

HUNTERS

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF SCI CHAPTERS IN WISCONSIN AND ILLINOIS
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2024

Rob Keck's Tips "Bear" Repeating



- Koback's Hunt for Hunger
- Chapter News & Event Photos
- CSF Legacy Award to Johnny Morris
- Hunter's Rights & Legislative Updates

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HUNTERS

Official Magazine of SCI Chapters in Wisconsin and Illinois
November/December 2024

On the cover: Rob Keck took the time to reposition his bear and capture this beautiful photo taken along the Chakachatna River in Alaska. See his tips on pages 16-17

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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

Hunting and holiday seasons! What a great time of year to live in Wisconsin!

Hope your hunting so far has been safe and fruitful and that you have enjoyed our glorious fall scenery. It's my favorite time of year and the best part is being out in the woods at daybreak and listening to the wildlife "wake up." Nothing like it in the world. Enjoy!

One of the things I wanted to remind all chapter members about is the SCI Hunter's Embassy, D.C., Brick Paver program. For \$500 you can purchase a paver with your name or family name, or chapter name, for all to see when attending our building in D.C. How cool is that? Politicians, staffers, visitors, even President Donald Trump visit our Hunter's Embassy on a daily basis. One of them can make a great gift for someone in your family who is a dedicated SCI member, to memorialize them for all time. Wisconsin chapter members can purchase one by calling the WI Chapter office to get the form as they have been pre-purchased by the chapter. Anyone else, just go on the SCI website and make your purchase there or contact your chapter leadership to see if they are making a chapter purchase.

With Christmas coming up, the gift idea is unique!



Well, happy hunting and hope everyone has a wonderful Thanksgiving (we have so many things to be grateful for) and a beautiful, blessed Christmas with loved ones. And may the New Year be filled with love and new adventures!

As always, be safe, be well, and God bless.

Happy Holidays!

SE WI Bowhunters Chapter Report

Wake Up Hunters and Gun Owners!!

by Dan Trawicki, President

Every election is important to be sure. I have always firmly believed that as citizens, we have a responsibility to participate in the elective process. That is why I am shocked, when those of us that are so passionate about the outdoors, our gun rights, and the future of our children don't vote. We know as an example that there are over 380,000 registered gun owners in our state that are not registered to vote. In recent data compiled by Hunter Nation, only 50% of the hunters in our state vote. I honestly don't get it.

When I hear hunters complaining about the lack of a wolf season right here in Wisconsin, the loss of habitat and access across the state, the inability of

sportsmen to cross railroad tracks from parking lots created and established to allow us to take our kids hunting and fishing, I always ask the same question. Did you vote? If you didn't, why not?

I hear gun owners who are hoarding ammo because of the fear of taxes and availability. When not that long ago you had virtually no ammo available when certain elected officials were talking of banning certain types of ammo. The sale of AR 15 type firearms is constantly under attack by elected officials. When I hear the barrage of complaints and criticism, I ask the same question I do of hunters. Did you vote? If not, why not.

I can also say for me, November elections come at the worst possible time. I

am either in a tree stand, duck blind, or in the field. I go to my local city office and get an absentee ballot and complete it before I head to the woods. I can also say, when I vote, I vote policy not personality. I am not looking for someone to have over for dinner. I am looking for someone that most closely aligns with my core values as it relates to our outdoor heritage among other things. If you will be out of town on election day, get an absentee ballot!

I know of a very wise statement that an old boss told me once. "If you're not part of the solution, you are part of the problem." Don't be part of the problem, make your voice and your vote count.

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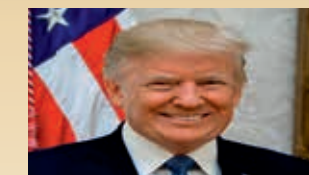
IT MATTERS!

REMEMBER THESE QUOTES FROM VICE PRESIDENT KAMALA HARRIS

-At a 2020 presidential campaign event in Londonderry, N.H. in September 2019, then-presidential candidate Harris told reporters that confiscation of commonly-owned semi-automatic firearms was "a good idea." Elaborating on her support for a compulsory "buyback" program.

-On the September 16, 2019 episode of "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon.": "I do believe that we need to do buybacks," Harris said. "A buyback program is a good idea. Now we need to do it the right way."

-She also called for a "mandatory buyback program" during an October 3, 2019 MSNBC gun control forum and again during a November 2019 interview with NBC Nightly News.



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Wisconsin Chapter Report

by Dean LePoidevin, President

By now many of us have had the pleasure of walking the woods and valleys of our wonderful state in search of the elusive whitetail. I hope you have had success, to date, and urge you to continue your quest well into winter and the coming year. After all, late-season hunting can be extremely rewarding.

In addition, we know many SCI members enjoy other forms of outdoor recreation in the fall and winter, including the hunting of duck, goose, turkey, rabbit, squirrel, grouse, coyote, fox and other furbearers, and of course angling for many species of gamefish. If you haven't taken advantage of all the opportunities available throughout the state, there's still plenty of time.

In recent columns, I've mentioned a unique opportunity to show your

support of SCI WI and SCI International by purchasing a limited-edition paving brick, inscribed with your family or business name, or whatever you prefer. These bricks will be placed at the entrance of the SCI Hunter's Embassy in Washington, DC, just steps away from the nation's capital and congressional offices.

SCI WI members can look forward to another chapter tradition: our annual Christmas Party. This year, we will be celebrating at the Ingleside in Pewaukee, WI, on Friday, December 6th. Get more details and make your reservations soon by contacting Sarah Ingle at office@sciwi.org or calling 262-437-0097.

Future programming highlights include a member meeting in January 2025 and, of course, our 48th Annual Banquet and Fundraiser at the



Brookfield Conference Center over the weekend of February 13-15, 2025. This celebration promises to be bigger than ever, with more exhibitors, outfitters, displays, auctions, and ways for attendees to mix and mingle with like-minded outdoor enthusiasts. More details to come, so continue to monitor the SCI WI website at www.sciwi.org.

Until next year, our collective best wishes to all for a safe and fun-filled holiday season!



Big Al's Success at Wern Valley

by Rick Rollo

What a day, I can honestly say I don't know where to begin but begin I must.

I understand that a long list of thank yous is a bit boring but I just can't figure any other way around it. So here we go.

To all the wonderful people at Wern Valley Sportsman's Club, especially Shelby and Tommy who come in on a

Sunday and are nothing but gracious, kind and helpful. Bill MacFarlane and the folks at MacFarlane Pheasants who make sure we have the birds we need and at a reduced cost. Craig Brown, not my right arm but both my arms, he is the guy that puts most of this together and the reason it comes off so well. Liz Darland who designs the always coveted Big Al magnets. Simone, Esme, Bing, and Colleen who

get everyone registered and raffle tickets sold before 9:00am, Matt Lionheart and Bill Rollo for the delicious coffee in the morning. Our wonderful, hardworking dogs and dog handlers. The Board of Directors at SCI Wisconsin Chapter, especially Charmaine and Steve who work tirelessly to use the Big Al funds in the way you want them distributed. To Debby, my amazing wife, who has been 100%

my biggest supporter from the beginning.

Last, but certainly not least, to all of you! To those that were able to come this year and to those who couldn't. I could name each and every one of you by name and talk about your contributions and donations, your generosity is beyond pale.

To prove your generosity is beyond pale, I will tell you that this relatively

small group of sportsmen and women (54) raised \$25,345 this year with still some more pledged. I think I must have gone over the numbers five times because I couldn't believe it myself.

To say THANK YOU doesn't ring hollow but it in no way expresses the gratitude and overwhelming pride I have to know each and every one of you.

I promise you that we will work diligently to make sure that your generosity is used in the most direct and efficient manner possible to help those less fortunate.

Thank you again and may all of you be healthy and happy until we meet again.



Northeast Wisconsin Chapter Report

by Kathryn Thede, President

Well, Wisconsin bow hunting is underway. The weather feels a bit more like summer than hunting season, but it still feels good to be out in the woods just relaxing and enjoying nature. Truth be told, I enjoy the late season better (when all the little blood sucking mosquitoes have gone to sleep for the year!) As you spend time in the woods—be safe, good luck, and create all those memories!!

We went to the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association Expo in Oshkosh a few weeks ago and had a great time. They seemed to have a really good turnout and next year it will be a two day event. At the event we were able to talk with so many people and it was a new experience for us. Brythe (my husband) and I had been talking and it is important to support other hunting events and learn about their organizations, too. After all, our mission at SCI is broad and covers all hunting. We are in this together and we are fighting to protect and promote hunting rights. The more we work together, the stronger we will be!

Speaking of working together, I know we are all aware that there is an upcoming election. One thing that I didn't realize, "10 million gun owners and hunters in the United States are not registered to vote" (according to an article in NRA- American Hunter- from August 21, 2024, and Vote4America data). While I have always considered voting an American right, privilege, and our civil duty. The older I get the more I understand and appreciate just how important it is. Not just the act of voting but the research and "knowing who and why" they are getting your vote. If you haven't voted or aren't sure if it is worth it- I encourage you to research (not just watch the ads), know your candidate, where they stand on the issues that matter most to you, and take to time to proudly let your voice be heard. Encourage those around you to do the same. We live in the greatest country in the world and should never take that for granted. Take the time, make it a priority!

Northeast Wisconsin Chapter of SCI has some events coming up. We have our member meetings/dinner/member presentations located on our website www.newsci.org under membership. We also have a Facebook page Northeast Wisconsin Chapter SCI. I invite you to follow for information on upcoming events. On November 13, 2024, Kristine and Gary Borkowski will take us on an amazing adventure as they relive a Montana hunt at Holidays Pub & Grill (3950 N. Richmond Street Appleton) cocktails at 6pm and dinner at 7pm price is \$25 per person. Please text or call your RSVP (name and how many will be attending) to Kathryn Thede 920-450-0765. We would love to have you join us!



We are starting something new and doing a spotlight on a board member so that YOU can get to know US! This month's spotlight shines brightly on Samantha LaCourt. We appreciate her ideas and all she does for our chapter.

Board Spotlight: Sami LaCourt

"My name is Sami LaCourt. I have been involved with SCI since I was a little girl attending the Expo, meetings, and banquets with my dad and of course, entering the trophy competitions. In 2022, my husband

and I were voted on the board. Since becoming a board member, I have taken over Sables for our chapter. In Wisconsin, my favorite animal to hunt is turkey but for me, nothing beats an African safari. Hunting and the outdoors are my passion, but the best part of my life is my daughter who keeps me on my toes. My husband and I can't wait to take our daughter on her first hunt as she already can't get enough of the outdoors and the animals in our trophy room. SCI is important to me because they fight for hunters' rights. With all the changes in the world having them advocate for us is more important than ever!"



