


HUNTERS

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF SCI CHAPTERS IN WISCONSIN AND ILLINOIS
SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2023

PUSH TO DELIST GRAY WOLVES

- 
- Chapter News & Events
 - LaBarbera Resigns WWF Top Job, But His Legacy Work Continues
 - Conservation: Deer Dung, CWD & Cat Gut
 - Education: SCI Helps Launch OHEC Pass It On - Outdoor Mentors Initiative
 - Legislative & Humanitarian Updates



A memory I will carry with me forever is checking the flying squirrel traps and having deer follow me and owls call out to me. I remember thinking how lucky I am to be doing this as an undergrad.

Erinn Kiesow
Wildlife Ecology and Mgt (BS)

Safari Club International - Badgerland Chapter Scholarship



College of Natural Resources
University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point

I am truly grateful for your generous donation. This scholarship lets me know that others are just as excited about my education as I am. This scholarship brings me the luxury of peace of mind. Knowing that my school bills are less allows me to focus on my school work and my research projects.

People like you that support not only education but the field of natural resources energize students like me to keep forging forward and push my goals higher. Your support reassures me that I will someday soon make my passion a career. This scholarship is so much more than money it is motivation, peace of mind and encouragement!

As a returning student, there are moments when I pause and analyze my path to make sure I am still moving in the right direction. Your support shows me that others agree that I am. I cut back on the hours I was working at my job. Ultimately, I quit my job to increase my focus, a decision that increased financial pressure, however, because of you, I walk into the woods soaking up the lessons provided by nature.

Erinn Kiesow

UWSP SCI Badgerland Scholarship Recipient

SCI FIRST FOR HUNTERS

Editor/Publishers: Mark & Coni LaBarbera

HUNTERS is a bimonthly publication for members of SCI chapters in Wisconsin, plus bonus electronic circulation, which includes some of the world's most avid and affluent conservationists who enjoy hunting here and around the world. They have earned a reputation of leadership on natural resources issues and giving to protect and support the future of hunting and conservation here and abroad. To share your message with them, send ads and editorial submissions to Mark LaBarbera at wiscimag@peoplepc.com.

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HUNTERS

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September/October 2023

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Join today!

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 Report

*by Charmaine Wargolet,
Regional Representative*

As I sat earlier this afternoon on the day, I am writing this, I happened to open up Facebook and saw someone had liked a post that I had shared. The original post was about one of our Region 16 chapters, the Illinois & Chicago Chapter, and it simply read, "Hunting is about the Journey not the outcome."

When I first saw the post, I remembered sitting and thinking about the many hunting memories I have when I didn't catch a fish or harvest an animal. Wonderful memories of time spent in the out of doors, observing nature in all of its splendor and wildlife as it moves about its natural habitat. From watching giraffe moving across the side of a hill opposite the one I was sitting on, and listening to the zebra bark in the distance, to smiling as a playful chipmunk played with the shoelaces on my boots as I sat waiting for a deer to come past my ground blind, I took as much pleasure in these moments as when I took my very first animal, a 400 lb. black bear in Ignace, Ontario. All of these moments etched in my memories forever.

So, as I thought about my "hunting journey" and my love of wildlife and how all of my friends who hunt feel the same way I do, it made me wonder if the non-hunting people of the world really understand how much we care about the outdoor world we live in. Sadly, my



experience tells me they do not. It made me realize once again how much SCI means to me. As a new member, the mission of SCI was just a bunch of words. I love to hunt, and I liked meeting like-minded hunters. Short and simple, right? But as time went on, I came to truly understand what scientific wildlife management really meant both to me and more importantly to the wildlife species. Conservation of both the animals and their habitat meant they would hopefully be here long after I am gone. Hunter advocacy would preserve our hunting heritage for years to come. And, right now for me, education of our youth and non-hunting public is an urgent priority. Trying to make them see how hunting is so much a part of the big picture, and trying to make them realize how much we care!

But this is what SCI does everyday for us. Along with our help, SCI is on the forefront of the fight, and I am so grateful. Grateful to be a member of an organization that talks the talk and walks the walk. Thankfully, my journey is not over yet. I will continue to enjoy my outdoor adventures and continue to help in any way I can to educate those folks who are blind to what it takes to save the animals that we love. I hope you will be there too!

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

time of year, we're also in the beginning stages of planning for our 47th Annual Grand Banquet on February 9th and 10th. If you're interested in getting more involved or want to share your thoughts of how to make the banquet a better experience for everyone, please let a board member know how to get involved. You do not need to be a board member to help out.

I wish all of you a safe and successful start of the hunting season. I look forward to seeing the social media posts and seeing the trophies scored at our Annual Grand Banquet.

Badgerland Chapter Report

by John Martinson, President

May was a busy month for Badgerland Chapter with me flying to Washington DC to help lobby and proactively oppose trophy bans, anti-conservation bills, predator control restrictions on federal lands, and support access to lead ammunition, no-net-loss policy (to maintain or increase current levels of hunting and fishing access across the country) and celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act by fixing it.

I was proud to present Badgerland Chapter's 30 percent check to the international which was the second highest in our history. You can be proud of our fund-raising success plus our other activities. We had our sensory trailer at Outdoor Heritage Education Center's MacKenzie MOHEE event with Scott McConnell, Dale Hudack, Steven and Patty Cripps, and me. We gave kids,

teachers, and parents a hands-on experience and information about hides and mounts mostly donated by Badgerland members. Great seeing so many kids interact with our displays. MOHEE set an attendance record, again! Busloads of students filled the place.

More recently, we had a little twist from our normal membership meetings as new member Gavin Hoffmann shared his bowfishing experiences on Madison lakes and elsewhere. He did an excellent job explaining his equipment and techniques. I didn't know about aiming below fish because light refraction gives the illusion they're closer to the surface. Gavin showed pictures of big carp, longnose gar, and catfish that he shot.

This summer, Treasurer Stacy Davis and husband Mike gave a traditional, but exceptional presentation about hunting South Africa. Stacy was

working on her tiny ten of South Africa with shooting Sharpe's grysbok, springbok, and mountain reedbuck plus, hunting at night, got an elusive caracal. Stacy finished with nyala and eland.

Apparently, Mike had the checkbook with shooting a free-range hippo, 15-foot crocodile, eland, springbok, and waterbuck. No snakes, so it was a happy ending, as you'll read in November HUNTERS.

Please join our membership meetings for other exciting, informative presentations with Badgerland members.

Have fun and safe adventures.



Lake Superior Chapter Report

by Jennifer Dums, Secretary

The Lake Superior Chapter hosted our annual two-day fundraiser and banquet this past April and despite some bad weather, it was once again a great success!

From cake auctions to live music from Forrest Pike and even a guest appearance from "President" Trump!

Our sold out Wine, Women and Cheese event was once again a huge hit with the ladies.

We offer something for everyone at our banquet: youth raffles, ladies silent auction, men's signature drink and, of course, the dozens of firearms and high ticket prizes like ATV's were the stars of the weekend.

We also welcomed in our new President Scott Olson and are excited to see what the next chapter of Lake Superior SCI brings!

We are changing gears at the moment to focus on summer fundraisers with our First Annual Golf Tournament in August where proceeds will go to fund local youth trap teams. We also have our Youth Day coming up in September which is free to attend and features trap and pheasant hunting for the community youth.



Wisconsin Chapter Report

by Sean Coykendall, President

The Wisconsin Chapter hosted our 34th Annual Sporting Clays Outing on July 15th. For those that missed out, we had a perfect day to shoot at The Highlands Sportsmen's Club. More than 60 people came out to shoot and support the event. We couldn't have had a successful event without our sponsors: Delta Defense/USCCA, Weldall, Betters & Associates, Old National Bank, Interstate Power Systems, Lepoidevin Marketing, Anchor Wealth Partners, Oliver Jon Belongia, Ben Laskowski, and Robert Eastman Jr.

September is my favorite month of the year. It means that the chase for the elusive Wisconsin whitetail is underway for bowhunters. I've been bowhunting on my own since I was 12, the earliest you could start when I was growing up. The first sit in the stand is best of the season, regardless of if you are able to harvest one or not.

September also means that membership meetings have started back up. Attendance at our membership meetings have been great to start the year. We hope to continue this momentum into the fall with our few remaining meetings. This



Illinois Hunt Camp

Illinois Hunt Camp is a different kind of one-day event for adult hunters of all types and all abilities. Think of it as an inclusive social networking conference for Illinois hunters and trappers with food, education, games, and prizes.

Most outdoor events are either aimed at one specific group of hunters or meant to sell or showcase products. Those types of events can be awesome, but Illinois Hunt Camp is a bit different and is all about raising community amongst hunters and trappers of all types and abilities. Hunt Camp is the one day where ALL the hunters can come together and share some stories, laughs and information. It doesn't matter if you are already an avid hunter or someone who is just interested in hunting, Illinois Hunt Camp is for you!

FOOD: The outdoor grills will be fired up once again as traditional cookout fare is flame broiled to mouth-watering perfection. Hamburgers, hotdogs, brats, oh yeah we have it all, with all the "fixings" too. Food will be available (while supplies last) for free to all Hunt Camp attendees. Food is provided thanks to the Illinois Conservation Foundation (ICF). Alcohol

will be available for purchase from the on-site bar.

EDUCATION: There will be educational stations and tables representing many of the most active outdoors groups in Illinois set up including your very own SCI Chicago chapter. Walk up and learn from experts about some useful skills. There will be educational stations set up on: map reading and remote scouting, waterfowl identification, trapping, dog training and more!

GAMES: To get the crowd energized and engaged, we will have some fun games set up that are free for all Hunt Camp attendees. Think you are pretty good at estimating yardage? Well compete against everyone at Hunt Camp and find out once and for all. Maybe you think you are the "Annie Oakley" of casting baits into tight spots, well we have a game for you. Sure to be some surprises anyone with an interest in the outdoors will appreciate.

PRIZES: All Hunt Camp attendees will get tickets for the prize tables when they register. There will be an Outdoor Gear prize table and a Mentored Hunt prize table especially for the newer hunters. Hunt Camp has something for everyone!



We will once again include the *Final Showdown* competition thanks to a generous donation by SCI - Chicago. The Final Showdown is a barrage of outdoor inspired games designed to narrow the field down to a single victor who will win an awesome prize. You don't want to miss out on this one, participation is the only way in this competition.

If you are an established Illinois hunter who would like to donate a mentored hunting opportunity or gear for prizes, contact the Hunt Camp coordinator at curtis11@illinois.edu.

The Hunt Camp website is www.illinois-huntcamp.com.

Badgerland Chapter Helps You Add to Your Conservation Legacy

For over 25 years, Badgerland SCI has been awarding scholarships to UWSP students majoring in wild-life 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. Thanks from two recent recipients are on page 2 and below.

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.

Dear Safari Club,

First and foremost, I would like to thank you for choosing me for your scholarship. I am honored that I was awarded it out of such a large pool of students. I am familiar with your organization and do truly believe in its core values. Hunting and conservation certainly go hand-in-hand, and I believe that the Safari Club is an essential resource for like-minded conservationists to come together and protect both hunters' rights and promote the protection of the wildlife we all love.

Additionally, in choosing me, you have allowed me to focus on some more important things than struggling to make ends meet for college. The money will be put to great use, going towards my tuition costs for the upcoming year. In helping me pay my tuition, you support a girl from a small town to make a difference in the world with the degree she is striving to achieve.

I hope you are well and that with all the craziness of these times, you are still finding joy in even just the little things. Thank you again for awarding me this scholarship.

Most Sincerely,

Gabrielle Eklund
Gabrielle Eklund



Southeast Wisconsin Bow Hunters Chapter Update

by Monte Whiteaker, President

By now, archers around the state are making final preparations. The latest and greatest broadheads are getting screwed in and put in the quivers. Scoping out “your” tree way back on that public land. Anticipation and excitement are starting to rise for this year’s hunt. It is definitely my favorite time of year!

But what have we done in the off season? Continue to shoot in the back yard, maybe shoot a league at the local bow shop? Those things will help keep your arrows flying true, not to mention a lot of fun! But what ensures your right to be allowed to continue to do what we love and are so passionate about? The answer being the never-ending fight to keep hunting alive. We are fortunate in WI to have a strong hunting heritage. As in the case for other states,

that does not seem to be enough anymore. Many other states with a longtime hunting heritage are now having their rights or opportunities to hunt reduced. If you have not heard what is happening in Alaska, please do some research on it. Is the federal government wanting to buy forests in Michigan the first step in diminishing hunting rights and opportunities there?

