

HUNTERS

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF SCI CHAPTERS IN WISCONSIN AND ILLINOIS
JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2024

KERN'S CARIBOU & MUSK OX ADVENTURE



- Kubichek's Moose
- Chapter News & Events
- Education & Legislative Updates
- Big Al's Humanitarian Event Tops \$250,000 For Vets, Others
- TV's LaBarbera/Small Do It Again With Help From SCI Chapters



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- 11:00 to 11:30 – Dr. Christine Thomas, Founder of the Becoming an Outdoors Woman program
- 11:30 am to 11:45 – Sarah Ingle, president of Women’s Hunting and Sporting Association (WHSA)
- 11:45 to 12:15 – Melissa Bachman, conservationist, hunter and TV personality

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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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Issue	Deadline
January/February	November 20
March/April	January 20
May/June	March 20
July/August	May 20
September/October	July 20
November/December	September 20

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HUNTERS

Official Magazine of SCI Chapters in Wisconsin and Illinois
January/February 2024

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Register Online: <https://www.sciwi.org/grand-banquet/>
Registration Deadline: January 31, 2024 **NO WALK-INS** for evening activities or dinners!



www.sciwi.org

Contact Sharon Yunk at **262-617-3806** or sciwireervations@gmail.com with questions.

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SCI Chapters welcome you!

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

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SCI Region 16 Representative

Charmaine Wargolet

charmainew@ameritech.net

SCI Region 16 Report

*by Charmaine Wargolet,
Regional Representative*

The holidays are over, but I hope yours were wonderfully spent with loved ones! We now embark on a brand new year full of new possibilities, opportunities, and most of all new adventures! We need to make the most of our precious time.

I was talking with Mark LaBarbera today about a new R3 initiative at the Wisconsin DNR designed to slow the decline in hunters, if not increase them. The legislature again cut the number of full-time positions at the DNR so the agency got creative and teamed up with others who will host four new positions within their organizations and paid for largely with state and federal money. These four people and their organizations will work full-time on beginner hunter programs. I asked what R3 stood for ("I really should know," she said red-faced). It is Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation. This is exciting stuff as there will be many more hunting and shooting sports events welcoming newcomers to try the sports we love while retaining and reactivating existing hunters and shooters to provide instruction and guidance.

Mark and others have been working behind the scenes for years on getting these positions and programs in place for the long haul and for the good of our sports.

Another project that ties into this is the OHEC Mobile Closet. He got the idea at one of his Learn to Hunt events where kids and adults showed up with inadequate footwear and clothing. The people who put on such events have seen that newcomers might not know what to wear, might not want to spend the money for proper gear until they know they're going to want to keep hunting, and in some cases can't afford the gear to keep them comfortable. If they're not comfortable, it affects whether they enjoy the experience. So, the idea is to have loaner



boots and clothes plus other gear that helps newcomers want to keep hunting.

The SCI Wisconsin Chapter and Izaak Walton League donated to the first OHEC Mobile Closet trailer and Mark is already working on fundraising for a second trailer plus gear to fill them. With the SCI logo on the trailer, it's also a traveling billboard showcasing our chapter and the SCI brand.

The idea is to place these OHEC Mobile Closets with free loaner gear in each region so anyone hosting an event can use them. Great idea!

I am approaching my home chapter to organize a drive at our banquet to collect some of these things. What is needed is very GENTLY used hunting clothes, both camo and especially blaze orange coats, vests, gloves, and hats. Both youth and adult items in varying sizes, and also boots are a huge need! Again, youth and adult in varying sizes for males or females. These will be used at beginner hunting programs where the participants may not have warm enough clothing or footwear because hunting clothing can be expensive. But if they can borrow the clothes at the event they participate in, they may find they really enjoy hunting and would be more encouraged to spend the money to outfit themselves.

Encourage your chapter to run a clothing drive like I just talked about! It doesn't have to be at your banquet, it can be at a monthly meeting or any type of event. Cash is obviously a much appreciated commodity as things can be purchased to fill in a needed item or a specific size. Donations go to charitable nonprofit OHEC (www.OHECYes.org).

Once again, as much as I sound like a broken record, banquet season is starting so, please VOLUNTEER! You will never know how much fun it is to help out alongside your hunting friends until you do it! And if you are unable to help, donate an item or cash to help out your chapter auctions!

In closing, I want to wish you all things wonderful in the new year, and as always, shoot straight, be well, and God bless!

Badgerland Chapter Report

by John Martinson, President

The fifth annual Feather Ridge Farm Disabled Pheasant Hunt with SCI Badgerland was a Blast as usual with having the great opportunity to get out into the marsh and bang away at some roosters! It's also a pleasure watching the pointer dog's work and enjoying the camaraderie of good friends.

This year we had 19 hunters signed up but ended up with 11 due to all the health issues when dealing with a disability. We all take for granted being healthy and life itself, but it can be taken away in an instant. This is why it means so much to all the hunters and the reason why we

have such great volunteers and organizations giving a positive experience in people's lives.

We would love to have you at our Badgerland's Hunter's Expo February 16th - 17th at the Chula Vista Resort where you can show your support for Badgerland's humanitarian efforts and protecting hunter's rights. It's a fun event with good quality guns to win, worldwide outfitters, taxidermy displays, live & silent auctions, great Chula Vista meals, and don't forget the famous Bruce Brock, auctioneer extraordinaire!

Sign up as a new member or renew/extend your current membership before or on Saturday February 17, 2024 and



have a chance to win a Ruger AR 5.56 in American Flag Cerakote. Also, if you are a current member and sponsor a new member that signs up, you have a chance to win Vortex optics.

Have fun and safe adventures!

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation Report Illinois: 2023 Legislative Summary

*by Bob Matthews,
CSF Senior Coordinator,
Great Lakes States*

With the new year comes another legislative session, and new opportunities for sportsmen and women to secure policy victories and defend our ability to pursue our favorite species. As a longtime mission partner of Safari Club International, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) will be back in the halls of government - working with the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses, an unprecedented network of more than 2,500 bipartisan, pro-sportsmen legislators in all 50 states - to promote policies that benefit hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers.

The new legislative cycle also offers the opportunity to reflect on the legislative successes achieved in 2023. Not all victories result in passed legislation; oftentimes victories are the result of killing a bill that would have had a negative impact on our time-honored outdoor traditions. Here's a summary of sporting victories that were either achieved or took effect last year in Illinois, thanks to SCI and CSF-led advocacy efforts:

- **Illinois hunters may now use center-fire, single-shot rifles to take white-tailed deer.** In 2022, Illinois passed House Bill 4386, introduced by Illinois Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus member Representative Lance

Yednock and co-sponsored by multiple Caucus members. Up until last deer season, hunters in the Prairie State could not deer hunt using rifles, except for muzzleloaders.

- **Hunters and recreational shooters in Illinois may continue to share ammunition while afield or at the range.** House Bill 1057 would have prohibited the sale or transfer of ammunition between anyone other than holders of a Federal Firearms License. This incredibly strict standard would have made it nearly impossible for sportsmen and women to share ammunition amongst the members of their party while hunting or target practicing. The bill would have created an unnecessary barrier for sportsmen and women to partake in their favorite outdoor activities, while simultaneously making it very difficult to recruit new hunters or recreational shooters.

- **Pets will not be eligible to be appointed legal counsel, which would have been a step towards "Animal Personhood."** House Bill 1169 would have allowed a judge to appoint dogs and cats an attorney to serve as a special advocate in cases of animal mistreatment, representing the animal in a court of law. The idea of animal personhood, which extends legal rights to animals that are reserved for humans, endangers the very foundation of hunting and

trapping, and threatens the traditions Illinoisans have cherished for generations.

- **CSF supported the passage of an Illinois bill that reduces the cost of fishing licenses** for anglers aged 26 and older that have not purchased a fishing license in any of the last ten years. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources is not presently capturing revenue from this subset of both residents and nonresidents alike through the American System of Conservation Funding, so the discount provided by House Bill 2317 serves an incentive for these new or lapsed anglers to pick up a rod and potentially generate future revenue for the DNR to manage the State's waters.

Through the work of CSF's bipartisan Illinois Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus, sportsmen and women can continue to enjoy - and share with future generations - the State's storied fish and wildlife natural resources. While 2024 is sure to present new legislative challenges, CSF is sure to protect what is best for sportsmen and women in Illinois, Wisconsin, and around the country.





