

# HUNTERS

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF SCI CHAPTERS IN WISCONSIN AND ILLINOIS  
MAY/JUNE 2025

## SCI NE WI Chapter Profiles Mark Jablonic

- **Conservation: Terri Roehrig Inducted, Primos Purdeys, 21 Shooting Sports Facts**
- **Humanitarian: Big Al Does It Again**
- **Chapter News & Events**
- **Legislative Updates & License Fees**
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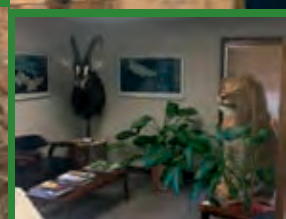
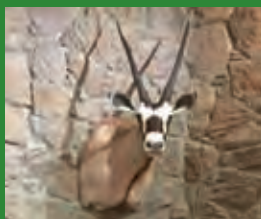
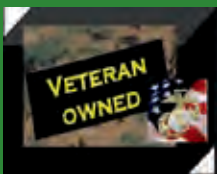


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Editor/Publishers: Mark & Coni LaBarbera

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# HUNTERS

Official Magazine of SCI Chapters in Wisconsin and Illinois  
May/June 2025

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## Join today!

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### SCI Region 16 Representative

**Charmaine Wargolet**

[charmainew@ameritech.net](mailto:charmainew@ameritech.net)

## SCI Region 16 Report

by **Charmaine Wargolet**,  
Regional Representative

**S**pring is here! Then summer and warm weather fun! You may not be going on as many hunts in the next couple of months, so I wanted to talk to you about something really awesome that you can do with just a few spare minutes.

At the last annual Region 16 meeting in January, all of your chapter presidents talked about Hunter magazine. In the past I had heard from various chapter leadership about the expense to their chapters, so we talked about the potential of cutting the number of issues or the size of the magazine. Much to my mild surprise, they all spoke up about how great Hunter is and what it means to our members and potential members. I always knew how great Hunter was but was so glad to hear how they all agreed! They voted to keep everything the same but to commit to trying to solicit more ads to drop the cost for all our chapters. So far, I have seen some real progress in this area, and it is great to see that we can still give our members a quality, award-winning, local news publication by working together. And you can help! If you hunt with an outfitter or have a local business that would like to advertise, please get in touch with Mark LaBarbera, our editor, whose info is in the front of the magazine. If two members from each chapter would sell an ad, we would be doing wonderfully!



Now, to be honest, that is not the thing I was hoping you would do in a little bit of your spare time.

So many of you have gone on amazing hunts over the past year and a half and only a few of us get to see the pictures. It would be so cool to see a Hunters Gallery in Hunter magazine each issue. All Mark needs is a picture of you with your animal or a couple if you took multiple animals, with your name, where you hunted and with whom. It really is quite simple, but you get a chance to share your adventure with other hunters and potentially to give them a chance to ask you about your hunt. Someone may want to hunt that animal that you did and aren't sure who to go with or are curious about the price or have other questions, but just by simply posting a picture and your name gives everyone a chance to see an exciting moment for you and possibly consider one for themselves. Or they might just want to congratulate you! Please take those few minutes to email Mark at [mlabarbera57@icloud.com](mailto:mlabarbera57@icloud.com)!

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

## Wisconsin Chapter Report

by **Dean LePoidevin**, President

**P**ersonally, I love the four seasons in Wisconsin. I'm writing this article during a snowfall, just two days after we all experienced temperatures in the mid- to high-70s. Happily, by the time this issue reaches your mailbox the weather should be perfect for fishing, hiking or boating.

It's also a great time to book your foursome at the SCI WI Golf Outing! Last year's outing was a great success, with more than 70 golfers, great raffle prizes and the sharing of stories of missed putts and 260-yard drives.

This year's outing will again be on Monday, June 2, at the Legend of Brandybrook, in Wales, WI.

Registration begins at 10:30 am with a shotgun start at noon. Fees are \$175 per golfer or \$650 for a foursome and include golf, cart, range, lunch, light appetizers, awards and prizes. Deadline to register is May 23, 2025.

Many sponsorship levels are being offered, including hole and gun board sponsors. Contact Sarah Ingle at [office@sciwi.org](mailto:office@sciwi.org) or visit [www.sciwi.org](http://www.sciwi.org) for further details and registration information.



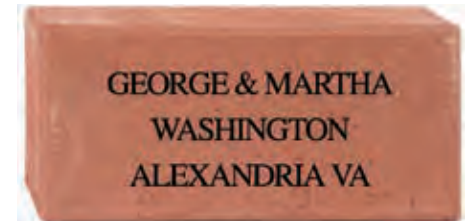
Speaking of summer entertainment, be sure to mark your calendar for Saturday, July 12 when we will again host our annual Sporting Clays outing at Wern Valley Sportsman's Club in Waukesha, WI. Enjoy a round of sporting clays, lunch catered by Robert's Meats of Waukesha, raffles, trophies and great camaraderie. The folks at Wern Valley always help make it a great event. See the chapter website for registration info and further details.

Attendees at the recent 2025 SCI Wisconsin Chapter Banquet were offered several chances to obtain domestic and international hunts, vacations, hunting gear, rifles, shotguns,



handguns and to purchase one of the remaining commemorative courtyard bricks, all in the name of supporting hunter's rights.

Good news, as there are still a limited number of bricks available for purchase. Each brick is a permanent show of support for hunter's rights and SCI and will be placed at the Hunter's Embassy



in Washington, DC. Your brick will be engraved with your choice of message, displayed in three rows of up to 20 characters each. Contact Sarah at [office@sciwi.org](mailto:office@sciwi.org) for further details or to obtain an order form.

Keep your eyes open for information on our May membership meeting, slated for Thursday, May 15. Details are available on [www.sciwi.org](http://www.sciwi.org).

For those of you who have received a spring turkey license or a fall bear tag, we wish you the best of luck.



Alex Kostner, Kevin Mineard, Cory Pederson and Sean Coykendall



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# Northeast Wisconsin Chapter Report

by Kathryn Thede, President

Expo season has come and gone. Thank you so much to everyone who helped with, volunteered, attended, and supported our banquet this year. We couldn't do it without you, and we are humbled by your support. This year I got to see more of what happens behind the scenes. I am so thankful for every single member of our board of directors and our volunteers. They work like a well-oiled machine, and I am in awe of even the littlest details that each person just jumps in and takes on. The banquet and expo are a busy time, so much planning and hard work goes into one weekend and that weekend always goes by so fast. I am not going to lie though; it is one of my favorite weekends of the year. I love working the membership booth at expo. I love talking hunting with everyone who stops by. I love meeting new friends and



reconnecting with the people who have become so special to me throughout the years. I love sharing what SCI means to me and why membership is so important. I am always excited when people stop by to join and/or to show

me pictures from the last year and renew their membership. It is such a blessing to be a part of this journey and being able to connect with people year to year is probably my favorite part about working the membership booth.

In February I was able to be a part of my first Hunter Education class. I had a great group of mentors that took me under their wing as I helped to teach the next generation of up and coming hunters. It was truly an amazing experience. If you are looking for a way to give back to the hunting community this is a great way to pay it forward. The eagerness and excitement these younger (and not so young) people had is so rejuvenating. They were so appreciative of the class, the information, and volunteers.

April 9th we will have our member's meeting at the Roxy in Oshkosh. (Keep your eyes open for that yellow flyer in the mailbox.) Cost for the dinner is \$25.00 per person. We would love to have you join us! Please follow us on Facebook Northeast Wisconsin Chapter SCI and on our webpage NEWISCI.org for upcoming events. Feel free to reach out to me via phone or text Kathryn 920-450-0765 with any questions or concerns.

Our Board of Director Spotlight this month is Mark Jablonic. He is a man who wears many hats and has talents that he gives us sneak peaks of. A wealth of knowledge and an eagerness to help are just a few of the reasons he is an asset to SCI as a whole and our chapter is so thankful for him!! Here is a bit about him.

## Member Profile:

### Mark Jablonic

My name is Mark Jablonic and I have been involved with SCI for more than 15 years. Walt Janke was involved in SCI and one day he asked me to come to a meeting. I have been on the Board of Directors for approximately 12 years. I served multiple terms as president and serve as a Co-Chair of volunteers for our banquet as well as the Master of Ceremonies the for the last two years.

My favorite animal to hunt is either the last animal I hunted or the next one I am going to hunt. I can't say I have a favorite.

I have hunted on three continents and each hunt has its own special memory. There are some hunts that may have challenged me more than another. Or there may have been something about the experience that makes it stick out in my mind but normally it's about camaraderie and the stories we will tell.

Naturally, hunting and fishing are my hobbies. I retired a couple of years ago so that my wife, Vickie and I could travel. We've been to Utah, the Apostle Islands, Florida and Europe is next.

What makes SCI important to me is that we aren't species specific. Nothing against Whitetails Unlimited, Ducks Unlimited, RMEF, NWTF, Pheasants Forever, Muskies Inc., Trout Unlimited, etc. but they are all species specific. What I like about SCI is that it doesn't matter what you hunt or fish or where, SCI is fighting for our rights to enjoy that

activity. The other thing I like is that we have our own lobbyist in Madison, Dan Trawicki. Hunting and fishing rights are always in jeopardy of being taken away from us so it's nice to know we have someone in Madison looking out for us.



A fun fact about me? I normally do pretty well playing Trivial Pursuit or watching Jeopardy because as my wife says, I know a lot of useless information.

# SE Wisconsin Bow Chapter Report

by Dan Trawicki, President

On March 21 the SE Wisconsin bow chapter Of SCI held its 25th annual banquet. We were fortunate enough to have a complete sellout 3 weeks before the event! Our host restaurant the Golden Mast in



Dave Bahl, Sr. accepts the plaque recognizing his role in creating the Southeastern Wisconsin Bowhunters Chapter now led by President Dan Trawicki, right.

Okauchee once again did an exceptional job with the food and service. Final numbers are still being tabulated, but I believe it will be our most successful financial banquet! I believe I have been at almost every banquet except one year I was on a hunting trip (the only valid excuse!).