The viewpoint that they cannot take away our rights and opportunities away is no longer true. It is time for us to make sure that hunters are heard. So, what can you do to help? Well, sure money does help, however I feel that even more important is your voice. Take a friend hunting, have them join an SCI chapter (I hear the SE WI Bowhunters is one of the best). But most importantly, encourage friends and fellow hunters to be vocal with their ideas and



concerns. Have them reach out to family, friends, acquaintances, and their local politicians to express how they feel. If you break it all down, that is what we are fighting against, a lot of opinion from anti-hunters. It is time to stand up. IT’S YOUR VOICE, USE IT.

Wisconsin Raises Non-Resident License Fees

by Dan Trawicki, SCI Lobbyist

For many years now, Safari Club as well as many other sporting organizations have lobbied to increase the fees for non-residents to hunt and fish in Wisconsin. As a matter of fact, Safari Club was part of a greater coalition that met several years ago to increase fees for both residents and non-residents as a way to not only raise revenue, but more importantly provide much needed resources for habitat restoration, research, and implementation of a master plan.

While at first it seems counter-intuitive for hunting and sporting organizations to be asking for a fee increase, as a group. However, we recognized that fees have remained unchanged since 2005 and the needs of our respective organizations have increased significantly. While we lobbied our legislators, we were met with continuous roadblocks and opposition. Citing tourism concerns as a primary concern, we just were never able to gain any traction.

That brings us to July 11, 2023 when the DNR announced that fees would be increasing for non-resident hunting and fishing licenses. With increases ranging from \$5-\$40 across the board for all licenses, we at Safari Club feel that this is a much-needed step in the right direction.

So how did this get accomplished and who were the drivers?

From all of the information I have learned, this was a late night, budget crunching decision that was reached as the 2024-2025 budget was being finalized. While I can be quick to criticize poor decisions made by our state government, this was a good one. It seems that State Senator Mary Felzkowski (R-Irma), State Senator Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green), and from the Assembly Mark Born (R-Beaver Dam) were the ones that brought this forward and got it done. (Rep. Born was recognized in April as the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation’s Legislator of the Year.)



All of us at Safari Club are grateful for the leadership they provided on this issue.

While you may or may not agree on fee increases for residents, most will agree that this increase for non-residents was much needed, and brings Wisconsin in line, or in some cases still lower than our neighboring states. As I mentioned previously, we have had no increases since 2005, while the demands on our natural resources have increased significantly. More information will be forwarded as it becomes available.

Pass It On Teams Up with Outdoor Heritage Education Center

The Outdoor Heritage Education Center, a charitable non-profit organization based in Wisconsin and Pass It On – Outdoor Mentors of Wichita, Kansas, will be 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. Additional funds are needed to support recruitment of new hunters and shooting sports enthusiasts. Groups and individuals who want to support the effort can contact mlabarbera57@icloud.com

“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! We are eager to expand to other states that have vibrant youth shooting sports programs and well-connected local on-the-ground partners to help guide our efforts, like OHEC in Wisconsin.”

According to OHEC Executive Director Ruth Ann Lee, “Like so many of our OHEC partners who already help us connect people to the outdoors, Brittany and her team are 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 thousands of 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.

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 lifelong hunters and conservationists.”

OHEC is the key as PIO begins to build 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 Mark LaBarbera to connect people and resources. 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



OHEC Executive Director Ruth Ann Lee was named Conservation Educator of the Year a few years ago by the Wisconsin Conservation Congress. WCC’s Joel Taylor presented the award.

activities like fishing, hunting and other shooting sports. 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 Big Brothers Big Sisters, Pheasants Forever, the National Shooting Sports Foundation, Delta Waterfowl, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the 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.

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation Accepts MAFWA President's Award

by Bob Matthews, Senior Coordinator, Great Lakes States - Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

During the fall and winter, Lambeau Field in Green Bay, Wisconsin is a common hunting ground for Lions and Bears, but this summer it served as the meeting site for the 89th Annual Midwestern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, or MAFWA, Directors' Meeting. The location of this annual meeting rotates each year between MAFWA's member states, which span from the Dakotas to Ohio and as far south as Missouri. Attending the meeting offers these state fish and wildlife agency Directors the opportunity to discuss shared challenges and potential solutions to effectively manage the storied wildlife populations that Midwestern sportsmen and women have pursued for centuries.

The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, or CSF, attended all four days of the meeting, engaging in important discussions with agency directors on issues relevant to the sporting heritage that CSF exists to protect. During the Awards Luncheon, CSF accepted the MAFWA President's Award, which was presented "in recognition of more than 30 years of commitment to inform, influence, and defend policies that protect and promote outdoor traditions." Through working with its National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses, which is

comprised of approximately 2,000 state legislators from all fifty states that are committed to securing policies that benefit sportsmen and women, CSF can effectively advocate for legislation that benefits hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers. Oftentimes, this entails going to bat to defeat legislation that would strip state fish and wildlife agencies of management authority.



Properly and effectively managing wildlife populations requires nuanced and informed decision-making, and CSF works diligently to ensure that management authority is wielded by state agencies which are staffed with experienced wildlife experts that are well-versed in employing science-based wildlife management.

However, supporting state agency management authority does not mean that CSF supports every decision made or position held by those agencies. In

February of this year, CSF submitted public comments to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) regarding its draft Wolf Management Plan, requesting that the DNR include language in the final version that would implement a framework for population management that includes hunting for when the wolf is inevitably delisted from the federal list of endangered species. More recently, in early July of this year, CSF opposed an emergency rule promulgated by the Minnesota DNR that prohibited lead ammunition from being used by hunters on certain state lands.

CSF has worked in the halls of government for more than thirty years to earn the reputation as the trusted voice of sportsmen and women. Thanks to that reputation, CSF can oppose individual policies adopted by agencies that may be harmful to the outdoor sporting

community, while nonetheless maintaining strong working relationships with those agencies. Achieving victories in the conservation policy realm is a difficult business, but as indicated by receiving the MAFWA President's Award, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation is committed to securing future opportunities for hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers to pursue and enjoy the outdoor traditions and species that they have for generations.

SCI WI & IWLA Help OHEC Launch

MOBILE CLOSET

Loaner gear, boots, and clothes help remove barrier for recruiting new hunters

by Pat Scuzzin

Daniel and Brenda Syvrud shook their heads in disbelief as they looked at the footwear of students arriving for the Learn to Hunt Pheasants event at their Windy Corner Wings hunting preserve in Lafayette County. They saw sneakers, open-toed sandals, street shoes, and only a few hunting boots. What part of "Wear appropriate clothes and footwear" did young people not understand? That was the day volunteer mentor Mark LaBarbera of the Outdoor Heritage Education Center decided to create the OHEC (pronounced OH'-heck) Mobile Closet.

The need was evident as he, Dave Breuning, and Fayette Sportsman's Club members looked at what students were wearing...or not wearing, like no socks for some new hunters. A few things were clear. First, newcomers don't always know the basics of what's needed to stay comfortable afield. Second, students of all ages may not want to or be able to invest in those

basic needs, especially as they are just starting to decide if hunting is something they only want to try or if it is an activity they will adopt long-term as a lifestyle.

The third thing that became clear is that it would be expensive for any mentor or club to donate to each student everything needed to outfit them for a Learn to Hunt experience.

And that's when the idea emerged to provide free use of loaner clothing and gear, new or used, and to create a mobile closet in an enclosed trailer that comes to where the new students gather for Learn to Hunts and other events.

So, with help from Safari Club International's Wisconsin Chapter and the Wisconsin Division of Izaak Walton League of America, OHEC Founder Mark LaBarbera purchased an enclosed trailer and built the first OHEC Mobile Closet by adding shelves and racks, storage tubs, and exterior graphics. The outdoor writer and editor who served on the gun industry's

National Shooting Sports Foundation Board of Governors donated a lot of his own gear "that shrunk in the laundry." LaBarbera's gear included high quality outerwear and boots from his years as a member of the international Gore-Tex Hunting Advisory Council. SCI and IWLA funding helped add so much gear in so many sizes that OHEC is already looking for more trailers that could be outfitted and stationed in different areas that would make it convenient and easily accessible in other areas where there are needs related to connecting people with outdoor activities.

This OHEC Mobile Closet is owned & operated by the Outdoor Heritage Education Center as part of its R3 program to Recruit, Retain, & Reactivate hunters and other recreational shooting sports enthusiasts. Learn more at www.OHECyes.org. OHEC welcomes donations of new or used footwear, clothing, gear, cash & gas gift cards. Contact office@OHECyes.org



Deer Dung'.....

Pick up deer poo-poo tips, like can you tell bucks from does by their droppings?

by Kip Adams, NDA

Can you tell a whitetail buck from a doe by the shape or size of deer droppings? How many times a day does a deer poop? Great questions. The sex thing works for turkeys. Gobbler droppings are "J" shaped while hens' are spiral. It also works for elk as bull droppings are dimpled on one end while cows are typically tapered on both ends. But does this hold true for deer?

Deer feces come in many shapes, sizes and colors, and they're referred to by many names – scat, droppings and pellets to name a few. We can learn much from deer pellets, while some things we can't. Let's take a look.

Pellet Personalities

In general, deer pellets change with the seasons based primarily on the deer's diet and specifically on its water content. Although deer droppings are usually observed in groups of dark brown, oblong pellets, succulent spring foods can produce soft, clumped masses while dry winter foods produce hard, fibrous pellets.



When deer scat is fresh it has a shiny, wet appearance from an outer covering of mucous-like material, which is gone in a matter of hours as it is

exposed to the elements. As scat ages it becomes lighter in color and the plant fibers become more visible. There's even a slight difference in the number of pellets as does average 50 to 60 while bucks crank out 70 to 80 pellets per bowel movement.

Deer Dung Data

With some analysis in a lab, you can determine the quality of the deer's diet and even estimate the amount of grain or supplemented ration it received. You can determine what the deer was eating, its protein content, and more. You can even detect and measure a stress hormone called cortisol to study how deer are affected by factors like predators and weather. Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania and the Wildlife Futures Program are even training dogs to identify the presence of chronic wasting disease in the environment via deer pellets.

Bathroom Breaks

Deer managers have used pellet group counts since at least the 1950s to estimate deer density, although studies show a deer's daily defecation rate ranges from 13 to 34 times per day based on diet, relative age (fawns go more than adults), and time of year. In general, deer go an average of 10 to 15 times per day during

fall and winter and 20 to 30 times per day during spring and summer. And you thought you spent a lot of time in the bathroom!



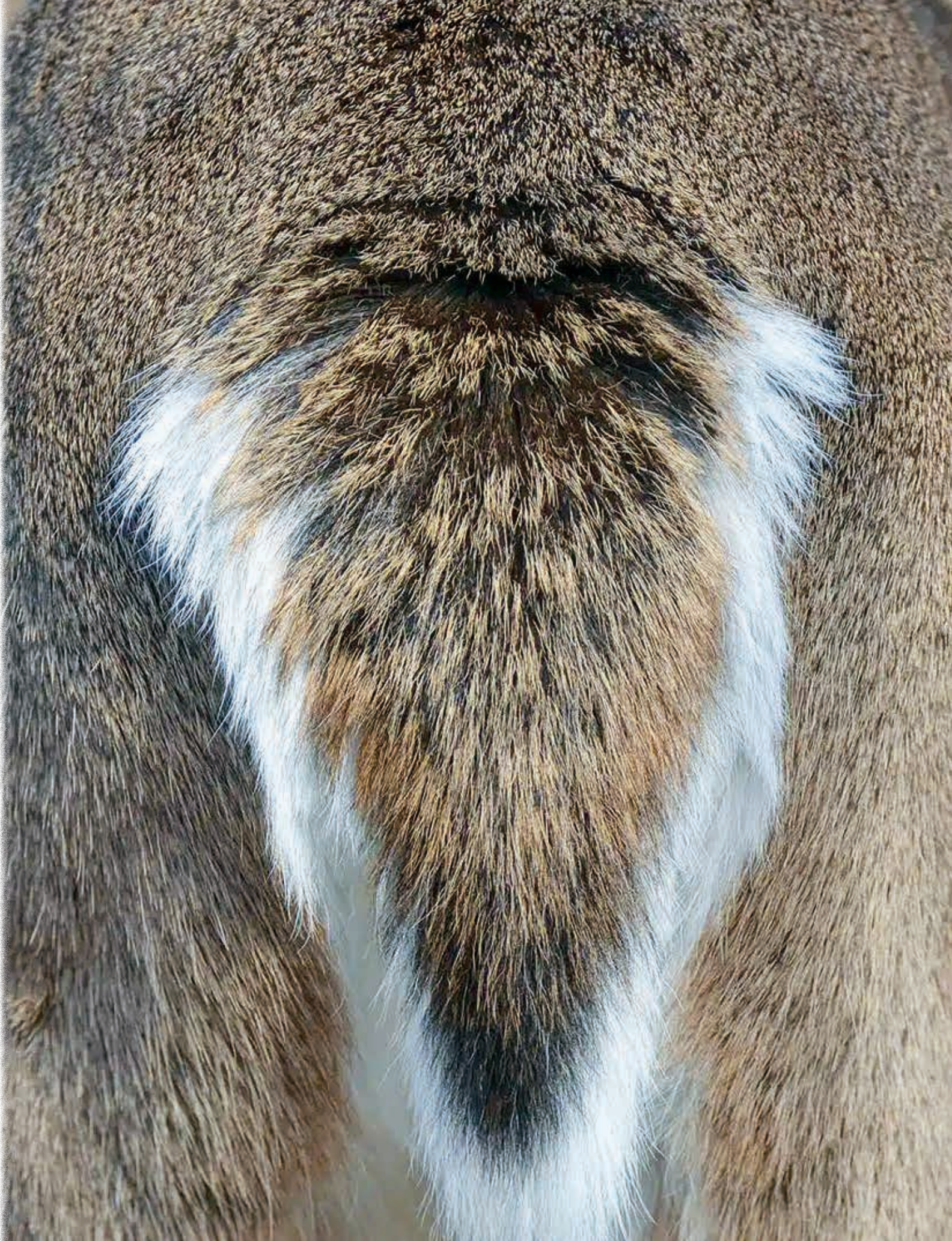
A doe averages 50 to 60 pellets per group. Bucks average 70 to 80.

