

HUNTERS

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF SCI
CHAPTERS IN WISCONSIN AND ILLINOIS
SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2026

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- Members' Adventures
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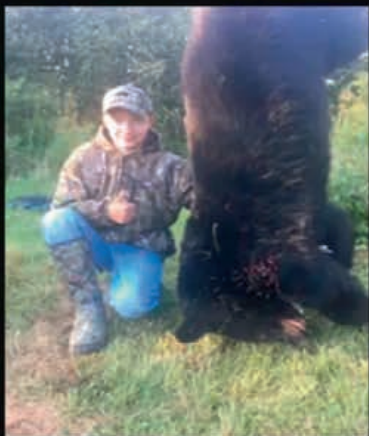
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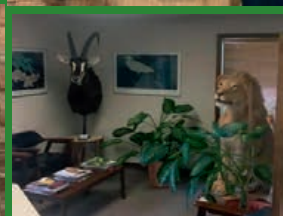
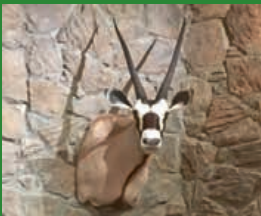
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Editor/Publishers: Mark & Coni LaBarbera

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HUNTERS

Official Magazine of SCI Chapters in Wisconsin and Illinois
September/October 2026

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SCI Region 16 Representative

Charmaine Wargolet

charmainew@ameritech.net

Region 16 Report

by Charmaine Wargolet,
Regional Representative

Well folks, when you get this, it will be two months before the November elections, and my message to you is simple. Get out and



I know that as members of SCI, you are activists at heart and probably vote in every election. But I am willing to bet that a lot of your friends and family might not. Voting is a privilege and should be treated as such, but it is sometimes hard work which is what I am asking you all to do! Get yourself completely versed in the issues and talk to all those family and friends who are not and ask them to get to the polls.

I also know that there are folks who believe that their one vote does not count for much, but when you consider that there could be 100, 5,000, or 10,000 people who feel the same way. This is how elections are won or lost. I know this because I was one of those people when I was younger. But I would



like to tell you a short story that completely changed my thinking.

It has been a number of years since my dear friend, Christine Thomas (founder of the Becoming an Outdoors Woman program) called and told me that a proposal was before a committee in our Wisconsin state legislature to have the DNR support the salary of the BOW Director. It had come to the committee, and the vote had ended in a tie so it was tabled to the next meeting. Christine called to let me know that one of the committee members represented my district in New Berlin. So, I called and told his staff person who I was and that my organization was very much in support of this proposal. She said that she would relay this to the Congressman. I then asked if she needed all of our other members in the district to call in, and her voice went up an octave as she said, "No, no, that's ok."

As you can guess, at the next meeting my Congressman voted aye, and it went to the legislature and passed. It took ONE person to take the time to call. That was the day I realized that one person really could make a difference.

In talking with my good friend Dan Trawicki, our state lobbyist, he told me that if just 30% of the sportsmen and women in our state would get out and vote, we would never lose an election. And this year is a huge one! We can either be run by a socialist or by someone who loves Wisconsin and knows the issues that our state faces.

PLEASE, do your research and get people to the polls! I know you love our great state as much as I do.

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

SE WI Bowhunters Chapter Report

by Dan Trawicki, President

After such a great March banquet, we began planning our fall wild game dinner. Time flew by and the Wednesday August 5th event was another sellout.

As I'm sure most of you are aware, the Southeast Wisconsin Bowhunters Chapter of SCI was formed over 25 years ago with the specific plan of being a force in the political world by supporting elected officials that support us. We have given tens of thousands of dollars through the years in that endeavor. This year in conjunction with the Northeast Chapter we will be giving our largest donation to date. In fact, it may be the

single largest donation given to any political candidate by a sporting organization.

On August 5th at our wild game dinner, we gave to candidate for Governor Tom Tiffany a check for \$65,000! Some of that will be in the form of direct compare/contrast advertising, and the bulk will be to fund his overall campaign. I realize that in a Governor's race, this is not a huge amount of money. But for SCI to raise this kind of money is incredible.