Our chapter has come a long way, and we continue to stay true to our original core mission. From the very first meeting and banquet which was the idea of Dave Bahl, we wanted to be politically active and support those leaders and legislators that support hunting in general and bowhunting in particular. That first banquet, and several after were held at Buck Rub Archery on the 3D range. "Kaz" from buck rub was instrumental in the early development of the chapter. At our recent banquet we had prepared



plaques of appreciation for both Dave and Kaz.

Our banquet in March included over 20 live auction items, a large bucket raffle and of course gun and bow boards. After a lot of trial and error, we were finally able to get our registration all online which made the process more streamlined and efficient. One of the main goals I had coming in as president, was to provide more events and meetings for our members. Currently we are looking at participating with the Wisconsin chapter for the golf outing, and our wild game dinner which is also at Golden Mast on Thursday August 14. Shortly after our wild game dinner we will be hosting a chapter 3D archery shoot at Buck Rub in Delafield. We have a lot going on, and our chapters future is bright!

# Badgerland Chapter Report

by Randy Mayes, President

Food plots and turkey hunting. That's where many of my thoughts and actions are this time of year. Oh, don't get me wrong, I still make time for everything else in my life... like work, church, family, etc. It's just that at certain times of the year I do what I can to carve out some additional time for my "other" passions.

My soil testing has been completed. My seed and fertilizer have been purchased. By the time you read this, I may already have some of my plots planted. Maybe I even have another turkey in the freezer! I am thankful to be able to enjoy the passions that I do.

One of my other passions is SCI. I am also thankful for the many others in our chapter who share that as well. If it were not for our great board members as well as other members stepping up to help out when needed, our organization would not be where it is today. A HUGE thank you to everyone who has helped in the past year, either with your time or financial support. Because of our successful events, that you made possible, we are able to offer funding on so many levels that all funnel back to this passion we all share.

Everyone has responsibilities and commitments throughout the year. I hope you are successful in "making



room" for YOUR "other passions" this year!

Since I need to carve out some time to prepare for an upcoming hunting trip to feed the passion, I'm going to cut it slightly short for this issue. Good luck in the turkey woods!



# Illinois and Chicago Chapter Report

by Brett Hensley, President

As the warmer weather rolls in, we're proud to celebrate yet another successful season for our chapter. This spring, we partnered with the Kishwaukee Archery Club for an incredible archery event, and we hosted a memorable annual banquet that brought together passionate hunters and conservationists.

Held in April, our banquet was a powerful tribute to the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. Through our live auction, raffles, and silent auction, we raised vital funds to protect and promote this foundational model—right here in Illinois. This year's theme, "Fight!", served as a reminder that the battle for conservation is ongoing. As the saying goes, "Success breeds complacency. Complacency breeds failure. Only the vigilant survive." As advocates for ethical hunting and sustainable wildlife management, we cannot afford to rest. Even as we look ahead to a more hunter-friendly administration, we must remain vigilant and united in our mission to safeguard the legacy of the North American Wildlife Management Model.

We welcome your feedback on the banquet and events—please feel free to reach out directly at b20hensley@gmail.com.

As we head into summer and fall, our chapter is setting its sights on growth. Our vision is to build a stronger, more connected presence throughout Northern Illinois—from Winthrop Harbor to Galena, down to Morrison/Moline, across to Princeton, and up through Kankakee. By expanding our reach, we not only amplify our collective voice in Springfield but also create more opportunities for members to get involved in events, projects, and conservation efforts.

With nearly 300,000 hunters in Illinois, it's time we stand united and make our voices heard. Together, we can lead the charge for wildlife conservation and ensure our values are represented at every level.

Stay connected by visiting our website and watching for updates in Hunter's magazine—you won't want to miss what's ahead.

All of our chapter members and all of us on the Illinois & Chicago SCI Board look forward to seeing you at our



upcoming events and continuing the fight—together!

- Brett Hensley- President & President-Elect
- Dale Rimkus-Vice President
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# Biomimicry

by Mark LaBarbera

SCI members are familiar with how architect Frank Lloyd Wright designed homes and other buildings to fit in with nature. And over the years, designers and engineers have observed closely how animals and nature survive and thrive. Now, researchers are taking it to new levels, far from the Wright Brothers early efforts to mimic birds in flight.

Take for example the new robots modeled after dogs. We see them on the TV news as these four-legged machines are used by police bomb squads and rescue crews. In Estonia, scientists recently looked to nature to improve

performance of Tallinn University of Technology's dog-like robot used in forests and all kinds of terrain. Specifically, they mimicked the hooves of moose.

Moose hooves don't get stuck in the mud. Moose hooves get traction on

rocks, dirt, and the most challenging terrain. With two toes, the hooves inspired a re-design of Tallinn U's robot as they try to improve performance for conservation work, disaster relief, and other uses.

Mimicking biological originals may seem like news, but it has been a part of innovation for decades and includes some popular products. Take for example, Velcro or other hook and loop fasteners. Back in 1941, Swiss engineer George de Mestral was removing burrs from his dog when he started looking closely at the burrs. They had small hooks at the end of each spike. He went on to invent Velcro.





Legislative Update:

Leading The Way For Conservation

by Dan Trawicki,  
SCI Lobbyist

It's been reported quite inaccurately that the Governor will be raising all resident and non-resident license fees. While it's true that he has proposed a large increase, especially hefty for residents, nothing can be done until the budget gets passed. Simply adding language to help erase a deficit in the DNR budget does not make it happen.

First, a little history. We as resident hunters, fisherman and trappers have not had any increase in our resident license sales since 2005. There were increases to the non-resident fees in 2023. I was actually part of a statewide study group that put together recommendations on a license fee increase. It was however stipulated how those funds were to be used. Wildlife habitat restoration, trout stream habitat, stocking in specific area and other areas of concern were all mentioned among many others. Those recommendations ultimately were not accepted, and our work was discarded. As I mentioned, non-residents did have an increase in 2023, but nothing compared to the drastic proposed increase

for residents. Almost every major hunting and fishing organization in the state was represented at our strategy session to help our fish and wildlife.

While almost everyone I have talked to, appreciates the fact that we may be due for some increase at some time, it's the depth and scope of the proposed increase that is difficult to swallow. Especially in light of the fact that the state is currently projecting a \$4.6 billion with a "B" government surplus. Another major complaint is the fact that nonresident fees do not go up at the same rate or percentage as resident license. As I reviewed the state budget, and the recommendation from the DNR, I was not able to find any study or supplemental information to justify the increase. I have had an opportunity to speak with many legislators and lobbyists over the past few weeks, and none of them saw this coming, participated in any study or was made aware of the proposed fee changes in advance of the budget proposal.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, this is a budget item. Nothing more and nothing less. There will not be an increase in our fees for now. Many people have commented to me how insulting this is. A proposed fee increase that is extremely high compared to non resident AND with no study or documentation to support it. And all of this on the heels of a projected 4.6 billion dollar state surplus!

This budget will be completely reworked and redone. My advice is to contact your legislators in both the Senate and Assembly and express your displeasure. I believe sportsmen were a huge influence in this past election. WE can do that again. Always remember to get out and vote so your voice can be heard." If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem".



When Warren Nelson speared this 63.6-pound, 62.3-inch-long male sturgeon near Winneconne February 10 with his dad Cody and grandpa Doug, he may have been the youngest person ever at 12 years and 10 days old to spear such a big fish on the Poygan Lakes Chain.



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or scan the QR code at right  
During the registration process, you will be  
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Questions? Contact Sean Coykendall  
at 231-631-0903 or [seancoykendall.sci@gmail.com](mailto:seancoykendall.sci@gmail.com)

Appropriate golf clothing, including collared shirts that are tucked in, is always required on the golf course. Denim, gym shorts, cut-off shorts, beach/swim wear, T-shirts, halter or tank tops are not allowed. Hats must be removed when entering the clubhouse.



# Why President's Second Amendment Executive Order Matters to Bowhunters

by Jay Pinsky, Editor  
The Archery Wire  
& The Hunting Wire

President Trump's recent executive order reaffirming the Second Amendment is a bold move to protect gun owners' rights - and archery rights.

For years, government overreach has chipped away at sportsmen's rights, affecting everything from firearm ownership to hunting access on public lands. While bows and firearms may seem like separate issues, they share a familiar battleground: hunting regulations, conservation funding, and outdoor access.

Yes, we (bowhunters and gun hunters) can help each other. Just like we can hurt each other. Now is a good time to remind us all that this constant bickering, infighting, and peer shaming within bowhunting, and all hunting needs to stop. Off my soapbox.

This executive order directs the Attorney General to assess regulations that may infringe on the Second Amendment, laying the groundwork for reviewing policies that affect all hunters, including those who hunt with bows.

### How It Benefits Bowhunters

At its core, the executive order states: *"The Second Amendment is an indispensable safeguard of security and liberty. It has preserved the right of the American people to protect ourselves, our families, and our freedoms since the founding of our great Nation. Because it is foundational to maintaining all other rights held by Americans, the right to keep and bear arms must not be infringed."*

Although archery equipment is not classified as a firearm, many policies restricting firearm use and hunting access also affect bowhunters. The order requires the Attorney General to conduct a full-scale review of government regulations that may infringe on hunting and firearm rights. This means some restrictions that indirectly affected bowhunters could soon be reassessed.

For years, federal regulations have limited hunting opportunities on public



lands. In some cases, this has directly impacted bowhunters by restricting access to prime hunting areas or banning certain types of gear.

President Trump's order explicitly directs the Attorney General to review: *"(i) All Presidential and agencies' actions from January 2021 through January 2025 that purport to promote safety but may have impinged on the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens."*

This review could increase hunting opportunities on federal lands, benefiting all hunters—whether they hunt with a bow or a firearm.

Many hunters don't realize that the firearms and ammunition industry funds a significant portion of conservation efforts through the Pittman-Robertson Act. When firearm ownership is restricted, so is the funding that sustains wildlife conservation programs, habitat restoration, and hunter education.

