game and turkey hunts," said French. "We feel that it's critical that today's youth be given multiple opportunities to hunt, hopefully making them life-long hunters and conservationists."

OHEC has been a key element as PIO

began building a Shooting Sports Outreach Program in Wisconsin that will help ensure that the Wisconsin outdoor heritage is successfully passed along to the next generation.

About Outdoor Heritage Education Center

OHEC was founded in 1998 by SCI Life Member Mark LaBarbera to connect people and resources. With support from SCI and others, OHEC volunteers and donors have helped launch clay target teams in a number of Wisconsin schools. OHEC is an active leader in recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R3) efforts that fit with its mission to help pass along our outdoor heritage to future generations who are losing touch with the natural world, and to increase the public's understanding, appreciation, and sense of stewardship for natural resources and related activities like fishing, hunting and other shooting sports. Publicity generated by OHEC has recognized partners like SCI and raised awareness of the mission and the opportunities for new hunters. See www.OHECyes.org or email RuthAnn@OHECyes.org.

About Pass It On - Outdoor Mentors

Pass It On - Outdoor Mentors, Inc. is a Wichita, Kansas-based national organization dedicated to providing children with mentors who will share with them the experiences of traditional outdoor activities. The heart of the group's mission is to give children opportunities to connect with nature that they more than likely won't have without a mentor showing them the way. Partnering with organizations with like-minded conservation and youth participation efforts like Pheasants Forever, Delta Waterfowl, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and National Wild Turkey Federation among others, volunteers with a passion for the outdoors can give a child the chance to go fish, hunt, or simply spend time in the fields with a caring adult.



Father/Son Success

by Mark LaBarbera

Rick Jenson has not hunted deer for many years. Forty years ago, on his November 19 birthday in 1983, he shot a nice Wisconsin whitetail buck on the family farm. It was one of the high points of his young life as he turned 18 that day.

"Back then, I didn't think life could get any better," he said.

Rick was one of 22 brothers and sisters, so his parents were proud of his success but also grateful for the additional protein. They had a lot of mouths to feed.

"If you're wondering," added his wife Jodi, "there were no twins, triplets, or quadruplets; only singles. My husband's mother was an amazing woman!"

Rick loves hunting and the outdoors, like his father who passed away about 20 years ago. But farming and other priorities cut into his time afield. So, when Rick and Jodi gave birth to Ryan a few decades ago, they planned to

introduce him to his outdoor heritage and traditional nature-based activities like hunting and fishing.

Indeed, they did, planting a seed that would flourish. They nurtured him and cultivated his interest in all things wild, as well as his outdoor skills. Grandma was proud and continued to support that interest like she and her late husband had done before he passed away. Rick and his mother spent a lot of time farming, but he and Jodi planted the seed with Ryan and encouraged him to hunt. Ryan became a successful outdoorsman, plus he graduated with a natural resources degree from the University of Wisconsin—Stevens Point.

His career opportunities allowed him to move closer to the family's home in Lafayette County, which made it easier for him to share time outdoors. He welcomed his parents to join him if they could

get away from other demands on their time.

"We especially like deer and turkey hunting," said Jodi, who shared these two photos from last deer season. "My mother-in-law passed away in 2022 and that was especially hard on Rick as he farmed with his mom for decades. She was an amazing person, and her loss has been hard."

Jodi added, "We all knew it would be good for Rick, and we believe his mother would have wanted him to get out there for fresh air and healing, as well as carrying on the family tradition."

He agreed. Rick hunted another property while Ryan hunted in northern Wisconsin.

"Ryan had been hunting up North but didn't see anything," explained his mother. "When he got back to

Lafayette County, he came out to our property and was lucky enough to shoot his buck within 30 minutes of being there."

She continued, "My husband shot his deer on November 19, 2023, his birthday, exactly 40 years to the day from when he shot his first buck. It was an amazing deer hunting weekend. Lots of excitement and emotions"

Rick said, "I truly felt my mother was right there with me. What a special birthday present."

It was that much more special knowing that the family's conservation values and hunting tradition have already been passed to the next generation. And it reminded Rick of how important it is for him and his family to make time to go hunting.

The father and son success is a good reminder for all of us to spend time doing what we enjoy with family and friends while we can.

In Memoria:

Jerome E. Schenck

October 31, 1949 – February 27, 2024

Hunting dog lover, conservation volunteer, and President of the Friends of Poynette Game Farm, Jerry Schenck, a dedicated U.S. veteran, left us suddenly on February 27, 2024, in the quiet company of his

pheasants each year. As President of Friends of Poynette Game Farm and before, he organized Learn to Hunt events that recruited and taught adults and youth about responsible hunting practices. Like spending time



Rick Jenson got this 2023 buck on his birthday.



Ryan Jenson with his 2023 Lafayette Co. buck.



beloved dogs. His journey began October 31, 1949, marking the start of a life filled with unwavering service, boundless compassion, kindness, and an infectious love for the natural world that he eagerly shared with everyone around him.

Jerry's story is one of service. A Sun Prairie grad, he served as an Air Force mechanic in the Vietnam War. In civilian life he worked in auto body repair and retail store fixtures installer. He was an EMT in Sun Prairie and later worked in the that School District

Jerry thrived in the embrace of nature, volunteering countless hours with Custom Canines Service Dog Academy for disabled individuals and veterans. He volunteered hundreds of hours to help under-staffed DNR raise and release about 70,000

with his daughters and grandchildren, FPGF service filled him with immense joy.