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Northeast Wisconsin Chapter Report

by Marty Witczak, President

As I look forward to the new year and all the activities and plans my wife and I are making for 2024, I just want to make sure that I could have wished you all a blessed holiday season and the start of a happy and healthy new year!

I would like to share with you, since this is a hunting magazine, a couple of successful deer hunting stories. The first story involves my younger son who you have all been introduced to, Chris Witczak, through former hunting trips and a fellow trap shooter on my summer team at the Berlin Conservation Club. Chris with his Hoyt bow brought down a nice size 10-point buck on our hunting land. His numerous trips out to the land and his patience finally paid off and he was rewarded with this fine buck on October 30. He is not a huge buck, but I am sure he will be a mighty fine eating buck! The second story involves an out

of state hunt in Butler, Oklahoma with a good friend of mine, a retired navy veteran Bill Spanbauer and his son Louie, both long time SCI members. They attended a 6-day white tail deer hunt hosted by South 40 Ranches. Louie shot this nice 9-point buck with his 300 Winchester Mag late Saturday afternoon on November 25. He was sitting in a blind patiently watching this buck and several does chasing each other and eating, when the nice buck stepped out into the open, allowing Louie to get a shot at it. Down he went! Congratulations to Chris and Louie on your hunting trophies!

If you would like your trophy pictures in the magazine or posted on the Northeast Wisconsin Chapter SCI Facebook page, please email them and your story to Samantha LaCourt. Email her at slacourt@outlook.com.



February will be here before you know it and with the arrival of February our annual SCI Banquet to be held at the Stadium View in Green Bay, Wisconsin. We are expecting the event to be sold out so make sure you get your dinner and live auction tickets soon. Please visit our website, SCI NE Wisconsin Chapter for all information and to purchase dinner tickets. Also, visit online hunting auction northeast Wisconsin and then click on 2024 SCI NE Wisconsin Chapter – 2024 Hunter's Auction to bid on the donated packages.



Legislative Update: Bear

by Dan Trawicki, SCI Lobbyist

On 11/29/23 members of the Wisconsin Bear Advisory Committee met to discuss the 2023 hunt as well as make recommendations for a 2024 quota. The quota for all units in 2023 was 4,575 bears. That is, the number of bears the state wanted harvested across the state. The harvest total was actually 3,003 bears or down 34% of the recommended take.

This was the lowest harvest in approximately 14 years. There was a lot of discussion as to the reasons why. It certainly didn't have anything to do with hunter participation like the deer harvest.

In some units (A) it can take 10-12 years to get a permit. Participation by hunters is at an all time high. Demand for bear tags in key areas, and the number of hunters applying for preference points are high. Non-residents are treated the same as residents, and 95% of the tags are being secured by residents. Most participants felt the unusually high acorn crop was a major factor, as well as the possibility that the population is simply not as high as estimated. As a comparison, the 2022

harvest was 4,110; 2021 was 3,846 and 2020 was 4,306.

Based on the data, most of the members including me representing SCI felt we should be cautious and reduce the number of permits issued for most zones. Some of the zones had greater reduction in harvest than others and were handled appropriately based on specific zone data. The biggest drop per zone occurred in zones C and D. It's a difficult situation, because hunter satisfaction is high, so while giving out more permits would increase the harvest totals, it would also decrease the level of hunter satisfaction with more hunters on the landscape.

Moving forward to 2024 the recommendations were as follows:

Zone	Harvest target	Permits issued
A	1075	1730
B	850	1515
C	600	3000
D	1100	3005
E	175	750
F	50	500



This represents an overall reduction in the target harvest from 4,575 in 2023 to 3,850 in 2024. It also recommends a reduction in permits allocated from 12,760 in 2023 to 11,500 in 2024.

Most committee members feel we have one of the best bear hunts in the country which the DNR concurs with and need to be cautious to prevent over-harvest and a reduction in hunter success and satisfaction.

Randy Johnson, the large carnivore specialist for the DNR, will now present the recommendations to the wildlife leadership team. From there, it will go to the Natural Resources Board at the January meeting.

Illinois & Chicago Chapter Report

by Dale Rimkus, President

Special thanks to all of the chapter members and guests who added to the fun and success of our December Annual Christmas Brunch.

It was a fun morning with great food and friends old and new, plus an opportunity to meet with St. Nick himself!

If Santa truly knows who has been bad or good, I wonder if he heard about what chapter member Brandon Goodwin was up to?

I'm talking about the not-so-nice conditions during an Alaska Brown Bear hunting adventure and what I'm describing as a "close encounter of the furred kind." If you have not heard about it, check out his hunting report on page 34 of this issue, plus Brandon's tips about what he learned from his

experience that came to a head on Friday the 13th.

There will be more reports and stories to share April 20 at our 52nd Annual Fundraiser & Banquet. Plans are coming together for another great event. The committee has been pulling together some great prizes too for our Live Auction and our legendary Silent Auction. You can expect great hunting and fishing trips, top of the line firearms, exquisite jewelry, artwork, hunting gear, and unique one-of-a-kind items. Fellow SCI members from other chapters are also invited to join us. Please mark your calendar to be part of the fun with great people and great food in a great venue.

Details for these and other chapter activities will be updated at www.sci-illinois.com.



Meanwhile, if you have photos and/or stories to share from your adventures, please contact SCI HUNTERS Editor & Publisher Mark LaBarbera at wiSCIImag@peoplepc.com. With so many chapter members traveling here in Illinois, across North America, and around the globe, you probably could browse through photos on your phone right now and find images to email to him. That's all it takes. Members of chapters in our SCI Region 16 enjoy seeing where fellow members have been.



**The Northeast Wisconsin Chapter of
Safari Club International**
**Cordially invites you to our "25th Annual SCI
Hunter's Banquet" and "Hunter Expo 2024"**

Our **"25th Annual SCI Hunter's Banquet"** will be held Saturday February 24th at the "Stadium View Bar & Grill" in Green Bay, WI. Enjoy an evening of fine dining with friends and family, followed by our Famous Live Auction, along with Firearms and Merchandise Raffles.

Our **"Saturday Night Live Auction"** will feature Hunts, Trips and Adventures from Wisconsin to Africa, South America to Europe, Art Work and More.

Join us Friday Night at Stadium View Bar & Grill for our **"Outfitters Fish Fry"**. Visit with SCI Donors and start your bidding strategy for that trip you have always wanted to take.



Saturday Night Banquet Tickets are only \$75.00 per person and include free admission to the Wisconsin State Hunting and Fishing Expo.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT
WWW.SCIHUNTEREXPO.COM**

OR CALL WALT AT 920-470-6444 or GARY AT 920-735-9718

First FOR HUNTERS' RIGHTS

"Bucket Raffles" to include firearms from, Ruger, Smith & Wesson, Tikka, Winchester, Browning, Savage, Kimber, Glock, Colt, Springfield, Kimber and Optics from Vortex just to mention a few.

"Hunter Expo 2024" and "The Wisconsin State Hunting and Fishing Expo" will be held at the Resch Expo in Green Bay, WI.

Visit with over 175 Outfitters, Professional Hunters, Retailers, Lodge Owners and Taxidermists from around the world.

There will be seminars covering a wide range of topics.

Bring in your Trophies and have them scored by **"Official SCI Scorers"**, then enter them into our Trophy Competition. First and second place plaques will be awarded for all categories. The **"SCI President's Award"** will be judged on "The One-Shot Rule" and only SCI Members are eligible for this Trophy.

For the kids we have the SCI Laser Shot, Kid's Archery Game, the Wisconsin Hunter's Ed air gun range, and the **"Touch of the Wild Trailer"**.

Remember that over 70% of all the money raised at this banquet stays right here in Wisconsin to help protect your hunting rights, educate our teachers and youth, and conduct conservation and humanitarian projects.



**Safari Club International
Northeast Wisconsin Chapter
25th Annual SCI Hunter's Banquet
Saturday February 24, 2024
at the "Stadium View Bar & Grill" in Green Bay, WI
Ticket Reservation Form**

SEATING IS LIMITED – MAKE YOUR RESERVATION EARLY!

SATURDAY NIGHT DINNER WILL BE ASSIGNED SEATING.