"SAVE THESE DATES"

FEBRUARY 21-23, 2025

Join us, the NE Wisconsin Chapter for our Annual SCI Hunter's Banquet and Hunt Expo 2025.

Saturday Night we will be hosting our "26th Annual SCI Hunter's Banquet", Live and Silent Auctions along with Firearm, Optics and Merchandise Raffles at Stadium View Bar & Grill.

Our Hunter Expo is held in conjunction with the "Wisconsin State Hunting and Fishing Expo". With over 175 vendors, there will surely be something that will interest you.

Banquet tickets are only \$75 and include a free pass to the Sport Show.

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Badgerland Chapter Report

by Randy Mayes, President

As this issue comes out, we are obviously on the verge of an extremely important election. I know I'm preaching to the choir here but let's hope and pray that everything works out in such a way that our hunting heritage, gun rights and economy will thrive in the coming years! With one party, that is much more likely to happen than the other! I think you know what to do between now and November 5th.

I'm going to limit my talk on politics because I'm pretty tired of hearing about it as much as you. But...one positive political tidbit is the voice we have with our state government. That is Dan Trawicki. Our chapter has always been happy to support Dan's connections as a lobbyist with our state politicians. He goes to bat for us on many issues relating to our cause. I know I wouldn't want to do what he

does for us! Keep it up Dan!

About the time you receive this, I will, Lord willing, be high up in a tree in Illinois. This is my fourth year bow hunting in the Pike county area. I have yet to send an arrow at a deer down there. I just haven't seen "The Right One". I'm not waiting for a giant, but I will say that the bar is set a little higher there than on my hunting land near home!

I want to put a plea out there. In the last several years, our chapter, thanks to many of you reading this, has had some of our most successful Hunter's Expos ever! I attribute this not only to the support we have gotten from attendees but also our very cohesive Board of Directors. We are however, in need of more directors. We have lost and are losing a few of our directors



because of various "life" things happening. Being on the board does not require a large commitment of time. Half of our board meetings are virtual. Even the officer positions aren't extremely time consuming. I think it is also healthy for organizations to have a regular change in leadership. Our directors have some great ideas but sometimes having a fresh, new viewpoint can be a benefit as well! Please give it some consideration and contact me at 715-340-0804 if you're interested!

A-Mayes-ing Project

When he's not spending hours being SCI Badgerland chapter president, Randy Mayes is a full-time taxidermist. One of his recent projects, "Sheep Mountain," has been nominated for "The Coolest Thing Made in Wisconsin" contest. This nomination is for the mountain Mayes Taxidermy built as shown below.



Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation Update:

Key Public Land Fund Faces Reauthorization

by Bob Matthews, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Why It Matters: The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund, which grants authority to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to acquire public land, is up for reauthorization and will be a focal point of the Badger State's upcoming legislative session. Access to public lands and waters that are open to hunting and fishing is critical for the continued enjoyment of our time-honored outdoor traditions.

Highlights:

- The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund was established in 1989 and is an extremely popular program amongst Wisconsin voters;
- Lands acquired with these funds must be open to hunting, fishing, and trapping;
- Increased opportunities for sportsmen and women to access public woods and waters is important to both Wisconsin's storied sporting heritage and conservation efforts; and
- The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) will continue to work with legislators in Wisconsin to ensure that the Knowles-Nelson Fund is reauthorized and continues to provide Wisconsinites with opportunities afield.

CSF recently joined partners in Madison, Wisconsin to conduct meetings with members of the Wisconsin Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus to express the importance of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund and the opportunities that it affords hunters and anglers in the Badger State. About 14% of Wisconsin is comprised of public land that is open to hunting, placing it at 18th among all 50 states. Access to hunting grounds and fishing holes is paramount to the continued pursuit of game species, especially in Wisconsin, where outdoor traditions are particularly engrained in the state's identity.

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund, a mechanism for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to acquire public lands that must be open



Wisconsin Outdoor Communicators Association professional media members received an update about Knowles-Nelson last year from Mark LaBarbera.

to hunting, fishing, and trapping has provided Wisconsinites with a dedicated funding source to enjoy their natural resources. However, the program has faced significant cuts since 2010 – falling from \$86 million per year authorized in the 2007-2008 State Budget to only \$33.25 million per year today. Following a recent State Supreme Court decision that changed legislative oversight capabilities, the Knowles-Nelson will not only need to be reauthorized in the upcoming session, but its structure will need to be modified as well – making it susceptible to fundamental changes, further funding cuts, and even threatening its continuation.

CSF will continue to communicate to legislators the importance of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund and the benefits that it provides Wisconsin's hunters and anglers, but it is critical that SCI members and other sportsmen and women in the state leverage your voices to encourage elected officials to reauthorize it, as well

Knowles-Nelson Stewardship - NCO Fully Subscribed, No November Applications

by Luke S. Roffler, WDNR
NCO Grant Manager, K-N Stewardship Program

Hello, I am writing to announce there will be no November 2024 application round for Knowles-Nelson Stewardship - Nonprofit Conservation Organization (NCO) funding.

The next round of Stewardship NCO grant applications will be due Monday, March 3, 2025. The Department will consider all complete applications received by this date.

Application materials are located on DNR's Stewardship website. If you are considering an application, please contact your regional Project Manager. Please also ask your appraiser to contact DNR's Review Appraiser before completing the appraisal report.

As the NCO Grant Manager for the Stewardship Program and on behalf of the rest of the team, I look forward to working with you. Thank you.

Badgerland's Shoot for Adventure

by Joseph Koback

SCI Badgerland had another great shoot, with 69 shooters, and there were no lines to wait in, but everything stayed busy all day. We saw an increase in shooters playing the side games and an increase in shooters re-entering and shooting the course again.

We had our Sensory Safari trailer there for all to enjoy, the food put on by the Rio Conservation Club was phenomenal again this year, and of course the prizes were even better than last year's. We drew our Big 5-gun raffle that always sells out. This year it

was sold out a month before the shoot. For those that missed out, please buy early next year, since we only print 600 tickets for five guns valued at \$6,000.

Thank You to the Rio High School Trap Club that comes and helps run the side games for us. In appreciation for their support at the event we present them with a \$1,000 grant for their school program. Another thanks goes to the Rio Conservation Club for hosting our event at their Club house/range. This is really a great partnership between the two organizations.

Our prizes are 100% donated which is what allows us to focus on making

the event fun for shooters of all ages and skill levels. Thank you to these great donors (most are \$500-plus donors); Koby's Firearms, 12ga construction, Mayes Taxidermy, Piers Plus, Bignell's Power sports, Piggly Wiggly (Pardeeville), Freese Trees, Woodman's Grocery, and an anonymous chapter supporter. If you haven't made this event, you need to. It is put on with the purpose of getting members and friends together to have fun. We even had wine tasting with PRP Wines International in the clubhouse. First Saturday of August every year, see you next year.



Building Online Hunting Biz

The compelling story of how an avid hunter and techie built a business and launched www.bowhunting.com.

by Jay Anglin

Hunters might remember when the internet was just starting to hit its stride, and outdoor pursuits were right there from the beginning. With hunting and fishing forums popping up right and left, the hardest part of checking in was waiting for crummy dial-up connections to render a website. In a matter of years, some websites flourished while others quickly languished, some vanishing altogether. It didn't take long to see some developers were in it to win it, however, while others were literally phoning it in. And speaking of phones, very few people had any notion of how important they would become for producing and viewing content in only a decade or so with the introduction of smartphones.

Some big players long ago left the ever-evolving constraints of making a living off the outdoors via the internet, but not everyone. Todd Graf, with the help of his colleagues, have been in the game for a few decades now, and with a lot of hard work, and a little bit of luck, they're still pumping out much needed quality hunting content on multiple platforms.

"I had a knack for computers. When I graduated from college it was kinda cool because email was just coming up to speed, as well as wide area networks, and the internet was born. It was a big deal," said Graf, who has been based in northwest Illinois from the beginning. "People wanted to get networked, and they wanted to be on the internet and have all their locations communicating to each other. I could put that all together for them, so that's how it started.

As a passionate hunter and diehard entrepreneur, Graf saw the internet evolving and realized it was the "new frontier". He wondered if he could somehow leverage the internet for something related to hunting and decided to start buying domain names. This escalated quickly, and he eventually owned over 2000 hunting-related

domains. Graf's passion for anything whitetails also fueled his desire to launch his first website, whitetaildeer.com.

"I really didn't know what direction this was going, but I love whitetail deer hunting and wanted to do anything I could to be in that world. At that time, I wasn't so much thinking about being in the industry, but more wanted to be able to do something that is what I love to do, and have it connected to my daily life," explained Graf.

"Back in those days the hot thing was bulletin boards or forums as we know them today. Just a cool deal and opportunity to get into the industry. I built my first website whitetaildeer.com and boy oh boy, you know, six-months later I would have never believed it was possible to receive thousands of emails from people reaching out, saying things like - 'there just isn't lots of stuff on the internet for deer hunters like us, so this is great.'"

Graf starting to connect the dots together and leveraged his Marketing

Degree from the University of Minnesota Duluth (as well as his passion for deer hunting) and began creating homes for hunters on the web, and at the same time developed relationships with manufacturers like ScentLok so they too could get involved with this next frontier.

"ScentLok is a brand that anyone who is passionate about hunting white-tails and wants to get closer to them knows. Hunters obviously appreciate how good the whitetail's nose is, and ScentLok does a great job of giving you that extra edge. At the end of the day, every time you can get ne step closer, it's an advantage. It's been a great relationship for us," added Graf.

Being fortunate enough to build successful hunting-based websites before the dot-com bubble burst worked out very well for Graf, who eventually sold them, with the goal of developing a more focused web experience.

"The domain name I really wanted was not in my portfolio, so I reached out

to the person who owned it, who turned out to be a woman in Canada. I got her on the phone, and we started talking. I told her I was interested in buying the domain name and I'd pay a fair price for it," Graf explains. "She's like, 'I don't know if I want to sell it, I've had so many people reach out to me over the years wanting to buy this thing. You know I really like it for me and my daughters,' and I'm thinking, this is kinda bizarre. You don't often meet a woman with couple daughters that bow hunt who want to keep a domain name like that. It was strange, right?"