Jerry was a proud member of numerous groups, including The Wisconsin Beagle Club, MacKenzie Center, Deutsch Drahthaar Club, NAVHDA, and Tri-County Wings over Wisconsin. He served as an NRA-certified range safety officer at the North Bristol Sportsmen's Club. His compassionate heart, boundless energy, and unforgettable smile have positively influenced everyone he touched, both human and canine. Jerry's legacy of kindness, service, and love for his community and the natural world around us will continue to inspire and guide us for years to come. Jerry's legacy is one of love, service and dedication.

Hunt Report:

Alaska Mountain Goat

by *Bill Vandertie*

I retired in July 2023, and it was a great year for hunting adventures. Here are some photos from my Alaska Mountain goat hunt this past September with Alaska Safari Unlimited.

On the third day of a six-day hunt, we spotted a group of 14 goats in the late morning on the side of a large mountain bowl and started working towards them.

A particular mountain goat was alone, at the back of the bowl, near the top of the rim, and about a half-mile

from the others, which is a sign of a mature Billy.

As we worked towards it, glassing confirmed it was indeed a mature Billy. We continued the stalk to get into a reasonable shooting spot while trying to stay out of the open. We stalked to 290 yards.

The shot was 290 yards at a steep incline, probably 35-40 degrees, using a .300 Win Mag.

The photos show how the beautiful terrain and scenery, but it's even better when you're there in person. I also am

including a photo of me and the guides near the top of the rim. What an adventure.

Looking back now, I'm smiling as I think of this Alaskan mountain goat hunt, as well as the Wisconsin deer season when daughter Andrea made a one-shot kill on a nice buck on our tree farm. The photo of her as well as the Saskatchewan buck I shot with Woody River Trophy Hunts were in the most recent issue of HUNTERS.

I am looking forward to many more adventures!

NOTE: If you have photos with captions, hunt reports, or stories, please send them for a future issue to WiSCIimg@peoplepc.com.



SCI Badgerland Chapter Hunter's Expo '24 Scored Big

by Mark LaBarbera

Chula Vista Resort's Mike Kaminski is also an SCI member dedicated to passing along our outdoor heritage to his grandchildren and others. His resort is home to Badgerland's annual event that again impressed all comers February 16-17. Great food and camaraderie among members, sponsors, volunteer leaders, donors, and world-wide exhibitors are just part of the fun. Every year, Badgerland leaders generate an impressive amount of funding for the mission while making it fun and memorable for all the families and friends participating.

The photos here are not the same as being there, but they do capture some of the experiences at Badgerland events, like Bill and Vicki Hilgers joy as high bidders for the new puppy, or Pat Hudak and Randy Mayes smiles as one won a nice rifle and the other won a squirt gun. Also adding to the fun were auctioneer Bruce Brock and emcee Dan Trawicki, a familiar face at SCI banquets with his lobbying reports and other contributions.

It was clear again this year that the hard work of all involved paid big dividends in raising money that will

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





by Mark LaBarbera

SCI BADGERLAND CHAPTER
2023 TROPHY COMPETITION
FIRST PLACE
KAREN PETERS
LEMPRO BENSIEK
LADY DIANA

DIAMONDBACK
BINOCULARS

SCI Wisconsin Chapter Hosted a Grand Banquet

by Mark LaBarbera

Members and guests gathered at the Brookfield Conference Center, February 9 & 10, for the SCI Wisconsin Chapter's 47th Annual Grand Banquet. Strong leadership, generous sponsors, impressive exhibitors, big donors, and active volunteers enjoyed another successful fundraiser that was both fun and productive as

they raised money to support the mission. Here are some snapshots that provide a glimpse inside the event where Dr. Christine Thomas and media celebrity hunter Melissa Bachman were guest speakers. But it is only a glimpse. To fully appreciate this wonderful event, it is best to experience it first-hand. Plan now to be part of the 48th Annual Grand Banquet in Brookfield, Wisconsin.





Thank you for attending our event!

BANQUET COMMITTEE
 Sean Coykendall (Chairman / President / Chairman)
 Monte Whiteaker (Honor Chairman)
 Our many thanks to the people who put in numerous hours of hard work and effort to make this weekend a success!

Dave Bahr	Scott Phillips
Juan Gotti	Jim Rinke
Nick Hamer	Kyle Schmidt
Sarah Hagle	Dan Trawicki
Brad Korot	Stacy VanLushout
Ben Laskowski	Steve VanLushout
Denn LaPodwin	Charmaine Wargoloff
Jim Marks	Patrick Whitcomb
Harry Mattson	Mani Wukalski
Tim Nowak	Sharon Yusk

PAST PRESIDENTS

HECTOR GITSCHA	LOWELL K. LEVY
RICHARD T. NELL	JIM FREY
DONALD K. BECK	DAN FRANKOWI
MICHAEL K. WACKER	JOHN F. KUBICHA
JAMES A. EICHSTEDT	RON KLUMBA
LARRY L. HUFFMAN	DAN FRANKOWI
FREDERICK A. SURAN	HARRY MATTEK
JOHN L. CESTRELL	MICHAEL R. BETTERS
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Izzy's Elk

First youth to harvest a Wisconsin elk shares her family's adventure

by Mark LaBarbera

Against all odds in 2023, the athletic, saxophone-playing Mount Horeb high school junior Isabella Wink became the first youth and second female in modern history to harvest a Wisconsin elk, and it was a family affair.