So, you can determine several things about whitetails by their feces such as food sources they've eaten and the quality of that food. You can estimate the number of animals in an area by the number of pellet groups and whether any of those animals have CWD. You may even be able to estimate the relative size of the animal based on the size of the droppings, but you cannot distinguish between the sexes based on the shape of their droppings. That woodsman's skill is reserved for elk and turkey hunters.

Join the National Deer Association free at <https://deerassociation.com/basic-membership/>

About Kip Adams:

Kip Adams of Knoxville, Pennsylvania, is a certified wildlife biologist and NDA's Chief Conservation Officer. He has a bachelor's degree in wildlife and fisheries science from Penn State University and a master's in wildlife from the University of New Hampshire. He's also a certified taxidermist. Before joining NDA, Kip was the deer and bear biologist for the New Hampshire Fish & Game Department. Kip and his wife Amy have a daughter, Katie, and a son, Bo.



Northeast Wisconsin Chapter Update

by Marty Witczak, President

Summer has ended and so has my summer season of trap. My team of five did an excellent job! I am proud of the growth in skill and persistence to improve each time we shot as a team. I take my hat off to Randy Revels, Louie Spanbauer, Chris Witczak, Bill Patek and of course myself as captain! Hopefully, these team members will all be back next summer to participate again! We have a winning team!

It has been a while since my wife and I returned home from our Scotland/Ireland trip and hunt of a lifetime. We had the honor to be guests of Michael and Danielle Grosse, the owners of International Adventures Unlimited Inc. I was hunting for a red stag and any other animal that I envi-



famous for, a small and beautifully colored roe deer. We took this trip in September of 2021 and in the month of July 2023, I got a call from the taxidermist Brad Miller, who personally accompanies Michael and Danielle while they are hosting all their fall hunts in Scotland and who was the taxidermist that prepared my mounts, that he had completed them and they were ready to be picked up. Brad just so happens to reside in southern Wisconsin and so I gassed up my vehicle and set out to pick them up. I was filled with excitement as I drove to my destination! Once there, as I gazed at those three beautiful mounts, I could not believe they were mine and in my thoughts I could not thank Michael Grosse enough for the expert hunting experience that he had promised, and I had experienced. It is with pleasure that I share these trophies with all of you in these attached photos! I honestly do not know



sioned on my walls at home. I ended up with a massive 48-inch-spread red stag, a beautiful white fallow deer and of course a trophy that Scotland is



if it can get any better than this! I am beyond happy!!

The excitement is growing as the board, and I have thoughts of the 2024 Hunting and Fishing Show and our 25th annual SCI Live Auction and Banquet. We will be back at the brand-new Stadium View in Green Bay Wisconsin. Let me explain, the Stadium View is not new, but the banquet hall has had a significant facelift! Check out these photos of the beautiful new renovations! The weekend of outfitters, hunting and fishing trophies, merchandise to purchase and of course the delicious munchies will be here before you know it and is happening the weekend of February 23rd through the 25th. The accommodation for the banquet and live auction is warm and inviting for all so we hope you plan to attend. Follow Northeast Wisconsin SCI Chapters Facebook page for what is happening locally and of course visit our SCI website for all our up-to-date activities and some national news!



Randy's Grandson

SCI Badgerland Chapter Past President Randy Mayes is passing along his outdoor heritage. First, he signed up his grandson, Elisha Jensen, as an SCI Badgerland Chapter member. Then he took him fishing. Here's a photo of Elisha with a couple of fish he caught this spring. He caught the bass on a Mister Twister and the sunfish on a worm.



Seasons of Change

by Justin Loehrke

There is very little in life that I enjoy more than archery hunting. Like many SCI members, I bounce with excitement as the season arrives, only to find myself still sitting motionless in a stand months later. As fall turns to winter, my excitement continues to grow. There is something special about the woods and the elements when most have moved on to other pursuits.

The cold crisp weather provides laser focus. Time stands still with the plummeting of the mercury. One afternoon last December, I climbed into my happy place with high expectations. But to really appreciate this story, we must go a little farther back. It was late October of 2021, and my siblings and I were providing 24-hour care of our dying father. My sister was taking over for me that evening, so I decided to shoot my bow while dad was resting. After I just got done shooting a few arrows at 50 yards, dad started to awake from his nap, so I quickly put my bow away.

The next morning found me in one of my stands nestled between a couple bedding areas. It wasn't long after the sun started to greet me, I heard the rustling of cattails and the sound of a grunting buck. Our local white doe came hustling past the stand at fifteen yards, and following behind her was a buck I decided I would shoot if presented with the opportunity.

Everything was perfect as the buck passed the stand on the same trail. I brought my bow to full draw and

settled the pin behind his shoulder. As I squeezed the trigger on my release, I was already making plans to show dad. You can imagine my surprise as I watched the arrow harmlessly sail over the buck's back. As the buck walked away slowly, my mind struggled to climb through the previous events. Then it dawned on me. In my haste to put my bow away the previous night, I had forgotten to adjust my sight pin from when I was shooting 50 yards. Before I knew it, he was gone.

My father passed away in early November so other priorities consumed my time and thoughts. As the calendar turned from December to January, the draw of sitting out one last time was too great for me to pass up. I climbed into a blind overlooking a food plot. The cold weather had the wildlife moving early and it wasn't long before deer exited the woods into the field. Before closing time arrived, I watched numerous bucks pass by my location. One of the bucks was the same buck I had missed a couple months earlier.

Surviving this long is an achievement for a buck of his age, and usually requires the deer catching a few breaks along the way. Little did I know, but he was going to catch his second break from me. Everything was perfect as he passed by, but I just couldn't bring myself to squeeze the release on the last day. I felt like I could hear my dad whispering in my ear, "let's see what he will look like next year."

Fast forward to next year. By late August, I started getting trail camera pictures. He had added six points, some mass, and a whole bunch of character. I also was getting pictures of a couple other nice bucks. There was only one problem. I had won a trip to Buffalo County Outfitters, and I needed an unfilled archery tag to go. With the hunt scheduled for late October, I quickly made the decision to target only that specific buck before my trip.

On my first sit in September, one of the other nice bucks decided to test

my resolve, but I found peace in letting him walk by unharmed. I also found myself at full draw with a good Buffalo County buck in my sights in late October, but the draw of chasing the buck back home was too great.

Our firearms season came and went without a sighting. But it didn't take long, and I started getting trail camera pictures letting me know he had survived.

My excitement climbed with each rung of the ladder as I got nestled back into my happy place on December 18th.

With the bitter cold temps, the turkeys fed through the field, and I was surrounded by a plethora of birds and other wildlife. A rooster pheasant worked his way through the strip of Egyptian wheat while a hawk sat in the top of a cottonwood tree eating his feast for the day.

Soon, deer started to filter into the field. Two little bucks battled it out at the edge of the woods. Suddenly they snapped apart and locked onto something moving through the woods.

Based on their reaction, I knew a good buck was headed my way. I grabbed my phone as I didn't want to miss the shot. At the first glimpse of antlers coming through the brush, I recognized the buck. I snapped a couple pictures as he made his way to the field and worked a scrape. As he followed another buck out into the field, I swapped my phone for my bow. In an instant, it was over. The storybook ending brought my bow season to a close, but not before the first few chapters of my next archery season were already written.



Justin returned from hand-planting behind his dad's tractor.



The local white doe delivered a brown fawn.



These views show the antler mass.



Illinois Shares Urban Coyote Research

Max McGraw had an insatiable curiosity about the natural world, and through the Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation he tried to encourage that same curiosity and activism in others. SCI members in Illinois are aware that, as a result, McGraw is known worldwide as a leader in wildlife research and education.

Much of its work has been done in cooperation with federal, state, and local agencies, which recognize the expertise of our scientists.

In its early years, McGraw concentrated on the science of raising gamebirds in captivity, in hopes of sustaining huntable populations of pheasants, partridge, quail, and waterfowl. The groundbreaking techniques developed on the property still guide game farm managers across North

America. Other research ranging from bats to butterflies, waterfowl and wetlands has been documented in research papers, scientific journals, and many publications.

As time went on, McGraw expanded its scope to focus on mammals, particularly those that live in urban surroundings and as such, have frequent interactions with humans. While McGraw researchers have studied feral cats, raccoons, deer, and other creatures, we are best known for our work on Chicago's burgeoning coyote population.

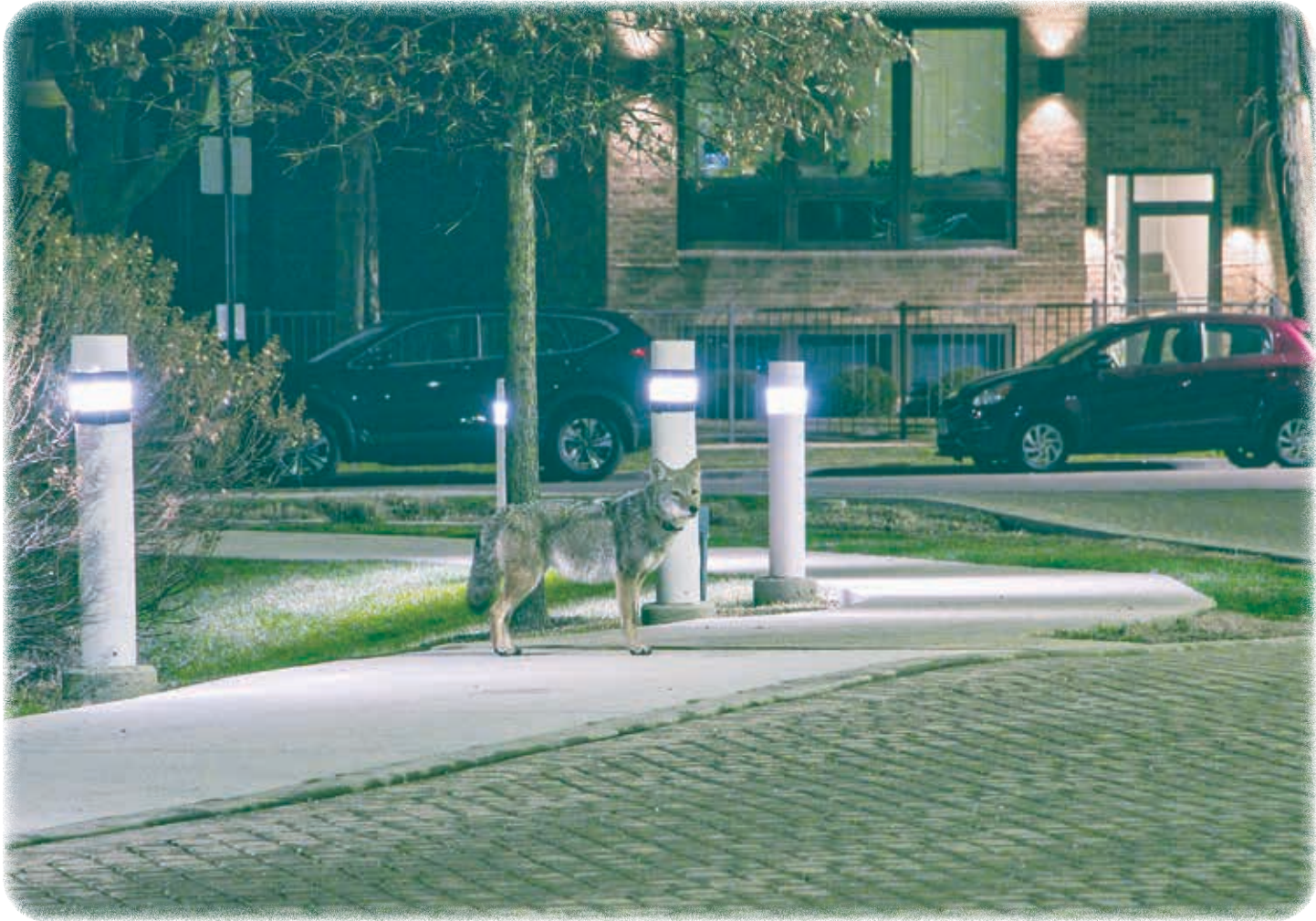
The Urban Coyote Research Project is led by Dr. Stan Gehrt, chair of McGraw's wildlife research and a professor with The Ohio State University. For more than 20 years, Dr. Gehrt and his teams have partnered with Ohio State, Cook County Animal

Control, and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County.