Tom Tiffany is the real deal. As a member of the assembly and senate here in Wisconsin, Tom has always fought for our hunting and fishing rights. When I



would meet him or his staff at the capital, he had a full mount black bear in his office! Now as a member of congress, he is fighting to get wolves delisted, which is something desperately needed.

As we always say, "SCI first for hunters" has never been a more appropriate quote.

Conservation Funding Coalition Welcomes SCI Chapters & Others

by Mark LaBarbera

Natural resources and shooting sports leaders officially launched the Wisconsin Conservation Funding Coalition at its August 24, 2026, summit meeting in Madison with a call for reliable, long-term public funding and an invitation to other groups, land-owners, counties, townships, outdoor recreationists and businesses. Participants rallied around and fine-tuned a vision statement similar to this one that was taking shape as this issue of SCI HUNTERS went on press:

"Healthy lands, waters, wildlife, and outdoor traditions benefit the people and enrich economies of local communities throughout Wisconsin. More than 95% of residents use state parks or outdoor spaces. About 60% participate in the outdoor recreation economy. Once a national leader in conservation, Wisconsin now ranks 49th in natural resources funding, staffing, and investment. It's time to 'Reinvest Naturally' in Wisconsin natural resources and access for all people. We call for reliable, long-term public funding that protects clean air and water, sustains wildlife and habitat, supports state, county, and federal lands entrusted to the public, with

access for all. Conservation benefits all citizens and guests. Together, we should all contribute to funding it."

Groups as diverse as Wisc. Trappers Association, Federation of Great Lakes Sport Fishing Clubs, Izaak Walton League, Wisc. Waterfowl Association, Outdoor Heritage Education Center, Wisc. Conservation Hall of Fame,

Friends of Wisc. State Parks, Wisc. Wetlands Association, Wisconsin's Green Fire, and The Wildlife Society responded early to an invitation from the Wisc. Wildlife Federation.

"It's very early and, with vacation and other priorities, many others may just be seeing their invitation to be among the

Continued on page 38



Jordy Zeller, 3, caught his first crappie "all by myself" with Grandma Coni, thanks to guide Art Barlow, Rhinelander, who helps recruit new anglers.

Photo by Mark LaBarbera

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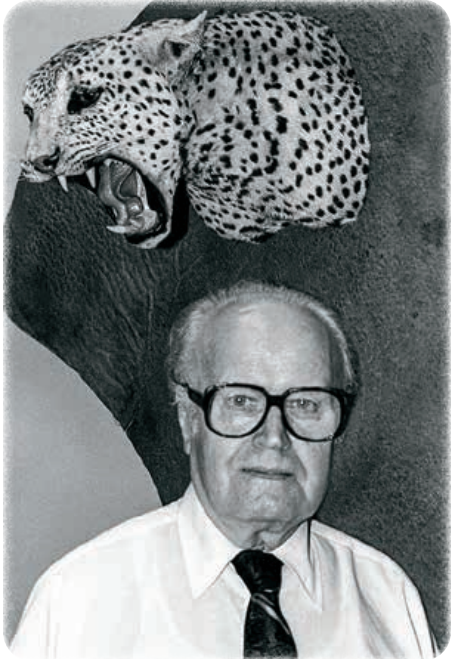
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Illinois & Chicago Chapter Report

by Dale Rimkus, President

Our country is celebrating its 250th anniversary this year, revisiting the historic events that led to the creation of the greatest country ever to exist. The Illinois & Chicago Chapter of SCI is only 54 years old, but let's take a look at how it came to be.