Izzy told her story on camera last month when I interviewed her for "Deer Hunt Wisconsin 2024," the award-winning annual TV and online special that

some SCI chapters help sponsor. Here's a sneak peek behind the scenes of what will air mid-November on Bally Sports, YouTube, and PBS.

To understand the odds, go back to last May when the Natural Resources Board approved the DNR's recommendation to allow only eight elk harvest tags, with half of those tags to be used by the Ojibwa per their treaty rights for the Ceded Territory. By the May 31 deadline, 21,300 Wisconsin resi-

dents entered a drawing for the other four once-in-a-lifetime tags. With no preference points for anyone, everyone who entered had a chance to be selected. The odds were against being drawn.

In June, the DNR drew the names of four lucky residents and called the winners living in Cedarburg, Green Bay,



Sparta, and Mount Horeb. Izzy's dad was one of the four.

"I got a voice message and thought it was a prank, but returned the call," he said. "Glad I did!"

Brian Wink said, "Izzy knew last summer after the drawing that our family was going to scout for elk in the Clam Lake area where we would hunt when the season opened mid-October. She was eager to help me prepare for my hunt."

Without his daughter knowing it, Wink worked with the DNR to transfer his tag to Izzy for her 16th birthday. Since the first Wisconsin elk hunt in 2018, Brian had been applying, and now he added to his daughter's historic event by making her the first one to be gifted a tag.

"She didn't know until her birthday in August that she was going to be the actual individual who would be doing the hunting," he said.

Izzy elaborated, "For the scouting, I always went up to help my dad because that was the intent of the hunt, and we explored... spent a lot of time learning about different areas that we thought would be good, spent a lot of time walking trails, too, and a lot of scouting by foot. What we found most successful was scouting by foot."

During their scouting trips, the Winks stayed at their cabin and got tips from friendly Clam Lake area residents who shared elk sightings and locations.

Apply for Elk Hunt

Applications are due May 31. Only Wisconsin residents are eligible, with exceptions for nonresident Purple Heart recipients and Armed Forces members meeting qualifying criteria. The application fee is \$10 and limited to one per person, with 70% going directly to elk management, monitoring, research, and elk habitat work that benefits other Wisconsin wildlife too. The other 30% covers administrative fees, vendor fees, etc.

You can only draw an elk license once in your life. Winners are notified in June. The elk hunting license is \$49 online or at a license agent in person.

Before obtaining an elk hunting license, all winners must participate in the elk hunter orientation, usually in September. The class covers Wisconsin elk history, hunting regulations, biology and behavior, and scouting/hunting techniques. The 2024 archery, crossbow, and firearm elk season is Oct. 12-Nov. 10 & Dec. 12-20.

Logging and clear-cutting influence elk movement in the thick Northwoods so early sightings don't guarantee finding elk on opening day. After countless days exploring the largely public elk range, the family narrowed their choices of likely opening day locations.

Izzy's mom and dad savored the family time outdoors as they had throughout her childhood.

"Brian and I used to put her on the backpack and hike into the mountains out West and closer to home," recalled Lisa Wink. "She went camping, canoeing, kayaking and climbing with us throughout her childhood."

Lisa doesn't hunt but says, "I think it's great! It's something that teaches skills and appreciation for nature. Brian's always instilled that hunting is not just the animal or the biggest trophy. It's the whole experience."

She said hunting also helps instill a desire to take care of natural resources that young people grow up enjoying, noting, "It's important to start them young and they'll appreciate the outdoors and want to expand from there."

Brian's and Lisa's thoughtfulness, and the selflessness of both parents and Izzy made the surprise 16th birthday gift that much sweeter for everyone.

Once she knew that it was her tag, Izzy dedicated countless hours to learning to call elk and practicing her shooting skills.

"I did practice a lot," she said. "I practiced with a mouth call in my room. I'd play a recording of live cow elk and then try and repeat back how it sounded. And I put a lot of practice into bugling. I wasn't as great at it, but I did practice that, too."

Brian provided the custom rifle with Vortex scope, and together they loaded ammo and practiced for different scenarios. Izzy was already a hunter and precision shooter. He said, "She's a skilled shooter and she practiced a lot from different shooting positions at all distances so that regardless of the shot opportunity that was presented she knew she could humanely and ethically take that shot and take a follow up shot, you know if it was required, and be able to shoot off a tripod, standing behind

brush, all those sorts of things. So, it wasn't just from a shooting bench."

They discussed that if the elk was still standing after a shot, shoot again until it goes down. Her shooting practice included quick follow-up shots.

Izzy said, "I always kept that in the back of my mind." She had plenty of time to think about it during their pre-season scouting trips.

Together, they also attended the DNR's mandatory elk hunter orientation class before they could buy the license. They felt ready for the mid-October opening day.