By live-capturing and tracking hundreds of coyotes, McGraw's researchers have contributed extensively to our knowledge of how coyotes have become the leading mammalian predator in North American cities, and how humans can better co-exist with them. Dr. Gehrt's work has been featured by some of the world's most prominent media organizations, including National Geographic and the BBC.

SCI members and other hunters welcome real-world science on coyotes and other species that add to our knowledge of these animals and the natural world.

We will share interesting research findings in future issues of SCI HUNTERS magazine.



LaBarbera Leaves WWF

by J. Sindberg

Wisconsin Wildlife Federation Executive Director Mark LaBarbera, an SCI and Sables Life Member who had also served as Director of Marketing & Communications at SCI World HQ in Tucson announced his retirement in a June 10 resignation letter to WWF President Kevyn Quamme. At SCI, he served under three presidents, beginning with Dennis Anderson of California, then Merle Shepherd of Michigan, and ending with Dr. Larry Rudolph of Pennsylvania.

Citing three recent changes to his personal situation that have moved him to "re-retire," LaBarbera said: "My personal situation has changed in the time since I came out of retirement to accept the WWF Executive Director job. My 96-year-old mother can no longer live independently and has moved into our home. My wife and I have become her primary caregivers."



Grandpa Mark will be spending more fun time with Coni, Rachel and Jordy.

He also wrote, "Only-child Rachel and her husband Alex Zeller recently delivered our first grandchild."

The third and most recent change related to his wife's career: "And recently Coni accepted greater responsibilities with the Sinsinawa Dominicans which currently require her to stay overnight away from home 2-3 evenings per week."

LaBarbera's last day as WWF Executive Director was August 5, 2023.

In 2023, the 66-year-old LaBarbera started his third year as WWF Executive

Director. He was hired April 5, 2020, coming out of retirement at the urging of WWF Past Presidents Ralph Fritsch, Jerry Knuth, and others. He took over when George Meyer retired from approximately 18 years of leading the Federation. Enshrined in the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame, Meyer is a lawyer and former Secretary of the Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources who has remained involved as a WWF volunteer and Honorary Director.

LaBarbera's accomplishments during his years as WWF Executive Director add to his more than 43 years of success nationally, and his work is being praised by current WWF Officers, affiliated members, collaborating organizations, and fellow conservation leaders no matter their political leaning. At its recent board meeting, WWF Directors heard LaBarbera stress the importance of "conservation without conflict" and non-partisanship so leaders focus on doing what's right for conservation and our outdoor heritage.

Wisconsin Natural Resources Board Chair Bill Smith, who addressed the Federation's annual meeting, praised their hiring decision in the face of having "big shoes to fill," and described LaBarbera as one of the most connected conservation leaders with the right mix of skills for the job.

LaBarbera said, "I feel blessed to have had the opportunity with the Federation to work with so many new friends and



National Wildlife Federation outgoing Board Chair Ken Salazar and Mark LaBarbera.

collaborators from all across Wisconsin and the country. I'm sure we'll find time to work together on programs and projects that connect youth and adults with the outdoors as my personal situation allows in the future."



Iwla national leaders Don Klecker, Patty Nunn, and Vicki Arnold.

Fellow lobbyist Dan Trawicki of Safari Club International said he enjoys working with LaBarbera on a variety of issues, including trying to gain legal access across railroad tracks for outdoors enthusiasts along the Mississippi River and throughout the state.

"Mark and I have talked a number of times since his big announcement," he



LaBarbera, Tony Blattler, Dan Trawicki, and George Meyer worked on RR crossing access and other issues at the Capital.



said, "and he will have more time now to hunt and fish, and to collaborate on the issues that are important to all of us SCI members. Whether it's at the Capital or throughout Wisconsin or nationally and internationally, SCI can count on Mark to add to our success."

Trawicki first hunted with Mark more than 40 years ago along with Cousin Patrick LaBarbera, who said, "He's not leaving. Anyone who knows Mark as long as I have will tell you that the shooting sports, conservation, and especially outdoor education and recruitment of new hunters, anglers, and target shooters will always be in Mark's DNA, so he will always continue to do more than his fair share of the heavy lifting. I don't know how he does it."

Nationally, LaBarbera was chosen by peers to be Vice Chair of the National Wildlife Federation's Hunting, Angling Working Group (HAWG) working on federal and state efforts to advance conservation, the shooting sports, fishing and boating, youth education and recruitment, and landscape restoration initiatives, grasslands, the Great Lakes, and Mississippi River basin, plus CWD and other issues. He helps lead the Wisconsin Coalition for Recovering



OHEC provided critical support for a new Cuba City school trap team with Becky and Terry Curtis.

America's Wildlife Act which could generate about \$18 million for Wisconsin.

Ruth Ann Lee, Executive Director of the Outdoor Heritage Education Center, which LaBarbera founded 25 years ago, said she is looking forward to having more of Mark's time to fulfill OHEC's mission of connecting people with nature and outdoor activities like hunting and fishing. She said OHEC has a series of new initiatives that will be making news, on top of recent major

accomplishments that SCI supports like setting attendance records for the Midwest Outdoor Heritage Education Expo at MacKenzie Center in Poynette, 2023 expansion of MOHEE to Havenwoods State Forest in Milwaukee, and growth of the Touch of the Wild sensory safari trailer fleet to five mobile



Mark LaBarbera with Collin O'Mara, National Wildlife Federation Executive Director.

education units, with a sixth on the drawing board, plus OHEC helping Badgerland Chapter dramatically increase use of its sensory safari trailer.

SCI Region 16 Representative and former Wisconsin Chapter President Charmaine Wargolet said she was relieved to hear that LaBarbera would continue to stay involved with both OHEC and SCI, including publishing the award-winning HUNTERS magazine. She talked about how important it is to have people who know how to get things done and have time to do it plus people and organizations like SCI that provide critical funding and



The welcome light is on at WDNR for LaBarbera who is known as a positive, get-it-done collaborator at all levels in the agency.

valuable input to make things happen sooner than later.

DNR Secretary-Designee Adam Payne told LaBarbera when they were in Madison for the quarterly gathering of hook and bullet conservation group leaders July 18 that he has appreciated the personal input as well as coverage in SCI HUNTERS magazine, and that he hoped LaBarbera might be available for important projects or initiatives.

LaBarbera has been a trusted collaborator for a number of DNR Secretaries, administrators, and staff. He was simultaneously the Minnesota DNR's Communications Director and Information & Education Chief based in St. Paul before returning to his home state of Wisconsin. In Minnesota, he convinced the Mall of America to add a hands-on educational "Touch of the Wild Woods" to its world-class Underwater Adventures aquarium attraction. And he launched and co-hosted on Twin Cities Public Television a "Touch of the Wild" weekly outdoor news and education program.

The Minnesota Chapter of SCI and Gander Mountain were the first two sponsors of the first two Touch of the Wild trailers and OHEC's Fun-of-a-Gun mobile airgun range that LaBarbera and friends built in the back of a former U-haul truck.

The DNR here had him write the strategic plan that continues to guide the growth of the Youth Conservation



Congress. He has served on WDNR's State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) task force and contributed to other committees and working groups to help set direction, and he is one of a small handful of "externals" that participated in hiring panels for the current R3 Supervisor, senior wildlife biologists, and other key positions. He and Harold Drake of Juneau continue to contribute as non-DNR reps who volunteer on the shooting range grant review



LaBarbera joined executives of Remington, Browning, Federal, and dozens of other industry leaders decades ago to focus on recruitment, retention, and reactivation initiatives before anyone coined the term "R3."

team that last year worked with a budget of \$800,000 for clubs and ranges throughout Wisconsin. They are working with a similar budget for this year's applications which were due in July.

Former Friends of Poynette Game Farm President Paul Mayer said, "Mark and I worked together for years to push for the new hatchery that serves Learn to Hunt Pheasants organizers all across Wisconsin, plus our group helped launch new R3 events. He still blames me for convincing him about 10 years ago to volunteer time to launch one of 24 Friends of NRA fundraisers and to serve on the State Funding Committee that doled out hundreds of thousands of dollars for ranges, school trap shooting

teams, MOHEE, and other things like the Friends of Poynette Game Farm's Learn to Hunt equipment trailers. I'll say this: He gets it, and he gets things done."

LaBarbera remains on the Wisconsin Sporting Heritage Council as its longest serving member since inception, and he is a Lafayette County delegate to the Wisconsin Conservation Congress. He works closely with WCC and Friends of WCC leaders like Rob Bohmann, Scott Gunderson, Ed Harvey, and Tim Andryk, Trent Tonn, Bob Haase, Harold Drake, and others.

He said he will continue to serve on the Executive Committee of the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin through the end of the year, where he is the former Treasurer, Vice Chair, and last year's Chairman of the Board. During his tenure, NRF more than doubled its financial strength, established its operational endowment, added the LaBarbera-Vaughn Outdoor Heritage Education Fund, quadrupled the Cherish Wisconsin Outdoor Fund with voluntary donations from license-buyers and others, completed strategic plans, and successfully hired and onboarded new NRF Executive Director David Clutter.

People who have known LaBarbera since his early days at West Allis Nathan Hale High School will tell you that he has



Cabela's Randy Christensen and WWF President Kevyn Quamme of North Bristol Sportsmen's Club agree that a day of fishing and shooting is always a good one.

always been a leader and communicator, including as Student Council President and Editor of the student paper. He worked summer jobs at Milwaukee County Zoo, caddying at Westmoor Country Club in New Berlin, and Camp Rio Vista counselor and archery instructor in the Texas Hill Country near Kerrville. While still in high school he was



Joint Finance Committee Co-Chair Sen. Howard Marklein delivered the Wisconsin Blue Book to LaBarbera.

hired by Post Newspapers as a writer/photographer covering government, and occasionally the outdoors. He put himself through UW-Milwaukee in three-and-a-half years with Post paychecks and a Teamster job loading semi's at night at the Gateway Trucking terminal in West Allis. With a bachelor's degree in mass communications and minor in Spanish, he was hired by Glenn Helgeland as Associate Editor on national archery/bowhunting and camping magazines. The Marketshare Communications offices were in the same downtown building as National & International Wildlife Magazines, his first exposure to the National Wildlife Federation.

Only a year later, he accepted an offer to be Editor of a new Minneapolis-based organization, the North American Hunting Club and North American Hunter magazine. From 1980 to 1998, he and they grew exponentially. One of a handful of employees, LaBarbera helped grow NAHC to more than a half-million members before launching from scratch a North American Fishing Club, then a Handyman Club, Gardening Club, Cooking Club, and others. LaBarbera advanced to Publisher and Sr. VP, and part owner, overseeing magazines, websites, books, videos, and TV shows on ESPN and other channels or networks. Friends will tell you that he often reminisces about hunting and fishing adventures on various continents and most states and provinces made possible by his outdoor "job." The parent corporation for the clubs became North American Membership Group with more than two million members combined. PGA Tour and others teamed



OHEC's Bob & Peggy Besecker delivered \$1,000 to help launch the Platteville clays team.

up with NAMG to more than double its PGA Tour Partners membership. When Outdoor Life flew him to New York, wine and dined him, and offered him a job he had dreamed of since his childhood days when he would tape pages of photos from that magazine on his bedroom wall, he ultimately declined.

He told me, "I didn't want to live in New York, and I was already working for a national magazine plus living where I could see wildlife every day and launch my boat on a dozen different lakes within 15 minutes of home."

SCI Past President Don McMillan was an early friend and mentor who, along with Doug Evans and Sven Lindquist, served SCI and the cause together for decades. They worked with outdoor celebrities like Ron & Al Lindner, Babe Winkelman and Ron Schara, plus NFL Hall of Fame Coach Bud Grant who was an avid outdoorsman. Most notable was

LaBarbera's role as volunteer chair of the Minnesota Outdoor Heritage Alliance which built a coalition of outdoor groups, media, and celebs that helped lay the groundwork for one of the country's first initiatives resulting in a percentage of the state sales tax being dedicated to conservation and the arts. It continues to generate millions for Minnesota projects and programs.