Roman Hupalowski

In January of 1972, a man from Chicago named Roman Hupalowski traveled to Los Angeles. Roman was a well-known hunting booking agent based in the Chicago area with an extensive hunting résumé of his own. He was the founder of Safari Outfitters, Inc., the very first international hunting consultancy company in the world, founded in 1952. That company is still in operation 74 years later in 41 countries on 6 continents. On Roman's trip to L.A. that winter, he met with C.J. McElroy and attended a meeting of local California hunters. McElroy was an avid international hunter and the owner of a roofing and contracting company in Inglewood, California. He had organized a group of hunters into a Los Angeles hunting club. At the meeting, Hupalowski suggested combining the groups of hunters from L.A. and Chicago. Upon returning to Chicago, Roman utilized his own agency's client mailing list to bring together a large group of Midwestern hunters in



Hyland Erickson

downtown Chicago at Chef Alberto's restaurant, a hunter-friendly establishment that served wild game and was decorated with many game mounts of its proprietor. McElroy flew from L.A. to attend the meeting and talk with the Illinois hunters. At the conclusion of the meeting these sportsmen decided to unite under a single organization.

McElroy returned from the meeting in Chicago and in March 1972, he filed paperwork to officially establish the organization under the name of Safari Club International to reflect this multi-city alliance. Because the two chapters merged to create the international body, the Illinois & Chicago Chapter of SCI is recognized as one of the two original founding pillars of the entire global network.

The next month, April 1972, the newly formed Chicago Chapter of SCI held a meeting and appointed Hyland Erickson as the very first Chapter President. Erickson was instrumental in expanding the club nationally, traveling and working to form chapters across the country including SCI Houston, SCI Dallas, SCI Denver, SCI Michigan, SCI Pittsburgh and many others. Because of his crucial involvement in the early growth of SCI, he served as SCI's second international President from 1974 to 1976. Erickson held SCI Life Member #2, directly following McElroy.

The significance of these SCI pioneers from Illinois cannot be understated and should never be

forgotten. Roman Hupalowski was the second ever recipient of SCI's International Hunting Award (C.J. McElroy was the first). He was the fifth member of the SCI Hall of Fame, inducted after Roy Weatherby, William Ruger, Fred Bear and the Jonas Family. His company dominated the international hunting world for many years. This early pioneer opened sport hunting in many African and Asian nations, and today hunters are still reaping the benefits of his early work. During his tenure as SCI President, Hyland Erickson took on CBS News and broadcast reporter Dan Rather for what he saw as "smear tactics used to attack hunters" in the "Guns of Autumn" fake news "documentary" in 1975 and forced the network to air "Echoes of the Guns of Autumn." This second program established and featured SCI as the leader in protecting the hunter/conservationist.

Another of our "founding fathers" was Keith Bates, the first Vice-President of the Chicago Chapter, who was at that prestigious gathering in Chicago when SCI was formed. Two years later he became the driving force in making SCI's monthly publication, Safari Magazine, an award-winning publication. After launching the success of the magazine, Keith was elected Chapter President in 1977.

Just as it is important to honor the founding fathers of our nation, we hunters should remember and honor those who came before us and created this outstanding organization, Safari Club International and the Illinois & Chicago Chapter.



Keith Bates

Wisconsin Chapter Report

by Monte Whitaker, President

Hi, first and foremost, I would like to thank Dean LePoidevin for his countless hours of work and dedication over the past few years. He has served the Wisconsin chapter well and has left some big shoes to fill. I have learned a lot from him the last two years and hope to continue to guide the chapter towards great things.

Our sporting clays event was July 11th at Wern Valley, and if you did not make it, you missed a great day of shooting, camaraderie, great food by Roberts' Specialty Meats, and fun! Thanks to Dean LePoidevin for your hard work and putting on such a great event.



Charmaine Wargolet won Women's Top Gun.

Our own Charmaine Wargolet took home the Gold for the women's division, Walker Bachmann took 1st place for the



Walker Bachmann was Youth Top Gun again!

second year in a row for the youth division, and Mike Wettstein took 1st place in the Men's competition.

I brought someone new to the shooting sports for this event. It was fun watching the progression from the first station in showing her how to load to the following stations as she learned how to handle and cycle the



Mike Wettstein won Men's Top Gun.

gun. Yes, she was using a pump. There was one station she managed to get a piece of all four birds!

I know a few of our chapters have a sporting clays event, and I challenge all of you to bring one new person to the event like this. If your chapter does not have one, support another chapter or just hit the range with a newcomer. You could be opening their eyes to a new way of life!