Item	Quantity	Cost	Total Amount
Friday Night Outfitter's Fish Fry		\$15.00	
Saturday Night Dinner Ticket plus 1 pass to the Wisconsin State Hunting and Fishing Expo (\$85 Total Value)		\$75.00	
Saturday Night Dinner Table - 8 Dinner Tickets plus 8 passes to the Wisconsin State Hunting and Fishing Expo (\$680 Total Value)		\$600.00	
I am unable to attend this event but would like to donate to assist you in protecting our Hunting Rights.			
GRAND TOTAL			

Banquet Guest Names if Available:

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____
5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____ 8. _____

**Must register at Stadium Bar & Grill to receive your WI State Hunting and Fishing Expo Pass.
Saturday Night Dinner Tables must be paid with 1 check.**

Dinner Tickets and Expo Passes will be available for pickup @ the Registration Booth.

Raffle Ticket Packages and Chapter Rifle Tickets will be available at the event!!!

Name: (Please Print) _____

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Payment by: ☐ Check ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ Discover ☐ Am Express

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Make checks payable to "NEWISCI Chapter"

Return Registration Form to:

**Safari Club International – Northeast Wisconsin Chapter
Attn: Gary Knaack - 4005 Towne Lakes Circle #10209 - Appleton, WI 54913**

**Call Walt at 920-470-6444 or Gary at 920-735-9718
or visit www.scihunterexpo.com for more information.**

SCI is FIRST FOR HUNTERS!

Wisconsin Chapter Report

by Sean Coykendall, President

I hope everyone had a healthy and successful 2023. I know many of you harvested some amazing animals and I hope to hear the stories soon.

The Wisconsin Chapter had a great 2023. We welcomed several new board members who are already stepping up in big ways. Bringing in new board members who are willing take on roles immediately is extremely important to perpetuate the knowledge and leadership of our chapter. We also made an effort to keep the cost of our membership meetings low in 2023 to increase attendance and the results showed that worked.

Our 47th Annual Grand Banquet on February 9th and 10th at the Brookfield Convention Center. Saturday February 10th is our Family Hunting Expo that is free to the public from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. The morning program includes seminars from Christine Thomas (founder of Becoming an Outdoors Woman), Sarah Ingle (President of Women's Hunting & Sporting Association) and Melissa Bachman (Winchester Deadly Passion on Sportsman Channel).

We also are bringing back the free trophy scoring on Saturday. You can bring any trophy in to be officially scored. Everyone who brings in a trophy



to be scored will be entered into winning a free hunt. We had a broad range of species brought to our 2023 banquet, so be sure to stop by and see everything getting scored.

Be on the watch for more information regarding our 47th Annual Grand Banquet and be sure to register early!



Moises Trujillo, 15, of Sparta, was mentored by cousin Cody Kamrowski of Melrose.

MOM MENTORED MASON, 2023 + ONE YOUTH HUNT SUCCESS



Mason Gudgeon shot this buck with mom Nikki Houtakker who learned years ago from her dad Kevin Germaine, right.

Lake Superior Chapter Report

by Scott Olson, President

Hello SCI Members. Let me introduce myself. I am Scott Olson, the new President of the Lake Superior Chapter. I am a lifelong sportsman, having grown up in St. Croix Falls, WI before residing most of my adult life in MN. I have been involved in wildlife organizations for about 40 years, starting with attending my first DU banquet. Eventually, I became a Co-Chair of a Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation chapter, Vice President of the Midwest Chapter of Wild Sheep Foundation and finally, for approximately the last 10 years, I've held various positions within the Lake Superior Chapter. I am excited to serve as President. The chapter has a great Board of Directors, with decades of experience in both hunting locally and worldwide, and much banquet experience too.

Hunting is my passion, and I enjoy sharing that passion with like minded

people. Introducing new people to the sport of hunting is fun and exciting. This year has been especially fun as I was able to introduce my fiancé, and now wife, Lisa Gingerich of Coppersmith Logistics/HuntingTrophy.com to the sport. I won't spoil upcoming stories of SCI Hunters magazine, but she has become a great hunter. Spring black bear in Idaho, honeymoon safari in South Africa, and whitetail in Idaho. Our mountain lion hunt scheduled for the week before Christmas of 2023 was just cancelled due to lack of snow. Lisa is off to quite a start!

The Lake Superior Chapter started a Sables Committee this fall. We recognize that women are the fastest growing portion of our sport, and we encourage all ladies to become involved. We look forward to planning many events specifically toward lady hunters.

I'd like to invite all SCI members to attend the Lake Superior Chapter



banquet, which will be April 5-6, 2024 at the Grand Casino in Hinckley, MN. 2 days of fun including sporting clays, seminars, raffles, live auction items including hunts around the world, and the best banquet food you've ever tasted. I am excited to announce that Tom Miranda will be our guest speaker each evening. Tom will also do a seminar on Saturday.

I look forward to meeting many of you at the banquets around the area. I'll be the tall, bald guy hanging out with Lisa at the Coppersmith booth! Let's talk hunting, long range shooting and share our passion for SCI!



Lake Superior Chapter Banquet & Fundraiser

April 5-6, 2024

Special Guest
Tom Miranda



Dear Members,

I want to invite you to the Annual Lake Superior Chapter Spring Banquet!

We have a fantastic line up of events that include entertainment, speakers, raffles, and our live auction of hunts across the world.

Our Board of Directors is made up of the finest people you could ever ask for and have spent endless hours designing this event for your enjoyment.

Last year's banquet was a huge success, as most of you remember. We were able to fund projects on all levels: locally, nationally and across the world. The Lake Superior Chapter donated funds for Hunters Rights and Preservation of our lifestyle.

Our projects include funding for many Trap Shooting teams from across the Midwest. It's very exciting that Trap Shooting has become the fastest growing High School sport, promoting & educating our children on Gun Rights and Safety.

As always, we strive to promote the Guide & Outfitters associations from the United States and their conservation efforts, but we also want to do more... so please join us in making this one of our best banquets ever!

Online Registration is now open! Just click on the link for the Annual Lake Superior Banquet & Fundraiser on our website at (www.sci-lakesuperior.org)!

We truly look forward to seeing you in April and Thank You for your continued support.

SE WI Bowhunters Chapter Report

by Monte Whitaker, President

As 2023 has closed, I hope you all had a safe and enjoyable hunting season. As I think back over the last year of hunting for me, I cannot help but be thankful for all the hunting opportunities I had with friends old and new. From muskox in Greenland to eland in Namibia, and even a few in between, it was an amazing year. Some of the highlights of those hunts were listening to other stories. I enjoy hearing of other's "firsts" in hunting. As I was writing this, I was getting a thank you text for referring someone on a hunt in Croatia. He had a great time and shared some of the stories and photos. That to me is one of the best parts of our SCI family. And like most of us, he is already thinking of where to hunt next!

I hope everyone had the opportunity this past year to talk to someone about getting into hunting for the first time. I was able to get my son-in-law out for his hunting debut on a pheasant hunt at Wern Valley. I must admit he was a bit skeptical at first but judging by the smiles and the conversations after the

hunt, it's safe to say we have a new hunter in Wisconsin. I would expect by next year he will have a new gun, new bow, and I will have an upset daughter for him spending all that money! She'll get over it...ha ha.

The other opportunity I had was to teach kids for the second year in a row with "Raised At Full Draw." Most of our chapters have donated to RAFTD through grant requests. From the parts of an arrow, climbing a tree stand, to tracking animals, it truly was a rewarding experience guiding these young archers. Then as fall came around, their successful harvest photos would be on Facebook, and most of their smiles took up the whole photo. RAFTD recently hired Gregg Kurzynski to collaborate with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and contribute to the support and growth of bowhunting and bowhunters in the state. We have one camp per year now in Shawano but stay tuned as there could be one by you in the near future. Getting new hunters – young and old – is the key to us keeping our hunting heritage alive. The more there are of us,

the louder we are heard, and as you all know, we need to be pretty loud these days to defend our hunting heritage.

We have a voice, and we need to use it.

On behalf of SE WI Bowhunters, I would like to thank all of you who attended our events in 2023. I see familiar faces from not only the WI chapter, but also Badgerland and Northeast. It's a great thing that we all support each other's efforts. Please mark your calendars for the SE WI Bowhunters upcoming banquet on March 22nd at the Golden Mast Inn at Okauchee Lake. We will have auctions, bucket raffle, gun and bow boards, and many other raffles. The food never disappoints with their perch filets and bacon-and-jalapeno-wrapped pheasant breast bits. Like us on Facebook, more info will be out soon.