LaBarbera talked about his most vivid memories of it, recalling, "I remember sitting across the desk from State Senate Finance Committee Chair in his St. Paul office when he explained that the only way this would pass is if a percentage of it also went to fund public radio, museums, and the arts for his St. Paul constituents and others who were



not necessarily supporters of hunting and fishing. It was a reality check and life-long lesson that stills reminds me to work to understand all of the forces at play in any situation."

During his nearly 20 years at NAMG, he helped launch the highly successful Wildlife Forever nonprofit group and served on its Executive Board. While at NAMG his dedication to outdoor education, recruitment, and conservation, along with his strategic planning, marketing, and communications skills, were recognized nationally, and he remains the only person to have served on all of the following national Boards:

- National Shooting Sports Foundation Board of Governors
- American Sportfishing Association



LaBarbera helped start and sustain the big Hazel Green clay target team.

- Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation
- Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
- Tread Lightly
- Becoming an Outdoors Woman National Steering Committee with Dr. Christine Thomas.

Thomas, the Dean Emerita now from UW-Stevens Point who is a long-time member and friend of SCI, will tell you that LaBarbera helped B.O.W. at critical times in its history.

He also served on the Board of the Wildlife Legislative Fund of America, which is now the Sportsmen's Alliance. In addition to the conservation and industry leadership roles,

LaBarbera was selected by peers to be President & Board Chair for both the Association of Great Lakes Outdoor Writers and the Outdoor Writers



WWF First VP Connie Polzin, Dan Small, and Bob Haase at one of Mark's favorites, Wild Eagle Lodge in Eagle River.

Association of America (which included the guys from Outdoor Life).

In addition to many local, state, and national communications awards, he has served as a Federal Duck Stamp Judge.

I asked LaBarbera, "If someone did a trivia quiz about you, what are some



Mark joked with fellow federal duck stamp judge and conservationist Jeanette (Cantrell) Rudy, a daughter of the American Revolution who owned a rare original Ding Darling stamp as part of her world class collection.



The federal duck stamp judges included outdoor writer Tim Eisele and NFL Hall of Famer Dave Butz who let Mark try on three of his Super Bowl Rings. Any bigger, LaBarbera said, and the rings could have been bracelets!

things most likely to stump contestants which most folks wouldn't know?"

He said, "I don't know. Maybe that I can be as happy hunting turkeys, bowfishing for carp, or flyfishing for panfish as I can taking another lion, buff, or leopard. Oh, here's another one. Two of my most treasured earthly possessions are a giant grizzly bear trap from Jim Shockey and a picture he autographed 'Mark, Thanks for giving me my first shot in this wonderful industry.' I gave Jim his first U.S. magazine column in North American Hunter and invited him to join me on a Vancouver Island black bear muzzleloader hunt for our TV

show on ESPN or ESPN2. He ended up buying that Pacific Rim Outfitters business. He and Louise have always impressed me as a class act, and we have remained friends. I give him "guff", as he would say, that he has become such a success and celebrity in the last 30-or-so years. It's fun seeing their kids Eva and Branlin grow into class acts with the same humility and intelligence and creative talent as their parents."

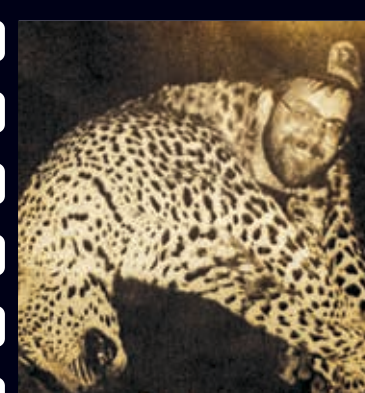
During the year after NAMG sold and he cashed out, he launched the charitable nonprofit Outdoor Heritage Education Center and volunteered his time to guide it while also dedicating time daily to help friend Rod Johnson through a final year with terminal brain cancer. The star in the OHEC logo represents Rod as a guiding light who helped navigate the nonprofit's startup.

After Johnson died, LaBarbera was consumed with consulting work, like organizing two U.S. summits for the National Shooting Sports Foundation, and working on the Hunting Heritage

Trust, plus an early gig involving EA Sports' deer hunt video game.

Looking at LaBarbera's photo album, you see a common thread of giving back and passing along our outdoor heritage. In the SCORP you read about his mother's inter-

est in fishing, and throughout his newspaper and magazine work, you see him sharing what he learned from his parents, Betty and Joe LaBarbera, and other mentors along the way. LaBarbera is like the OHEC logo with its hidden eagle, fish, and wolf, in that the closer you look the more interesting things you discover. SCI and others will keep looking and keep supporting the interesting initiatives LaBarbera is involved in wherever his post-WWF years take us.



Cat Gut Can Kill CWD Prion

by Lindsay Thomas, Jr.

Chronic wasting disease prions are the Chuck Norris of infectious materials. Incinerating them at 1,112°F will only slightly degrade their infectivity, and you must hit 1,800°F to destroy them. They are just fine left out in the environment for years, outside an animal host, without losing infectious potential. They can even survive a trip through the guts of coyotes and crows and still infect deer. It's tough to kill something that isn't really living to begin with.

But we can now lengthen the short list of things that destroy CWD prions. A trial with mountain lions and a separate study with bobcats – neither of which appear to be susceptible to CWD infection – found only about 2 to 3% of the prions that entered the front ends of these cats made it out the back ends. Both studies were shared recently at the International CWD Symposium in Denver.

The Mountain Lion Study

Chase Baune of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases in Montana led a study in which two captive mountain lions were fed ground mule deer spiked with CWD prions.

"We recovered only 2.8 to 3.9% of input CWD prions after passage through the mountain lions' gastrointestinal tracts," Chase wrote in his report. "Interestingly, CWD prions were shed only in the first defecation following consumption. Our data... suggest that most of the ingested prions are eliminated or sequestered by this large predator."

Rapid excretion is a good thing, because mountain lions tend to stay close to a deer or elk carcass for days as they consume it. Though their digestive tracts appear to be destroying 96% or more of the prions they eat, the few that make it through aren't likely to be scattered far from the kill site. Chase

also pointed to other studies showing mountain lions tend to select CWD-infected mule deer over healthy prey. All this means mountain lions may be a helpful though minor factor in western outbreak zones by targeting infected deer and elk and then digesting many of the infective prions they are carrying.

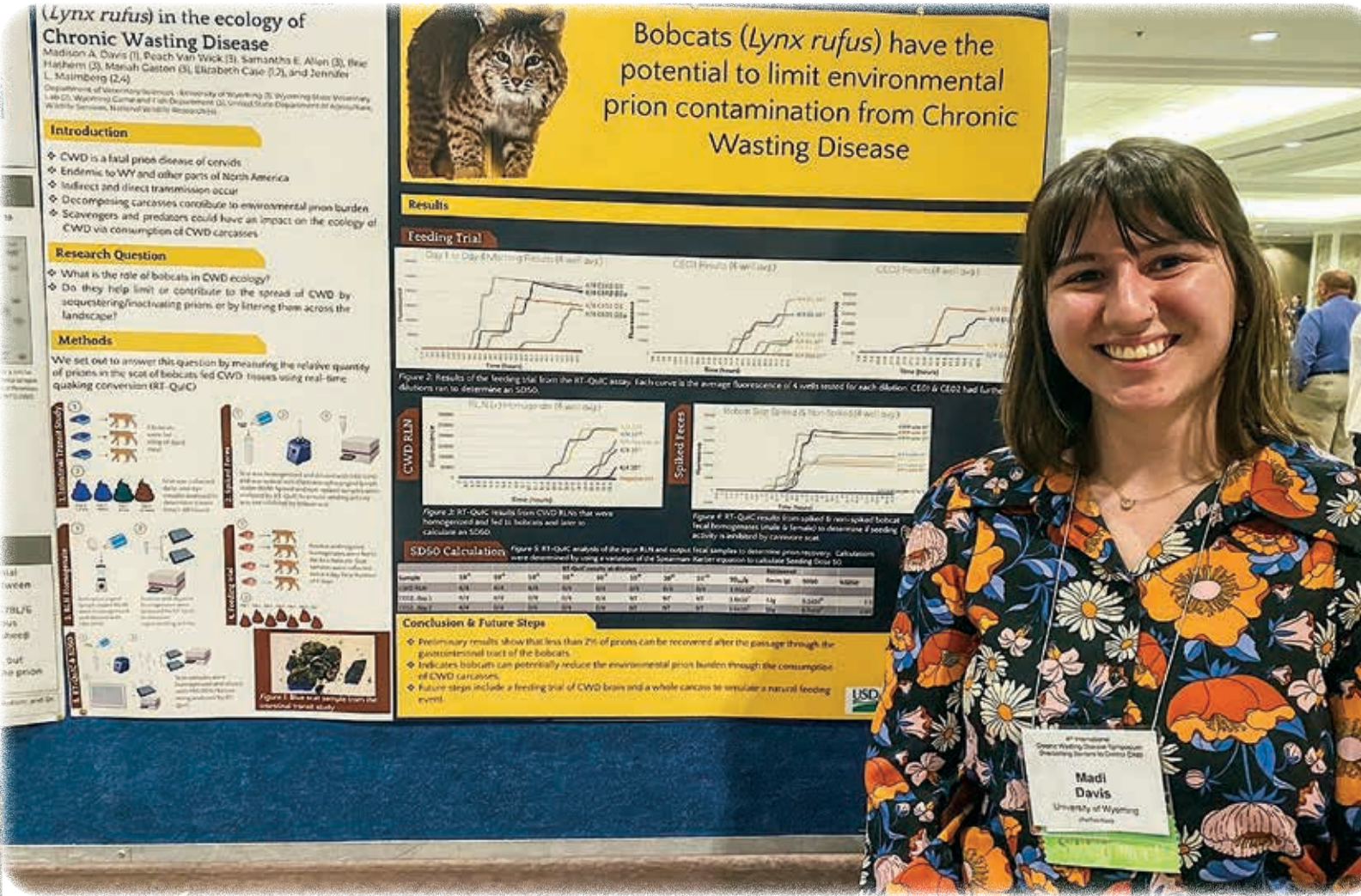
The Bobcat Study

In a similar study at the University of Wyoming, graduate student Madi Davis fed ground beef spiked with CWD-positive elk lymph nodes to three bobcats. A fourth bobcat, the "control," was fed the same beef without the infective CWD material. Madi recovered less than 2% of the CWD prions from the three study bobcats. She is moving on to new tests using whole deer and elk brains and then whole carcasses fed to the four bobcats.

"I also now want to determine the stability of these prions left in the



This deer was not killed by a bobcat. NDA member Gil Lackey used the carcass of a buck he killed as bait for his trail-camera and caught this bobcat scavenging meat. Bobcats are not significant predators of adult deer, but as this photo shows they will scavenge dead deer.



Madi Davis of the University of Wyoming presented her bobcat study as a poster display at the International CWD Symposium in Denver

bobcat's poop because there could be a chance that the 2% we are recovering is a lot less stable in the environment compared to what a deer is shedding," said Madi.

Where Did the CWD Prions Go?

What is happening to the vanishing prions in both cat species? In the mountain lion study, examination did not locate prions collecting in the cats' bodies or organs, which suggests the missing prions must have been fully digested. I asked Madi the same question about the bobcats.

"After talking with a few other scientists, my theory is that bobcats and other obligate carnivores have more enzymes in their GI tract that can degrade proteins," said Madi. "I also think that the microbiome of these animals could potentially contribute to this degradation as well, but I suspect that it is less likely than the digestive enzymes. I'm hoping that I can test these theories in a few years."

Obligate means these cats require an almost total meat diet for nutrition, unlike coyotes which eat a wide range of fruits and other foods. Therefore, lion and bobcat digestive systems may be more efficient at digesting proteins, which includes CWD prions.

Feline Friends in the Fight

While bobcats are far more numerous and widespread than mountain lions, and their range overlaps most of the whitetail's, they are not significant predators of adult deer – though they will scavenge deer carcasses. It's likely CWD-infected deer are more susceptible to bobcats than healthy deer, but still not likely bobcats are a significant factor in slowing the spread of CWD.

Nevertheless, when we know so little about prion diseases, every new piece of knowledge adds to the picture, and we'll take good news when we can get it. When we know so few things

that can destroy CWD prions, it's good to add mountain lions and bobcats. We need all the allies we can get, so please welcome *Lynx rufus* and *Puma concolor* to the fight.

Join the National Deer Association free at <https://deerassociation.com/basic-membership/> and visit NDA's CWD Resource Center online.