"We started the actual hunt on the Sunday of opening weekend and the three of us were able to hunt Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday together," explained Brian. Lisa had to head home for work. Friend and Park Falls gun shop owner Chuck Lovlance joined Izzy and Brian during that first part of the split season. Lovlance even made a custom knife for Izzy's elk hunt.



They were ready for success, but time was running out on their fifth day, and their top spots were not productive. They knew that unsuccessful elk hunters could hunt again in the second half of the split season after the traditional gun deer season. Izzy was the one who spoke up and suggested they try a spot she just "thought might be better, even though we hadn't seen elk there yet. We just needed to try something different."

She had permission to hunt from a local farmer whose property bordered public land. They couldn't see all of the farmer's fields from a single spot, so Izzy, Brian, and Chuck spread out. Brian could not see Izzy and her shooting gear from his vantage point, but he wasn't far from her, and he could cover part of the field where elk might appear on that rainy overcast late afternoon.

Izzy said, "On the last day of our hunt, Thursday, there were three of us spread



Upon Harvesting An Elk

The carcass tag must be immediately validated by removing the bottom portion (validation stub). The tag must be attached to the elk if the hunter leaves the animal temporarily. All harvested elk must be registered by a local wildlife biologist in the field or at a mutually agreed-upon meeting place and presented in person by 5 p.m. the day after recovery. After in-person registration is completed, DNR will enter the hunter's elk in GameReg. The harvest record will appear on the hunter's Go Wild account. The elk registration confirmation number will then be available to the hunter. Hunters will get sampling kits at orientation and must provide samples at registration that may include lung and liver tissue, skin, a tooth, etc.

out to hopefully have some better luck in seeing things. Dad wasn't right with me then. And as the sun was going down, I was kind of losing hope and thinking that, well, this area didn't work out either. But then I got a text from the third person we were with saying, hey, there's elk over here. At that moment I knew this is it; this is like I got to make this happen. I packed up everything and I wasn't able to let dad know. So, I had to make all the decisions on my own. I'm, like, this is my chance. I have to take it. As I packed everything up, I was trying to be as quiet as possible walking over to where I could see the elk, and when I passed through this little wooded area I looked up into the next field and there's more elk than we've seen the entire time, the entire week."

WI Elk History

Once widespread across North America, elk were eliminated from Wisconsin in the 1880s. Thanks to the support of many partners like the Rocky Mtn. Elk Foundation, and the backing of Wisconsinites, the herd now boasts a healthy, growing elk population thanks to restoration efforts from 1995 to 2019. By 2018, the elk herd could sustain a harvest. In October 2018, Wisconsin held its first managed elk hunt, a testament to careful management and strong partnerships across agencies, states, tribal governments, and non-profit organizations.

"Thanks to collaborative reintroduction efforts, Wisconsin's expanding elk population has grown. The state has had an annual hunt every year since 2018," said Josh Spiegel, the DNR Wildlife Biologist in Sawyer County.

The herd bull was bigger than any other elk they had seen, and it had a collar.

She said, "It was crazy to see all of them all at once. There were lots of cows, and there were smaller bulls fighting with each other, and it was so amazing to see them in their natural own little world. I got all my stuff set down, my tripod out, and started cow calling."

Cows picked up their heads in the field. Suddenly, four other cow elk appeared from the woods closer to Izzy.

"I realized I'm like busted. I'm like I just messed this up, but then this wonderful bull started running from the cows in the field right towards me. It got to about 80 yards. I waited a few moments because it originally was faced towards me, but I knew that I had to calm down and wait for that ethical shot. I'm not sure if it heard some noise or the closer cows alerted him or something, but it turned broadside, and that's when I knew I'm like this is my chance and I have to take it."

The 7mm-08 was steady on the tripod. The Vortex Viper PST 1-6x24 helped gather light.

Izzy's training and practice kicked in as she concentrated quickly on her shot placement before pulling the trigger on the broadside bull.

"I took that first shot and I saw that he wasn't down. A second later I knew I should take another shot. And then he spun around right where he was, did a 180. I took my second shot, and he dropped right there. Between shot #1 and shot #2 there was just a few seconds. They were literally 'Bang! Bang!'"

Brian said, "I heard cow elk bark, so I knew something was up, and then I heard Izzy shoot and then, right away, shoot again."

He hustled over to her, and they walked up to the dead bull in the field. The moment was both reverent and joyous. Soon they discovered that Izzy's two shots were opposing each other, entering from opposite sides and less than two inches apart from each other. One passed through, but they recovered the other bullet. The bull was collared, #508, and they later learned he had been captured in January 2023.

"After I saw the bull go down, it was the biggest relief of my life," Izzy said. "There's so much excitement.

Everything was built up, and it was definitely a moment I won't forget. It is something that my entire family will always remember, and there was so much happiness. As soon as my dad came running over it's like I knew like we did it! All this work paid off! And it was the best experience! Just beautiful!"

Tearful eyed, Brian listened, and added, "On her own, Izzy was able to set up, call, execute a phenomenal shot, and have her quick humane harvest. It was pretty exciting. Yeah, cool alright!"

Izzy smiled as she watched her proud papa and listened to his praise, and she shared, "I'm very grateful to even have this opportunity in the first place, and to be surrounded by so many people who supported me through this. I'm very grateful for that and I hope that everybody gets the opportunity to do something like this someday. Hunting and being out in the wild is a big part of who I am. It definitely plays a big part in how I interpret things and how I interact with the natural world."