Scott

Registration is available online. Please consider this option, as it is the quickest way to register and frees up valuable time for all of us. Note that nametags will be presented at the registration desk at the banquet. It is very important to include the full names of your guests, so that name tags can be created in advance.

Please go online and register today:
www.SCI-LAKESUPERIOR.ORG

For guest room reservations at
Grand Casino Hinckley
Please call
800.472.6321

Big Al Charity Pheasant Hunt Adds \$23,800, Tops \$250,000

SCI Member Rick Rollo's enthusiasm and gratitude were contagious as he shared results with participants and other supporters.

"Thanks to your incredible generosity, we experienced yet another amazing year as we came together for the 26th Annual Big Al Charity Pheasant Hunt," he said. The \$23,800 raised this year at the Wern Valley Sportsmen's Club event brought the total amount generated to \$250,000 since inception.

"Since partnering with SCI Wisconsin in 2009, The Big Al has raised over \$250,000 for giving disabled veterans and ill children the outdoor experience of their life," he said. "That is an incredible amount of generosity and heart on behalf of less than 60 participants annually!"

You can still give year-round, however. If you missed the fun and still want to help, you can see more photos and you can donate at www.bigalcharityhunt.com.

With a big thank you, Rick reminds everyone, "This is a charity event and every single dime we take in goes directly to helping a sick child or disabled vet enjoy the outdoors like we all do."

As Rick always says, "It's about the people!"

If you would ask Rollo, founder of the Big Al, whether he thought 25+ years ago this event would have raised more than a quarter-million dollars and grown into what it has-- impacting lives of

many children and disabled veterans-- he'd likely tell you "absolutely not!" He would also tell you the resulting success and impacts are because of the people involved.

"Anyone who has helped or been a part of an event like this knows that it takes a ton of people to pull it off," said Rick, "And to pull it off successfully for over 25 years takes exceptional people!"

In 2021, the Big Al had its most generous year ever, bringing in more than \$22,000 dollars! This was also accomplished coming out of the pandemic. That alone speaks to the kind of people involved with this event, and the lives of generosity they live out.

Through the generosity of organizations like Wern Valley Sportsmen's Club, McFarlane Pheasants, and SCI Wisconsin Chapter, the many men and women graciously donating raffle items, and the generous and giving spirits who show up to participate, the Big Al continues to bring the outdoors experience of a lifetime to our recipients!



Hunt Report:

The Newfoundland Sprint

by John Kubichek



I peered out the window of the 777 when we were about 3 hours ENE of Ohare on our way to the Baltic a few years back. "Look at how rough that coastline looks", I mumbled. Sue leaned over and said, "Those rocks and mountains don't look any gentler, and look at all those little lakes."

We were looking down at the north-eastern peninsula of Newfoundland. We've traveled to most Provinces in Canada, but never to any of the Maritimes. We both agreed, the time had come.

I'd worked with Mark Cooley when I was SCI WI Hunt Chairman, knew he repped good fly in camps in Newfoundland, away from resident hunters and booked a moose hunt with Cliff Vincent of 2G Outfitters through him.

Covid and taking groups to Africa stole my time until this year, but on September 30th, we boarded an Air Canada jet and whooshed off to Deer Lake, NL.

After overnighting at the Holiday Inn Express, we were picked up and driven 2 hours north, along the coast, to Portland Creek for a 20 minute flight into camp. Mother Nature decided to clog the mountain passes with clouds and a 40 knot wind aided a decision that safety was more important than getting to camp that afternoon. We holed up at the Sunrise cabins in Parsons Pond on the Gulf of St. Lawrence and flew in the next morning.

The Beaver float plane dropped us into a rock, bog and forest lined lake, just northeast of Gros Morne National Park. Our camp was more than expected. It had a well-stocked modern cabin with 4 bedrooms, 2 full baths, heat, and freezer, plus there were boats, Argo's and a great

staff who greeted us at the dock. Our guide would be Jeremy from Fogo Island, just north of NL. We shared the camp with Buddy from Maryland and Vince from Michigan.

While boating to hiking points was uneventful, we were immediately introduced to NL's bogs. When stepping onto seemingly innocent bare patches, Plop! We dropped in up to our knees in watery goo. We learned that every footfall needed to be on grass tufts or mossy patches. The moose rut was late and silence greeted our efforts to coax a bull from the timber, into the bogs. We spotted 6 cows and calves the 2nd morning and I passed a 30" outside bull with almost no paddles later that night. The two other hunters in camp weren't as picky and took smaller bulls in the first 2 days.

The 4th morning, we boated across the lake and hiked up a valley toward several bogs that traditionally held bulls. We set up and called over a promising bowl, but as had been the case for the previous 3 days, no one answered our calls. We hiked only another 150 yards, past a small pond, through a slimy bog and up a gentle rise when Jeremy recoiled and barked out "Bull! Shooter!" A great bull had stood up only 30 yards in front of us! I sloshed forward and to my left, while ripping the rifle from my shoulder, slamming a round into the chamber and staring past Jeremy towards the bull. No safe shot! The heavy paddled bull spun to his right, trotted over a rise, and was gone. Not so fast, Bullwinkle! I immediately bolted forward and charged 40 yards up the rise, to the bog the bull was crossing, He was already across that bog and only offered me a stern shot as he crested the next

rise. He was out of sight in 2 seconds, and I began a 75 yard sprint, doing my best not to get swallowed up in the many sinkholes and standing water in the bog. The last 20 yards rose over 30 feet and both my heart and lungs were working overtime. I angled toward a dead tree I hoped to rest the rifle on and crested a second time. There he was, about 75 yards ahead of me trotting slowly and turning to his left. I could only see the top half of his massive body and he was 20 feet from disappearing into the timber. I leaned into the tree, swung the rifle to my left, dropped the crosshairs to the front of his shoulder and mashed the trigger. The bull faceplanted into the bog.

"I've never seen you run that fast!" an ecstatic Sue blurted out. Jeremy said he'd never seen a bull moose run down before. I was 100% happy the bull was mine and fairly proud of myself, both that I had caught up to him and that I didn't fall up to my waist in a mudhole. Adrenaline does wonderful things!

He was an old bull; The guides guessed around 8+ years old, with worn and chipped teeth. His dark rack measured a little over 35" outside, with 17 points and his thick paddles were exactly what I wanted.

While Alaska and Western Canada offer bigger bulls and larger antlers than NL, if a hunter is patient, gets away from the locals and has a bit of luck, he/she can come back with a very nice trophy AND a very nice freezer full of moose meat!

I want to thank Sue for sharing this adventure with me, Mark for arranging it, Cliff for running a nice operation, and finally to Buddy, Vince, Jeremy, Wanda, Chris and James for making camp life enjoyable.



Dinsmore's Deer

Jason Dinsmore had a busy season. "I occasionally made it into the woods, but son Logan and I would a few times between hockey practices, school, and work. Found this boy on the second day of the season." Jason explained, "It was Logan's first time in the blind with a deer being shot.

Three years in the making. He was hunting under an apprentice license with me this year and I tried hard to get one to stop in front of him. We had three chances move through too fast for him to get a good target acquisition. Even this one was chasing does (and a buck he had just beat in a sparring

match that lasted five minutes behind our blind). We whistled, grunted, and practically yelled to get him to stop. He finally did in a spot that Logan couldn't get his gun around to shoot. Logan convinced me to fill my tag."

Logan, left, was with dad Jason Dinsmore.



Deer Hunt Wisconsin TV Promotes Hunting

The SCI Badgerland and Wisconsin Chapters continue to be a key to the success of the "Deer Hunt Wisconsin" annual TV special produced by SCI member Dan Small and Life Member Mark LaBarbera.

They and SCI are joined by Wisconsin Outdoor News, which promotes the show, SCI, and other sponsors in multiple editions in Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The show now airs in five states and is supported by longtime renewing sponsors like Vortex Optics, Mayville Engineering Co., Wildlife Research Center, and Whitetail Sanctuary Solutions, as well as Official Host Location Wild Eagle Lodge in Eagle River and sponsors like Airgun Sporting Association, Serpent Arms, and Wisconsin Wildlife Federation.

For nearly four decades, DHW TV specials have promoted hunting and conservation to the broader public through both network and public stations, and recently through YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/deer-huntwisconsin>) and other online and social media outlets. Milwaukee PBS and Wisconsin PBS, as well as community media public TV stations throughout



the state air "Deer Hunt Wisconsin" multiple times, generating great visibility and wide reach.