By directing a review of: *"(vi) Agencies' classifications of firearms and ammunition"*

*This executive order ensures that the firearms industry remains strong and stable, which keeps conservation dollars flowing—benefiting both firearm hunters and bowhunters.*

While archery gear is not currently under the same level of scrutiny as firearms, restrictive government policies have a way of creeping into unintended areas. If the federal government is willing to restrict one type of hunting equipment, there's always a risk that archery gear could be next.

The executive order also requires a review of: *"(iii) Agencies' plans, orders, and actions regarding the so-called 'enhanced regulatory enforcement policy' pertaining to firearms and/or Federal firearms licensees."*

This is important because restrictive policies on firearm accessories—such as optics, ammunition, and

suppressors—often overlap with hunting regulations. Ensuring that government agencies do not overstep their authority means bowhunters can have confidence that their equipment choices remain protected.

Hunting rights and firearm rights are deeply interconnected. In recent years, policies restricting gun ownership have had unintended consequences for hunting, including:

- Bans on lead ammunition, which impact hunters of all kinds.
- Firearm import restrictions have limited the availability of certain hunting rifles.
- Overregulation of hunting gear and accessories makes it harder

for hunters to properly equip themselves.

This executive order ensures that hunting remains accessible and practical for future generations by rolling back unnecessary government interference.

### What Bowhunters Must Do Next

This executive order is a major step in the right direction, but hunters—whether they use firearms or bows—must stay engaged in the fight to protect our rights.

- Stay Informed – Follow hunting advocacy groups and track policy changes that could affect your right to hunt.

- Support Conservation Efforts – Even if you don't use firearms, the taxes they generate help protect wildlife and hunting lands.

- Advocate for Hunting Access—Policies affecting gun hunting often impact bowhunting. Speak up when hunting rights are on the line.

President Trump's executive order is not just about guns; it's about ensuring that hunting, in all its forms, remains a protected and cherished tradition. By standing together, hunters can ensure that our rights, access, and heritage remain strong for future generations, whether we hunt with a rifle, shotgun, or bow.

## NBEF Supports Bowhunter Education

SCI Chapters in Illinois and Wisconsin support outdoor education and safety training for anyone hunting with gun or bow. The National Bowhunter Education Foundation applauds SCI's work and

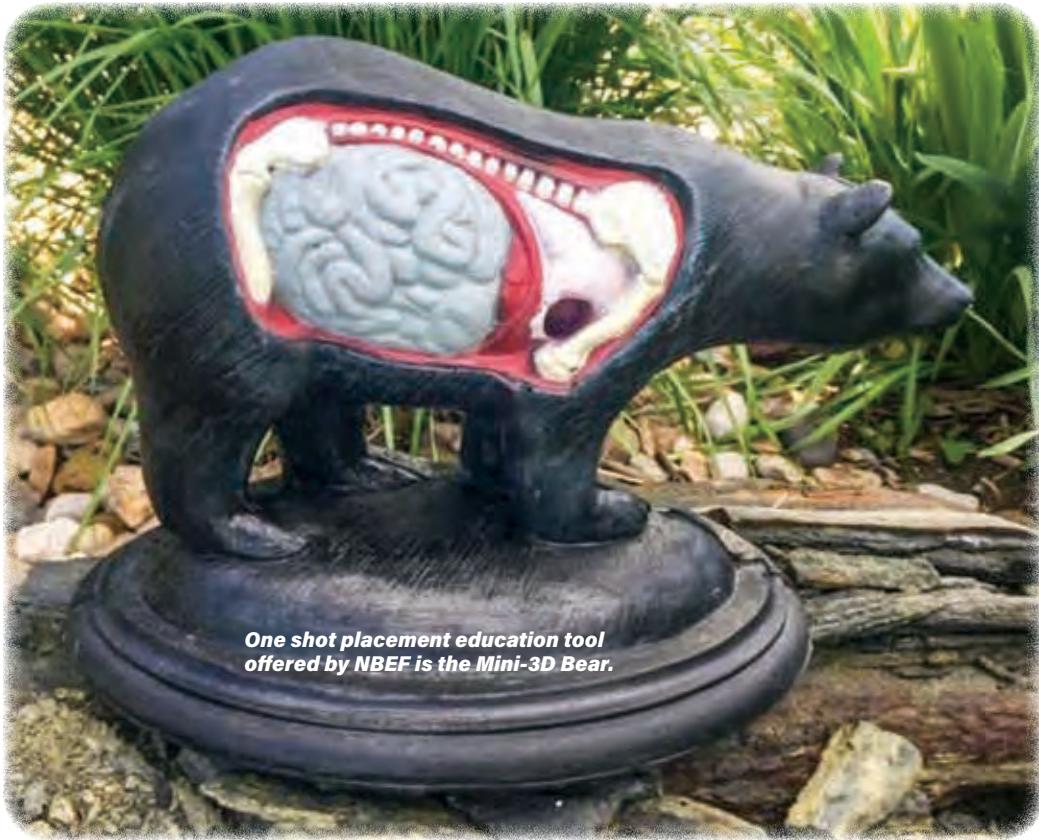
also offers instructional content and tools for bowhunter education and hunter education. Helping bowhunters become safe and successful hunters and stewards of the sport are important NBEF missions. NBEF provides the

bowhunter certification curriculum and class content that some states and certain circumstances require to bow hunt. NBEF provides instructor training and certification.

NBEF oversees the International Bowhunter Education Program and works with the International Hunter Education Association and state agencies like Wisconsin and Illinois Departments of Natural Resources to coordinate a unified program. States may have additional requirements. SCI members who want to bowhunt overseas should know that Europe and other countries accept the NBEF (IBEP) certification.

NBEF also oversees the International Crossbow Education Program and works with state agencies responsible for crossbow education to develop comprehensive online crossbow safety courses that teach students of all ages the important laws and regulations, game identification, and safe, responsible handling of crossbow equipment.

NBEF is a 501(c)3 corporation that isn't a membership-based organization. Tax-deductible donations to support this non-profit are welcome. Learn more at [nbe.org](http://nbe.org).



One shot placement education tool offered by NBEF is the Mini-3D Bear.



# Youth Conservation Congress Has SCI Ties

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress is one-of-a kind. No other state has this system of citizen representation to help guide natural resources decisions. Delegates elected in each county by its residents provide ideas, resolutions, feedback, and votes to advance or reject changes to the direction of our outdoor heritage. They advise the Natural Resources Board, DNR, and are seen as a resource

for legislators who care about what their constituents want.

WCC, years ago, wanted to breathe life into a youth initiative that would recruit and educate youth who could someday become delegates in their counties. The DNR called on SCI Life Member Mark LaBarbera of Hazel Green, Wisconsin, to create a strategic plan that laid out a vision as well as detailed strategies and tactics. With the

support of then DNR Secretary Preston Cole, the plan took shape with input from conservation and sporting group leaders, legislators, educators, DNR professionals, and others. WCC approved it, including emphasis on the number one priority of hiring a coordinator focused on this youth initiative.

With initial funding from the DNR and the Friends of WCC, a part-time position was created. An interview panel including LaBarbera met with applicants before ultimately choosing the current Youth Conservation Congress program coordinator Ms. Kyle Zenz.

"She does a great job of working with WCC delegates to recruit youth

Caleb from St. Croix County



Tommy from Vilas County



Josh from Columbia County



from their counties," said WCC Chairman Rob Bohmann of Racine. "Plus, she finds activities to keep them busy having fun and learning."

Those activities include behind the scenes fish hatchery tours, hunts, fly tying, fishing, career development and other fun and engaging events throughout the year. With help from the Friends group, Outdoor Heritage Education Center group, and others, YCC is already producing future leaders.

Recently, YCC also encouraged youth delegates to participate in the Wisconsin deer hunting season in any capacity. All YCC delegates who submitted a picture of their participation in the deer season, whether they harvested a deer or not, were entered into a drawing for prizes. Here are photos some of them submitted.





# Big Al Supporters Do It Again

by Rick Rollo

**M**ore than \$25,000 was added again this year by supporters of the Big Al Charity Pheasant Hunt at Wern Valley Sportsmen's Club to the funds spent on charitable and humanitarian causes. Let's take a look at this year's photos as well as the history of this great event.



My dad, Big Al, dedicated husband and provider, was father to six, grandfather to 12 and great grandfather to 14. Nothing made him happier than having his family around him. He was a veteran of World War II, respected long-time employee of Wisconsin Electric, and a guy who knew how to get things done. Big Al lived a good, honest life



dedicated to what matters: family, friends, country and a deep appreciation for the outdoors.

In 1997, Al was diagnosed with cancer, and the prognosis was not good. While this was a painful, uncertain time, the hard work and dedication of many excellent caregivers made all the difference. Al beat the odds and lived. As a family, we were so thankful to have more time with him which made me want to do something for the people who worked so hard to help. The only thing I



could think of was to donate to a charity that supported their work...and so The Big Al Charity Pheasant Hunt was born.

## That First Hunt

In 1997, on a crisp fall Saturday afternoon, 11 family and friends gathered for a few hours of field hunting and to show their love and support for Al. We met at Blonhaven Hunt Club owned by dear friend Jim Clark. When I first presented this idea to him, he was in 100% and offered to open his facility at a very minimal cost. This was critical to the success of the event. Without his generosity, the charity wouldn't have worked. That first day, we raised about \$800 for the American Cancer Society. It was a fun, successful day of pheasant hunting, but more importantly, it was the beginning of a tradition that would in many ways change my life and the lives of many others—some of whom I'll never even meet.

## From Field Hunt To Tower Hunt

The following year, we had planned another hunt. Word had



gotten out about what a great day it was, and we had a number of people ask if they could join us. The Big Al was now off and running. In these early years, we held a "field hunt." Four hunters were paired to a dog and handler... and were given a field to hunt for the afternoon. As the numbers began to grow, however, this became hard to manage. Jim came to me and explained that the logistics of getting that many dogs, handlers and fields was becoming a nightmare.



of shooting and excitement. Imagine 12 to 14 blinds surrounding an approximately 30-foot tower. Each blind holds two hunters which means that in just one round, 28 shooters can be accommodated. As birds are released from the



tower, hunting begins. The pheasants fly out powerfully in full flight in any and all directions. Dogs and their handlers are working alongside the hunters to harvest the birds as they fall to the ground. After every 10 or so birds are released, a horn is sounded, guns are unloaded, and each hunter rotates over one blind. Everyone has an equal opportunity to get in some great shooting. It is not unusual to shoot two or three boxes of shells in one round.