About Lindsay Thomas:

Lindsay Thomas Jr. is the editor of *Quality Whitetails* magazine, the journal of the National Deer Association, and he is NDA's Chief Communications Officer. He has been a member of the staff since 2003. Prior to that, Lindsay was an editor at a Georgia hunting and fishing news magazine for nine years. Throughout his career as an editor, he has written and published numerous articles on deer management and hunting. He earned his journalism degree at the University of Georgia.

Coalition Files to Delist Wolves Here

Dual-petition approach answers court's concerns, provides pathway for protecting remnant populations while delisting and returning recovered wolf populations to state management.

SCI members here welcomed recent news that the Sportsmen's Alliance, together with Michigan Bear Hunters Association, Upper Peninsula Bear Houndsmen Association, and Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association, filed a pair of petitions under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife



Wolves in snow look at you in a way that makes you wonder which of you is the threatened or endangered species! Photo by Scott Flaherty, UFWFS



Service (FWS) on gray wolves. One petition is to recognize and delist a Western Great Lakes Distinct Population (WGL DPS) of wolves within Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin (and areas of adjoining states) while the other petition requests FWS to exercise specific management options on remnant wolf populations existing outside of the WGL DPS and the Northern Rocky Mountain Distinct Population Segment (NRM DPS) created by Congress in 2011.

SCI Regional Director Charmaine Wargolet, Lobbyists Dan Trawicki and Joel Kleefisch, plus other SCI leaders in the Midwest applauded the strategy.

"It's critical that we put together a long-term plan to get the science back in wildlife management on wolves," said Todd Adkins, vice president of government affairs at the Sportsmen's Alliance. "The ESA petition process is abused by the animal extremists to handcuff wildlife managers, but in this case, we are using the same process to get the state agencies and science back into the mix."

In the WGL DPS petition, the coalition points out that wolf populations have far surpassed FWS recovery goals in the WGL region, with the total population now exceeding 4,000 wolves. This includes estimates of 2,700 wolves in Minnesota, 1,000 in Wisconsin, and more than 600 in Michigan. FWS' original recovery goals for the species was 1,400 for Minnesota and a minimum combined population of 100 wolves for Michigan and Wisconsin together. In all three states, fish and wildlife managers estimate that wolves occupy nearly all suitable habitat throughout their range.

FWS has delisted the WGL DPS at several points in the past, but each of these delisting actions has been challenged by animal-extremist organizations in federal court. In these cases, the courts have repeatedly ruled against delisting, not because of a concern over the wolf population within the WGL, where gray wolf recovery is well established, but due to FWS' failure to address "remnant" wolves that exist outside of established population segments like the WGL and NRM. The concern repeatedly raised by federal judges is that delisting the WGL DPS could remove protections for remnant wolves elsewhere in the country.

According to SCI's Dan Trawicki, who has kept Region 16 chapter members in Wisconsin, Illinois, and parts of Minnesota abreast of the decades-long wolf hunting battles with animal rights groups that use the court system to advance their anti-hunting agenda for wolves and other species, the two-part approach this time might be a game changer.

Need For a Second Petition: Managing Remnant Wolves

Cognizant of this reality, the hunting coalition filed a second petition on remnant wolves to develop a pathway out of the litigation morass that has strangled effective wolf management for nearly 20 years. With remnant wolves addressed with the second petition, the coalition is confident that FWS can move forward, once again, with a WGL DPS delisting action that will survive court scrutiny.

The remnant petition requests two specific actions. First, the FWS should create a West Coast Wolf DPS (WCW DPS) consisting of the partially recovered and rapidly growing wolf populations to the west and south of the defined NRM DPS. This DPS would mostly cover non-NRM wolves in California, Oregon, and Washington.

The coalition recommends that this newly established WCW DPS be listed at the threatened level, thereby downlisting this population from endangered status, providing maximum flexibility to state wildlife managers. Assigning this remnant population into a new DPS will provide FWS with much needed flexibility going forward.

Second, our petition asks that FWS create a "non-DPS" consisting of all wolves in the lower 48 states that are not otherwise included in an established DPS. This will mean that all wolves outside of a DPS will continue to be protected under the ESA as endan-

gered under the original 1978 listing.

When taken together, the two petitions create a clear pathway for FWS to recognize wolf recovery where it has taken place while continuing to ensure management flexibility under the ESA for remnant wolves in the West and throughout the country. Granting the requests within the two petitions in tandem also would align FWS' approach with federal court rulings in a number of cases over several years.

"While not immediately obvious, these two petitions are following a blueprint established by the federal courts on gray wolves and the ESA," said Todd Adkins, vice president of government affairs at the Sportsmen's Alliance. "Instead of a quick fix, this is a long-term strategy to get wolf management back in the state agencies where it belongs instead of locked up in litigation brought by the extremists to keep their fund-raising



Captured gray wolf in pen. Photo by Pedro Ramirez, Jr.

juggernaut running full steam 24-7, 365."

"Michigan's gray wolves have exceeded recovery goals for over two decades now and it's far past time to give our state's professional wildlife managers the authority they need to make the best science-based decisions for both the animals and residents that call our state home," said Michigan Bear Hunters Association President Keith Shafer. "Michigan's recently





updated Wolf Management Plan, crafted with input from all stakeholders, shows we're ready and able to take over that responsibility today, to ensure gray wolves are sustainably managed for generations to come like all of our other wildlife."

"Wisconsin's Bear Hunters are firm in our conviction that our wolf population has recovered and must be managed responsibly by our state's Department of Natural Resources. These petitions ask the

In 1996 gray wolves were captured in Canada and released into the United States in the effort to establish self-sustaining populations of wolves and remove the species from the endangered species list.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to do what it has done several times in the past – delist wolves as they have fully recovered in our state," said Carl Schoettel, President of the Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association. "The science overwhelmingly supports this move but unfortunately, past attempts to delist wolves have been challenged by animal-extremist groups who have never set foot in Wisconsin and are driven by a dangerous ideology, not science. These petitions put us on a path to right the wrongs perpetrated on Wisconsin's citizens and our wildlife by these out-of-touch extremists."

About the Petitioners

Sportsmen's Alliance: The Sportsmen's Alliance protects and defends America's wildlife conservation programs and the pursuits – hunting,

fishing, and trapping – that generate the money to pay for them. Sportsmen's Alliance Foundation is responsible for public education, legal defense, and research. Its mission is accomplished through several distinct programs coordinated to provide the most complete defense capability possible. Stay connected to Sportsmen's Alliance: Online, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

The Upper Peninsula Bear Houndsmen Association is a group dedicated to the preservation of bear hunting, conservation, education and the right to hunt. For more information, please visit: <https://www.upbearhoundsmen.com/>

Founded in 1946, the **Michigan Bear Hunters Association** works to protect the black bear and bear hunting while fighting for more research, better management, fairer hunting regulations and defeating anti-hunting measures pushed by anti-hunting extremist groups. For more information, please visit: <https://www.mibearhunters.org/>

For over 50 years the **Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association** has been at the forefront of protecting the rights of sportsmen and sportswomen in Wisconsin, as well promoting youth hunting, conservation, and sound wildlife management. The WBHA is



much more than a hunting organization, awarding scholarships to college-bound high school grads, sponsoring highway and public land cleanups throughout Wisconsin, and supporting a number of charitable causes through our foundation. The WBHA seeks to ensure that our children and our grandchildren will have the opportunity to enjoy

Wisconsin's great outdoors while participating in hunting, fishing, and trapping. WBHA believes that when young people enjoy the outdoors, they will be more inclined to protect it while understanding that proper wildlife management is critical to guarding our precious resources. For more information, please visit: <https://wbha.us.com/>

Historic medical exam on a tranquilized gray wolf. Photo by LuRay Parker.



SAVE THESE DATES:

FEBRUARY 23-25, 2024

WISCONSIN STATE
HUNTING AND
FISHING EXPO



Join us, the Northeast Wisconsin Chapter for our Annual SCI Hunter's Banquet and Hunter Expo 2024.

Our 3-Day Sport Show is held in conjunction with the "Wisconsin State Hunting and Fishing Expo". With over 160 vendors, we will surely be something that will interest you.

After checking out the Outfitters at the Show on Friday, come on over to Stadium View for our "Friday Night Outfitter's Tailgate Party".

Saturday night we will be hosting our "25th Annual SCI Hunter's Banquet". Live and Silent Auctions along with Firearms Raffles at Stadium View.

Banquet tickets are only \$75 per person and includes free admission to the Sport Show.

WWW.SCIHUNTEREXPO.COM

History:

Gray Wolf Delisting FAQ

This set of questions and answers was developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service back in 2020 and provides a good historic retrospective as SCI and others continue to push for delisting in the Midwestern states where we live and hunt.

What actions did the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service take when gray wolves were delisted in 2020?

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service finalized a rule to delist gray wolves (*Canis*

lupus) currently listed in the contiguous United States and Mexico under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) due to recovery. This final determination was specific to the gray wolf and did not include the separate listing of the Mexican wolf (*Canis lupus baileyi*) as endangered under the ESA. Recovery of the gray wolf under the ESA is one of our nation's great conservation successes, with the wolf joining species such as the bald eagle, peregrine falcon,

American alligator, and brown pelican that have been brought back from the brink with the help of the ESA.

How were gray wolves recovered?

This remarkable recovery success is a result of more than 45 years of collaboration and partnerships with states, tribes, conservation organizations, private landowners, and other federal partners. Many of our state and tribal partners in areas where the wolf was already delisted continued to demonstrate their ability to responsibly manage wolf populations, so they were healthy and sustainable. The regulatory mechanisms put in place by these partners continued to benefit gray wolves and ensured the long-term survival of the species.

The ESA does not require wolves to be present throughout all of its former range, or for populations to be at historic levels for delisting to occur. The measure under the ESA is whether wolves are in danger of extinction (endangered) or at risk of becoming so in the foreseeable future (threatened) throughout all or a significant portion of its range. By any scientific measure, gray wolves no longer meet the ESA's standard for protection and so should be delisted.

Under the ESA, if we determine that a species is no longer threatened or endangered throughout all or a significant portion of its range, the Service must publish in the Federal Register a proposed rule to remove the species from the Lists of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants in title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations (50 CFR 17.11 and 17.12).

What is the range of gray wolves?

Today, the vast majority of wolves in the lower 48 exist as two large, stable, or growing populations that are broadly distributed across the northern portions of three states in the Great Lakes area and all or portions of five states in the northern Rocky Mountains.

The population in Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota is strong, with the Northern Rocky Mountains population in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Oregon, Washington, northern California and back in 2020 in northwest Colorado

was standing at around 1,900. There were further 12,000-14,000 wolves in eastern Canada and 15,000 in western Canada, each of which was connected to the adjacent gray wolf population in the United States. Wolves had also begun to expand into western Oregon, western Washington, northern California and in northwest Colorado.

In western Oregon, western Washington, and northern California there were seven known breeding pairs (note: because of effective documented dispersal, wolves in these states were an extension of the metapopulation of wolves in western Canada and the northern Rocky Mountains). In addition, Colorado Parks and Wildlife personnel confirmed the presence of a single group of at least six wolves in northwest Colorado.

Lone long-distance dispersing wolves had been reported from the listed states of Vermont, Massachusetts, New York, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado, Utah, Arizona and Nevada. The total number of confirmed records in each of these states, since the early 2000s, ranged from one in Nevada to at least 27 in North Dakota.

What is the history of gray wolves under the ESA?

Federal protections were first established for two species of wolves under the Endangered Species List in 1967 the red wolf (*Canis niger*) and the eastern timber wolf (*Canis lupus lycaon*).

This List was published on March 11, 1967, under the Endangered Species Preservation Act of 1966 – the first piece of federal legislation that would allow native species of fish and wildlife, at risk of extinction, to be formally protected within their range. This eventually became the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

In 1978, the Service published a rule reclassifying the gray wolf as an endangered population at the taxonomic species level (*C. lupus*) throughout the contiguous United States and Mexico, except for the Minnesota gray wolf population, which was classified as threatened. US Fish and Wildlife Service continued to recognize the red wolf as the species *C. rufus*, and noted that it was listed as endangered where found. USFWS did not consider red wolves further in the proposed rule, and the red

wolf listing was not affected by the final delisting determination.


Wolves have never been threatened or endangered in Alaska. There were an estimated 7,000 to 11,000 gray wolves in the state around 2020 when this was written.

At the time of listing under the ESA, where did wolves remain and how many were there?

Excluding Alaska, wolves occurred in only two places in the entire lower 48 United States. A population persisted in northeastern Minnesota, and a small,

Individual State Wolf Plans

SCI works with a variety of organizations, agencies, and individuals to achieve success consistently as we fulfill our mission of being First for Hunters. One of the organizations that recently acted on the gray wolf issue is the Sportsmen's Alliance. They shared this tri-state information.