She was also grateful to the landowner who agreed to use his tractor bucket to haul the bull and put it in Brian's truck. After registering the elk in person with the DNR biologist who took tissue samples, Izzy drove home on the Interstate with the bull on a snowmobile trailer. Brian followed her in his vehicle. He said, "As other drivers would see the big bull on the back of this trailer, they would wave at Izzy or give a thumbs up and honk their horns. That was cool too."

Ojibwe Rights

Tribes reserved rights to hunt, fish and gather on public lands off-reservation in Ceded Territory of northern Wisconsin when they signed Treaties with the United States, and the right to "declare" or claim up to 50% of the total harvest quota there for a variety of wildlife, including elk. Tribal members who are Wisconsin residents can apply through the state drawing. Non-tribal hunters are not allowed in a tribal elk hunt.

The tribes have been strong supporters of re-introduction of elk which continue to be valued for subsistence, cultural, religious, medicinal, and economic significance to the Ojibwe and Ho-Chunk Nation. Like deer, Ojibwe tribal elk hunting begins the day after Labor Day and runs through the first Sunday after New Year's Day. The Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Commission maintains tribal elk hunting rules.

Northeast Wisconsin Chapter's 25th SCI Hunter's Banquet & Live Auction

by Mark LaBarbera

It is amazing to see in-person each year the successful, smart collaboration between the Northeast Wisconsin Chapter of SCI and the Wisconsin State Hunting & Fishing Expo. If you have not been to the banquet and auctions at Stadium View and the expo at the Resch Center a block away, you won't regret putting it on your calendar for next year. It is impressive, and it continues to grow, so book your hotel early.

These photos don't do justice to the event and the feeling in the room or the expo hall. Chapter leaders include a blend of experience and fresh ideas, young and old, that come together to support a clear mission. Officers,

directors, and other volunteers spend 11-12 months leading up to the event harnessing the resources of exhibitors and hunt donors from around the world, as well as avid hunters, sponsors, and conservation leaders, including sponsors and donors who care about our hunting heritage.

Northeast Wisconsin Chapter, like some other chapters of Safari Club International, represents a dynamic group of members dedicated to conservation, hunters' rights, humanitarian services, outdoor education, and supporting safe, ethical hunting and the shooting sports. Chapter volunteers "understand that the future of responsible game management resides within

the next generation of hunters and the continued support of sportsmen and women around the globe." Leadership said, "We promote education and public awareness about our role as conservationists and champions of hunters' rights."

Its mission statement says, "We firmly believe in the value of hunting as both a game management tool and its spiritual importance to a functioning society. As a coalition of sportsmen and women dedicated to the advancement of hunting in this world, we welcome all who share our commitment to the stewardship of natural resources of this small and beautiful planet. Join us. Add your voice. Create a legacy for the future."





WI Governor's Fishing Opener

by Mark LaBarbera

Safari Club International members and fellow travelers can appreciate what I was feeling somewhere over the Atlantic Ocean last month as wife Coni and I flew to Europe for her international conference on Alzheimer's and dementia where she was a U.S. representative.

grass is always greener and the bass are always bigger on the other side.

One of the best reminders of how good we have it is the annual Governor's Fishing Opener in northern Wisconsin. My first one about 40 years ago started a long list of great memories, including the year I participated in the Minnesota Governor's Fishing Opener with Jesse Ventura. Both states recognize the huge economic impact of outdoor tourism and the many values of taking care of natural resources that are accessible to the public. Kudos to any Governor, fisherman or not, who recognizes and supports fishing, hunting, and outdoor recreation, and who appreciates wild things, wild places, and healthy habitat for fish, wildlife, and people.

In recent years, Dan Small and I have made a point of attending the Wisconsin Governor's Fishing Opener and enjoying local tourism opportunities in northern counties. Check out www.northwestwisconsin.com for great links to all kinds of trip-planning tools for various outdoor activities and destinations in Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Burnett, Chippewa, Douglas, Iron, Polk, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, and Washburn counties.

The 2024 Wisconsin Governor's Fishing Opener, May 3-4, was in SCI Lake Superior Chapter's backyard. SCI members can enjoy destinations like the Jordan Buck & Gandy Dancer State Trail, Forts Folle Avoine Historical Park, Northwest Passage Gallery, Governor Knowles State Forest, Brickfield Brewing, Burnett Dairy Co-op &



Cheese Store and Crooked Lake Park, plus local dining, and fishing on so many lakes and rivers. SCI Chapter Past President Burl Johnson's Fish Bowl Bar in Danbury was not far from the action on nearby Yellow Lake in Burnett County. The Lodge at Crooked Lake, St. Croix Casino in Danbury, and Best Western provided most of the lodging, while Zhashagiins Event Center in Siren was home to the VIP social hour, banquet, and program.

According to Kaitlin Hanson, Chair of the organizing committee, "A main goal of the event is to generate significant media coverage highlighting the host communities and Wisconsin's fishing and tourism industries. It also provides a fun, outdoor-focused community event. In 2022, we added a family-focused Saturday event to inspire the next generation of outdoor enthusiasts." Besides media, VIPs included local business leaders and state and federal elected officials



The DNR's Fishmobile and R3 educator Theresa Stabo, plus Outdoor Heritage Education Center's Touch of the Wild education trailer with fish and wildlife exhibits were featured attractions at that Washburn County event on the shores of Shell Lake.