## The Right Partner, SCI, Steps In

The tower hunt model allowed us to accommodate many more shooters in a much shorter time which then led to more participation in the event. As more people joined, the raffle portion of the event got bigger. Participants donated more items and bought more tickets, allowing us to raise a lot more money. By about year 10, it became

His suggestion was to change the event into a "tower hunt."

For those that have never been to a tower hunt, it is a ton of fun. There's a lot



apparent that we had two good problems. One, we began to raise so much money that we had a tax problem, and two, the distribution of the funds became difficult to manage.

What we learned, however, is that The Big Al seems to take care of itself. Whenever this event develops a problem, a solution seems to present itself—almost miraculously. And that is exactly what happened here. While attending an SCI-Wisconsin banquet, an old friend, Ron Kujawa, came up with the solution to our problems: Approach the







SCI Board of Directors to set up our charity event as "The Big AI Fund" within the chapter. At the very same time, Make-a-Wish had stopped funding hunts for terminally ill children, so we saw this as a very special need we could meet. The transition was perfect and timely. Because my dad had been a WWII veteran and a strong advocate for youth in the outdoors, we decided to sponsor outdoor activities for sick kids and disabled veterans, trying to stay as local as possible. A solid partnership with shared ideals was formed that day.

### Something Bigger Than Us All

The generosity of the people who attend The Big AI is unbelievable. Many

of the hunters save up over the course of a year to be able to donate in a meaningful way. So, where does the money go? Here are just some of the experiences we help to sponsor:

- Pheasant Hunting for wheelchair-bound vets;
- Trap shooting for vets fighting cancer;
- Muskie fishing for disabled vets (with Wounded Warriors);
- Donating toward Dan Small's "Deer Hunt Wisconsin" annual TV special that reaches so many people and features segments like a female wheelchair mentor helping a youth hunter and a Fallen Outdoors Hunt



where veterans talk about the importance of spending time outdoors with military brothers as a way to release debilitating stress and anxiety; and

- Great Lakes charter fishing trips for kids with life-threatening diseases. We co-sponsor with the United Special Sportsman Alliance (USSA) to bring in these brave kids from all over the state. They are put up for the night in Port Washington, get up



early Saturday morning, fish with guided Great Lake Charter boats (also donated), return to port around noon, and then have a big lunch. There are sometimes as many as 25 kids.

One year, I was fortunate to be able to go along on one of these charter fishing trips and see the joy on these kids' faces. At the end of the day, when I was getting ready to leave, a woman came running up to my car and said, "Thank you so much for what you have done here today. You don't know what it means." I said, "It was certainly my honor." She said "No, you really don't understand what this means. Every dime we have goes to medical bills. We would never even dream of being able to do something like this for Michael

[her little boy]. I have not seen him smile this much in a year. We cannot possibly thank you enough." She kissed me on the cheek and walked away, and I sat in my car and cried for about 15 minutes.

This is what the Big AI is all about.

### 25 Years After That First Hunt...

On that drizzly October 16, 2022, gray morning, Wern Valley was bustling, preparing for 60 hunters—60 family and friends. Everybody was happy.

Everybody was showing up to support a great cause. Everybody was busy: raffle prizes were being unloaded from the back of a pickup truck, coffee was brewing, the ticket table was getting set up...and I was more emotional about this event than I had ever been before. The goal for that 25th year was to hit \$25,000. The mixture of nerves and love for my dad and

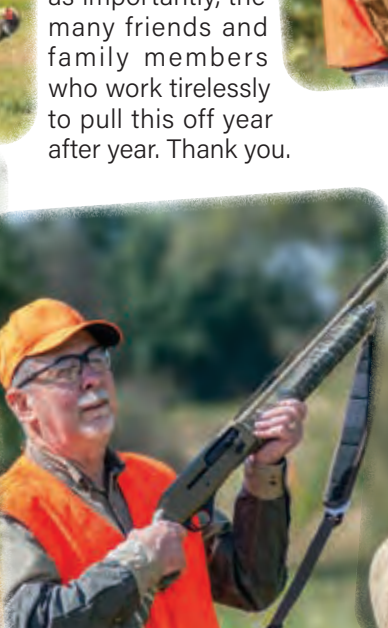
all these people and this event was overwhelming.

I couldn't stop thinking about what we were trying to accomplish. In between those nerves, though, my dad kept coming to mind. I wished that he could have been there. The day turned out better than I had hoped. It was full of great sportsmanship, friendship, and fun, memories that I would never forget. When all was said and done, we raised \$26,000 for the kids and the vets!

And now we begin planning the 2025 event. Please join us. As we share these photos from the 2024 Big AI event, I count our blessings for what has been accomplished since 11 people gathered to donate a few bucks to the American Cancer Society and spend an afternoon pheasant hunting. Since our partnership with SCI, we have pushed past \$250,000 raised, and since our start 27 years ago, past more than \$350,000 raised!

I know that if my dad could have seen this, he would have been very quiet. That was his way. But he also would have had the biggest smile on his face—and that right there would have been worth it all.

It goes without saying that none of this happens without the help of many, many people. Wern Valley Sportsmen's Club, SCI Wisconsin Chapter, and MacFarlane Pheasants in particular, but just as importantly, the many friends and family members who work tirelessly to pull this off year after year. Thank you.





# Safe Tips

Whether you won more guns at recent SCI banquets and outgrew your existing storage, or simply want to protect your existing firearms, valuable belongings, and important documents, choosing the right gun safe is a crucial decision. With numerous brands offering a variety of models, it's easy to get lost in the sea of options.

SCI HUNTERS magazine's editor asked a long-time friend of SCI, Nick Fink, for advice. SCI members have been using his Nick of Time safe-moving services for decades and they have been glad to see him offering deals on Browning safes in recent years throughout the Midwest and nationwide through Outdoor Lifestyles, LLC in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. Fink offered these helpful tips when buying a gun safe:

- **Size Matters:** Consider how many firearms you own and if you plan to expand your collection. Think about your long-term needs, including storage for accessories, documents, and other valuables.

- **Security Features:** Look for safes that have advanced security features such as heavy-duty steel construction, high-quality locks, and fire resistance. Browning Safes, Fink said, offer robust protection with their superior locking mechanisms and fireproof capabilities. The brand uses a unique "TITANIUM" reinforced door design, which further enhances the security of the safe. This extra layer of protection makes Browning safes more resilient to pry bars, cutting tools, and other common break-in tactics, outclassing the competition in terms of anti-theft features.

- **Locking Mechanism:** There are several types of locks to choose from, including mechanical, electronic, and biometric locks. Consider the pros and cons of each: electronic locks are quick and easy to use, while mechanical locks are often seen as more reliable over time. Some of Outdoor Lifestyles' safe models feature as many as 14 bolts.

- **Fire and Water Protection:** Look for safes with a fire rating and waterproof features. Fink said, many of Browning's safes are rated for up to 120 minutes of fire resistance at temperatures as high as 1,400°F. They use Fireseal technology, which creates an airtight seal that helps protect the contents of the safe during a fire, and valuables will remain safe from heat and smoke damage.

- **Location and Installation:** Think about where you want to place your safe. It should be in a secure, discreet location but also easily accessible. For larger safes, it's often worth investing in professional installation to ensure the



safe is properly anchored and secure.

- **Budget:** While investing in a quality safe is important for security, it's also important to consider your budget. With a variety of price points, Outdoor Lifestyles LLC can help you find a safe that fits both your security needs and your budget, Fink said. The company stands behind its products. Browning gives a lifetime warranty, which includes protection against defects and damage caused by attempted break-ins.

Fink said, beyond these key buying tips, SCI members may want to look at storage designs that provide ample space and flexible configurations with adjustable shelving, gun racks, and premium interior fabrics.

He said, "While security and functionality are paramount, we also understand the importance of aesthetics with safes that are beautifully designed with sleek, stylish finishes and options for customization. Whether you want a more traditional look or a contemporary finish, we offer a range of colors, designs, and configurations that blend well with your home or office decor."

Beyond his advice to help any SCI member planning to buy a safe wherever you live, Fink also answered the question, "Why buy from Outdoor Lifestyles?" He listed these reasons:

1. **Expertise:** The store manager and owner bring 20 years of experience in the gun safe industry, ensuring they have extensive knowledge of the products and can help you select the best safe for your specific needs. Their expertise allows them to offer insights into the latest security features, quality materials, and the right fit for your home or business.
2. **Veteran-Owned:** Outdoor Lifestyles LLC is managed by a Veteran, which often brings a sense of discipline, integrity, and commitment to excellence in both customer service and business operations. Supporting a Veteran-owned business also allows you to contribute to a cause that many customers value.
3. **Quality Selection:** With years of industry experience, Outdoor Lifestyles LLC offers a curated selection of high-quality gun safes.
4. **Customer Service:** Whether you're looking for advice on the best gun safe for your collection or need help

with installation, their team is there to offer tailored solutions.

5. **Competitive Pricing:** Outdoor Lifestyles LLC provides additional value, including free delivery or discounts for in-store purchases.

6. **Nationwide Delivery & Sales:** Whether you're in Wisconsin or across the country, Outdoor Lifestyles LLC offers nationwide delivery and sales.

7. **Expert Installation:** The company also offers delivery and installation services, ensuring your gun



safe is properly set up and securely placed inside your home or business, not left at your door for you to handle from there. Inside delivery is so valuable.



Josh Quinn with Dan Small, Nick Fink





In Memorium:

# Marlin “Spin” Spindler

by Mark LaBarbera

My friend Spin died and my heart is heavy. All of us will miss him in the field, in the classroom, in the home, and at the Midwest Outdoor Heritage Education Expo.

Marlin Peter Spindler, 89, of Beaver Dam, passed away on Wednesday, February 19, 2025 at Hospice Home of Hope in Fond du Lac but his legacy lives on.