"So, I started to talk with her a little more and I said, 'Hey, I tell you what, I'll give you five-thousand dollars for it.' And she says, 'oh are you serious?' 'I'm thinking, shoot, did I just offer too much.'

She scared me with all that talk of other people inquiring, but back then people just didn't get it yet. And she says, 'Okay I'll do that.' I'm thinking, 'where am I gonna get five-thousand dollars.'"

Graf ended up buying the bowhunting.com domain, but he kept his mouth shut until the purchase was done and legally had the name before asking one big question. "When it was all said and done, I said 'Hey, if you don't mind me asking, why did you have this domain name in the first place?' And she says, 'Oh, it's simple, my daughters and I just love collecting bows for our hair, and we're always out hunting for bows'. And that was how I was able to acquire the name and how bowhunting.com came to be," he said with a bit of a laugh.

"But as we've all seen with digital media, the world is changing, and things are always moving in this business, too. In the old days, all you needed was a great domain name. We've been able to evolve over the years and stayed in the game by having good quality social media accounts, a high-quality email list, and of course, a successful YouTube channel. It's crazy how this stuff is ever evolving."

"With the benefit of the internet and social media, staying relevant in the outdoor industry may seem easier than ever, but at the end of the day the cream rises to the top," he concluded.

It is there where you will find the result of decades of focus and determination including bowhunting.com and Bow Hunt or Die on YouTube.



Rob Keck's Tips "Bear" Repeating

by Mark LaBarbera

Running into old friend Rob Keck at the Bass Pro Shops/Cabela's store in Prairie du Chien recently allowed us to catch up on things, which is how we ended up with this great photo of Rob's big bear.

He took it, the bear and the photo, along the Chakachatna River in Alaska. This 36-mile-long river in northwestern Kenai Peninsula Borough flows from Chakachamna Lake southeastward into the McArthur River and ultimately Cook Inlet.

But it's not the hunt or the place that Rob talked about when we visited; it was the behind-the-scenes effort that resulted in one of the most beautiful hunting photos ever seen, especially among bear photos. They are just not easy to move or pose.

Rob is the former Executive Director of the National Wild Turkey Federation

and has successfully hunted wild turkey just about everywhere they exist. Some of those are states or provinces that did not have turkey seasons before Rob and NWTf restored healthy populations there. That includes Wisconsin 50+ years ago. The Bass Pro Shops/Cabela's event covered in the July/August SCI HUNTERS celebrated partnerships and volunteers that helped restore wild turkeys here.

While at NWTf, Rob established a great relationship with Bass Pro Shops Founder John L. Morris, also an avid hunter and angler. After NWTf, Rob became a BPS ambassador supporting Johnny Morris' commitment to conservation.

Rob is a master turkey caller, but he is also a world-traveling big game hunter, and he has perfected the art of posing birds and game with the hunter.

When he agreed to share his bear photo, he talked about how important it is to take the time to respectfully pose wild game and to capture images that put hunters in the best light, in more ways than one.

As you see in each successful hunter or angler photo in Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's catalogs, good images honor the person and the game. Rob's message is to share positive photos and avoid posting or showing images that do not show respect for the hunter or the hunted. Sometimes, editors wish we had better photos, and we encourage SCI members and others to take the time to pose hunters and game properly.

Rob's reminder comes at a good time as we approach gun deer season. Good luck in your travels and adventures as you savor the experiences and capture the memories to share with fellow members, family and friends.



NRB Approves Elk Plan

The Wisconsin Natural Resources Board (NRB) today approved the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) 2024-2034 Elk Management Plan and the associated administrative rule package.

The plan is intended to guide elk management at a statewide level to ensure a healthy, robust and sustainable elk population that provides ecological, social, economic and cultural benefits while minimizing elk-human conflicts in Wisconsin.

The DNR and the Wisconsin Elk Advisory Committee, consisting of the DNR, Tribal Nations representatives, external agencies and stakeholders, developed the 2024-2034 Elk Management Plan to align elk management strategies with the current state of Wisconsin's elk population, the interests of different user groups and the cultural significance elk provide.

The DNR collected and considered a wide variety of input throughout the development process. The outreach and feedback mechanisms included consultation with Wisconsin's Tribal Nations, the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, members of the Elk Advisory Committee, private

landowners and various stakeholder groups, recommendations from the NRB, public surveys, open houses and public comment periods.

Key updates include:

- Managing statewide elk population using an adaptive management approach;
- Renaming management zones to include regional distinctions (Northern and Central);
- Creating one continuous elk hunting season;
- Expanding the boundaries of the elk management zones; and
- Establishing elk hunting units within and adjacent to elk management zones.

Wisconsin's elk herds reside in northern (Ashland, Bayfield, Sawyer, Rusk and Price counties) and central Wisconsin (Jackson County). The state's elk population is projected

to reach over 500 animals after this year's calving season.

To view the Elk Management Plan 2024-2034 or learn more about elk in Wisconsin, visit the DNR's Elk Management webpage.



Photo Credit: Jeff Morden

Legendary Conservationist Johnny Morris Earns CSF Dingell-Young Sportsmen's Legacy Award

Johnny Morris, conservation legend and founder of Bass Pro Shops, was celebrated at the 35th Annual Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation Banquet and Auction with the highest award given by CSF, the Dingell-Young Sportsmen's Legacy Award.

Named for conservation policy icons Reps. John Dingell Sr. and Jr., Rep. Debbie Dingell, and Rep. Don Young, the Dingell-Young Award was created to celebrate individuals who best exemplify the extraordinary individual and collaborative leadership of the Dingell family and Representative Young, and their shared dedication to the advancement of conservation efforts and our outdoor hunting and angling traditions.

To be eligible for the Dingell-Young Award, an individual must demonstrate leadership and long-standing dedication to advancing two or more of the following areas: national conservation policy, the role of sportsmen and women in conservation, expanding public access to hunting, fishing and/or recreational shooting, increasing the engagement of youth and underrepresented communities in sporting pursuits, and promoting our outdoor heritage in the policy arena.

"It is such an honor to be able to present my dear friend, Johnny Morris, with this year's Dingell-Young Sportsmen's Legacy Award. Johnny and I go way back, and I have seen first-hand his passion and commitment towards our great outdoor traditions," said Richard Childress, Chairman and CEO of Richard Childress Racing. "Johnny is one of the greatest conservationists of our time and knows the vital contributions of our nation's sportsmen and women towards the protection of our nation's most treasured natural resources and I cannot think of anyone more deserving in being recognized as this year's award recipient."

Johnny Morris, lifelong conservationist and sportsman, has devoted his life to conserving what he loves most and inspiring past and present generations to love and respect our country's

incredible natural resources. An avid bass fisherman, Morris got his start in 1972 by selling fishing tackle out of the back of his father's liquor store - for the first 13 years, this was the only Bass Pro Shops store. Today, Bass Pro Shops has become a household name for sportsmen and women across North America and is a destination for more than 250 million visitors annually. Over the last 50 plus years, Morris has not only grown a business that is an integral part of our sporting heritage; he has also made a significant impact on the sporting-conservation communities.

Morris' development of countless conservation and community initiatives, including programs that get kids engaged in the outdoors, advocacy efforts to defend conservation and promote access for sportsmen and women, and his dedication to partnering with leading conservation organization has rightfully earned him the widespread recognition as one of America's most outstanding conservation visionaries and leaders. Morris' unwavering commitment to conservation, communities, and America's outdoor heritage has inspired many, and will continue to do so for centuries to come.

"The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation is, without question, one of the most effective bipartisan conser-

vation organizations anywhere in the world. We are proud to work alongside our friends, Chairman Richard Childress, President and CEO Jeff Crane, and the entire CSF team to advance the cause of conservation," said Johnny.

"The Dingell-Young Award was meant to honor those that have made a truly profound impact on our outdoor pursuits. To say Johnny Morris has done that is nothing short of an understatement," said CSF President and CEO Jeff Crane. "Johnny's commitment to conservation and our time-honored traditions has had a positive impact on all of us and his conservation legacy will continue to touch future generations when we need it most. I cannot think of a more deserving individual to receive this honor."

In attendance for the award ceremony were approximately 60 members of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus in addition to sporting-conservation professionals, industry partners, as well as numerous sportsmen and women that have been inspired and touched by Johnny's leadership and impact. CSF applauds Johnny Morris for his commitment to America's 55 million sportsmen and women, and we are grateful for the opportunity to honor his monumental influence on the sporting-conservation community



CSF recognizes Johnny Morris with Dingell-Young Sportsmen's Legacy Award.

SCI SCI Congratulates RMEF

Long-time SCI collaborator the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has been a strong ally on Wisconsin initiatives like reintroducing elk here and sponsoring the Midwest Outdoor Heritage Education Expo. As RMEF begins its 40th year of major education, land conservation, and access successes, SCI congratulates the group founded in 1984. SCI and SCIF look forward to teaming up on elk and MOHEE again this year.

Here's a list of RMEF's accomplishments last year.

2023 Conservation Highlights

- Surpassed 8.9 million acres in lifetime conservation work.
- Completed 11 land conservation and access projects in Colorado, Idaho,

Kentucky, New Mexico, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Virginia, and Wyoming that protected 72,813 acres and opened or improved access to 77,960 acres.

- Allocated funding for 130 habitat stewardship and 43 wildlife management projects in 22 states that enhanced 161,180 acres in support of calving grounds, winter range, migration corridors and bolstering scientific research both in the East and the West.
- Increased wildfire restoration funding to \$1.6 million for 2021-2023 projects.
- Awarded \$842,000 in RMEF/partner support for southern Appalachian elk country.
- Allocated \$400,000 to conserve migration corridors and \$250,000 for migration mapping.

- Supplied \$200,000 to advance chronic wasting disease research/management.
- Completed 291 projects to bolster youth firearm and archery teams, mentored hunts, outdoor and conservation camps, and similar hunting heritage outreach efforts in 38 states.
- Fortified OutdoorClass, a video-based subscription service for hunters of all skill levels.
- Advocated for/helped restore nationwide school funding for hunter education and archery programs.

Like SCI in Illinois, Wisconsin, and nationwide, RMEF relies on dedicated volunteers and supporters.





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Jordy Ryan's 2024 Bull

by Mark LaBarbera

Just as this issue was going to press, 10-year-old Jordy Ryan became the youngest person in modern history to harvest a Wisconsin elk. He shot this beautiful bull in northern Wisconsin on October 14, 2024, with his dad, Andy, and Jake Nelson of Flambeau Forest Outfitters based in Phillips.