"Last November, two of the segments resulted in a lot of teary eyes, but I won't spoil it for anyone who has not seen it on Bally Sports or public community media TV and may yet want to watch it on YouTube," said Small. "I will say that SCI Badgerland and Wisconsin Chapters continue to make the difference in us being able to produce great shows. I hope others will contact

us to explore ways to be a part of the 2024 program that is already taking shape for next November."

Sponsors enjoy additional notoriety as the award-winning show continues to receive high praise and top honors in state, regional, and national media competitions. Small also promotes the show and sponsors on "Outdoors Radio with Dan Small" on more than 20 stations, including far-reaching WISN and others.

"Dan's and Mark's TV special showcases hunters as conservationists, mentors and humanitarians," said Charmaine Wargolet, Regional Representative for Safari Club International. She also thanked member Rick Rollo and everyone who helped make his Big Al's event a success because in some years those funds flow through the Wisconsin Chapter to support important educational outreach efforts like "Deer Hunt Wisconsin."





Kevin Casey and
Vortex's Mike Austin

Vortex Renews Support for Deer Hunt Wisconsin

Vortex Optics of Barneveld, Wisconsin renewed its support for "Deer Hunt Wisconsin" along with others who see extra value in associating with celebrity host Small who is an outdoor icon and long-time SCI advocate.

Put Your Family on TV

SCI members Dan Small and Mark LaBarbera welcome cell phone or other video clips from fellow members like you, as well as your family and friends, for next year's "Deer Hunt Wisconsin" TV special.

SCI members are among the most active and successful hunters and can help promote the joys and rewards of hunting.

It's easy to share what you have recorded already. Plus, here are tips for shooting future videos that could be used on the award-winning "Deer Hunt Wisconsin" TV specials, even if you don't have fancy camera equipment.

1. Be sure to turn your smartphone horizontally like a TV, use a steady rest or tripod, and press record to capture camp life, deer hunters having fun, your deer stand and live deer.
2. Record successful hunters with their deer in the field as they tell how they got it.
3. Also, record scenes of hunters supporting local businesses like gas stations and grocery stores.

If you get any length video clips from 10 seconds to 10 minutes, give Mark LaBarbera 520-730-9252 a call or text "I have some deer hunting video for you."

To contribute any amount toward this educational public outreach effort or sponsor the show, email WiSCIImag@peoplepc.com.

DHWTV Shares Airgun Facts, Informs Public About Legislation

Legislators and their constituents learned more about modern large caliber airguns and air shotguns for the second year in a row thanks to "Outdoors Radio with Dan Small" and "Deer Hunt Wisconsin" television.

defined to mean a weapon originally manufactured to expel one or more metal projectiles by the expansion of compressed air. Air shotguns are already allowed for most game species, including waterfowl but unintentionally not turkeys. This bill is expected to correct the oversight and allow them to be used for wild turkey hunting in Wisconsin.

Under current law, the Department of Natural Resources is authorized to establish open and closed seasons for the hunting of wild animals. DNR issues hunting licenses that authorize the hunting of specified animals, and those licenses specify the type of weapon that may be used when hunting under those licenses.

Under the bill, if DNR establishes an open season for hunting an animal with a firearm, the season must also be open for hunting that animal with an airgun. The bill also provides that each license that currently authorizes the hunting of an animal with a firearm also authorizes the hunting of that animal with an airgun.



Department of Natural Resources professionals also tuned in.

One of the most trusted outdoor media personalities, Small shared facts about pre-charged pneumatic airguns and legislation introduced by State Senators Stafholt, Felzkowski and Tomczyk, plus Representatives Tittl, Plumer, Brooks, Edming, Gustafson, Murphy, Mursau, Rettinger, Schmidt, Sortwell and VanderMeer.

Under this bill, a person may hunt a wild animal with an airgun in a season open to hunting that animal with a firearm. "Airgun" is



Be a Featured Airgun Hunter

The Airgun Sporting Association would like to showcase you as a featured airgun hunter across social media and in newsletters. For a chance to be featured you can send your story and pictures to info@airgunsporting.org. Make sure to include your name, state,

favorite airgun to hunt with and also feel free to answer the following questions:

1. How did you get started with airgun hunting?
2. Who was your biggest influence in the airgun hunting industry?
3. Describe your favorite airgun hunting experience.

Current law generally prohibits discharging a firearm from a vehicle or aircraft, across a highway, within 50 feet of a highway, and in the direction of a transmission facility. The bill expands these prohibitions to include discharging an airgun.

Because this bill creates a new crime or revises a penalty for an existing crime, the Joint Review Committee on Criminal Penalties may be requested to prepare a report.

SCI supports this legislation. Coverage of it on "Deer Hunt Wisconsin" qualifies chapter sponsorship of the show to fit under more than one SCI mission focus areas, like Education, Hunters Rights, and Legislative SCI programs.

SCI Lobbyist Dan Trawicki said, "It helps to have Dan Small and other media provide good factual content that we can share with legislators. And it helps when Dan's TV, online, and radio coverage informs the broader public in legislative districts across Wisconsin."

This article was written before the legislature was going to vote on the bill, but Dan and others expect it to pass the House and Senate, and the DNR to establish rules for airguns to be a bigger part of the 2024 hunting season.

Wisconsin's Serpent Arms Supports DHWTV & Bills

Joel Braun, owner of Bullseye Industries and its Serpent Arms business in Juneau, Wisconsin, already uses his company's air shotgun to harvest Wisconsin game. As reported in the most recent issue of this magazine, Editor & Publisher Mark LaBarbera also has been using a Serpent Arms air shotgun on the Mississippi River and for small game in southwest Wisconsin. And Serpent Arms has been helping educate the public at sports shows like the Wisconsin Waterfowl Expo, as well as by sponsoring "Deer Hunt Wisconsin TV."

As a Wisconsin manufacturer that is already having a positive impact on the state's economy, Braun's company is

Discover & Support ASA

The outlook for 2024 is as good as or better than had been expected when the airgun industry first created in 2018 a new association to represent manufacturers, retailers, distributors, and the broader airgunning industry. The Airgun Sporting Association (ASA) formed as a 501(c)(6) non-profit business league to promote the common business interests of its members.

The mission of the ASA is to market, promote and serve individuals, companies and corporations involved in the manufacture, importation, wholesale and retail sales and distribution of airguns and related hunting and airgun sport shooting equipment, products, goods, and services.

As it is doing with its sponsorship of "Deer Hunt Wisconsin" and with the DNR here, ASA's

primary focus is strengthening of relationships between the state wildlife agencies and representatives of the airgun industry. ASA's collaboration with trusted Wisconsin media, legislators, and conservation leaders like SCI, former DNR Administrator Keith Warnke, Dan Small, and Mark LaBarbera seems to be working for the development of regulations legalizing the use of big bore airguns for big game hunting and clarifying existing airgun regulations for small game hunting.

The ASA has launched an informational website describing the mission and scope of the work being accomplished within the industry as well as a source for the most up-to-date regulatory airgun hunting information for each state. Visit the ASA at www.AirGunSporting.org.



beginning to have an even greater impact as he helps SCI members and other hunters expand their gun collections and options.

Serpent Arms supports the new airgun legislation and SCI's efforts. Discover more about air shotguns currently available at www.serpentarms.com



2023 Success



Makenna Musgrave, 11, shot this Lafayette Co. buck.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

Watch Deer Hunt Wisconsin TV Special!

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

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

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

DEER HUNT WISCONSIN
 View Segments and the Entire Show!

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

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

Dan Small & Mark LaBarbera
Official Host Location of DHW TV

Laura & Shawn Wozniak's Mulies



Laura Wozniak and her husband Shawn, the MEC Outdoors Manager for Mayville Engineering Co., each shot mule deer near Craig, Colorado, and posed for a group shot with Matt and Wayne Zastrow.





Cody's Ducks

Cody Kamrowski is the new Executive Director for the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation after Mark LaBarbera retired. LaBarbera hired Cody at WWF last year with succession in mind. His waterfowl hunting buddies include Jared Patterson, Garrett Goodenough, and Brandon Ewert.



Paisley's 2023 Buck



Jordan Williams of southwestern Wisconsin had mistakenly planned a guys vacation during the recent Wisconsin Youth Deer Hunt, so he headed to Las Vegas for the Green Bay Packers game.