More than 5,000 students learned fire-arms safety and hunter education in his Dodge County classes. Fellow instructors like Paul Mayer said, “I first met Spin when he came into where I worked to get copies of his hunter education roster. I asked him how does a person get into teaching this course? He replied, ‘Give me your name and contact number. When I run my next class in six months, I will contact you, and you can come help and get certified.’”

Mayer remembered fondly, “That was 1983. Since then, Spin and I have taught many hunter education classes together, sometimes as many as 10 a year, some with only 10 students, and others over 70 students. This started a friendship of a lifetime and built a very close relationship. A genuine man and a true friend.”

He added, “We would travel to recertification classes and seminars together. Be it for Hunter Education, Wisconsin Conservation Warden Recruits at Horicon Marsh for Waterfowl Enforcement Training, or just taking a road trip to go get something. Most times I would drive but sometimes Spin would. It did not matter who drove. Our first stop always had to be the first Kwik Trip to pick up donuts. Spin always had his trusty Stanley full of piping hot coffee to wash those donuts down along with his favorite orange plastic hunter education mug that he received from the WI DNR



as a token of appreciation. No matter where we traveled, he had a story about that area. It may have been about hunting there, or maybe a family vacation travel, a friend lived there, possibly he had refereed a high school football or basketball game, or a vehicle break down, or maybe even getting pulled over for not paying attention and speeding! No matter what the occasion, if the event or hunt started early Spin would bring donuts for everyone and he always had his orange coffee mug and that Stanley! He loved that mug. I cannot recall how many times after some of our hunter education range & field days Spin would forget something. I would get a call, ‘Hey, can you grab my orange mug and bring it home? I will get it from you tomorrow.’”

Mayer smiled, “Oh yes if that old orange mug could talk! At our field & range days for firearm safety, Spin always worked the .22 rifle range. One day a few of the prankster instructors found a way to sneak away that old orange mug. As shooting was about to begin, Spin shouted out, ‘Hey has anyone seen my orange coffee mug?’ Everyone pointed down range. There it sat as the number one target. Of course, no one ever shot it. Everyone, students included, would all chuckle and laugh.

Even Spin got a great laugh.”

Mayer said, “Later on, at all of the classes or learn to hunt programs, Spin would like to be introduced as Grandpa Spin. I believe that Grandpa Spin’s favorite segment of teaching at these events was field dressing. Spin would go into grand detail about how to properly care for your game to provide the best palatable meat possible, and that you took the life of this animal that God

put here for us to use and that you should not waste it because of improper care.”

Another quick story from Mayer: “After a day of deer hunting with us, Spin drove home, and soon I got this call from him. This is what he said, ‘I was driving home in the dark. About halfway home on the other side of the road there were two vehicles pulled over. They both had their bright lights on. One vehicle’s lights were shining in my eyes, and I could not see very well. There were people standing around those vehicles waiting for me to pass. I slowed way down because of the lights shining in my eyes and could not figure out what had happened. Then all of a sudden, my Ranger went thump, klump, klump, thump, and bounced around. Here the one vehicle had hit a deer, and it was laying in the middle of the road, and they were all standing there waiting for me to go by so they could recover the deer. I never saw the dead deer! Well, I guess I tenderized it a bit for them!’ When Spin finished, I laughed so hard I had tears in my eyes, just as I have tears in my eyes now as I mourn the death of my good buddy.”

DNR Conservation Officer Heather Gottschalk said, “I’m not sure where you begin when trying to describe a man whose very name is the essence of

kindness, generosity, and life itself. I first met Marlin Spindler when I was the new game warden in town. Many were interested in what vehicle I drove, where I lived, what I looked like, and whether I was going to be tough and by-the-book or be easier going. Then there was Spin, full of energy, open arms and a big ‘How ya doing?’ because he didn’t care about all those other things. Spin cared about me, not the job I had or how I would do it. He cared so much that he and his lovely bride Jean invited me over to their home shortly after my arrival to my new station in Beaver Dam. It was wonderful! This was the start of a friendship that would last a lifetime. Spin will never know how much that dinner meant to me and how it took my station from being a place I was assigned to go to instead being my home.”

She said, “From that point forward, Spin and I would work together on a lot of projects, most dealing with hunter safety. One of the biggest was the DNR documentation of hunter ed firearms that were issued to Spin by the Dodge County Courts. Thanks to Spin and his documentation of these guns this momentous task took no time at all.”

Smiling, she recalled, “I invited Spin to ride along with me one day when I was headed to the DNR warehouse. My thought was, why not take the guy that needs the equipment instead of going myself and failing to get everything or not get enough of it. I explained to Spin on the way down a few rules, like we can only take what we need. When we walked in the door, Spin turned into a kid. Oh boy, I thought to myself, I gotta find the reins and reign him in, quick. We got our stuff and maybe a few extras. The next day, I got an email from the Law Enforcement folks in Madison telling me that won’t happen again. I did manage to salvage a couple extra orange hunter ed mugs for Spin, knowing how near and dear to him they were.”

She said, “I can’t help but think If we could all be a Spin or have a little Spin in us, we would all be a little kinder to one another without wanting anything in return (and we’d all have an orange mug of coffee in our hand).”

Gottschalk had visited Spin in hospice and thanked him personally. After she did, she shared a final thought, “Spin, my friend, I will miss your boundless energy. I am forever grateful for your

kindness. Your friendship will forever be a part of who I am, and the game warden I became. Rest in peace.”

Spin was born June 4, 1935, the son of Herman and Eleanor Spindler. He graduated from Eau Claire Senior High School in 1953. He attended UW-Eau Claire for two years, where he participated in football and baseball, earning his Bachelor of Science degree from UW-Stout in 1960. He later obtained a Master of Science in Industrial Education in 1970 and dedicated 33 years of his career to teaching Industrial Education and Technology Education at Beaver Dam Junior High School. Additionally, he taught behind-the-wheel Driver’s Education for 20 summers during his 43 years of instruction.

Spin served in the U.S. Army and Reserves for nine years. He was also an active member of his community, serving as a WIAA basketball and football referee for over 15 years. A devoted member of First Evangelical Lutheran Church, he served as an usher, communion assistant, and youth confirmation mentor.

Spin is survived by his wife, Jean; his daughter, Shelly (James) Skorik of Cedar Grove; and stepchildren, Donna MacLafferty of Indianapolis, Sharon (James) Sasing of Elkhorn, Connie (James Brown) Jacobson of Wisconsin Rapids, and David Jacobson of Beaver Dam; his brother, Alvin (Kay) Spindler of Brooklyn Park, MN; and son-in-law, Robin (Sue) Monette of Beaver Dam; grandchildren, Megan (Ryan) Draeger of Berlin, WI; Breanne (Kevin) Sambs of Sandwich, IL; Ciara (Brandon) Paitrick of Beaver Dam; Savanah Monette of Beaver Dam; and Sarah, Andrew, and Jack Skorik of Cedar Grove; step-grandchildren, Michael MacLafferty of Germany, Erika Sasing of La Crosse, Natalie Sasing of Milwaukee, and Lessa Sasing of Madison. He is further survived by 10 great-grandchildren, as well as many other relatives and friends.

He was preceded in death by his daughter, Wendy

Monette; his son, Michael Spindler; his brothers, Donald and Allen Spindler; his step-grandson, Brian MacLafferty; sister-in-law, Gloria Spindler; and other relatives.

If desired, memorials in Marlin’s name may be made to the Outdoor Heritage Education Center fund (OHEC, 2955 Kennedy Rd., Hazel Green, WI 53811), Beaver Dam Scholarship Foundation or First Evangelical Lutheran Church.





# Know the Basics

by Len Harris

I can still hear my Dad saying this often when we fished. It typically happened just before a hole that he knew held a big trout. It meant time to tie on a new lure or check the line for nicks and frayed places. It was time for a knot check also.

Know the basics also meant shadow control. Not just in the hole where we were going to fish but the hole below it. A shadow on the water means danger to trout. He called the little ones that scurried out of the hole below "the tattle tails." They went to the main hole and their body language alerted the bigs.

We talked a lot when we fished. If he repeated something twice in a short time frame it was important, and I committed it to memory. I remember him telling me that you could shout at the top of your lungs and the trout could not hear that. He told me being quiet while trout fishing was a wives' tale. Anglers did this to quiet talkative children.

He told me the best way to ruin a potential lay was to be heavy footed on the approach. I asked him how far ahead you had to be stealthy? He said just make it a standard way of walking. Avoid stepping on twigs and don't jump down banks. He only went in the water to land a big fish. Ripples in the water spook bigs.

Fast forward 60 years. I take lots of folks fishing. I almost get as big of a thrill watching someone catch a big as catching it myself. When I catch a monster, I typically share a tale about the adventure. This usually gets people wanting to come with me and try to "dance" with the central character of my tale. Yes, I oblige them often.

I do take kids with me after monsters from time to time. I go into dad mode and make sure the basics are covered on the way to the monster's lair. We typically fish our way to the monster zone. I want to see what the kids have learned. I want to see if the basics sunk in on the way there.

Some more basics to remember. Always pick a potential landing spot for that monster before you cast. Try to match your surroundings as far as attire. Camo is not needed but if you have it wear it. It can't hurt. Don't go to a gunfight with a knife. If you think your line or gear might be inadequate for a big trout, it is!"

You are my net person...I am yours... know how to detach net...don't worry about spooking hole if hooked up...big trout did it already...net fish headfirst with a slight tilt to net...that big is going to make one last run when it sees the net...trout have no reverse capabilities. The tilt is for that last blast they give... instead of blasting over the net they power themselves into the net.

Adults are not immune from forgetting the basics or not even knowing them. I recently made a mistake with the color of vest I was wearing in the winter. It was too dark and my profile was obviously easy to see. Three trout spooked out 40 yards upstream when I rounded the bend on a stream. I was using my stealth so it only could have been my vest.

A couple years back I took a friend out after a monster I had caught. My photo on my cell phone was more than he could stand. He wanted a chance at her. I timed the outing for early spring. I had fished with him before, and he

seemed like he had his stuff together and could handle dancing with a monster.