In 2023, the family fun continued in Price County. According to Laura Palzkill, Executive Director of the Phillips Area Chamber of Commerce. She said, "The Family Fishing Day and Community Fish Fry were open to the public, so everyone is welcome. Destination Showcase tours highlight some of Price County's top tourist destinations."

In 2022 and 2023, I toured the St. Croix Rod factory, Canoe Museum, and Spooner Fish Hatchery, the state's largest cool water hatchery and the world's

largest muskellunge hatchery. very year, the walleye and muskellunge raised at the hatchery are stocked into waterbodies across the state as a management tool to restore, maintain and enhance fish populations.

Palzkill was quick to add, "And, of course, everyone is welcome to join in on the fishing on the Phillips Chain of Lakes." I had fun fishing with Tony Blattler, former Wisconsin Conservation Congress Chair who lives in the area. A "Discover Wisconsin" and film crew followed us as we cast with quality St. Croix rods hand-made in nearby Park Falls.

The organizing committee and Blattler were nervous then because there was still ice on the lake a week or so before the opener and the county was snow-covered and still hosting winter sports enthusiasts, but this year's early warm weather got rid of the ice. The big April 2024 snowstorm was welcomed by skiers and snowmobilers, and the fishing opener organizers were confident they'd have open water the first week of May.

Congratulations to them and thanks to event sponsors Dairyland Power Cooperative, Discover Mediaworks, Enbridge, DSG Outerwear, Hidden Cove Resort, Homespun Coffee & Crafts, Indianhead Foodservice Distributors, James Netz Photography, Kwik Trip, National Marine Manufacturers Assoc., NW ITBEC, Rice Lake Tourism, St. Croix Rod, The 5 Senses, Weather Shield MFG, Wisconsin Counties Assoc., and Xcel Energy. Here are photos from prior events.



Capt. Barb Carey, right, guided Gov. Tony Evers in recent years. (photo by James Netz)

Why am I leaving Wisconsin when a "stay-cation" on a lake closer to home is what I would really enjoy? The question would not go away.

People from around the world come to Wisconsin to enjoy world class hospitality and access to first class nature-based activities. I suppose it's like going to the other side of the lake to fish while people from that side come to fish near your dock. We think the



Quest for a King

by Randy Mayes

I'm an avid duck hunter. I am NOT what I would call a "died in the wool" duck hunter. I've duck hunted in South Dakota the last 25 plus years. Other than those several October days in South Dakota, I really don't do much waterfowl hunting. I concentrate more on big game of all sorts.

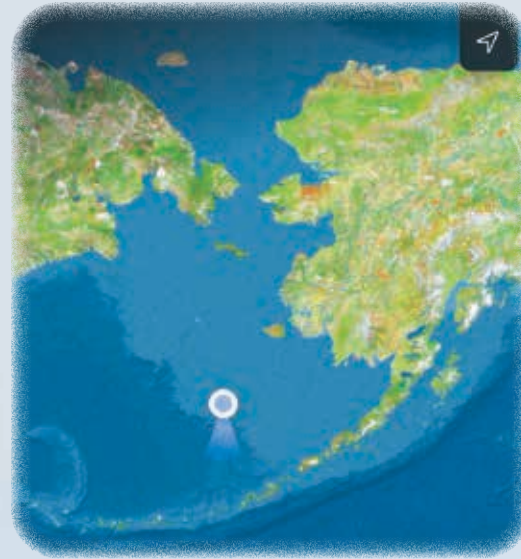
Quite a few years ago, I watched an episode of Benelli's "To Kill A King" with Tony Vandermore. I saw guys in some far-off place in the middle of the Bering Sea battling high winds and giant waves in little rubber boats to hunt a very beautiful, exotic looking duck called a King Eider. At the time I thought "those guys are crazy"!

In April of 2021, my customer and friend Doug Stelzner of Waupaca said that he was ready to book a hunt for King Eider on St. Paul Island, Alaska. He also informed me that he had a couple of spots open in case I was interested.

He had done the research and felt that Aleutian Islands Waterfowlers was the best outfit to use. It's a very small island and there aren't many outfitters to pick from. This hunt wasn't exactly at the top of my list but thinking back to the aforementioned show I had watched, I knew it was a true "adventure hunt" which I am certainly fond of! Within weeks of Doug inviting me, I sent in my signed contract and deposit for a hunt in mid-January of 2023.

At that time, we were thinking COVID concerns would be off the table as this was nearly two years away. WRONG! In mid-winter of 2022, I received a call from Helen Summerville, the outfitter's wife, saying that due to COVID, St. Paul Island would be closed to ALL incoming and outgoing travel. Therefore, all hunts in January 2023 would be delayed one year.

That delay gave us time to fill two more available spots in our group. My



long-time hunting friend Mike Alff and Doug's son Brandon would fill out our booking.

As with any hunt, there were some "special purchases" that needed to be

made. Namely, waterproof, cold weather, hunting clothes and premium shotshells (our group used primarily BOSS shells). You don't want to "go cheap" with any of these items on a hunt like this.