Minnesota Wolf Management Plan

Minnesota's wolf legacy is unique: There state's northeastern corner of lakes and forest once sheltered the last remaining wild wolves in the lower 48 states. Today, wolves are distributed across half of the state in numbers (2,700) well above Endangered Species Act recovery plan goals (1,251-1,400) for the wolf in Minnesota. Wolf population growth in Minnesota has contributed significantly to the expansion of wolf range in other parts of the upper Great Lakes region that includes Wisconsin and Michigan, and Minnesota's wolf population represents nearly half the current wolf population within the lower 48 states.



Wisconsin Wolf Management Plan


The increase in wolf numbers over the past 30 years has generally been accompanied by range expansion within the state. In portions of the northern and central forest, where wolves have been established for many years, territorial behavior has kept wolf numbers fairly stable.

In recent years, range expansion across the state has been minimal, suggesting that wolves likely occupy all suitable habitats in Wisconsin.

During the 2021-22 overwinter, the number of pack-associated wolves was estimated between 812 and 1,193 within the pack-occupied range, with the most likely estimate being 972 wolves. The total number of packs was estimated to be between 243-352 packs, with a most likely value of 288 packs.

Wolf monitoring is conducted every winter when snow cover allows efficient

tracking, representing the low point in the annual population cycle. Wolves in the Western Great Lakes region surpassed federal recovery goals in the winter of 1999-2000, when Wisconsin and Michigan had a combined total of 100 wolves for five consecutive years, in addition to the population in Minnesota being stable or growing.



Michigan Wolf Management Plan

The Recovery Plan for the Eastern Timber Wolf established federal recovery criteria for gray wolves in the eastern United States (USFWS 1992). In addition to requiring that the Minnesota wolf population was stable or growing with its continued survival assured, a second population outside of Minnesota (or Isle Royale, Michigan) also had to be re-established before wolves could be removed from federal protections.

This second population is considered viable if it has "at least 100 wolves in late winter if located within 100 miles of the Minnesota wolf population," or "at least 200 wolves if located beyond that distance," and is maintained for five consecutive years. Because wolves in Michigan are not isolated, a combined "Wisconsin-Michigan population of 100 wolves" is currently the criteria that must be exceeded to ensure federal recovery criteria are met.

The 1997 Michigan Wolf Recovery and Management Plan adopted the definition of a viable isolated population from The Recovery Plan for the Eastern Timber Wolf as a criterion for wolf recovery in Michigan (DNR 1997). Therefore, a winter wolf population of 200 animals for five consecutive years is the criteria that must be exceeded to ensure State recovery criteria are met.

Since 2011, the minimum estimate for the wolf population has remained stable ranging from 618 to 695. A minimum of estimate of 695 wolves occurred in the U.P. during the winter of 2020.

The minimum wolf population estimate from the 2022 survey is 631 wolves, plus or minus 49 wolves. A total of 136 packs was estimated with an average number of individuals per pack calculated at 4.5.



isolated group of about 40 wolves occurred on Isle Royale, Michigan. The Minnesota wolf population was the only major U.S. population in existence outside Alaska at this time and numbered about 1,000 individuals.

While the Minnesota population was small compared to historical numbers and range within the lower 48 United States, it had not undergone a significant decline since about 1900. By 1978, when several gray wolf subspecies were consolidated into a single lower 48 United States and Mexico listing and a separate Minnesota listing under the ESA, the gray wolf population in Minnesota had increased to an estimated 1,235 wolves.

Subsequently, wolves from Canada occasionally dispersed south and successfully began recolonizing north-west Montana in 1986. In 1995 and 1996, 66 wolves from southwestern Canada were reintroduced into Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho.

What is the current legal status of gray wolves?

The effect of the 2020 final rulemaking action was to remove all gray wolves in the lower 48 states from the list of species protected under the ESA. Gray wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains were delisted from the ESA in 2011 and 2012. However, court decisions subsequently overturned the delisting of wolves in Wyoming. USFWS succeeded in reversing the Wyoming decision on appeal in 2017. Wolves have never been listed in Alaska.

The 2020 final rule only addressed gray wolves that were listed under the ESA. It is specific to the gray wolf and does not include the separate listings of the Mexican wolf subspecies and the red wolf species.

What was the 2020 rule based on?

In making the final determination to delist gray wolves it was based on sound science, a thorough analysis of threats and how they have been alleviated, and the ongoing commitment and proven track record of states and tribes to manage for healthy wolf populations once delisted.

The Service analyzed a number of factors, including human-caused mortality, habitat and prey availability, disease and parasites, genetics, effects of climate change, recovery activities and post-delisting regulatory mech-

anisms, and predictions about how these may affect wolves in the future.

The finding of the USFWS review was clear – the gray wolf had recovered by any and all measures required under the ESA. Gray wolves were no longer in danger of extinction or at risk of becoming so in the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of the species’ range. Once the science indicated a species had recovered, it was the obligation of the Service to delist it and return management authority to the states so that USFWS could focus its limited resources on those species that still require conservation attention.

What will happen if gray wolf population numbers decrease?

The Service has agreements from several states to manage wolf populations at sustainable levels, so they are confident that gray wolf numbers will remain strong. USFWS will continue to monitor the delisted wolf populations for the statutory five years to ensure they continue to sustain their numbers. Although they did not expect it would ever be necessary, as with all recovered species, in 2020 they said, “We may consider relisting, and even emergency relisting, if such an action is warranted.”

Will delisting mean wolf populations will be decimated by hunting?

No. State and tribal wildlife agencies have a long track record of successfully managing wildlife in their states, including deer, elk, wild turkeys and many other game and non-game species. The Feds said, “States will begin (Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin) or continue (Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming) to manage wolves according to their Service approved gray wolf management plans. States in which gray wolves are currently recolonizing, Washington, Oregon, and California, also have management plans that support wolf reestablishment in their states.”

As with many species of wildlife, hunting is an accepted and successful management tool that helps to reduce conflicts with humans, maintain stable populations, generate public support, and benefits all wildlife thanks to habitat improvements made possible by revenue collected from hunters. The Service again said it “is confident in the

ability of state and tribal wildlife agencies to successfully manage wolf populations. Although we do not expect it will ever be necessary, we could consider relisting, and even emergency relisting wolves, if such an action were warranted.”

USFWS said, “The ESA is not designed to permanently protect individual animals from hunting or other active management. The purpose of the ESA is to prevent the extinction of imperiled species and to recover them. Once the threshold of recovery has been met, we can – and must – return their management to state and tribal wildlife agencies.”

Why was the wolf reclassified in 1978 and what was the result of that action?

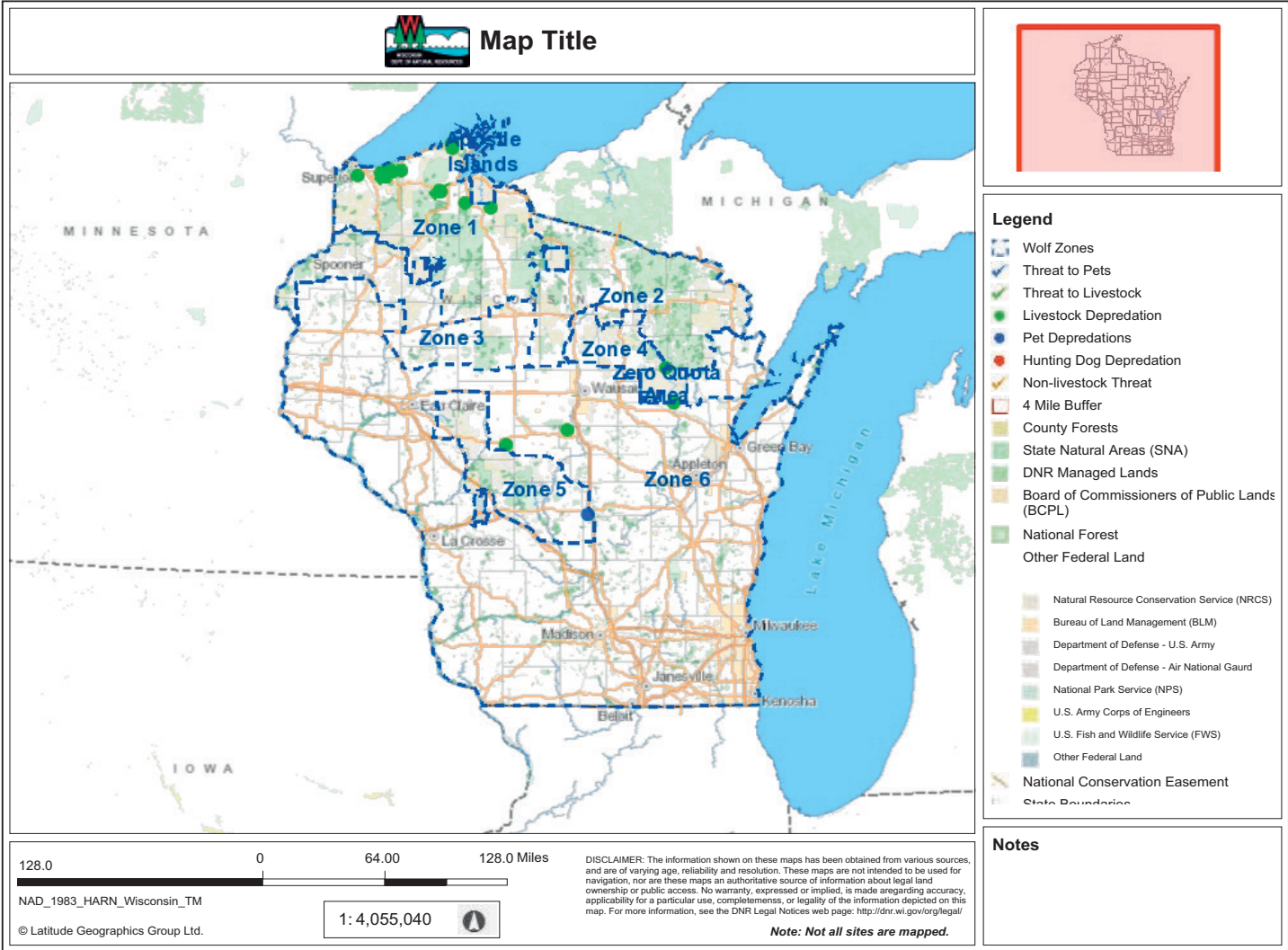
When the gray wolf (*C. lupus*) was reclassified in March 1978 (replacing multiple subspecies listings with two *C. lupus* population listings), it had been extirpated from much of its historical range in the contiguous United States. The 1978 reclassification was undertaken to address changes in our understanding of gray wolf taxonomy and protect all gray wolves in the lower 48 states and Mexico, rather than an indication of where gray wolves actually existed or where gray wolf recovery efforts were necessary.

The 1978 reclassification resulted in inclusion of large areas of the contiguous United States where gray wolves were extirpated, as well as the mid-Atlantic and southeastern United States areas where long-held differences of opinion regarding the precise boundary of the species’ historical range remain.

While this generalized approach to the listing facilitated recovery of wolves in the northern Rocky Mountains and western Great Lakes, it also erroneously included areas outside the species’ historical range and was misread by some members of the public as an expression of a larger gray wolf recovery effort not required by the ESA and never intended by the Service.

Does the Service plan to continue offering funding for prevention of wolf-livestock conflict and reimbursing for depredated livestock?

The Service administered the Wolf-Livestock Loss Demonstration Program, which gives grants to states and tribes for proactive efforts to reduce wolf-livestock conflict as well as to compensate



Wolf Depredation 2022-23

On June 29, 2023, USDA-Wildlife Services verified that wolves killed a beef calf on a farm located in the Town of Maple, Douglas County. Auditory deterrents were previously implemented on the property and will continue to be used. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) partners with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services department to investigate reported conflicts

with wolves. Interactive maps, past reports and damage payment information is available on the DNR's website.

Interactive Wolf Depredation Threats Map

This resource shows locations of wolf depredation and threat conflicts verified between 2013 and the present. Click here to launch.

Depredation Reports

Depredation reports detail individual

for confirmed wolf depredation. The Service has recommended other programs that are better suited to deliver this funding, such as the USDA's livestock indemnity program. Additionally, funding for recovery of listed species is limited and this program takes valuable resources that could be otherwise used to conserve species in need of the ESA protections.

Where can I find more information?

Detailed background information on gray wolves in the United States can be found in a separate Gray Wolf Biological Report (see USFWS 2018, entire). This document can be found along with this final delisting rule and the post-delisting monitoring plan at <http://www.regulations.gov> in Docket No. FWS-HW-ES-2018-0097

Wildlife Services reports, including if the report was verified as wolf depredation or determined as another cause. View past reports here.