He was so excited and wanted to walk directly to the hairpin corner where the big female lived. He wanted to fish in the hole immediately. Being in a hurry never ends well in my book.

We fished and talked for about an hour. I stopped him and asked him to tie on a new sharp lure and check his line for imperfections. He could tell by my demeanor that the hole was coming up soon. An excited angler is usually a poor casting angler. Just like anything in life the first few casts or steps are the most important. Take a deep breath place your cast well and don't let the adrenaline put that cast into the trees.

We were about 30 yards from the hole, and I told him where the big had been laying when I caught her. I wanted to give him the best chance at catching her, so we passed by the hole below her house. I didn't want the tattle tails to spook and swim into the main hole upstream where she lived. Always go back and fish that hole that you skipped.

My buddy was still excited. I tried to calm him down by repeating the battle plan. I would net the fish if he hooked it. I preached the low profile to him, so he crouched on his way to the primary lay. There was a log laying on the bank and he needed to navigate it before he could cast.

He is about my age, and I had fished with him a dozen times before. I did not feel the need to nursemaid him. My fishing partner walked right up through the down branches cracking heavy footed and crawled up on the down log and jumped down on the other side with a crash. I stopped talking. He fished the entire bend without a hit.

Later during the outing, he asked me why I was so quiet. I was biting my tongue that entire time and he asked so he got an answer. I asked him if he remembered when I quit talking.

He did. He said when he crawled over the down log. He stood there with a blank stare. He asked what he did wrong. I said, "Your crunching through the down branches and crawling up on the log and jumping down on the branches on the other side with a thunderous crash is why I quit talking. You might have as well have thrown a giant boulder in the hole."



# 21 Gun & Shooting Sports Facts

by Mark Damian Duda,  
*Responsive Management*

Millions of Americans continue to buy firearms for personal and family protection and for recreational target shooting activities, but these purchases also matter from the standpoint of wildlife conservation: thanks to the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937 (commonly known as the Pittman-Robertson Act), every sale of a firearm or box of ammunition in the United States helps fund the work of state fish and wildlife agencies through a dedicated excise tax on hunting and shooting equipment.

For fiscal year 2025, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service apportioned more than \$914 million in Pittman-Robertson funds to agencies in all 50 states and the five U.S. territories. Since its inception, the Pittman-Robertson Act has generated more than \$28 billion in funding for wildlife restoration, habitat management, land conservation, and other critical work benefiting wildlife.

State fish and wildlife agencies help support recreational shooting opportunities through the construction and maintenance of public ranges and access projects, as well as state hunter education programs. Firearm ownership and target shooting are often gateways to hunting participation, bringing shooters closer to the wildlife resources they help protect through their funding contributions.

Here are 21 things to know about firearm ownership and recreational

shooting in the United States based on decades of Responsive Management research for the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NSSF, CAHSS, the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Outdoor Stewards of Conservation Foundation, the Hunters' Leadership Forum, and other clients.

**1. Just under half of all Americans live in a household with a firearm.** Responsive Management's latest trend survey for NSSF found that 42% of Americans live in a household with a firearm, while 32% personally own a firearm.<sup>1</sup> These numbers are consistent with the rates from other high-quality surveys conducted by Gallup and the Pew Research Center.

**2. Firearm sales have increased dramatically over the past 20 years.** National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) data maintained by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (a widely used industry proxy for gun sales) show that checks have steadily risen over the past two decades, topping out in 2020 but remaining high in subsequent years. Since 2009 alone, as many as 228 million more firearms have entered U.S. circulation.

**3. More than three quarters of Pittman-Robertson wildlife conservation funding from firearm and ammunition sales is supplied by non-huntingrecreational shooters and firearm owners.** Growth in handgun sales for personal and home

protection purposes has helped drive this trend, not to mention the fact that recreational target and sport shooters typically use more rounds of ammunition than do hunters during their outings.

**4. There is low knowledge of the Pittman-Robertson federal excise tax on firearms and ammunition among non-hunting recreational shooters and firearm owners. However, once they learn about the program, they overwhelmingly support it.** Asked in a recent survey whether they had ever heard of the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program or the Pittman-Robertson Act, only a quarter of non-hunting shooters and firearm owners said that they had. However, after receiving an overview of the program and its purpose, 86% of non-hunting shooters and firearm owners indicated that they support the program.

**5. The overwhelming majority of non-hunting shooters and firearm owners say they are proud to help support wildlife conservation through their purchases of taxable equipment.** Similarly, three quarters of these individuals feel connected to wildlife conservation and ethically obligated to contribute to wildlife conservation.

**6. While firearm ownership is common in the United States, many people who own guns do not regularly use them.** In a given year, up to 45% of firearm owners do not participate in any target or sport shooting activities.

**7. The best ways to generate interest in target shooting among non-shooting firearm owners include offering free firearms training at ranges and reinforcing the knowledge that effective self-defense requires regular practice.** Other important ways include an invitation to the range from an experienced shooter, and the ability for non-shooters to feel more confident about their skills and knowledge levels (ironically, such confidence is only possible through regular practice and training with a firearm).

**8. About three quarters of Americans (76%) approve of legal recreational shooting.** This includes

more than half of Americans who strongly approve of it.

**9. Although Americans' approval of recreational shooting remains high, about a fifth of the public are negative or becoming more negative in their opinion of the activity.** Concern about gun violence influences attitudes toward recreational shooting: about a quarter of U.S. residents say that concern about gun violence affects their opinion of target or sport shooting; additionally, a third of Americans say that mass shootings in the U.S. have negatively affected their opinion of recreational activities that involve the use of firearms.

**10. The term "sport shooting" is sometimes misinterpreted by Americans to mean "sport hunting."** Because of this confusion, "target shooting" may be a more widely understood way to refer to recreational shooting activities.

**11. The large majority of Americans believe that most recreational shooters know how to safely handle firearms and are careful.** By contrast, 16% of the public believe that most recreational shooters do not know how to properly handle firearms.

**12. Americans' participation in target and sport shooting has risen over the past decade and a half.**



Responsive Management's trend surveys for NSSF, conducted since 2009, show a fairly steady increase in the number of recreational shooters in the United States, going from 34.0 million in 2009 to 63.5 million in 2022.<sup>11</sup> (The 2022 number was extrapolated based on U.S. Census data for the population in 2020, while previous iterations of the trend study used 2010 Census data.) Responsive

Management's participation number for 2022 is higher than the number of target shooters estimated by NORC for the 2022 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation: 46.2 million target shooters nationwide. This is likely due to the fact that Responsive Management's definition of target/sport shooting includes "any informal target shooting on your own property," which may account for the larger estimate of participants.

**13. The most popular types of recreational shooting in the U.S. include target shooting with a handgun, target shooting with a rifle, and target shooting at an outdoor range.** These activities have much higher participation rates than more specialized activities like trap shooting, skeet shooting, and sporting clays.

**15. The demographic characteristics of recreational shooters are changing.** Traditionally, rural white males have owned and used firearms at the highest rates. In recent years, however, the groups taking up recreational shooting for the first time at the highest rates include Black residents, Democrats, Hispanic/Latino residents, younger people, females, and residents of large cities or urban areas.

**16. The longer it takes recreational shooters to travel to a range, the more likely they are to stop participating altogether.** Responsive Management research examining the effect of travel times on recreational





shooting participation indicates that more distant access is correlated with a higher drop-out rate. Specifically, the mean travel time of actively participating target shooters was 29 minutes, while the mean travel time of intermittent target shooters was 34 minutes. Finally, the mean travel time for ex-target shooters, meaning those who had left the activity altogether, was 43 minutes, when they had traveled to go shooting. This underscores the importance of accessible ranges and other places to go shooting.

*From new Responsive Management research on Black Americans' recreational shooting participation conducted in partnership with NSSF and the National African American Gun Association:*

**17. As with firearm owners in general, not every Black firearm owner goes shooting.** Two thirds of Black firearm owners have been shooting in the past three years, compared to almost a fifth who have never done any formal target or sport shooting. In other words, while these individuals may have fired a gun at some point, they have not participated in what they would consider an actual target or sport shooting activity.<sup>16</sup>

**18. Black firearm owners' top constraints to sport shooting are access-related.** Not having a shooting range nearby and not having a place to go sport shooting are the most important major constraints to shooting participation among Black firearm owners.

*From recent Responsive Management research on women's R3 issues conducted in partnership with Pheasants Forever:*

**19. Among female recreational shooters, the top motivation for participating is to become more comfortable with firearms.** Secondly, female target and sport shooters most often participate for the sport or recreation.

**20. The top ways to encourage more sport shooting participation among females include an invitation from a friend and emphasis on programs that are conducted in a safe**



**and controlled manner.** Other important encouragements include better access to shooting areas or ranges and the ability for programs and instructors to help women feel comfortable and welcome while shooting.

*From recent Responsive Management research on R3 strategies for U.S. military personnel conducted in partnership with the Sportsmen's Alliance Foundation:*

**21. Members of the armed forces are an important market for target and sport shooting R3 outreach, as many are already trained in the use of firearms.** Among active-duty military personnel who have never gone sport shooting, the groups most interested in going are Marines and

National Guard members (as opposed to Army, Navy, Air Force, or Coast Guard personnel).

Speaking about the importance of sport shooting opportunities (along with hunting and fishing opportunities) as a form of recreation and relaxation, Major General Lonnie G. Hibbard, Senior Mission Commander of Fort Eustis as part of Joint Base Langley Eustis, offered the following: "I'm advocating on post and across all military installations for access and opportunities for soldiers and families to hunt, shoot, and fish as a method of team building and resiliency to combat suicides, assaults, and other behavior, health, and marriage/family challenges."



## Wisconsin DNR - Office Of Applied Science

# Wisconsin Black Bear Litter And Diet Survey

This project aims to estimate key reproductive parameters in each bear management zone and support decision-making for bear management.