"I fumbled on the scheduling, but I was excited to hear my daughter Paisley still wanted to hunt that weekend," he said. "Good friends Steve Murphy and Matt Andrews were more than happy to take Paisley gun hunting."

After not seeing anything the first evening, Steve, Matt, and Paisley punted and came up with a game-plan for the following night.

Wanting to put points on the board (and hoping that board would be a plaque with antlers), here's how Paisley described the plan to score: "Steve and I walked up to the stand, and there were already three deer in the field. Those deer ran away. After sitting for two hours, Steve said, 'There's a buck coming.' Steve and I got the gun ready. We checked the yardage, and it was too far away. We could just see the buck's head, and it started moving closer, which meant a better shot for me. We watched it for 15 minutes before I was able to get a shot."

Jordan said, "Steve excitedly let Paisley know that the deer was hit and going down. He then let Paisley know just how giant it was. Both Paisley and Steve were shaking with excitement."

Meanwhile, in Las Vegas, Jordan kept checking his phone for calls, emails, and text messages about the hunt back home.

"I was excited to finally start receiving the texts and phone calls as Matt and Steve began sending photos and details," Jordan said. "The Packers lost but Paisley won, scoring a memory to last her lifetime. And for the rest of my life, I'll be checking season dates and the calendar before booking future trips. I owe a big thank you to great friends for helping Paisley harvest a deer of a lifetime."

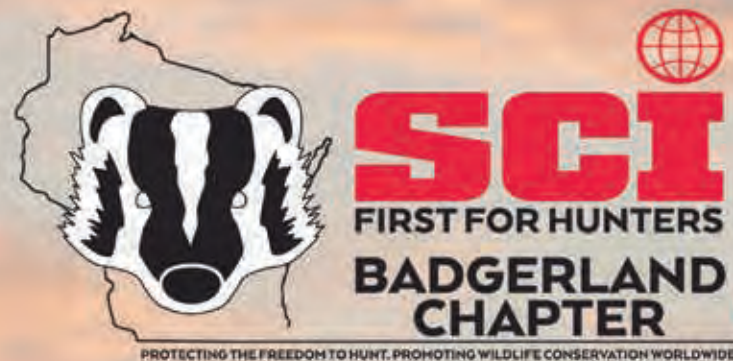
Matt Andrews, left, Paisley and Steve Murphy.

Kern's Musk Ox & Caribou

If there's any doubt that Kern Plumbing is a hunting friendly employer, let the record show that owner Ryan Kern gives all employees the week off during the peak of the Wisconsin whitetail rut. In addition to providing jobs and great working conditions for his team that includes a high

percentage of hunters, Ryan also takes time off throughout the year to pursue his passion for hunting. Like SCI members in chapters here and around the globe, he loves to hunt. Recently, Ryan shared photos from his 2023 pursuit of muskox and caribou. Enjoy!





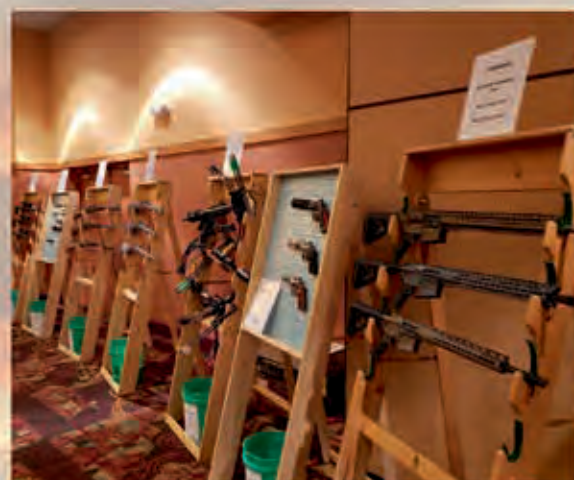
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Doors Open 4pm Fri. and 10am Sat.

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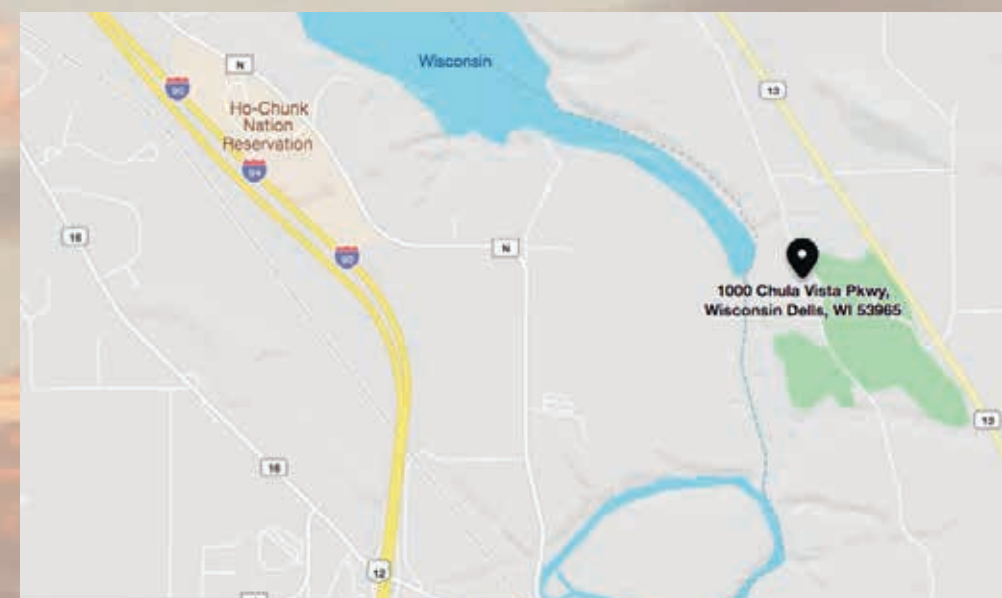
HUNTER'S EXPO '24

February 16 & 17, 2024 | Chula Vista Resort
Doors Open 4pm Fri. and 10am Sat.

The Badgerland Chapter of SCI would like to invite you, your friends, and family to our 2024 Hunter's Expo! This two-day event will be held at the Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells.

Doors open at 4pm on Friday, February 16th and runs until all auctions and raffles are completed. We'll be open again at 10am on Saturday. Both nights feature a great Chula Vista dinner at 7pm with an auction at approximately 8pm. Remember to arrive early enough to talk with the outfitters, without them, we would not be able to raise the money that we do. We will be offering online auctioning for our hunts & trips to those unable to attend our event.

Make sure to bring your trophies and enter our FREE 2024 Trophy Awards Competition! Great new prizes this year! Details and auction link available at scibadgerland.com.



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To reserve call: (833) 274-9894 | ID# J24138 Safari Club

Limited number of rooms available on a first come, first serve basis. Reservations can be made through January 17, 2024 or until rooms have filled, whichever comes first. Make your reservation early!

Passing the Torch

by James Davis

Mr. Fisher as I always referred to him, was much more than my best friend's dad, he was a life-long mentor to me. From the time I was old enough to hunt, Mr. Fisher was the driving force that fueled my passion for the outdoors. I was not raised in a hunting family. I met Matt Fisher, my best friend, in the fourth grade and his father, Dennis Fisher, took me under his wing and introduced me to the sporting life.

Growing up, my weekend mornings were spent in the pre dawn darkness waiting for their wood paneled station wagon to illuminate my driveway. Adventure was on the way! Would it be opening day ducks at Duck Creek, geese at Grand River, pheasants at Fox Lake, or deer at the cabin in Black River

Falls! We would pick up Mr. Fisher's brother Wayne at their childhood home in Baraboo or at a dingy diner in Portage. The car ride was filled with excitement and anticipation as hundreds of my questions about decoys, dogs, guns, and boats were all patiently answered.

Days were filled with lessons taught, from where to hunt and what to wear. To learning about decoy placement and how to process game. I vividly remember a cold Thanksgiving day rabbit hunt at Mr. Fisher's mother and laws farm, just outside of Cuba City. Weeks before, Matt and I had completed the Wisconsin Hunter's Safety Program. Proudly wearing our "graduate" patches on our new orange vests, we harvested our first rabbits. Mr. Fisher, clad in his well-worn jones

cap and faded brown canvas coat reached back and removed the rabbits from his game bag. A few patches of their soft, delicate, gray hair floated to the snow covered ground below. Out of the wind, behind the barn, he patiently took the time to show us how to dress the rabbits. A slice in the middle of the back and then pulling the skin off in each direction. We were taught to remove the legs and finally the head. Slicing the belly from the the bottom to the sternum, and then removing the innards. The shiny, silver, muscular body was placed in a large bowl of salt water... the water turned pink. We learned to use the fresh snow to clean the blood off of our hands and our knife blades. Numbing at first, our hands warmed with friction as the compacted flakes turned to liquid and washed the quickly drying blood away. Smiling with our prizes in tow, we made our way to the warm farmhouse where a delicious treat of fried rabbit was on the horizon!