Andy Ryan had been applying for an elk tag for himself and 14-year-old son Nolan for a couple of years but this time he also helped his son Jordy apply. Call it "Beginner's Luck."

Andy said, "I honestly never thought that there was a chance of drawing, but for ten bucks to go toward helping create a larger and healthy herd, what the heck, right?"

Then he got the call from the DNR.

"He left a very vague voice mail message when I was at work," Andy recalled. "A random call from the DNR...I thought, 'What the heck is this all about?'" During my lunch time, I called him back and he introduced himself as Josh Spiegel, the elk biologist for the Wisconsin DNR, and then it clicked for me! There were a few expletives said with shocked excitement."

Then Andy asked, "Did I draw a tag?"

The biologist said, "No, you did not. BUT if your son's name is Jordy, he did draw a tag!" They discussed the next steps, and Andy began the preparation process with his son and the entire family.

"Jordy had only one hunt under his belt. He shot a 22-pound spring turkey with my mentoring and big brother Nolan calling," Andy explained.

"After talking to Josh, I called my wife. She couldn't believe it either. So, she gave the phone to Jordy, and I told him the big news. He said, 'What? Do I seriously get to hunt an elk? That's super cool!' He also began rubbing it in to his older brother's face that he gets the chance at an elk before Nolan."

Jordy took hunter safety, plus the Vortex Edge Youth Intro to

Shooting class at Vortex in Barneveld, not far from the Ryan home in Mt. Horeb. They also practiced a lot on their own, and then received helpful guidance from Brian Wink, also of Mt. Horeb, who helped his daughter Izzy shoot her Wisconsin bull elk last year. Her reign as the youngest successful Wisconsin elk hunter has come to an end, but she is still one of only four females who have harvested elk in the state since the modern herd was re-established.

"Older brother Nolan was nice enough to let little brother Jordy borrow his .308 for the hunt," Andy said. "We ordered an adjustable stock from Boyd's to fit Jordy's small frame. We've been

quite fortunate to have the help of different family and friends that have stepped up and gave us access to rural land to target practice. And they shared pointers to help him become more confident and ready."

Andy added, "We have friends that have family land in the Clam Lake area. Thanks to that connection, we had eyes and ears on following the herds without us actually having to be there. We made some trips there, but local knowledge was a big help."

And now that Jordy filled his tag, Andy said, "Jordy was hoping he could get an elk and be one up on big brother, Nolan, who has had his share of success hunting other game."



In Memoria:

David Breunig

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress lost a stalwart advocate for hunters, anglers, and other outdoor enthusiasts when Dave Breunig passed away peacefully at Lafayette Manor July 26. The 75-year-old former Darlington mayor was an avid hunter who was active in Jaycees, Knights of Columbus, American Legion, Fayette Sportsman's Club, and much more, including decades as one of the Lafayette County delegates to the WCC where he co-chaired the regional council covering neighboring counties as well.

His death leaves big shoes to fill at these organizations, including WCC. According to fellow delegate Steve Staver, any Lafayette County resident interested in learning more about being

a WCC delegate or County Deer Advisory Council member, should email Staver at waterman52@yahoo.com.

Born the eldest son of Eugene and Bernadette (Koch) of Cross Plains on July 3, 1949, Dave graduated from high school in 1968 from Middleton High School before attending the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. He married Linda M. Staskal in Boscobel on May 20, 1972. He and Linda lived in River Falls for seven years before moving to Darlington where they raised their three children.

Dave was a proud member of the Wisconsin National Guard for eight years. He managed the Cenex Co-op and did sales for FS before retiring from Lands' End where he worked from home before it was cool.

Dave was an active volunteer, politician, and sportsman. He was also a member of the Holy Rosary Catholic Church and the Legion Post 214 Honor Guard. He was an active member of the Rural Medical Ambulance Service for 25 years, and mayor of the City of Darlington for 18 years. He was proud to attend and volunteer at events in support of the local community. If you had a raffle ticket to sell, he would gladly buy one to support whatever the community needed.

He loved watching the Packers, Brewers, and Badger games on TV when he wasn't out cheering on his grandkids. He was an avid bowler, hunter, and fisherman, and greatly



Dave Breunig was honored for 25 years of volunteer service at the 2024 Wisconsin Conservation Congress annual meeting in Appleton. Photo by Mark LaBarbera

enjoyed pitching horseshoes with good friends and his son over the years.

He is survived by his children, Anita (Randy) Schmid of Dodgeville, Charles (Denise Ehren) of Darlington, and Tracy (Aaron) LeDoux of Proctor, MN; his grandchildren, Hunter and Levi Schmid, Caitlyn, Jacob, and Connor Breunig, and Kaylee LeDoux; special friend Darlene Meyers; siblings Mary (Tom) Siedschlag, Tom Breunig, Shirley (Dave) Zander and Bill (Diane) Breunig; many nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends. Dave was preceded in death by his parents and wife, Linda.



15 Trailcam Tips

by Josh Honeycutt
Courtesy National Deer Alliance

Trail-cameras have been a big part of my life, even longer than my wife. You might say I've been married to the former for 20 years and the latter for nearly 10. And I love them both dearly.

I started checking trail-cameras and clicking through photos in the mid-2000s. I was young, but I took to cameras like flies to a glue trap. By the 2010s, I was running 50-plus trail-cameras every season. Today, I can't even count the number of SD and cell cams deployed on the tracts I hunt.

Throughout the years, that's led to a stockpile of trail-camera bucks. Some of these were pass-through deer with

only a frame or two to remember them by. Others were homebodies with thousands of triggers. As a result, I've cataloged millions of trail-camera photos and thousands of unique bucks.

You learn a few lessons with that much experience. Trail-camera use and operation, buck behavior, hunting tactics, mistakes to avoid – the list is long! But I whittled it down to 15 advanced lessons I've learned from monitoring thousands of unique bucks via trail-cameras. Some might make you a better hunter. Others are just cool things to know.

1. Bucks All Have Different Faces

Two elements of whitetail allure include unique antler shapes and sizes.

Some deer are typical. Others are non-typical. At maturity, some have six, seven, or eight points. Others have nine or 10. Even more, some have 20 or 30. Not to mention the wide range of antler scores from region to region, state to state, or even property to property. Of course, these things come as no surprise.

However, most hunters don't look beyond antlers and realize individual whitetails look very different. Starting with body size, deer tend to express larger, smaller, or average body weights. Some deer are taller, while others are shorter. Some are longer.

The head is the real kicker, though. Whitetails look different in the face. Bucks have different-colored forehead

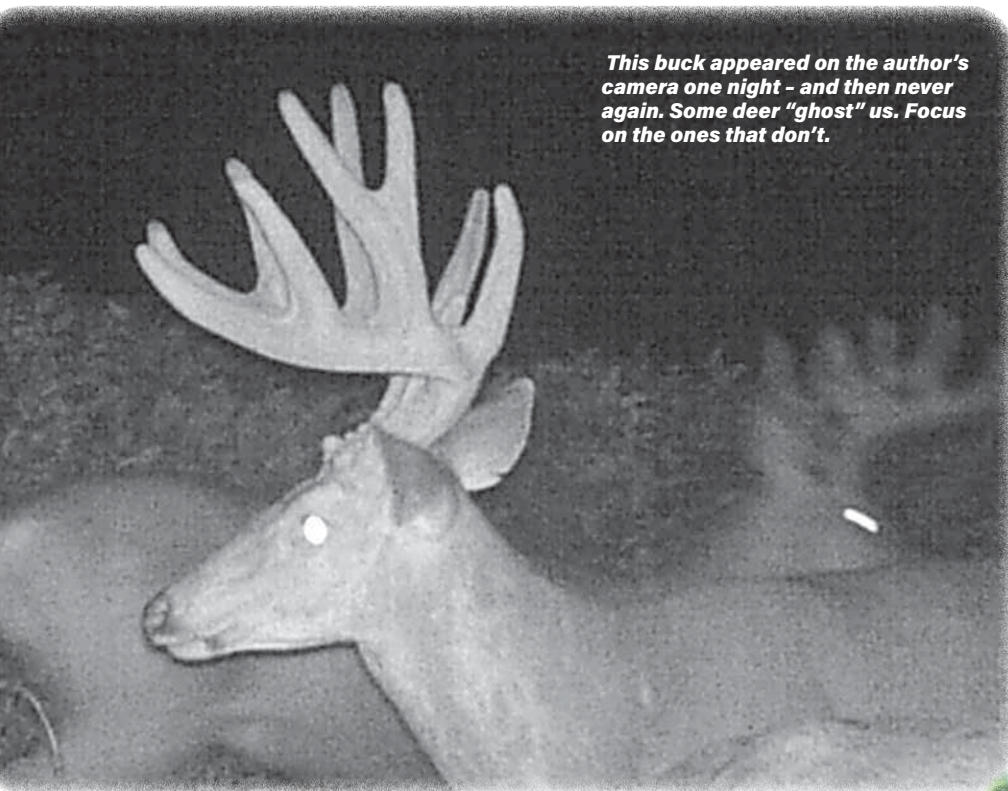


patches, including black, dark gray, light gray, dark brown, light brown, and red. They also have different markings around their chin, mouth, and nose. Features like these come in handy when separating two bucks with similar antlers or confirming you saw a particular buck in a previous season.

can go in and hang treestands, fill feeders, hang trail-cameras, and more, all without affecting these deer. However, other bucks get one whiff of ground scent, and they shift to the neighbor's property.

I've learned and re-learned this lesson. With some bucks, I've applied

This buck appeared on the author's camera one night - and then never again. Some deer "ghost" us. Focus on the ones that don't.



2. Bucks Have Their Unique Personalities

While physical appearance varies from one deer to the next, the inward traits do too. Bucks don't have personalities in the human sense. However, they do express specific and identifiable tendencies that culminate into perceived personalities.

Oftentimes, this helps put deer in one of several category types, such as aggressive or passive, homebodies or travelers, and much more. It can even help determine food-based preferences a deer might exhibit. Each of these things help profile deer and establish game plans used for targeting them.

3. Every Buck Tolerates Human Intrusion Differently

An extension of No. 2, but an important standalone point, is that each whitetail tolerates human intrusion at different levels. Some bucks are more tolerant of human intrusion. You

too much pressure and ruined any chance of killing them. With others, I've completed important scouting or season prep that made it possible to hunt these deer, and it didn't impact them. Over time, trail-cameras reveal how much intrusion (scouting, hunting, or otherwise) a deer will tolerate. Focus on hunting the tolerant bucks!