### TIMELINE

- » Launch: July 2021
- » Completion: June 2028

### DNR PARTNER BUREAU

- » Wildlife Management

### FUNDING

- » Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration

### COLLABORATORS

- » General Public
- » UW-Madison

The DNR is surveying black bears to improve the input parameters of its population model. The project focuses on black bear reproduction, updating parameters like average litter size, cub survival and litter frequency. Researchers will survey bear dens within each of the bear management zones, working with federal partners and the public to locate the dens.

Research staff will collect biological data from these dens throughout the winter, including examined sex, weight and body measurements. Blood, tooth and hair samples will also be collected and analyzed in the lab. Sows will be fit with GPS tracking collars to monitor survival of the sow and cubs.

Additionally, researchers are investigating a connection between the consumption of human food sources and reproduction since the availability of food could alter the reproductive output in the area.

Updating these reproductive parameters and investigating a connection to human food will each produce crucial information about the black bear populations in each management zone and can inform the management of black bears across the state.

Black bear dens can be reported at:

<https://dnr.wi.gov/tiny/2056>

### SPOKESPERSON:

Jennifer Price Tack, PhD  
DNR Large Carnivore and Elk Research Scientist  
[jennifer.pricetack@wisconsin.gov](mailto:jennifer.pricetack@wisconsin.gov)  
715-499-1097



Photo Credit: Rachel Benedict

### KEY POINTS

- » This project aims to provide reproductive information needed to inform bear management, a priority of the bear management plan.
- » Updated estimates of reproductive parameters will be generated for each bear management zone.
- » This project relies heavily on reported observations of bear dens by the public. We thank these individuals for their assistance reporting bear den locations.

### MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- » Zone-specific reproductive parameters will improve the accuracy of population models.
- » We will learn how food utilization by bears affects reproduction.
- » Food utilization analysis will help us better understand seasonal and yearly variation in food use.





# SCI/OHEC/DNR Recruit New Bowhunters

**T**he future of conservation funding and hunters rights are two motivating factors behind efforts to recruit, retain, and reactivate (R3) license-buying outdoor enthusiasts.

SCI, the Outdoor Heritage Education Center (OHEC) organization, other archery community members, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) are very involved with youth archery programs. Major youth programs in Wisconsin include a strong National Archery in the Schools Program® (NASP) and Scholastic 3-D Archery® program (S3DA). In addition to these two major youth archery programs, these groups support summer camps and events that expose our state's youth to the sport of archery and bowhunting.

SCI Southeast Wisconsin Bowhunters Chapter, Badgerland Chapter, Wisconsin Chapter, Northeastern Wisconsin Chapter, and Lake Superior Chapter promote archery and bowhunting programs that support R3 efforts. The Chicago and Illinois Chapter does similar work in the Land of Lincoln.

The OHEC nonprofit group, like SCI, helps place archery equipment and starts classes in school districts across the Midwest. Second, it helps train instructors who, in turn, teach archery safely to students. Some of those instructors are school teachers and some are camp counselors. Third, it helps Learn to Hunt and other entry level opportunities for new bowhunters. Fourth, it owns and operates the biggest youth outdoor skills field trip events in the country. Their SCI-supported Midwest Outdoor Heritage Education Expos jump-start what R3 professionals nationally call the Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model for recruitment. MOHEE fulfills three essential first steps in the Model: 1) Create Awareness; 2) Generate Interest; and 3) Offer Trial Opportunities through archery and airgun ranges at MOHEE events reaching thousands of

potential new shooting sports enthusiasts. R3 experts applaud MOHEE's added benefits for retaining and reactivating hunters by engaging them as instructors and mentors.

DNR staff professionals have been actively involved in MOHEE from its inception more than a decade ago. The DNR also has its own programs under the leadership of Kraig Richardson that OHEC and SCI chapters support.

## **Scholastic 3-D Archery (S3DA)**

The mission of the Scholastic 3-D Archery program is to foster, educate and guide youth in the areas of 3D, indoor target and outdoor target archery; as well as safe, ethical bowhunting practices. S3DA is active in more than 30 states and growing. The archers are allowed to choose their own equipment, brand and shooting style from compound bows with sights and releases, to bare and recurve bows. S3DA provides a natural progression that helps youth grow from elementary through high school, and it allows them to move straight into shooting at the collegiate level.

## **National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP)**

The National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) promotes instruction in international-style target archery as part of in-school curriculum, to improve educational performance and participation in the shooting sports among students in grades 4-12. Over 300 schools and 800 trained instructors and coaches teach the NASP system in Wisconsin. The equipment used in the program is standardized around the Genesis® bow, and the instructors use standard protocols for teaching archery and running a safe archery range. For more information, contact Kraig. Richardson@wisconsin.gov.

## **Wisconsin State NASP Tournament**

DNR coordinates the statewide archery tournament for the NASP

schools every spring at the Woodside Sports Dome in the Wisconsin Dells.

## **Archery Partnerships**

In addition to school-based programs, the Wisconsin DNR partners with external organizations and shooting ranges to provide archery opportunities for both youth and adults. These public programs can range from half-day basic skills workshops to sleep-away bowhunting camps. See offerings near you on the Wisconsin DNR Events page.

The Wisconsin DNR is proud to support youth archery events and programs by providing equipment and assistance in managing events around the state.





# California Reminders for Wisconsin & Illinois

by Mark LaBarbera

As news coverage filled screens of people here and around the world, some natural resources professionals and media outlets shared lessons that apply not only in California, but also here in Wisconsin, Illinois, and elsewhere.

Wildfires can happen anywhere. No matter where you live, removing brush, trees, and debris from near buildings can reduce fire risk.

California Dept. of Fish & Wildlife experienced an increase in questions from people asking about what they should do with young or injured wild animals they encountered. CDFW professionals told them the same thing that Dept. of Natural Resources experts here tell the public:

Do not provide food or water to wildlife. Feeding wildlife does more harm than good.

Certain wildlife species such as black bears, bobcats, coyotes, deer, and mountain lions can be displaced into urban areas after a fire. Leave them be.

Do not attempt to rehabilitate wild animals if you are not a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. This places humans, pets and wildlife at risk. An untrained person may unintentionally prolong suffering and reduce the chance of the wild animal being able to return to the wild.

Photo by CDFW

Photo by Victorville Daily Press

# Too Many Hunters Still Not Voting

by Christian Ragosta, CSF

SCI members know that it is critically important that sportsmen and women vote if we wish to have pro-sportsmen and women elected officials – or at least those that are willing to learn about and consider the critical role that sportsmen and women have in conservation before casting their votes on conservation-related matters. This is why CSF launched the I Fish. I Hunt. I Vote.™ campaign last fall to encourage early voting by sportsmen and women who may have plans to be hunting or fishing on election day. It is also why CSF has been working with states for the past two decades to make voter registration forms available when sportsmen and women purchase their hunting or fishing licenses (whether in-person or online).

As a real-world example of just how critical the voice of sportsmen and women can be, a newly formed State Senate District in New York in 2012 was decided by a mere 18 votes, and some consider it to be the bellwether for increasing anti-sportsmen sentiment in the state legislature. That following January, legislation like the NY SAFE Act (a sweeping gun control package) was passed. This was not a one-off

occurrence, however. States like New York continue to have closely decided local races and the past gubernatorial race was the closest decided since 1994.

The results of local elections also matter. Local ordinances and regulations from the town, county, or state impact sportsmen and women's access to hunting and angling opportunities, and in some cases, even whether a firearm or archery equipment can be utilized in certain jurisdictions (for any purpose, hunting or otherwise). Voting participation by sportsmen and women is therefore essential, starting from the lowest level of government where many future leaders in higher government come from. Adding millions of pro-sportsmen voices during the election process could help educate and motivate our current and future decisionmakers to work to pass sound pro-sporting, and pro-conservation policies.

The leading voice of conservation in the nation, sportsmen and women, who bring millions of dollars of conservation funding to their respective states from the American System of Conservation Funding, deserve to and should be represented at the polls.

It has become common for residents to receive voter registration applications at other state run departments such as the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). A state's fish and wildlife agency should be given the same opportunity to support voting rights for those who use their services, the sportsmen-voter. Providing access to an individual to fill out a registration while already filling out the same required information at a state-run department should be seamless and user-friendly for the applicant.

Why It Matters: As the election year frenzy has settled down over the holiday season, legislative bodies are swearing in new members and choosing chairs and leaders of committees. Although voting numbers seem to be increasing, a historical trend of hunters not voting exists. Some sources prior to the 2024 election were reporting that there were likely millions of hunters and gun owners who were not registered to vote. Allowing voter registration at the point of sale of hunting and fishing licenses could help.



The logo for Trudell Outdoor Adventures and Taxidermy Studios, featuring a stylized antler design around the text.

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A collage of various taxidermy specimens mounted on a wooden wall. It includes a lizard, a deer head, a ram head, a bear head, a zebra head, a fish, a bird, and a small animal in a cage.



# Terri Roehrig Inducted into Buffalo County Conservationist Hall of Fame

Buffalo County Conservation Alliance (BCCA) inducted Terri Roehrig, Mondovi, into its Hall of Fame in March in recognition of her outstanding contributions to conservation, wildlife advocacy, and outdoor education.

Her name is being added to the display honoring inductees in the Buffalo County courthouse, near Wildlife and Land Conservation offices.

BCCA President Wes Domine presented Roehrig recognition, noting, "Our county and state are very blessed to have Terri Roehrig's volunteer energy, leadership, and professionalism serving our natural resources management interests." He shared a long list of Roehrig's conservation leadership roles spanning 30+ years of volunteer service with BCCA member conservation clubs (Alma Rod and Gun Club, Gilmanton Sportsman's Club, Waumandee Sportsman's Club, Fountain City Rod and Gun Club, Mondovi Conservation Club), plus Trout Unlimited members, Buffalo County Land Conservation and WI DNR personnel.

"I was surprised and honored," said Roehrig, an avid hunter, angler, full-time business professional, and consummate volunteer.

Roehrig has dedicated decades of service to Wisconsin Conservation Congress, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation,

National Wildlife Federation, and numerous local conservation efforts. Her SCI friends note her tireless work in policy, mentorship, outreach, and habitat conservation has made a lasting impact across the state.