We have already started planning and preparations for our 50th Grand Banquet, and let me tell you, it will be one you will not want to miss. With opportunities to take home one of 50+ guns that weekend, some just for showing up. New games and some truly great items are on the auction that will be limited to in-room sales only!



Badgerland Chapter Report

by Randy Mayes, President

When I was a kid, like so many I would literally count the days until Christmas. Today, I have the same excitement in counting the days until hunting season starts and/or my next hunting trip! I know, you can hunt somewhere in the world pretty much any day of the year if you want. I've had the opportunity to hunt many of those far-off places and wouldn't trade those experiences for anything.

There is, however, some special thing, to me anyhow, about "opening days" on your home turf. Be it archery deer, ducks, grouse or gun deer season. These are the events I am "counting the days" for. It's been that way for me for a very, very long time.

In my business, one of my "perks" is I get to "talk hunting" as part of my job. I enjoy sharing my excitement for hunting as well as hearing about other hunter's adventures, be it a local deer hunt or a trip to some remote, far off hunting destination. Though I have been on many

trips and hope to experience many more adventures, there are so many that for various reasons I have to experience vicariously through others. I have a couple of great opportunities to offer you for just that!

Our September membership meeting at The Maple Tree Supper Club in McFarland will feature Brandon Thome-Neitzel giving a presentation on two great hunts he had last fall. One is a rocky mountain bighorn sheep in Alberta and the other a moose hunt in Alaska. Brandon got two absolutely AWESOME trophies from these two hunts. Whether you think you may experience one of these hunts at some point or not, come hear Brandon share pictures and stories from these TWO "once in a lifetime" opportunities! NOTE: There will be a very limited number of tickets available for this meeting so don't wait until the last minute to make your reservations.

The other opportunity is at our October membership meeting. One



unique thing about the October meeting is that we are trying to accommodate some of our "northern" members. This meeting will be at the Sky Club in the Stevens Point area. Joe Koback and Erik Mikkelsen, both Badgerland board members will be presenting on their very successful spring bear hunt in Saskatchewan.

You can find all of the details for these two meetings at www.scibadgerland.com. I wish you a safe, enjoyable hunting season wherever that may be!

Northeast Wisconsin Chapter Report

by Kathryn Thede, President

Last year while attending the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association Expo in Oshkosh, we found ourselves chatting with a guy from Western Wisconsin that does decoyed pigeon hunts. It intrigued my husband and reminded him of climbing silos in his youth hunting pigeons. It sounded like a fun time and a cheap little hunt.

We talked to some SCI members at different member meetings and found a few guys who were up for an adventure. We met up to shoot a round of clay pigeons and at the end of July, my husband and I met up with Ashraf and Michael in Western Wisconsin. The guys hunted two mornings and one afternoon. During the off times we met for breakfast, tried some wine, had dinners together, and some great conversations around bonfires. It was really a good time and just an opportunity to get to know fellow SCI members better, something that isn't always feasible during the time restraints of meetings. We had an amazing time and there has been some talk of going again next year.

Now fast forward to the greatest time of year which is upon us. The air is getting crisp, leaves are beginning to change color, days are getting shorter, and our wardrobes are containing more and more camo, neutral colors, and blaze orange is starting to sneak in. The Wisconsin election is also quickly approaching and not to sound like a broken record BUT here is your friendly reminder to research, vote, and encourage others to do the same. Each election is important and this one is no different. The direction of which our state is headed and the importance of the stance the governor-elect views hunting, shooting sports, and gun ownership can all directly impact not only our daily lives but could greatly impact the rights future generations will be able to enjoy.

I pray that each of you are able to create amazing memories with family and friends during this hunting season, that you make your mark at harvest time, and that you feel bold enough to share your love of hunting, experiences, and pictures with those around you. Please feel free to share those hunting stories

and pictures with me; I am always excited to share a part of the hunting journeys and hearing the stories help put me in the front row!