As the years passed, Mr. Fisher had the trust and the faith to allow Matt and I the freedoms to traverse the thousands of acres of public marshes and forests that dot Wisconsin's seventy two counties. We would branch out on our own for hours on end, exploring and learning. These treasured weekends have continued throughout my life. For this lifelong passion, I am forever grateful.

As we enter a new age of wing-shooting, we are witnessing many newcomers to the sport who, like myself, years ago, did not grow up in a hunting household. From secret grouse coverts and how to pole a duck skiff to the best load for spooky late season roosters, hunting is riddled with tried and true techniques and inherent wisdoms. For most, these time honored beliefs were passed down generation to generation from parents and grandparents. Without these wisdoms that were so commonly passed down, newcomers to the sport are left to "figure it out" on their own. A new survey by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service shows that today, only about 5 percent of Americans, 16 years and older, actually hunt. That's half of what it was 50 years ago and the decline is

expected to accelerate over the next decade. Plain and simple, fewer Americans are taking up hunting and experienced hunters are fading fast.

Hunters play an important role in society. We provide the necessary funds to support local, national, and international conservation efforts. In a day and age of processed and genetically modified food, hunting is a good source of nutrition and an opportunity to eat "clean". Hunting also helps states manage the size of certain animal populations and stimulates the economy. Then and now, rare is the occasion I don't stop in a small town to fuel up, get coffee, grab snacks for the day, and eat lunch or dinner!

Mr. Fisher stepped into my life and "passed the torch". Whether he knew it or not he installed a love and respect



for the outdoors. He turned a curious little boy into a lifelong hunter. Mr. Fisher has since passed and I, like many of you, are in a position to pass the torch. Looking for a way to help out and get involved? You can always invite a friend or coworker to "tag" along while you sight in your bow, head to the trap range, or paddle a local marsh scouting for ducks. These activities are sometimes just enough to "peak" a newcomers interest!

Contact your local Fish and Game or Department of Natural Resources. Many state agencies as well as

local and national conservation groups have developed and support "learn to hunt" mentor programs, seminars, outings, and workshops. They are always looking for volunteers and participants! No matter the age or activity, these are all great opportunities to not only help out at but to also introduce a future hunter to the sporting life.

You never know if that young boy, full of questions with a twinkle in his eye that watched and helped you clean ducks in your garage, that you later allowed to plink cans in your backyard with his BB gun or your neighbor you took clay shooting and then on a pheasant hunt may become a lifelong sportsmen and conservationist. Whether it be your own children, friends of your children, personal friends, coworkers, or neighborhood acquaintances, as sportsmen and women we owe it to the future of the sport to pass the torch. So, I ask. Have you passed the torch?

Brown Bear

by Brandon Goodwin

As it happens frequently on Alaskan hunts, it's always a rush to try and beat the weather to get into camp, and my brown bear hunt was no exception!

My guide Jess and I were flown to our tent camp late Sunday evening, and it didn't take long to get our gear sorted, eat dinner and sleep. The next morning, we awoke to high winds (I know, what a surprise on the peninsula in the spring), fog and drizzle.

The season didn't start until the next day, and we were still on our 24-hour flight hold anyway, so we spent that day checking and re-checking gear.

Opening day started off overcast and windy, but we were eager to get started, so we headed out early to a glassing spot a hike straight east of camp. Sometimes the best place to

camp doesn't coincide with the best spot to glass from, but we won that lottery in respect to that. This spot was a long tapering ridge which gave us 700 feet of elevation gain over the surrounding lakes, bogs, and brush as well as the only distinctive feature for miles in any direction being a little cluster of (I would say mountains, but I'm a flatlander, so someone from a true mountain state might say bumps) hills that rose to 1,300 feet. Our theory was that those hills being the only feature around was like if there is one bush in a fence row, all the animals cross at that bush. So, we set up on top and started glassing the flats and hillsides. We turned up several moose, a couple caribou and foxes but no bears. That evening we checked another viewing area straight west of camp, which turned out to be a bust since the entire

area around this smaller hill was a swamp and would be hard to navigate.

Day 1 with 15 hours of hunting was in the books, but it felt good to just be out there.

Day 2 we awoke to howling winds and fog and decided to let it blow over before heading out, which took until day 3.

Day 3 things looked better, but the winds were still strong; we hiked over to our spot and set up for the long day of looking. We found the moose, caribou and other small creatures but still struggled to spot a bear until late afternoon. I was glassing a spot I had been watching a moose feed on when I saw an out of place rock in the yellow hillside grass, and then it moved.

"It's a bear," I told Jess, and we watched from a couple miles away as it



Brandon held the date cut from his hunting license tag when he killed the bear on Friday the 13th.

fed on grass and wandered the hillside. It looked like a good one, but from that distance, the only thing we were sure of was that it was a lone bear, a good sign. It got late, so we headed back to camp for the night.

Day 4 was Friday the 13th! My inreach unit had the weather for our site as full sun and 47 degrees with winds 7mph. In reality, we were fogged in 34 degrees and 25 mph winds. After waiting a few hours, we decided to head out and wait for the fog to fully lift at our glassing spot. We made it there, and 15 minutes later, it cleared up.

We set up and began trying to find that bear.

Twenty minutes later, in a grassy area I just checked a minute earlier with no bear, that bear was standing in the wide open. "Got him" I told Jess, and we began our evaluation of the situation, knowing we had more than 14 hours of light ahead of us. We watched for a while and then decided to walk north down the spine of our hill to begin the task of closing the distance.

We hiked about a half-mile and found a clearing at the end of the hill and began searching.

Jess found the bear fast and said he looks like a good bear from here but we are still over a mile out. With not much of a choice, we broke one of my hunting rules "never give up elevation" and headed down to the flats to cross the mile over to the base of the hill the bear was on.

This should have been a simple hike, but it turned out that flat was a bog, and we spent the next hour knee deep with almost every step. That crossing sucked, but we made it to a small drainage that looked like a good place to gain back some of that elevation. Before we started up, we glassed the bear again and checked his position. He was slowly moving around the hill in our direction but gaining elevation as well. I noticed a big rock about 800 feet above us, that looked to be about 50 yards from where the bear would pass if it continued on its current course, so off we headed.

We made it to the rock and tried to find the bear which we did but it had climbed up into a large rock pile above us. We needed to move up another 300 yards, just to have a clear view of him, but we had to do it without him hearing, smelling, or seeing us. This took some time, but we were able to use the bushy hillside and scattered rocks as cover and made it to a big rock in the middle of the drainage with the bear directly above us.

The bear was lying on a big flat rock in the sun and just monitoring everything that happened below him. We dropped our packs behind the rock and peered over the top, my bino range came back 279 yards corrected to 248 because of the uphill angle. Jess asked me what distance I was comfortable shooting with my rifle (I had brought my model 700 in .338 WinMag with 250-grain partition bullets) and I said, "I've shot it out to 300 yards on hunts, but I'd rather get closer."

But there was no way to do that without just walking in the wide open

and the closer we got the steeper it got so, where we were was the best it was going to get. We set up for the shot and I was able to get a great rest on the rock and was in a comfortable position, the reticle in my scope was doped to let me know that the dot separating my 2nd and 3rd horizontal crosshairs was 253 yards.

I settled in behind the rifle to wait. When the bear finally got up from his nap, we were able to get a good look at him and determine that he looked like a good bear to take. He turned broadside and stretched, and I made a tiny wind adjustment in my head and placed the dot just behind the shoulder and squeezed the trigger.

Bang!
This is the point at which all your careful planning, perfect stalk and shot end the perfect story with the bear dropping dead to the ground. But this

was Friday the 13th and nothing even remotely close to that storybook ending was going to happen. The rifle recoiled and I heard Jess say "Hit! looked really good but he's moving up hill."