Roehrig's Service Leadership in Conservation includes:

- Chairs multiple WCC committees, including Rules & Resolutions, Relevancy (Spring Hearings & Elections), Strategic Planning, and Resolutions Review.
- She is the former chair of the Strategic Planning Committee, Outreach & Public Relations



Terri Roehrig was inducted into the Buffalo County Conservation Alliance Hall of Fame. Alliance officers (l to r) Perry Iberg, Treasurer (Alma Rod and Gun Club) Wes Domine, President (Fountain City Rod and Gun Club), Terri Roehrig, Secretary (Inductee, Mondovi Conservation Club and Alma Rod and Gun Club), Travis Burce, Vice President, (Alma Rod and Gun club and Gilmanton Sportsman's Club) shared this photo with SCI.

### ◆ Wisconsin Conservation Congress:

- Serving on the WCC Executive Committee since 2020.
- She is the WCC District 5 Chair (6 years) and Buffalo County Chair (2 years, Vice Chair for 4 years).

Committee and Ad Hoc Spring Hearings Resolutions Committee.

- She has served as Secretary of the CDAC Oversight Committee for a number of years.
- She served as a delegate member of the Youth Conservation Committee, Deer & Elk committee, and Bear committee.
- Roehrig is actively mentoring Youth Conservation Congress Delegates from Eau Claire and Trempealeau Counties.
- She was appointed to represent the WCC for the 2020 deer stakeholder committee.
- She received the 2021 WCC "Heavy Lifter" Delegate of the Year Award.
- She earned the WCC 2012 Conservation Educator of the Year Award.
- She is a former delegate for District 8 Calumet County from 2012-2015 and served as District Leadership Councilor for District 8 in 2014-2015.

### ◆ Wisconsin Wildlife Federation (WWF):

- Roehrig is the First Vice President (2024-Present) and served as the Second Vice President from 2023-2024 and as Secretary from 2020-2023.
- She Chairs Outreach & Communications Committee and serves on the Conservation Leadership Corp (CLC) Committee.
- She led the WWF through their Strategic Planning process for 2025-2030.
- Terri also served as a National Wildlife Federation Board Member (2021-2023), representing Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan on national conservation efforts.

### ◆ Commitment to Local Conservation Closer to Home

- She is the chair of the Buffalo County Deer Advisory Council (CDAC) and previously served as Alternate Chair and Secretary.
- She is the Treasurer and Board Member of the Mondovi Conservation Club (since 2018).
- Roehrig has been a Hunter Safety Instructor for over 20 years, educating new generations of ethical hunters. She is currently the lead Hunter Education Instructor at Mondovi Conservation Club. She has conducted hunter

education classes for Mondovi Conservation Club, Alma Rod and Gun Club, Arcadia Sports Club, Oxbow Sportsman's Club, St. Anna Sportsman's Club, Outdoors Sportsman's Club and Taking Wing Stewardship.

- She is a life member of Alma Rod & Gun Club and remains active with St. Anna Sportsman's Club (co-founded by her grandfather).
- She continues as Secretary for Buffalo County Conservation Alliance since 2016.
- She is a current Board of Director and foster home for Wisconsin German Shorthaired Pointer Rescue (WGPSR) and previously served as the President for the organization 2014-2019.
- She is also a supporting member WI Women in Conservation

### Advocacy & Conservation Efforts

- Terri has participated several times as an interview panelist for interviews for key positions within the WI DNR including the State Deer Biologist and local wildlife biologists.
- She has organized and mentored "Learn to Hunt" turkey and pheasant programs.

- She promotes prairie remnant preservation, wildlife habitat restoration, and pollinator conservation on her farm in Buffalo County.
- She advocates for trout stream restoration, public land preservation, and science-based conservation policies.
- She has served on the Buffalo County Land & Water Planning Committee.

For many mentioned groups, Terri serves as a communications and outreach administrator. She attends countless meetings and writes letters requesting political support for public land preservation and science-based conservation policies. Terri regularly testifies before WI DNR, Natural Resources Board, and county boards on conservation issues.

Terri's commitment to conservation is unmatched. She is a leader, educator, and advocate who has dedicated her life to protecting Wisconsin's natural resources.

Her induction into the Buffalo County Conservationist Hall of Fame is a testament to her lifelong passion for conservation, dedication to future generations, and unwavering commitment to protecting Wisconsin's outdoor heritage.



Roehrig was featured on Dan Small's "Deer Hunt Wisconsin" annual TV special hosted by some SCI chapters.

## IWLA Learn to Hunt



Mentor Jim Demski with Kaylee and Kyle Mindiola were part of the successful Izaak Walton League Bill Cook Chapter Learn to Hunt at Standing Rocks Park in Portage County.



Kyrah Baldemor, 10, shot this doe.



The first deer Ramsey Johnson ever shot was this buck



# Primos Historic Firearm Auction to Help Groups Share Truth About Conservation



Washington, D.C. – Five conservation organizations that SCI members embrace are partnering with renowned conservationist and outdoorsman Will Primos to launch the Truth About Conservation public



Long-time SCI friend Ryan Bronson, RMEF, enjoyed a rare opportunity with a Purdey.

awareness campaign and firearm auction that will pull back the curtain on the critical need for wildlife habitat management and raise necessary funding for conservation.

The campaign will offer a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to give back to conservation through a historic firearm auction that will feature Primos' iconic collection of Purdey hammer shotguns, a compilation of rare and one-of-a-kind guns, including .410, 28, 20, 16, and 12 gauges. This collection, unlike any other, will be auctioned online in December 2025, with proceeds benefiting Primos' beloved organizations, including the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, the National Wild Turkey Federation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever. SCI has a history of supporting CSF and partnering with these groups also dedicated to wildlife conservation.

Reflecting on the roots of his inspiration for the auction, Primos shared, "It dawned on me one day how important the habitat is to everything we value in the outdoors. I wanted to give back in a way that was special, something that would make a lasting impact. That's

when I realized the true purpose of this collection – it's about doing great work for conservation."

"This is a unique collaboration born from like-minded hunters and anglers who are passionate about conservation," said Jeff Crane, President & CEO of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation. "We are appreciative of Will's personal dedication to spreading awareness about our nation's natural resources through the donation of his exclusive firearm collection and we look forward to carrying his conservation legacy forward."

"Ducks Unlimited has always been about bringing together passionate conservationists, and our relationship with Will Primos is a perfect example of that. Will's lifelong dedication to the outdoors, ethical hunting, and habitat conservation aligns perfectly with our mission. His influence has helped inspire generations of sportsmen and women to not only enjoy the great outdoors but also to take an active role in protecting it. It is an honor to be included in this unique project. Together, we're ensuring that wetlands, waterfowl, and wildlife have a future for generations to come," said Adam Putnam, CEO of Ducks Unlimited.

"It is no secret that Will is a dedicated turkey hunter and a staunch supporter of wildlife conservation," said Jason Burckhalter, Co-CEO (Marketing & Fundraising) for National Wild Turkey Federation. "We are honored to be included in the groups that he has chosen as beneficiaries from the auction of these special and extremely rare firearms that are from his personal collection. We have no doubt that through our work with numerous state and federal partners, we will maximize the impact



A certified appraiser inspected the iconic guns.

of this donation for the betterment of wild turkey and our cherished hunting traditions."

"Will's dedication to hunting and conservation is evident. He is an example of it day in and day out and

not just by his support of RMEF that spans more than three and a half decades. He does so with his actions. We're grateful for this concerted effort to benefit like-minded conservation groups that care and do so much for



Will Primos used his rare Purdey while grouse hunting.



Close-up photos show details of the exquisite engraving.

elk and many other wildlife species," said Kyle Weaver, President and CEO of Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

"It's an honor for Will Primos to include Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever in this incredibly generous gift. Likewise, we're thrilled to be teaming up with our partners in conservation at CSF, DU, NWTF, and RMEF to stretch Will's contribution as far as possible for our shared habitat missions. From bobwhites to bluebills and bugling elk to gobbling turkeys, the funds generated by these Purdey shotguns are going to leave a lasting impact on the landscape for the wildlife we all cherish," said Bob St. Pierre, Chief Marketing & Communications Officer for Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever.

The campaign unites these influential conservation groups who will work together to create a conservation conversation and evolve the education so that the sportsmen's community is better equipped to 'Speak the Language' by:

Fostering a deeper understanding of the relationship between policy, science-based habitat, and wildlife management;

Spreading awareness about the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, a system unrivaled globally;

Underscoring the need for people to recognize that the public at large, regardless of whether or not they hunt or fish, benefit immensely from the contributions of hunters and anglers through abundant wildlife, healthy landscapes, and access to all of these resources; and

"This is the truth," Primos concluded. "This is the truth about conservation."

The guns will travel the country and officially be auctioned off December 5 – 7, 2025 by Rock Island Auction. For more information about the campaign and the auction, visit [www.thetruthaboutconservation.com](http://www.thetruthaboutconservation.com).



# Illinois Helps Keep Carp Out of Great Lakes

by Joel Brammeier,  
President & CEO, AGL

SCI members who love to fish and care about conservation are watching invasive carp headed toward the Great Lakes, advancing up the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers where the carp have already wreaked havoc. The Brandon Road project – a series of underwater deterrents and barriers at an existing lock in Illinois – is our best chance to stop them before they threaten the region’s \$5.1 billion fishing and \$16 billion recreational boating industries.

To date, the U.S. Congress has appropriated \$274 million, and the States of Illinois and Michigan have provided \$114 million and signed a project partnership agreement detailing their respective obligations to move the project forward. Initial contracts have been awarded for the first phase of construction. Work is underway.

Any delay or halt of construction of this project threatens the economy and environment of the Great Lakes and opens the door to yet another invasive species to do irreversible damage to

the Great Lakes and to the people who call it home.

This is yet another example of the ways federal funding is critical to the Great Lakes. While this project site is located in Illinois, it will benefit every Great Lakes state. Invasive carp don't stop at state lines. We're fortunate that the project, which has been guided by more than a decade of advocacy, enjoys broad support across the region and in Congress from members of both parties.

*Asian Carp on the Fox River in Illinois during electrofishing.*  
Credit: Photo by Ryan Hagerty, USFWS



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