Getting to and from St. Paul Island isn't always easy. Alaska weather in January often plays a part. For this reason, the outfitter has arranged a chartered, twin turbo prop plane to transport hunters from Anchorage. They are still at the mercy of the weather but are more flexible with scheduling than commercial airlines.

The focus of this hunt is getting a King Eider. There are, however, potential opportunities for other hard to come

by ducks such as harlequin, long tail and whitewing scoter. Several hunters in camp were attempting to complete their "Ultimate Waterfowl Challenge" in which the goal is to get all 41 different species of North American waterfowl. One of them got his King on this trip to complete the challenge! I do not have the desire to complete "the 41." I only did this trip because it is a beautiful trophy and an adventure in itself!

If I were to give one important piece of advice, here it is... this hunt is not for sissies! You will be hunting in a small, 16 foot, inflatable zodiac boat 2-5 miles out in rough seas with swells that are often

10-20 feet! While hunting, you will be on your knees, bent over to be as low profile as possible so as not to flare the ducks. You will also be shooting from your knees. There is another option which is a slightly larger, solid boat in which you are sitting on a small chair and standing up to shoot. If you often get seasick, there's a very good chance you will get it here. I have never had a problem with that, and this trip was no exception. There were a few guys in camp that weren't so fortunate!

Some of the challenges with shooting other than shooting from your knees are shooting from a boat that is rockin' and



rollin' due to the waves and ducks that are flying very low to the water and often being hidden by waves for seconds at a time. More than once I was swinging on a duck only to have it fly behind a wave about the time I was pulling the trigger, causing me to put my pattern directly into a wave as the duck flew safely behind!

Once you do finally connect, it is advisable to not shoot at a second duck at the same time as it is vitally important to keep an eye on where your duck came down. Even if the duck is dead and floating on the water, it is often hard to find due to the waves blocking your view. It is hard to "mark a spot" where the bird went down as you would on a marsh or slough. There are no cattails, trees, or anything for that matter to mark it with. I will say this, when I finally connected and grabbed my first, beautiful, drake King Eider out of the cold waters of the Bering Sea and held it in my hand, it was a feeling of relief and accomplishment! What a thing of beauty!

The trip we booked was four days of hunting. I think the hope is that you will have at least one day of "decent" weather that you can actually get out to hunt. Once you are finally out hunting, you WILL see quite a few King Eiders. We lost one day of hunting due to wind. There were gusts up to 65 mph! Charlie Summerville, owner of Aleutian Islands Waterfowlers is VERY conscientious of safety. He goes out every morning well before hunting time to check conditions.

He has been guiding on St. Paul Island for 20 years and has a perfect safety record as well as a perfect success rate of getting hunters their King Eider!

One other unusual thing about this hunt is that once you finally get out on the water and get to your spot, the hunt only lasts about 1 1/2 to 2 hours. They refer to the first hour as the "power hour" and that it is! The action is usually hot and heavy. Your head has to be on a swivel. The guides are exceptional not only at spotting birds but telling you what species they are and if they are drakes or hens. My ability to do this was not even close to theirs! One other thing you have to get used to is that sunrise is about 11:00! With the late starting time and a short hunt, there is A LOT of down time! The other guys in the lodge were great to be around which made the down time more bearable. There is Wi-Fi at the lodge so you can call, text, email, access the internet and there is satellite TV but even with all this, 20 hours or so of down time in a day is something I've never experienced!

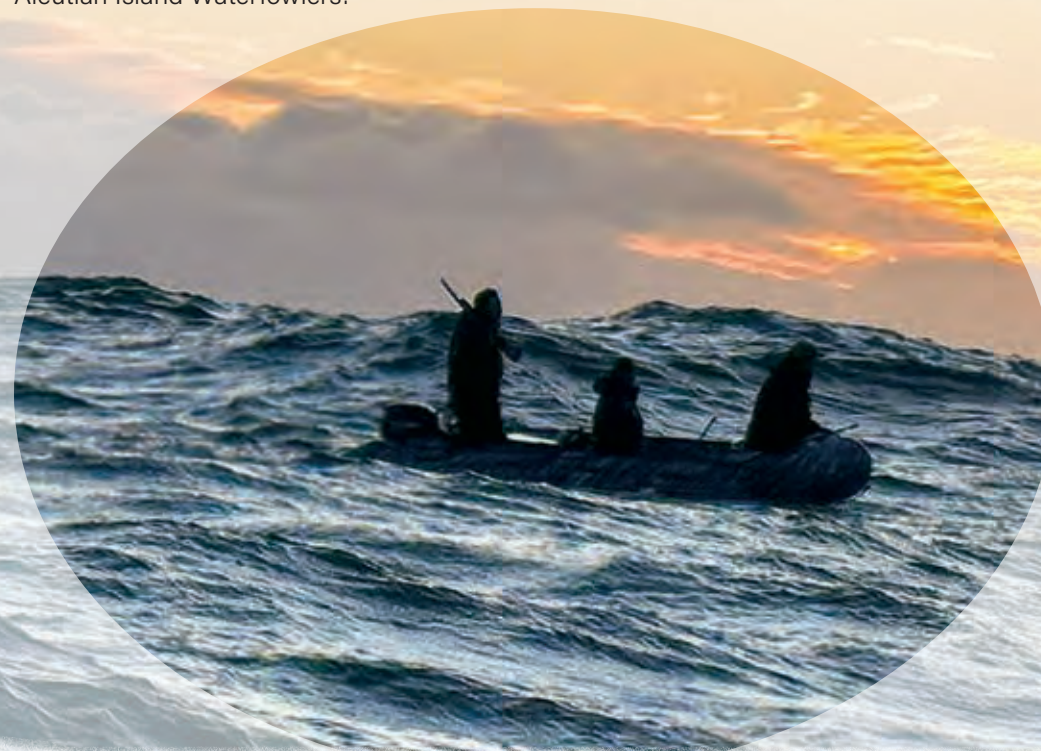
We had to land the zodiacs on a beach one morning as the winds were out of a direction that prevented us from putting in at the boat landing as we had done in previous days. I think this was the same beach as was in the "To Kill A King" video. You have to wade out a bit pushing the boat into the surf and then jump on in what was for me a less than graceful look! We got the job done though!