Livestock producers

If you suspect suspect a wolf or bear has depredated or is harassing your livestock, contact USDA-Wildlife Services at 1-800-433-0663 (southern Wisconsin) or 1-800-228-1368 (northern Wisconsin)

(see Supplemental Documents). Comments and materials received, as well as supporting documentation used in preparing the 2020 rule, were available for public inspection at <http://www.regulations.gov>.

The final rule was published in the Federal Register on November 3, 2020, to be effective 60 days after on January 4, 2021.

Western Deer Tags Cut

Extreme weather, from record snowfall to severe droughts, are affecting hunters and anglers here in the Midwest and across the country. Access to our favorite hunting and fishing spots are changing with the climate, and so we adjust and adapt. We are resilient and innovative when it comes to finding work-arounds. One way or another, we plan to continue to hunt and fish.

The latest climate-related reality has affected our western big game hunting opportunities. As Outdoor Life's Katie Hill recently reported, "It's no secret that many deer herds in the Western U.S. are facing tough conditions right now. In the Rocky Mountains and Northern Great Plains, mule deer and whitetails met high mortality rates from record winter snowfall. In Nebraska and Kansas, drought is stressing forage and water sources, stunting fawn production. Meanwhile, there are additional factors like EHD, CWD, and other population trends that influenced tag cuts."

She said, "Many states in the Mountain West and Great Plains states approved deer tag reductions for the 2023 to 2024 deer season." She provided this guide of all the states that have announced reductions to their available deer tags so far.

Colorado

Number of Deer Tags Cut: 7,900. Hill said, "a bone-chilling winter resulted in a lot of big game loss, particularly true for the northwestern part of the state. The area from Rangely to central Steamboat Springs and north to the Wyoming border saw the worst winter in 70 years. As a result, 5,000 male and either-sex mule deer tags across 17 game management units were eliminated. Additionally, 2,900 doe tags were also eliminated."

Idaho

Number of Deer Tags Cut: 200-plus. Hill said, "While Idaho Fish and Game didn't technically cut any deer tag... they did make other decisions that would help offset the immense winter loss they faced in the southeastern part of the state. Both doe and fawn survival rates in the Southeastern region were low—47 percent and 8 percent, respectively. Just two of 30 collared deer in that region made it through the winter. IDFG cut antlerless opportunities following a harsh 2016 to 2017 winter and had considered

reinstating those tags for this upcoming season, noting that 460 antlerless tags were on the table in earlier season-setting discussions. But wildlife managers revisited that decision and decided to pull back the proposed hunts. Additionally, nonresident hunters have returned 213 deer tags so far this year. Normally, those returned tags go on sale for nonresidents to purchase. But that won't happen this year."

Kansas

Number of Deer Tags Cut: 253--13 mule deer tags, 95 resident mule deer permits, and a net loss of 145 nonresident whitetail tags. Hill said drought and habitat loss continue to stress deer populations, but Kansas also added 229 tags across six more deer management units. Deer tags in the remaining two units were unchanged. All archery tags statewide remain untouched.

She added, "For perspective how small those whitetail deer tag cuts really are for Kansas, consider that hunters harvested more than 81,000 whitetails during the 2020 to 2021 season, according to KDWP's latest available data. The 95 resident mule deer tags that were cut will have a bigger impact on resident mule deer hunters, who harvested 1,747 deer that same season."

Montana

Number of Deer Tags Cut: TBD. While most states established tag quotas in late April or early May, Montana hunters won't have hard answers about tag reductions until June 8 when the Fish and Wildlife Commission votes on recommendations that aren't publicly available yet. This change would keep more does on the landscape to help populations rebound after bad winter weather in eastern Montana caused some winter mortality.

North Dakota

Number of Deer Tags Cut: 10,800. Hill said, "Like

much of the Midwest, deer in North Dakota rely on private land habitat to survive. Since 93 percent of North Dakota is privately owned, agricultural lands sustain the ample whitetails and shrinking mule deer North Dakotans love to hunt. But after harsh winter conditions hammered the whole state, 10,800 fewer deer tags are available to hunters for the 2023 season." She quoted state game officials: "The severity of winter conditions this year was record setting, particularly in the eastern half of the state," North Dakota Game and Fish Department wildlife division chief Casey Anderson said in a press release, pointing out that the state's 53,400 remaining deer tags make for the lowest quota in seven years."

Hill noted, "Of particular concern is how quickly North Dakota's CRP is shriveling. Due to expiring CRP contracts and limited re-enrollment of expired lands, 85 percent of the 3.4 million acres of quality habitat that were present in 2007 will be gone by 2026. And while correlation doesn't always equate to causation, quality habitat is necessary for deer populations to rebound from detrimental winters; without it, recovery is difficult. This delicate relationship shows in North Dakota: mule deer numbers in the western part of the state dove 29 percent from last year."

While land doesn't have to be enrolled in CRP to help mule deer, Anderson says, it must fulfill essential winter and fawning habitat needs "for numbers to bounce back effectively."



Nebraska deer tag cuts resulted from a mix of landowner complaints, drought, and disease.

Nebraska

Number of Deer Tags Cut: 8,350. Hill said, during the fall 2022 season, Nebraskans saw the lowest mule deer buck harvest since 1981 and the lowest whitetail buck harvest since 1994. As a result, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission approved a significant cut to tags for both species for the 2023 season.

Of the 8,350 total permits cut, 3,700 are nonresident either-sex or buck-only. (Statewide archery and muzzleloader tag cuts are included in that total.) An additional 2,325 "November firearm" permits and 2,325 antlerless permits were also eliminated. These figures include a mix of mule deer and whitetail deer tags, and antlerless mule deer harvest on public land (with some exceptions) was also prohibited. Hill said, "There are multiple reasons for these changes, what Nebraska Game and Parks Department big game program coordinator Luke Meduna calls the "three smoking guns."

"About five years ago, our landowners asked us to reduce our deer numbers," Meduna says, referring to complaints about high deer densities that destroyed crops. "We've also had a significant drought the last couple of years [that's] reduced mule deer fawn production, so the harvest that our herds could sustain five years ago is pretty detrimental to them now. We also have some disease issues."

Meduna explained how meningeal brainworms, CWD, and two consecutive EHD outbreaks have curtailed deer populations and forced some of the tag cuts.

Utah

Number of Deer Tags Cut: 8,421. Hill noted, "When it comes to the record-breaking 2022 to 2023 winter, Utah was the epicenter of the damage. Ski resorts recorded 800-plus cumulative inches of snowfall. The Utah Department of Wildlife Resources put out ton after ton of supplemental feed for wildlife that relied on it as their sole food source." Hill said, officials postponed shed hunting statewide, sparking an outcry among resident and non-resident shed hunters. One hunt unit in Utah's northeastern region saw 70 percent adult mule deer mortality and more than 90 percent fawn mortality.

Hill said all this loss culminated in major tag decreases. Overall, DWR cut 8,950 general season buck permits. Of those, 7,500 were in the Northern Region, which accounted for a 31 percent decrease in the area. The Northeastern, Central, and



Mule deer populations in the West were hit hard by winter conditions. Tom Koerner / USFWS

Southeastern regions also saw decreases, but only by a few hundred tags each. An additional 105 doe permits were also axed. DWR added 600 general-season deer permits for the Southern Region and 34 limited-entry deer tags were also tacked on statewide. This puts the net loss at 8,421 tags.

Hill said DWR big game coordinator Dax Mangus explained how factors like poor and limited habitat, predation, and extreme weather negatively impact deer populations, especially the crucial fawn survival rate. These fluctuations set the stage for tag numbers every year and were felt especially hard this year.

"The way we hunt [bucks] in Utah doesn't drive deer populations," Mangus said. "But what happens with deer populations drives how we hunt buck deer."

Wyoming

Number of Deer Tags Cut: 4,410. Hill said, "Wyoming rounds out the list with a hefty mule deer tag reduction following the same bad winter that plagued Colorado, southern Idaho, and northern Utah. While pronghorn hunters saw the worst of the cuts with 10,290 tags lost, the Wyoming also eliminated 4,410 mule deer tags across seven management regions. These cuts include both antlered deer and doe/fawn tags, and impact both resident and non-resident opportunities."

With the loss of those mule deer licenses comes an increase in whitetail deer opportunities. While 1,475 new whitetail tags for this season don't offset the reduction, they do add more chances to

put meat in the freezer than were available for whitetail hunters last year.

"We're trying to keep a little bit of an edge for mule deer to do better than whitetail [deer]," Wyoming Game and Fish Department wildlife division deputy chief Doug Brimeyer told the Commission during the meeting.

Wyoming's mule deer populations dropped by 31 percent from 1991 to 2016. Mule deer harvest has decreased from a 13-year high of more than 30,000 deer in 2016 to just 17,785 in 2022.

Katie Hill's Final Thoughts on Deer Tag Cuts

Hill said, "Every year, state agencies must grapple with many factors when setting tag numbers. Extreme winter, drought, disease, and habitat issues are just a few variables that impact the future of deer populations—and the future of American deer hunting opportunities, as well. As long as hunter harvest remains a management tool in the wildlife conservation toolbox, tag cuts will be part of the status quo."

Katie Hill



Katie Hill of Missoula, Montana is a staff writer for Outdoor Life where she covers outdoor news, hunting, and conservation in the West.

Whitetail Sanctuary Solutions Tip:

Bow Season, Finally!

by Michael Murphy

Bow Season is here! Revisit the tactics that will improve your chances of landing that trophy buck!

Here are some tips to remember to improve your chances on harvesting that Trophy Buck.

- The number one mistake most hunters make when hunting Trophy Bucks is they over hunt them! Remember, mature bucks respond to human pressure very quickly; so picking the best time to hunt them is key—hunt smarter, not more! If you over hunt them one of two things will likely happen. One – they will go nocturnal on you, or Two – they will actually leave your property to find a secure area with less human pressure.
- Remember, you are educating deer every time you enter their living room (the woods and surrounding area). Just because you are not carrying a gun or bow and maybe grooming trails, planting food plots, or moving stands, you still are showing human pressure on them. Limit the time you are in the woods and your quality hunts will go up exponentially!
- If you properly manage your property a 40-acre property can attract and retain three or more mature bucks.
- You need big healthy does as well as big mature bucks to develop your herd into trophy status!
- Learn from the signs around you when you are out hunting.
- A deer’s sense of smell is ten times that of a human. The epithelium lining in the nasal passage of the deer is very sensitive and increases in attracting scent molecules when moistened. This is why you often see deer licking their noses when they sense danger.
- Pay attention to not only prevailing winds but thermals as well and what the winds are at your stand. Changes in terrain – water, swamps, marshes, ridges, rock outcroppings – areas that hold temperatures longer than the air. These areas can result in thermals or swirling winds.

Use a simple wind detection device, this will give you what the wind is doing right at your stand.

- As the sun rises and sets or that cold front moves in you most certainly will be affected by thermals if you are in an area with varying contours of the land. If you are sitting on a ridge top looking down the hill you must pay attention in the evening to thermals or you most likely will be busted as the air cools and travels down to those lower areas, along with your scent. Evening stand locations should generally be below or at the same level as deer movement.
- Dropping temperatures (10-15 degrees) can result in increased deer activity.

Fellow SCI members who remember these tips will improve chances of harvesting that trophy buck!



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



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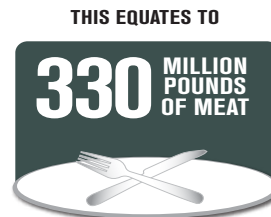
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HERE'S A STORY TO TELL
ONE THAT WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT
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BENEFITS OF GAME MEAT

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NO HORMONES, LOW CALORIE, HIGH PROTEIN

TOP 5 STATES FOR VENISON DONATIONS

VIRGINIA	405,000 LBS	1
IOWA	312,000 LBS	2
MISSOURI	237,000 LBS	3
TEXAS	214,000 LBS	4
OHIO	180,000 LBS	5

VENISON DONATIONS BY REGION

MIDWEST	NORTHEAST	WEST	SOUTH
46% of total donations	8% of total donations	*1% of total donations	45% of total donations
1,300,000 lbs 5,200,000 meals	200,000 lbs 800,000 meals	28,000 lbs 110,000 meals	1,250,000 lbs 5,000,000 meals
IA - IL - IN - KS - MI - MO - MN - ND - NE - OH - SD - WI	CT - MA - ME - NH - NJ - NY - PA - RI - VT	AK - AZ - CA - CO - HI - ID - MT - NM - NV - OR - UT - WA - WY	AL - AR - DE - FL - GA - KY - LA - MD - MS - NC - OK - SC - TN - TX - VA - WV

* May be under-reported. limited data sources available for the west

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These include:
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