4. Home Ranges and Core Areas Vary Greatly

Popular outdoor writing fodder places the average whitetail home range at approximately 640 acres (1 square mile) and core areas at about 30 to 50 acres. Of course, that's true for a lot of deer, but scientific research using GPS tracking collars shows it's not true for all.

I've hunted many different properties and run trail-cameras on nearly as many. I've learned that,

from one buck to the next, home ranges and core areas vary greatly. Habitat quality, available bedding cover, seasonal food sources, human presence, and much more, impact both size and shape of home ranges and core areas.

As a result, home ranges might be small or large for individual bucks. Core areas vary widely, too. And home ranges might be relatively blocky, or they could be more organic in shape. Every deer is different. When you see a particular buck in your trail-cameras regularly, you know you are lucky enough to be located in or near his core area.

5. Whitetails Come and Go

I've been blessed to follow some bucks over extended periods. There's the buck I called "Tanker" which graced my trail-cameras for seven years. Or "GP" who was around for five years. Of course, a great many bucks have stuck around for only two years or fewer.

Nonetheless, eventually all deer move on or die. They don't hang around forever. It's just the way of things. So, when deciding whether to give a deer one more year, understand there's no guarantee it'll come back. Whitetails come and go. A big reason they fail to

return is harvest by other hunters, but many die of natural causes and some fall to predators. Take this into account when deciding whether to harvest or pass specific bucks.

6. Deer are Instinctive, Not Calculating

Some people think that deer can... think. We can't read a deer's mind, but it's obvious they cannot reason in the way humans do. They don't see a ladder on a ladder stand and know hunters are there. They don't hear a rifle and deduce that hunting season is open.

However, if they see a hunter in a treestand, or getting into or out of a box blind, they can put the pieces together and avoid that spot. If they smell human scent on a trail-camera, it might cause them to avoid that area. Eventually, and sometimes suddenly, it results in an instinctive outcome, but it is not calculating.

7. Video Beats Photo Mode (Usually)

Photo and video modes have their unique benefits. Photos are ideal when minimizing time it takes to sort through files, saving battery life, and much



Some bucks react quickly to any sign of human disturbance. Others are more tolerant, like this buck that often visited a camera set up over a mock scrape and licking limb the author constructed.

more. It's ideal for taking inventory or maintaining updates on the deer herd.

Video mode has its benefits, too. First, video helps reveal a deer's perceived personality. It reveals how bucks interact with other deer. This can shed clues as to whether it's an aggressive or passive deer, as well as dominance or subordination to other bucks. This can help decide whether to call or rattle at specific deer, or not.

Video mode also illustrates direction of travel much better. The first frame of the video better reveals which direction the deer came from. The last frame of it determines the direction it went. Photo mode often misses this element entirely. Video mode offers more and better data when trying to determine bedding area and food source locations.

8. Antler Size Peaks Around Age 6½ to 8½

Some whitetails live long lives, but few bucks survive past 4½ years of age. In certain areas, they do well to reach their second or third birthday. However, the deer

that reach the older end of the spectrum show us valuable lessons through our trail-cameras, including year-over-year antler growth.

I've been fortunate to follow some bucks well into and even past their prime. In almost every instance, they produced their best set of antlers between ages 6½ and 8½. There's good science that supports this observation. In two cases, bucks best sets were at 5½, but they experienced injuries that likely reduced antler score in subsequent racks.

9. Details Matter When Targeting Mature Bucks

Those who hope to target specific bucks must pay attention to details. That much I've certainly learned. The details matter. Maybe a buck prefers this bedding area with a northerly wind. Perhaps it beds in another spot with a westerly wind. Perhaps it travels toward one particular food source when the wind is quartering or straight up its nose. Maybe it moves earlier during daylight when the wind direction is more in its favor. The examples and scenarios of how seemingly small things influence outcomes go on.





Finding a bedding spot is good intel but pay attention to the little details. Which way was the wind blowing when he bedded here? What direction did he approach and depart?

Stress over the details, or you'll stress when you realize not doing so cost you a shot at that buck.

10. Info Strips Are Vital Intel

A lot of trail-camera users don't put enough stock into the most basic element of trail-cameras. Info strips must be set to the correct date and time. This information includes vital intel in patterning deer and picking apart their home ranges and core areas.

Info strips are especially important for studying the underlying factors in when and why deer move. Generally, I study the timestamp associated with every mature buck daylight photo. This led to a significant revelation.

Some bucks' movements are very random and seem to not follow any obvious variables. Other bucks are predictable. Some of the mature deer I've followed with cameras seemed to only move outside their bedding areas when the wind was in their favor. For example, the wind was quartering or blowing straight toward them from where deer expected danger to be.

Knowing this information can help predict when a deer might travel past a certain treestand, hunting blind, or

trail-camera location. It's important intel you shouldn't overlook.

11. Trail-Camera Issues Are Usually Preventable

Most trail-camera problems are results of user error. Not reading the manual. Installing SD cards with very high write speeds. Failing to format SD cards. Using SD cards in different devices. Allowing battery corrosion to kill cams. Letting ants overtake the camera housing. Pointing cameras in the wrong directions. Angling cameras poorly. Leaving cameras out indefinitely without cleaning and maintaining. These and many more are mistakes to avoid.

Of course, some issues are a result of camera malfunction. But these are the exception and not the norm. Take care of trail-cameras, use them as directed, maintain them with care, and most problems cease to exist.

12. Sun, Bad SD Cards, and Drained Batteries are Pesky

Trail-cameras, especially cellular models, aren't cheap. Your investment needs to deliver results. But a lot of things work against this effort. Pointing trail-cameras in the wrong direction is

one of those. An easterly direction can deliver killer photos of morning-time bucks with backlit velvet antlers. A westerly direction can accomplish the same in the afternoon. But these directions can also produce washed-out images where you can't even see a deer in the frame. Aiming the camera as close to north as you can avoids these lighting problems, as seen in the graphic below.

Old, faulty, full, and locked SD cards ruin trail cam checks, too. Ensuring these are in top condition and ready to work is a must. The worst trail cam feeling is popping a card and realizing it didn't take, or save, any photos.

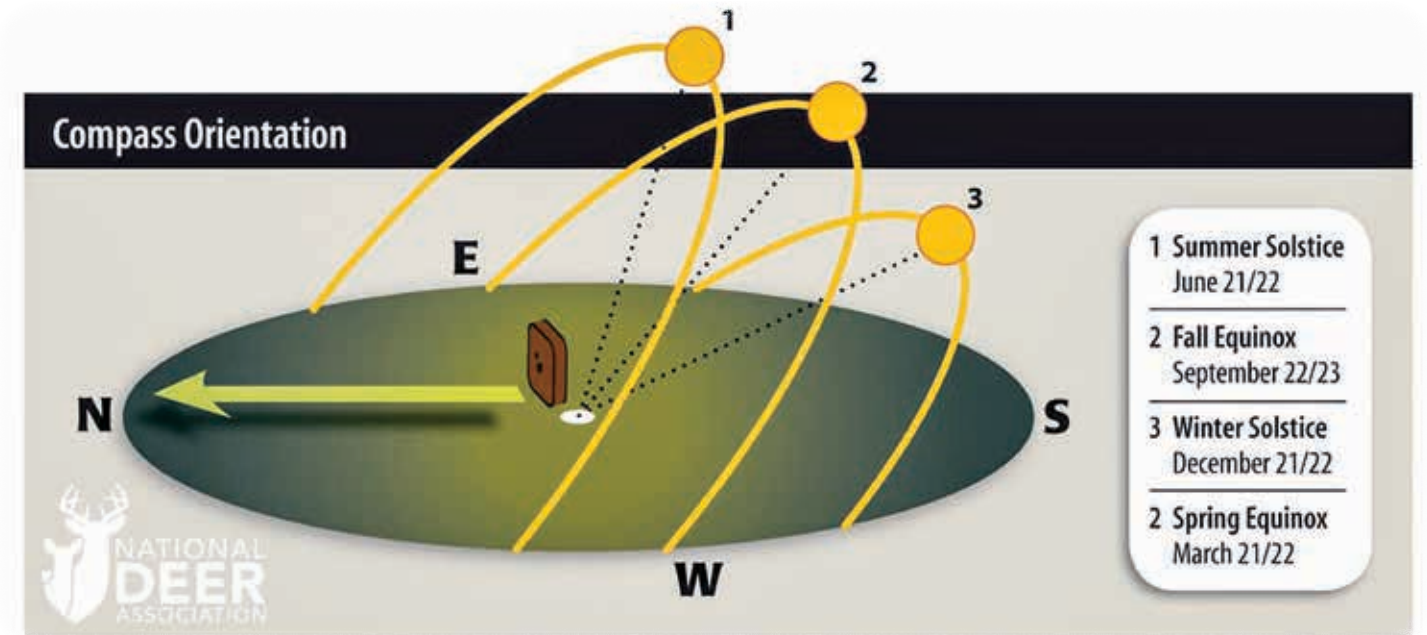
Of course, drained battery life is among the peskiest of trail-camera challenges. Placing cams over bait stations, water holes, and other high-activity areas can accomplish this rather quickly. But it doesn't have to. Choose SD and cell cameras that offer maximum battery life. Furthermore, pair these with external battery sources, such as battery boxes, solar panels, or a combination of both.

13. Cataloging Trail-Camera Photos is Crucial

Some hunters check cams, observe the photos, and dump the files. That's cringy. Hunters buy cameras, purchase batteries and SD cards, burn gas to deploy and check cams, and spend untold time posting, checking, moving, and pulling said cams. To not keep the very photos all the money and time were meant for is a mistake. Instead, catalog all trail-camera photos. Save photos in a file system by year, property, location, and date of camera check. If nothing else, keep all photos of antlered deer. Over time, you'll look back and realize that mature buck that showed up this year was actually a return deer you've seen before.

14. Modern Tech Helps With Photo Analysis

New opportunities continue to provide hunters with advanced technology. Some of these provide enhanced trail-camera photo analysis. For example, many of today's cell cam apps provide analysis that breaks down deer activity and behavior by camera location. Such tools aid in hunt planning, herd management, and more.



15. Trail-Cameras Are Your Best Scouting Tool

To sum it all up, trail-cameras are a hunter's best scouting tool. These will never fully replace e-scouting, boots-on-the-ground scouting, glassing from afar, and other methods. In fact, the best scouting effort integrates all of these into one effort. But without question, cameras are forever part of the scouting process, and just might be the most valuable of that stable of tactical assets. Milk the most from your trail cams this season.