This is not a normal duck hunt. As much as I love eating duck, this is not a trip made to shoot large numbers of

ducks and bring lots of meat home. You are primarily going to get some unique duck species, mainly the King Eider and Harlequin, for mounting. The ANNUAL limit of kings is four. The outfitter has a self-imposed limit on Harlequin of one per trip. They are very conscientious as to the conservation of all the species.

On this hunt, you are all but certain of getting your king and have a very good chance of getting a harlequin and long tail. Several hunters limited out on kings the first morning! If I were a better shot, I would have too!

Whether you're a "died in the wool" waterfowler trying to complete your 41 species, "Ultimate Waterfowl Challenge" or you are just looking for another great hunting adventure, I would recommend Aleutian Island Waterfowlers!



Whitetail Sanctuary Solutions Tip:

Plan Now for that Successful Trophy Buck Harvest this Fall!

by Michael Murphy

Spring is here! Now is a great time to evaluate your property and put together a plan for improvements to help you harvest a trophy buck this fall! Start with creating new small internal food plots in key areas. Open up the woods canopies at these locations to allow sunlight to your new internal food plots. Use the material cut down

(small logs and limbs) to create high quality bedding areas that will last a very long time with little to no maintenance. The new internal food plots should be placed near bedding and stands to be used as an attractant.

Start evaluating the deer trails on your property, and remove trails through blocking off with brush that lead the deer off your property or to the



neighbor's property. Now create new trail systems that bring the deer straight into the middle of your property. This is very easy – no cost other than your labor – this improvement will make a huge difference on how your property hunts!

Evaluate all your stands. Make repairs as needed, but any tree stand that has been in the same location for over three years should be relocated at least 30 yards away. A great stand will only remain a great stand if you move that stand at least every three years. Deer will go 60 to 100 yards out of their way to avoid these areas. Remember, you are hunting in their living room (the woods) and they know when things are out of place. If your stand has been in the same tree for more than three years – move it at least 30 yards – or they will know you are there!

For your property to function well and maintain healthy deer herds – you want:

- Multiple Food & Water Sources including fruit and nut trees.
- Multiple Bedding Locations free of human and predator pressure.
- Small Multiple Internal Food Plots used as an attractant near bedding and stand locations.
- Update and Maintain Your Trail Cameras so you may accurately evaluate your deer herd throughout the year. This will allow you to manage the bucks and does on your property to improve herd genetics.
- Maintain your UTV/ATV Trails so you can efficiently get in and out of the woods as quietly as possible.
- Keep Invasive Species at Bay through cutting and spraying.

Enjoy this time of year and improving your property to help you harvest that trophy buck this fall!

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



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Whether you're an avid hunter or just love viewing deer on your property, you don't need hundreds of acres to have a Whitetail Sanctuary. Whitetail Sanctuary Solutions customizes a plan with your budget in mind.

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SHOOT FOR ADVENTURE! OPEN TO THE PUBLIC!

**SCI Badgerland Annual Sporting Clay Shoot
August 3, 2024 | Rio Conservation Club - Rio, WI**

- Sporting Clays Course
- \$35 Entry; \$25 Re-Entry
- Youth: \$20 Entry; \$15 Re-Entry
- Other Fun Shooting Games
- Great Lunch
- Quality Guns To Give Away
- Wine Tasting
- Shooting 9am - 3pm
- Prize Drawings Start at 4pm

Big Five Gun Raffle

SCI-Badgerland "Big Five" Raffle
Safari Club Int. Badgerland, 2200 Winding Woods Rd., Mukwonago, WI

Drawing: August 3rd, 2024 at 4:30 pm - at Rio Conservation Club

1st PRIZE: Browning F. Bolt Max Long Range 6.5 Pk.

2nd Prize: Takka 138 Roughneck 12 Ga. Over/Under

3rd Prize: Weatherby Ossa Sporting 12 Ga. Over/Under

4th Prize: Savage 11.3 Long Range 7mm Mag.

5th Prize: CZ Sharpshooter 14 GA. Case Handmade Sides & Sides

License #0011229-A-22857

Tickets: \$20 each / 3 for \$50 / 5 for \$100

Visit SCIBadgerland.com
for event & ticket info!

For Pre-Registration call
Joe K. at (608) 566-9534

Rio Conservation Club:
W5950 Gorman Rd., Rio, WI 53960