Keep your eyes on the mailbox for those yellow flyers, we have some pretty awesome presentations lined up. Check out our website www.newisci.org and follow us on Facebook Northeast Wisconsin Chapter SCI for the latest up to date information on our chapter. As always, feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns. I will help in any way I can. Happy Hunting!



Wildlife AI Re-Writes the Wild

by Conservation Frontlines

A video on social media shows a leopard enter a backyard where a child is playing, and a house cat bravely confronts the leopard, scaring it away. The clip has earned over a million likes and more than 15,000 shares.

In another viral post, deer bounce on a trampoline. One more shows three raccoons floating peacefully down a river on the backs of crocodiles. These clips looked so real that thousands of viewers believed it actually happened. But it was made with artificial intelligence. Around the world, these fabricated wildlife videos are flooding social media, spreading faster than real conservation news ever could – and experts warn the consequences for wildlife awareness could be severe.

As these tools improve, the line between genuine field footage and digital fantasy keeps getting thinner, leaving viewers unsure of what's real and what's machine-made.

AI isn't just remixing wildlife videos; it's rewriting how the public understands nature. When millions of people watch...they're absorbing false ideas about how wildlife behaves, how common certain species are, and what "normal" looks like in the natural world.

That distortion hits the conservation world right where it hurts: public support. If people think predators are friendly houseguests or rare animals are everywhere, they're far less likely to grasp real threats like shrinking habitat, collapsing populations, and the hard truth of human-wildlife conflict. It also fuels dangerous trends like kids

wanting exotic pets, adults dismissing field science, and policymakers undervaluing habitat protection because the public thinks wildlife is doing just fine.

AI fakes aren't harmless entertainment. They chip away at the public's ability to recognize real animals, real behavior, and real risk – eroding the foundation conservation depends on.

Key Takeaway

Wildlife doesn't need more fantasy. It needs a public that understands what's actually happening on the ground. Every fake clip that goes viral makes that harder. The path forward is simple: tell real stories, amplify real science, and teach people how to spot manufactured wildlife from the truth of the field. Conservation succeeds when people see the wild for what it is – not what an algorithm dreams up.



Legislative Report

by Dan Trawicki, Lobbyist

Hunters are not voting! And that needs to change!

I don't know how many times I have spread the alarm of apathy and lack of voting among hunters. When I first heard about this, I have to admit I was in shock. It seemed everyone I knew voted. Well, as it turns out more and more hunters and sportsmen in general are just too lazy or uninformed. We have shown time after time that the outdoors community could swing virtually every election if they voted!

Just look at our own state here in Wisconsin. Do you honestly think we will ever get a sandhill crane hunt in this state with the current form of government? Answer: absolutely not! Do you think the power the DNR currently has will be reeled in? Are you sick of low bag limits on fish, out of control spending, spending and wasting money on projects that have no relevant purpose for our sporting committee? Then get off your butts and vote!

We have a wolf study committee that refuses to recognize the tribal factor in setting population goals. Essentially 50% of the harvest goal is assigned to the tribes in Wisconsin. I have no problem with that. Much of the wolf habitat is on tribal territory. They are definitely entitled to a fair share of the wolf harvest. Here is the problem. The tribes harvest very few if any wolves allocated to them. Again, that is their prerogative, I have no problem with that. My problem comes from the fact that we do not factor in the lack of tribal harvest when setting goals. We used to factor it in. It only makes sense when you are trying to set a harvest goal, and you know that almost 50% of the harvest will not be utilized, you should raise the harvest goal! Nope, not here with this administration. When I have questioned that, it was explained how the lack of tribal harvest was factored in years ago but not now. Why is that? The answer I get is that it is a political decision not a wildlife management decision. Wolves are just one of the many problems we have in wildlife management.