About Josh Honeycutt:

Josh Honeycutt is an avid deer hunter. He's hunted deer from South Carolina to South Dakota but spends most of his time hunting in Kentucky. Honeycutt is the associate editor and deer hunting editor for Realtree.com, and his work has appeared in more than 50

publications including North American Whitetail, Whitetail Journal, Field & Stream, Outdoor Life, Game & Fish, Fur-Fish-Game, Modern Pioneer and more. This trailcam article was provided by the National Deer Association.

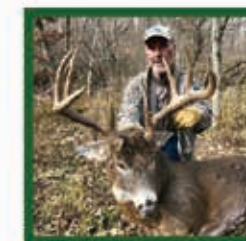
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Near Governor Dodge State Park



Former DNR Secretary Adam Payne shot a nice buck and spent time with family. Photo Sunday in deer camp, left to right: Courtney (future daughter-in-law), son Forrest, Uncle Glenn, Adam Payne, niece Hazel, brother-in-law Ron.



Strange Cat
This trailcam photo shows a bobcat



with a strange pattern on its hide. WDNR experts agreed it's a bobcat but said they had not seen the unique pattern before this. If you have, please send photos to wiscimag@peoplepc.com.

His Old Coat

by Len Harris

It is a classic. It has a padded shoulder and many pockets for game and shells. Inside the pockets there are memories. The memories of years past and years to come were in those pockets. The coat is stained and tattered. A couple buttons were even missing.

As a young boy I always waited for my father to announce we were going hunting. Usually, our dog Ginger gave out the first alarm when my dad took the hunting coat off the hook near the gun cabinet. She would howl and run around like her tail was on fire. Her body would quiver because she was so excited about going hunting. My dad would even pump her up a little. Ask her if she wanted to go get some Chippies (squirrels) or dirty birds (pheasants). She howled so much that my mother would kick all three of us out the door.

We would load up the dog and make an inventory of what we had in the pockets of Dad's Old Coat. If we were going squirrel hunting...It was checking for the .22 shells for Dad and the .410 shells for me. It was a ritual. We had to have the squirrel call and two plastic bags for the squirrels

The same ritual was made during pheasant season. The plastic bags and the 20-gauge shells for the double barreled 20 gauge. We usually loaded one of the pockets with candy bars. Both of us are sweet toothed. Not to mention the dog.

The coat was also used for many duck and rabbit adventures. There was one thing that was always the same about each outing. It was that my mother would come out to bid us farewell before each venture into the outdoors. I can still remember her speech. She would tell me the same thing every time. "Guns are not toys. Treat your gun like it is always loaded. Always identify your target. When in doubt do not shoot."

Mom had a different speech for dad. His speeches varied from season to season. It usually ended by my mother looking at my Dad's Old Coat and telling him that she was going to wash that NASTY thing when he came home. It was a joke between my dad and mom.

Mom knew that if she washed the coat, it would take all of the magic and memories out of the pockets. She really

each season came and past. I kept the coat ready for the next outing

I always pestered my dad about the coat. I told him that I wanted one just like it. He would kid me and tell me that it was one of a kind and that he would give me the coat when I grew into it. I remember showing him a catalog with a coat that looked like his and telling him that the coat came in my size.

He finally explained to me that he was NOT going to buy me a coat like his. He said that coats are grown into not purchased. He had been given that coat by his father and that I would be given the coat when I grew in size and hunting skills.

Years flew by. In 1984, I had just got out of the Army. I went home to visit my mother. She picked me up at the airport. We talked all the way home. She told me that my father would have been very proud of me if he were still around. Dad passed away in 1967 of a heart attack while deer hunting. I was 10 years old when he died.

I stayed with my mother for the first few months after getting out of the army. Fall came and I had the itch to go hunting. I put my army coat on and took the 410 out of the gun cabinet. I filled the pockets with the proper tools. A squirrel call and two plastic bags were carefully placed in the pocket. I took a couple candy bars from the kitchen and was headed out the door.

My mother stopped me as I left. She said, "Are you prepared for hunting?" I was a little taken aback by the question. I told her, "Of course." She told me that I had forgotten a key part of my hunting adventure. We went back into the house. I was little befuddled at what my mom was up to.

She led me to the gun cabinet. She reached to the hook on the side of it and grabbed IT. She said, "It should fit now. I am going to wash that NASTY thing when you get back." She smiled and sent me on my way.



didn't like the tattered blood stained thing that my father called a coat, but she knew that she should NEVER wash it.

Many adventures came and went during my childhood. I added a few stains to the pockets, and I took over the ritual of checking the pockets as

Hunt for Hunger

by Joseph Koback

This journey starts out at the Northeast Wisconsin SCI chapter banquet in 2019 when we bought a 7-day photo safari with Kemp's African Safari's. I had talked to Dawie Kemp, the owner, numerous times at the expo over the previous three years since we had booths close to each other. I was explaining to him how my wife Kathe wanted to go to Africa because she loves elephants and would love to see wild elephants in their natural environment. But neither of us like traveling in crowds with a tour package and a set agenda. He informed me he had donated a 7-day Photo Safari for the banquet that evening. Then he explained when he does Photo Safaris, it's a personalized tour, just the buyer and whoever they bring with them with the flexibility to do what they want and adjust during the vacation. He also assured me I could schedule it the following year since I was deploying later that year. I also discussed adding on hunting days if we did buy it.

That evening we walked from the Expo back to banquet discussing if we did buy it what we would be interested in hunting afterwards. The three of us sat together for dinner that night and ended up winning the bid at a very reasonable price. We looked at dates the following year and told him to book us a 7-day safari followed by 7 days of hunting and we'll talk details at next year's expo, but just plan on maybe hunting for Kudu but see what opportunities we come across. I was honest with him we never really had much interest in hunting Africa besides maybe Leopard or Cape Buffalo and

they cost more than I want to spend, but it would be a shame to be there and not hunt. He just smiled and said after we come once, we're going to come back. Dawie was never pushy, always listened intently on what we wanted both on vacation and hunting. He was also very accommodating of my military commitments and very appreciative of us adding hunting days to his generous 100% donation.

After returning from Afghanistan, COVID broke out and shut everything down for almost 2 seasons. By the time travel opened back up I was re-deploying again so we booked dates for right after I returned. Our plan to hunt plains game with an emphasis on either a Kudu or Nyala quickly changed with an E-mail while I was deployed offering me a Cape buffalo at a special price. I quickly jumped on that and told him we would still hunt plains game by opportunity.

That time quickly came around with Dawie making all the arrangements for our vacation after numerous texts verifying exactly what we wanted to see, which for us was all the natural beauties of South Africa. He came through with luxurious accommodations that were far beyond our expectations and breathtaking mountain views, waterfalls, natural land formations and of course 3 days in Kruger National Park. All of this on an all-inclusive package donated to N.E. Wisconsin chapter on a 100% donation by Kemp's African Safari's.

This trip was a vacation for my wife with a



hunt for me on the back side. The first 7 days were phenomenal, but I have to admit knowing there was a Cape Buffalo hunt following the vacation, I was getting excited on what was to follow. This also wasn't meant to be a trophy hunt, just a respectable Buffalo and then me and Kathe hunting plains game which quickly changed on day two of the hunt when we came across a massive Dugga-boy.

Day 1 of the hunt, we had a couple blown stalks on Buffalo in the mountains, but did find a nice Impala after a short stalk and with one shot, I had my first African animal. Truth be told, we were stalking another Impala at about 90 yds when this one came from behind us at about 20 yds, completely unaware of our presence.

Day 2 of the hunt started out the same; looking for tracks and glassing the far sides of the canyons. Late morning, while going through a thick bottom plain we found a mess of fresh tracks. After following them awhile we caught up to the herd and spotted 3 nice bulls. I was focused on a nice big wide one when Dawie got pretty excited about the third bull, which I never got a look at. It was extremely thick brush and tall grass in this roughly 500-acre bottom and before I could get on him, they moved back into the brush. We tracked them, being really careful not to bump them again. Even though this bottom was really thick and hard to hunt it was much better than the mountain canyons with the steep

rocky slopes and unpredictable wind directions.

We tracked/stalked him for the next 3 days always watching the wind and trying not to bump him, so they stayed in this basin with food and water. In those 3 days I had numerous opportunities for the other two bulls at close range. Most of the time we had to get inside 50 yds to even see them. But the big heavy bossed bull never gave me a look, let alone a shot. So, after hunting him for 5 days and bumping them again on day 5, we backed out and came up with a new plan for the next morning. We were going to go in at night, find them in the dark and flank them staying downwind to be on them at first light.

It was a perfect night/early morning. I got out of the truck into the dark of the night and didn't go far when I heard the Lions roar in the distance. With the dark, still night, cool air, sound of lions, and tracking a herd of Cape Buffalo, gave the morning a special feeling, a little spooky, but exciting at the same

as they usually did in the morning before bedding down. About this time, when it was just starting to lighten-up, a heavy fog set in giving us visibility of about 20-30 yds. We quietly stayed downwind and flanked them trying to get in front of them and hopefully find and opening we can see them come through and pick out the Big Boy.

The fog actually helped conceal us. It added to the eeriness of the atmosphere, but helped hide our movements as we were only 30 yds from them. When we found a little clearing with no underbrush and shorter grass we quickly set up and started watching the herd feed through. The fog was just starting to lift as it got lighter out giving us about 40-45 yds of visibility. I just started checking the cows as they feed through knowing all week the 3 bulls were hanging to the back when Dawie grabbed my arm and pointed down the trail ahead of us.

As I turned to look, I saw the 2 other bulls standing 40 yds away on the trail. The bulls were in

time. It didn't take long on the track when we could hear the clicking of hooves against rock as they were feeding just ahead of us. They were moving cross-wind heading for water

front today and went through the clearing before we got there. Ever try and quietly out pace a herd of feeding buffalo? It's not easy. I quickly swung 90 degrees just in time to catch the 2 bulls rear ends going across the trail into the brush and the big boy step out into the lane. He must have caught my movement and stopped perfectly broadside about 40 yds. This is all



happening in a matter of seconds. As luck has been on his side all week it didn't change today. He stopped with about an 8" diameter tree in front of his shoulder/vitals. In one quick move I took a huge step to the left all while keeping me eye in the scope. As I move, he started to bolt and as my foot planted the crosshairs found their spot, I shot.





other two bulls protecting him." So, we melted back into the brush and waited for the other bulls to leave and not figure out where we were.