I was already racking another round and found the bear in my scope moving up the steep hillside with some noticeable struggle. I placed the vertical crosshair on his spine and the 300-yard crosshair between his shoulders and squeezed again.

Bang!
Jess said, "Hit! He's moving down and left now." I couldn't see the bear because of a rock pile so I took the chance to put two more rounds in the rifle and turned the scope all the way down to 3-power. The bear came out from behind the rocks, and I was waiting but rushed a

shot that hit a little high over his shoulder which sent him running down the hillside. The next opportunity was an opening in the brush. I was able to get out in front a little and squeezed off another shot and this time we both heard the "Waop" of a bullet hitting flesh.

A few more steps and the bear disappeared around the side of the hill into the brush.

Simultaneously Jess and I both shouted some profanity and grabbed our packs and started off around the side of the hill in pursuit. Loading my rifle as we double-timed it to the last spot we saw the bear. We made it to the spot we thought we had last seen him but couldn't find any blood (not unusual with these bears and their thick fur). This was my worst nightmare coming true right in front of me. I told Jess, "Let's take a minute and think

about what happened and what we need to do next before we head off into this bush looking for 1400 pounds of pissed off bear."

He agreed and we went over every shot, we both thought my first shot should have done the job and he said he saw hair fly off right from the shoulder. Did that mean I didn't make enough of a wind adjustment and my shot was blown farther than I thought and maybe got into the shoulder more than the lungs? We knew the second shot had hit because the bear spun and headed down, but where exactly was unknown. The shot we heard hit I felt was good, and I have made many shots on moving targets in the past but no clear way to know exactly where that bullet had hit either. After the first shot, it was all about just getting more lead into him before we lost that opportunity and the entire exchange had only taken maybe 30 seconds. Jess was using a .375 H&H, but the bear was just too far out for him to back me up.

We drank some water and Jess used his Inreach to send a message back to base camp about what had happened. I was sick at what I knew lay ahead and was not looking forward to what had to be done.

We started off around the hillside trying to stay in the open grass areas that would give us the most reaction time if the bear was lying in wait in the brush. We also stayed 20 yards apart so that the bear couldn't get us both if we got to a pinch point. No matter how much water I drank, my mouth was dry, and my heart was pounding. We continued on a slightly downhill course as we side-hilled looking for any sign that the bear had gone this way.

After about 45 minutes, I began to believe we were never going to find this bear with just the two of us, or worse yet that it would become an even bigger problem than we already had on our hands. We came to a large clearing and Jess's Inreach went off with a reply from base camp. We stopped next to a large rock that I leaned against. Jess checked his message; base camp was letting us know they were going to come over and help us search but it would be a couple hours before they could get there. As he read the message, I reached back with my left hand and grabbed my water bottle from my pack and as I brought it

around in front of me, I caught movement in the corner of my right eye and knew in that split second exactly what that was.

I dropped the bottle and began to raise my rifle. At the same time in front of me I saw Jess racking a round and bringing his rifle into play. I flipped the safety off as the rifle hit my shoulder and just pointed toward the bear (I'm not sure I even used the scope). The muzzle was pointed near the bear's shoulder, and I jerked the trigger. There was no time for squeezing! I saw the round hit the bear just behind the shoulder at five yards away. As I was racking the rifle the bear jumped back into the bush and I lost sight of it.

Jess was on that bear's heels and said he could see it laying in the brush upside down in front of him. "He's not going anywhere," was his reply and I said feel free to put one in him if you want to make sure. He laughed and said, "That's a big bear."

Not two minutes earlier we were both talking that this bear could be 100 yards above us or 600 yards below us and we don't have a clue as to which way to look. I believe that bear was laid up and as we passed below him, he got

our scent and that made him get up and move. It all happened so fast, but it wasn't like the bear was coming for me or even Jess as much as just to the clearing we were in.

That bear was hit four times, and it took every one of them to bring him down. The feeling of relief at having that bear dead was amazing, and after we were done high five-ing and hugging, Jess sent a message to base camp: "Big bear down and found." We sat there and ate lunch to calm down before the real work began.

It took over an hour to get that bear out of the bush and onto the grass for pictures and both of us had worked up a sweat. Pictures taken, knives out and for the next two hours we skinned and pulled the feet and skull out to get the weight down on the hide. We loaded my pack with all Jess's and my gear and the skull (I'm guessing my pack was 75 lbs.) and the hide into Jess's pack (Again a guess but I'm saying 150 lbs. easy). Then the three-mile pack out back to camp down the hill, across the bog and around the lake. The pack out no one wants to hear about but it sucked in a satisfying way. We finally made it back to camp at 9:00pm.



6 Tips From This Hunt

1. You can't use too much gun. These animals can take the punishment. Bring a gun big enough to dole it out. I know the stories of "I only had to shoot mine once" and I've had some of the most bad ass hunters I know say "It took a half a box to bring that thing down." Make sure you use bullets that perform and not just group well at the range. I can't emphasize it enough, retained weight and controlled expansion.
2. Shoot a really small bear (LOL) unless your guide has the packing strength of a large mule (sarcasm). Be prepared for the eventuality that, even broken down, these bears are huge. Make sure you have a good pack with a frame.
3. No matter how dire the situation seems, keep your focus on the task at hand and don't give up. If we had not stayed positive this might be an entirely different story, so be prepared for it to get "western."
4. Never forget that your shooting skills can put you and your guide's life in danger, so take it seriously and don't ever plan to rely on your guide to finish the job. You need to be a team working together if you have any hope of a positive outcome.
5. Tip generously because your guide doesn't get paid enough to deal with times like this.
6. Make sure to give thanks that you get to come home safe after a hunt like this. I had an amazing adventure, and I rode the roller coaster of emotions to the end. But in the end, we didn't let Friday the 13th jinx the day.

Time to Grade Your Season!

by Michael Murphy

The end of deer season is coming soon, or for some already over. How did you and your hunting party perform? Did you see many mature bucks? Did you see too many smaller bucks? See fewer large does with twins or even triplets?

Now is a good time to evaluate how the season went and what you need to do in this off-season to accomplish your goals next fall and winter.

Use trail cameras as well as your time and your hunting party's time in the woods to evaluate your herd.

Start making notes:

1. Number of bucks in the class looking to harvest;
2. Number of smaller bucks – good genetics but too young;
3. Number of bucks with poor genetics;
4. The number of mature does with twins or triplets; and
5. Number of yearlings.

Now to get trophy class bucks you need to make improvements to your land as I have discussed with you in previous articles. A buck should NEVER have to leave your property because you are missing something. Do this first!

A close second: Evaluate your herd. If you do not have many mature bucks on your property you may have to wait one, two, even three years – with letting bucks go – so you can get to the class buck you are looking to harvest.

So, review the bucks – the ones with poor genetics. Use these to fill your freezer with venison. The young good genetic bucks let them grow so they get to the class you are looking to harvest. I have even let two – high 170 and 180 class bucks go till after the rut – just so they would breed the mature does on my property. It worked – you can see their sons in some of the younger bucks coming up. You can also possibly lose some of these bucks to your neighbors, but if you want to change your property and make it into trophy buck property you need to make some sacrifices.

1. Let your good genetic bucks grow to the class you are looking for on your property, also a chance to mate and pass on their good genetics to the next generation.

2. The small poor genetic bucks – take those out and use them to fill your freezer with venison.

Next: You MUST manage your does if you want to get trophy class bucks on your property. In previous articles I have talked about this. The best way to explain this is – Farmers do not take their prize bull and mate it with a puny/raunchy cow. It's the same in the wild – if you want trophy class deer then keep trophy class does on your property.

I do not have hundreds of acres for my personal hunting property. I do have a very well-managed property thou and produce Trophy Class Bucks and Does every year. For example, on my property I have two does that one has dropped triplets the last 3 years in a row and another doe who dropped triplets for the first time this year. These does are huge and completely off-limits to harvesting. YOU need to manage your Does and Bucks to get to that Trophy Class year after year! Something that you should NEVER hear from anyone hunting a well-managed hunting property is "You should see the huge doe I shot." If you

want meat shoot a small, poor genetic buck.

So, take the time this off-season to manage your herd and determine which bucks are going to the freezer and which ones are going to remain to pass on their genetics. Also, evaluate your does. You should be keeping high quality – great genetic does on your property. Never shoot the large does unless they are old – gray in the muzzle, and producing less off-spring (i.e. instead of dropping triplets they are only giving birth to a single fawn now).

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

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



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