The other two bulls stayed with him for about 30 min before they came out on the trail again and walked off in the direction of the cows. By now the sun is up and the fog is dissipated; but we still couldn't see into the thick

The bull took his big leap off the trail then ran back across followed by the other 2 bulls. They only went about 30 yds and stopped with the rest of the herd milling around trying to figure out where the danger was. We then heard the bull drop, he couldn't have been more than 45 yds away from us and we cannot see any of the buffalo, they are in the thick brush. It wasn't long and the whole herd bolted, I swear we could hear them for a mile as they kept going up the mountainside.

The problem was that we could still hear one milling around in the brush. I thought he got back up, making me second guess what I thought was a perfect shot. But Dawie grabbed my arm and motioned for us to back into the brush and wait. He then whispered really quiet, "it's the



set our sights on him and him only, passing up other trophy bulls but sometimes that's what it takes. It took us all 7 days of a 7-day hunt, changing up tactics and hunting hard; but more importantly, hunting smart, and not pushing him. For that I have to thank my PH's Dawie and Marco, we hunted as a team.

During the week of the hunt, after we would bed the buffalo down for the day we had opportunities for other game. I shot my Impala on day 1, a Nyala on day 3 and a nice Kudu on day 6. Our flight got pushed back a day so then we hunted another day giving Kathe a chance to hunt. She was a great sport (and a patient one) through the buffalo hunt, so we put a Sable on the list for her. We found one late the next morning putting it down with a perfect 50 yd shot. She then went after a Blesbok, and we found her a huge one in a big herd. After a 250 yd stalk, one shot later, she had a gold medal Blesbok. I finished out the day with a warthog and a cull Blue Wildebeest. Not bad for a couple of people who had no interest in hunting Africa.

bush. Dawie told me to keep my safety off and to watch for the other bulls and he will track. We slowly went to where I shot the bull, found blood right away, and only walked about 10 yds and saw him laying right where we heard him fall. We verified that he was dead, safeties still off just in case. We then decided to walk out to get Kathe and to clear a trail to get the truck in to where the Buffalo was. That would give the other bulls more time to get further away.

I got my big Dugga-boy. We found a big massive bull,



I know many of you have already experienced this, but after knowing Dawie for many years at the shows then vacationing with him for a week, and hunting with him the way we did, you become friends, you become family. I've heard this from many of you with other outfitters, but now I understand. This was our first trip to Africa,



and it was one I will never forget.

During our trip Dawie asked about the Badgerland chapter, so I invited him to get involved with our chapter also. He responded with a couple really nice donations. It's also convenient for him with our chapter banquets being on consecutive weekends. At the Badgerland banquet the following year he ran an idea by me to see if it would be something SCI members in Wisconsin would be interested in.

He explained to me that he had been talking to staff at his children's school about the number of children that come to school without breakfast or get a free lunch but take half of it home so that they know they will have something for dinner. For various reasons many children were not getting food, and he wanted to do something to help. This is not a school in a small village in the bush, or a Black vs White or a social status thing. This is a nice school in a nice town in South Africa, just south of Krueger National Park, with parents trying to get the best for their children's education, but not being able to feed them.

could ask the board, but in my opinion it would all have to be done here through the chapter, so that all money goes to the chapter, we would do the drawing at our summer "Shoot for Adventure" event, and the winner gets a contract for the hunt just like a hunt donation, and finally, then the chapter would send one \$10,000 check as a humanitarian project. He thought it was



So Dawie decided he wanted to do something to help, he wanted to start a program to provide food to these children. To fund it, Dawie donated a 10-day Cape Buffalo Hunt to be raffled off with the proceeds going to the school. This is what he wanted help with, if we could get the word out to anyone wanting to buy a ticket. I told him I

a great way of doing it and the board saw it as a great humanitarian project that one of our members will get a great hunt out of. We got everything set and printed the tickets.

Now I have to give you a little of the back story on what's about to transpire. My father loves to buy and sell raffle tickets, especially anything gun or hunting related. He is also a little superstitious and always takes number 2, if it's available. So, when I picked up the raffle tickets, I pulled out the two first tickets and bought them putting my father's name on number 2 knowing he is always good for it. About a week later I stopped by his house and told him I had the Buffalo hunt raffle tickets and pulled out number 2 for him. To my surprise, he said he wasn't interested and was pretty adamant about it so I figured if he changed his mind, it's his and if not, in the rare case that it wins it's mine or I can give him the hunt. About 2 months went by and we were down to just a few of the 50 tickets left when he called and said a friend of his wanted one and if I could stop by, he had the money for it.



When I stopped by, he grabbed two tickets and bought one himself before I could tell him. So, at this point I figured if number 2 wins and he wanted to go, I would give him the hunt and go with him. We had an archery hunt booked with Dawie the following May and he could do his hunt right after and I would stay and hunt with him.





The Badgerland "Shoot for Adventure" summer sporting clays event came around and the "Hunt for Hunger" raffle was the last raffle drawn featuring the Buffalo hunt. I had fellow board member Scott McConnell draw the winning ticket, and he immediately looked at me with this "are you kidding be look." I instantly got excited thinking he drew my ticket, but as you have probably already figured out, when he handed me the ticket it was my father's name on it in my handwriting. It was ticket number 2, and as I announced it, my father came up for the picture, all that was going through my mind, was calling Dawie to make sure we could do it back-to-back with our upcoming safari. But first, I had to find out if he actually wanted to go and to let him know I would go with him. Unfortunately, after months of trying to figure out what he wanted, from adding

vacation days to bringing a friend, he decided as much as he wanted to go, he couldn't. For me, this was a lost opportunity to take my father on a hunt of a lifetime. But hopefully, I will take him on something closer to home.

Now it became my hunt, but I already had a big Cape Buffalo, so I messaged Dawie and asked if we could switch it to a Hippo hunt instead. He said at the moment he couldn't, and I didn't push because it was a donated hunt, and I don't know the business end of the donation. So, I told him that was fine I would love to hunt Cape Buffalo again, but could we hunt with a bow this time? Dawie said that would be great, he loves bow hunters. Everything was now set for Kathe and me to come for a 10 day archery hunt with our friends Tim & Brooke, who would also be archery hunting. Kathe was going to hunt Gemsbok, Impala and Warthog, with me tagging along with her, and possibly shooting if I saw something I liked. We would also be doing some night hunting for fun. Tim would be hunting for Gemsbok, Duiker and Warthog, with Brooke enjoying time in nature with her husband. Then, I was to stay another 10 days after that and bow hunt Cape Buffalo.

The next Badgerland banquet rolled around, and after meeting up with Dawie, he informed me I could switch my hunt to a Hippo hunt, if I still wanted to. I was a little torn at first because I was really getting excited to hunt Cape Buffalo with my bow, but I didn't have a Hippo yet, so I said "Thank You" and switched.

Our hunt finally came. We drove 5 hours north of Johannesburg to Kemp's northern camp near the border of Botswana and just a short distance west of Zimbabwe. These 25,000 acres of dry, sandy, thick brush country was chuck

full of game. Dawie warned us that this is the most challenging property he hunts; but it can also be the most rewarding. You never know what might come into a waterhole because they don't know either.

Everyone was excited, we checked the bows on the range, and even heard some interest from Brooke in hunting



something. But Murphy's Law hit hard this trip from day 1 with a mid-day thunderstorm that dropped an inch of rain that afternoon. That meant the need for Gemsbok to come to a watering hole greatly diminished for a couple days. Day 2 Kathe shot right under a huge Warthog at about 20 yds. We found that somehow the range ring on the crossbow scope got maxed out. We turned it back and it was right on again. Somehow, I got blamed for that because I carried the bow to the stand for her. Needless to say, it was a frustrating week for everyone, more-so for the Ph's, because we were still having fun. Kathe likes oddball horns, so she made a great shot on an Impala where his right horn went out sideways. Tim shot a cull impala, a huge warthog on the last day and got his Honey Badger that he really wanted. Along with a Springhare one night that we went out hunting just for fun. It only took about two days, and Brooke was at the range and fired a rifle for the first time. She followed that up with a really nice Impala on her first hunt ever. It's always fun to share the experience of someone's first hunt. I hope she continues the passion, along with Tim and their



three children. I was there just to have fun; maybe shoot some odd things that I wanted and then hunt Hippo after they left. I ended up with the two I wanted, a Jackal and a Baboon. I shot a big male Baboon with Kathe's crossbow while sitting with her on day 2 at about 15 yds. Then shot the Jackal on the last day of the hunt. Also, on the night hunt we all went out on, I got a Steenbok and a Springhare.

It wasn't an overly successful hunt, but not because lack of game or our PH's not bustin' their butts; because they did and there was plenty of game. Bowhunting can be challenging no matter where you're hunting and add in bad weather and a little bad luck and it can be frustrating. I always look back at a hunt when it's over and ask myself if I would come back, well we are booking



a trip to go back in 2-3 years, and I haven't even left camp yet. Lastly, before I close out this segment, congratulations to Brooke on her first hunt. She grew up in a hunting family, her husband Tim hunts but you really don't fully understand it until you experience it. These were her own words. I hope you have many more.

We followed this trip with three-days sightseeing in Krueger Park, Moholoholo Lodge/animal rehabilitation center and an elephant interaction at HERD. Then I said my



goodbyes to my wife, Tim and Brooke as they flew home. I stayed at Dawie's home with and his family; his wife Willieme and 4 Daughters Linmri, Elindri, Danae, and Kaitaline. It was a pleasure getting to know his family.

The next morning was the most important part of this whole trip. We arrived at the school early, a little past 6:00 am to see where our donation went and help set up to serve them their breakfast which consisted of either oats or grits and today, they added hot chocolate for the chilly morning.



The children started showing up about 6:30 am and the hot chocolate was a huge hit, seeing that most of them looked pretty cold in their school uniforms. Dawie's daughter Linmri explained to me the night before how all the public schools in South Africa required the children to wear uniforms and private schools don't. She was not happy to hear in the US public schools don't require uniforms. I helped serve the oatmeal until about 7:00 am when I realized I was just messing up their system, but they were very appreciative of my help. As soon as I came out from behind the serving table, I had a couple children come up to me and give me a hug and say thank you. Others came later so I had to ask the teacher that was serving with me and she laughed and told me that they were all asking her who I was. She told them that I was the one that helped supply them breakfast in the mornings and hot chocolate today.

It was really heartwarming to see all the children and staff who volunteer their time in the mornings to come together for a quick breakfast. They all gathered together early, sitting outside, doing homework and socializing, while eating their breakfast. Black & white,



wealthy & poor, and even some parents came with their children until the bell rang for class. They explained to me they do it this way, serving everyone, so nobody is singled out because there is no way to know who isn't getting food in the morning. Anywhere from 50 to 150 children come each morning for a basic bowl of food that nobody's going to come early for if they don't need it.

Afterwards, I got many "thank you's" to our Badgerland Chapter of SCI from the Principle, Staff, and parents for helping to get this program started. We then discussed options to get local support to keep it running. The great need for this there makes me wonder how many children in our own grade schools are not getting a breakfast for one reason or another. I would like to thank everyone who bought tickets to help start up this program. It was an honor to represent SCI there in Africa.

Finally, it was my time to hunt. I'm driven, or shall I say focused, when I hunt. Of course, my wife would use other terms, but let's go with mine for now. We arrived in camp just before lunch, went out and did some scouting to look for tracks to see where the hippos might be coming out at night. We were not hunting herds but single



animals that had been doing damage to the orchards, sugarcane fields and posing a danger to the workers. These are usually either younger bulls or old bulls driven away from the herds. We found good sign coming out of a creek bottom with deep ponds with orchards on one side and cane fields on the other. The farmer was harvesting one of the cane fields, so with the noise, we bet on the hippos going to the orchards that night. We were right, that night after sitting for hours and only seeing a couple Bushbuck I finally got a nudge from Dawie as he slowly handed me the thermal binoculars, pointing right in front of us. We were not using a light because with a full moon I could see through the scope and we were using the night-vis binoculars to see further into the marsh grass. I grabbed the Bino's and 25 yards in front of us, sliding through the grass, not making a sound, was a leopard. He made his way until he got just a little down-wind of us, and then he just vanished. I don't know how but it was going along, and then it stopped, crouched down a little, turned away and was gone. That was really neat, but we figured the Hippo got past us, so we still-hunted our way along the creek bottom, checking the orchard side. It didn't take long, and we found a big male hippo in the orchard. The problem was he was in the wrong orchard; these permits are area specific, and he was

about 100 yards onto the wrong property. We snuck around him to get on the other side hoping to get him to move back to our area. When we got around and within 50 yards of him. But now, even when we put the spotlight on him to let him know we were there, he just ignored us and then started to posture defensively. For almost 30 min I videoed him broadside at 50 yds. We didn't press any more because we figured he would charge, but finally he turned to go back, but as soon as he turned, he bolted 200+ yds, right back to the water. A disappointing end to a great first night. I respect outfitters/PH's that respect the laws. We had permission to hunt both farms, but the permit area didn't cover all of the farms lands.

The next 3 nights were tough hunting. We knew there were two big males here, but they knew they were being hunted and the winds were not



helping us. Then on day four we switched to a new area that was down along the river with a lot of river bottom with tall reed grass, numerous sloughs, and deep holes for the hippos and crocodiles. They had a problem hippo that they claimed was a really big male. The first night we couldn't find him, but the next morning we decided to switch tactics and track him.

We got out there in the late morning and found his tracks; following them down into the river bottom. This brought us across numerous crocodiles and a few unwanted snakes. After sneaking in there, hoping to find the big



hippo, we were sitting on the edge of the water in the tall grass (10-12 ft tall). Now you have to realize me and Dawie both have sarcastic personalities to put it nicely. He was looking back at me smiling, then pointed behind me. Roughly two feet behind my head was a ten-foot python sunning himself on the tree limb. About then is when we got a call from the other farmer letting us know that they finished up harvesting the day before and the hippo's fed out in the cane fields all night.

We decided to hunt this hippo until dark and if we cannot get on him, we would go eat and head back to the other farm and hunt them all night if need be. We found where the hippo was bedded on shore and figured we pushed him into the water. We worked our way down river until we found where we thought he was hiding under water. We sat on that deep slough for about 45 mins until I spotted him surface way down river. We snuck down closer to where he was, and we saw him surface but go right back down. After about 30 mins, the other PH, Jasper, decided to sneak down river to see if he moved down river. It was getting close to dark, so we moved to a patch of weeds growing about 12 feet out onto the water. We figured that he was either coming up for air under

the weeds, or he moved down river. Jasper went down river and we set up in the brush on shore watching that weed patch. We figured that he knew we were there, so we stayed really quiet as Jasper left. It was about 20 minutes later, starting to get dark, we were thinking Jasper would be back soon and would move to the other area. When I saw a little

ripple come from the weed patch, thank God for a perfectly still evening. I pointed to it for Dawie and he just smiled. About 5 minutes later the hippo surfaced about 20 yds out in the middle of the river.

It took another 10 minutes for him to get comfortable enough to let his head come out of the water enough for a shot. Shot placement on this type of shot is very crucial. It is a rather small target you have to hit, and the last thing anyone wants to deal with is a wounded hippo in the water at night. I waited forever waiting for the two words whispered from Dawie's mouth, "Take Him". I was on him the whole time, so as I heard "Take" I don't remember hearing "Him".

There wasn't even a big splash, he was just gone. I knew I had a great shot, but I wasn't prepared for what came next. We went back to camp, got a trailer, and extra help, 5 guys. Then went back about 2 hours later to look for him to see if he surfaced. I was told they go down under the water and float up in about 2-3 hours. He had not surfaced yet; we looked up and down river, which has rapids on both ends of this pool, which is about half mile long. Nothing, no sign of him. Now we are pushing 3 hours from the time I shot him. From a guy that likes to see his animals drop when shot, these were easily the worst 3 hours of my life. They decided to get a boat and

give him a little more time. Jasper decided to scan the water with the spotlight one more time and just calmly said, "There he is," and walked away to go get the boat. I was like, "Are you kidding me?", give me the light. The hippo was floating right where I shot him! I think Dawie thought it was funny I was tearing myself up over this shot when they knew all along that this was just normal. We had the shot on video, but it's funny how 3 hours will get you to second guess yourself, or I'm just showing my pessimistic side. 4 hours later, we finally got him out of the water and onto a trailer. I learned long ago that as much as I hunt for the biggest trophy I can, it's the trials & errors,



effort put in, and all the intangibles that go into the hunt, that make it a trophy to remember. I'm glad I didn't get the bull on day one.

Thank you to Dawie Kemp of Kemp's African Safari's for donating this great hunt and doing what you do to take care of your community and the people in it. I spent another week with Dawie and his family. I never understood what a true "Swift" was until I met his daughters. He has a great family, and it was my honor to get to know them, listen to their singing, and I promised the girls that I would work on getting their father to bring them to the States. We spent the rest of the week at another one of Dawie's camps setting up baits and blinds for his next clients.

Most of us in the U.S. don't understand how intertwined the hunting industry is with the communities here and us hunters are what make it work. Lastly, I would again like to acknowledge the people who bought tickets and supported this program which came from multiple chapters across Wisconsin.



Sportsmen Need to Vote!

by Dan Trawicki, SCI Lobbyist

With so many important elections on the horizon, we all need a reminder to get out and vote! Recent statistical data has showed us that over 300,000 registered gun owners in Wisconsin and a similar number of hunters are not voting. I have to admit, at first, I simply didn't believe it. I always expected that gun owners and hunters were passionate about these interests. Even when I go to events and speak about the lack of involvement in the voting process, many people don't believe me. The facts don't lie. Safari Club along with Hunter Nation recently spent over \$15,000 in the "get out the vote" initiative. While we had some success, it clearly was not enough. Safari club will again be running ads and drawing attention to what we need to do. I won't even begin to go into my feelings about all the men and women in the military, that sacrificed everything to give us this right. If you don't vote, your opinion on any legislative topic has no importance to me. If you don't care enough

to cast a ballot, why would I care about your view on 2nd amendment rights or DNR proposals on wolf hunts, bear quotas or fish limits?

As I continued to look at this sportsmen and hunter apathy, I kept asking why? Then I looked at my own voting record. While anyone that knows me, knows I am conservative. Having said that, I don't actually even care who you vote for; just vote!! There have been very few elections I have missed. But I can also say I rarely vote on the normal voting day, especially fall elections. I would think many of you are in the same situation as I am. My Novembers are packed. Between bowhunting, duck and goose or fall fishing, I am gone. For many years now, I cast an absentee ballot well in advance of the fall elections. Its simple to do. You can either go online and request a ballot or go to your local clerks office and do so in person.

As the fall elections get closer, and one candidate has openly supported mandatory gun buy backs, are you ready to vote? Let your voice be heard,

and make your vote count! Every election is important but the upcoming presidential is one of the most important in the history of our country.

Take Action Today, Support Crane Hunt

SCI and partners like Delta Waterfowl and Wisconsin Waterfowl Association were successful in getting a Legislative Council Study Committee formed to examine the issues associated with our state's growing sandhill crane population. That committee will be discussing potential solutions in the coming weeks – including the possibility of allowing a sandhill crane hunt in Wisconsin. Now is the time to contact the legislators on the Committee to show your support. Our partner WWA made it easy for you to do your part in one minute right now with the one-click email at <https://p2a.co/SGe0rLB>.

1st WI Deer Taken With Airgun

by Kevin Grotelueschen

On October 5, 2024, during the Wisconsin Youth Deer hunt, the first deer season after hunting large game with airguns became legal, my son Eli Grotelueschen, 10, shot a deer with a Serpent Arms .45 caliber air rifle.

Eli and I walked to a blind near Montello at 4:30 p.m. It was 80 degrees and windy, so we decided to hunt a food plot on a ridge surrounded by woods. As we approached the stand, we bumped a doe and fawn off the plot. Eli said, "I enjoy the suspense of waiting for a deer to come out."

After we settled in the stand for about 15 minutes, we noticed a fawn enter the food plot to the right and began feeding. It stayed about 10 minutes. We had a feeling it was going to be a good hunt.

At about 5:45, another fawn came out to feed and then a small 6-point buck. The buck fed at 80-100 yds from the stand for a few minutes, then went back into the woods. The fawn stayed.

A few minutes after 6, a mature doe walked onto the plot directly in front of us and began feeding, working its way closer. While we were watching the doe, another group of does entered to our right and began feeding near the fawn. We focused on the doe in front of us as it continued to move closer. At about 6:15, the doe was about 30 yards from us and turned broadside allowing the perfect opportunity.

Eli made a perfect shot directly behind the front shoulder blade. The deer ran. We waited a few minutes, then went back to get flashlights, returned, and began tracking just after dark. When we found her in less than 200 yards, excitement set in. We realized Eli just became

the first person to take a whitetail deer with an air rifle in Wisconsin after the law changed in the spring of 2024.

"It was awesome to be the first person to kill a deer with the Serpent Arms air rifle," Eli said.



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