Bottom line is this, if we don't change the mentality of hunters and fishermen, we will continue to regress in our constitutional right to hunt and fish here in

Wisconsin. Safari Club, among other groups, is trying to do something about it. On August 5th at the SE Wisconsin Bow chapter of SCI we presented Tom Tiffany a check for \$65,000 to help support his campaign. We believe in Tom; we have worked with him on a state level and on the national level in his current position. We realize in a Governor's race, every dollar is important. I believe this is the single biggest contribution any Wisconsin sporting group has given to a political candidate. I can tell you this, we drained the coffers. We are putting all our chips in, betting that Tom Tiffany will support us like he always has. The best way to predict future performance is by looking at past work production.



Remember, if you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem. If you don't vote, then don't complain if you had your chance to be part of the solution but opted out.

WCC Welcomes SCI Members' Input

MADISON – The Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC) invites SCI members and others to submit proposed resolutions for the 2027 Spring Hearings.

WCC is an independent organization of residents, including SCI members like Lafayette County Delegate Mark LaBarbera and SCI's Kevyn Quamme, Green Lake County, that advises the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on how to responsibly manage Wisconsin's natural resources.

Submit proposed resolutions online starting on Saturday, Aug. 1, 2026. Resolutions must meet the following criteria:

1. Be of statewide impact;
2. Be practical, achievable and reasonable; and
3. Be within the mission and vision of the WCC.

SCI members can reach out to the resolution review committee or their WCC County Chair for guidance in drafting a resolution. Contact information and additional tips are on the DNR's Spring Hearings webpage.

Resolutions will be accepted until midnight Feb. 8, 2027. Then resolutions will be reviewed to ensure they meet the criteria. Online input about each resolution starts 6 p.m. April 12 and closes midnight April 14.

For more info contact Paul Reith, WCC Chair, at 608-616-0808.



County delegates vote at the WCC annual convention following the spring hearings.

Elizabeth Ward Named Female Scholar-Athlete of the Year

by Mark LaBarbera

Elizabeth Ward, 19, daughter of Susan and Kevin Ward of Benton won the 2026 Female Scholar-Athlete of the Year Award from Northeastern Iowa Community College. She is working towards a healthcare career as an LPN and RN.

She is an NICC clay target shooter who began competing on the popular Benton School trap team with help from Stan Bonjour of Leadmine and Eric and Marion Lovell of Benton. She continues to practice at the Izaak Walton League SE WI Chapter's range and helps younger students improve their skills and enjoyment.

Her advice to young men and women competing in this growing sport?

Ward says, "Keep your head down and don't give up, even when you have not so good days. You just gotta push through it. And remember to have fun."



Stan Bonjour, right, joins Kevin Ward and daughter Elizabeth Ward with her recent NICC award.

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Illinois & Chicago Chapter Supports Diamond Indoor Trap Range Foundation Vegas Night

by Annette Jones, Secretary

The Illinois & Chicago Chapter proudly contributed a generous sponsorship to the Diamond Indoor Trap Range (DITR) Foundation's Vegas Night Fundraiser on Saturday, May 30, 2026.

The DITR Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, supports youth shooting teams committed to building discipline, teamwork, responsibility, sportsmanship, and preparing young athletes for collegiate-level competition and scholarship opportunities. DITR is located at

2155 E. Division Street, in Diamond, Illinois.

These athletes compete on the Clay Terminators and share a deep passion for the outdoors, spending hunting seasons together and helping preserve a longstanding way of life. Through its programs, DITR provides meaningful opportunities for young sportsmen and women to grow both on and off the range.

The Vegas Night Fundraiser, held at the CD&ME venue in Frankfort, Illinois, featured dinner, live music by

Bandolier, raffles and gaming. The event offered multiple sponsorship levels, and the Illinois & Chicago Chapter was proud to support by attending the event and contributing to the foundation's mission.



SCI Supports FEES Act To Reform EAJA Abuse

SCI applauded Representatives Tom Tiffany (R-WI) and Harriet Hageman (R-WY) for introducing the Fix Our Forests and End Excessive Spending (FEES) Act, legislation aimed at restoring the Equal Access to Justice Act (EAJA) to its original purpose. Key points:

- EAJA was originally designed to help small businesses and individuals challenge government overreach.
- From 2019–2024, approximately \$24.8 million in EAJA awards were issued by the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture.
- Roughly 76% of those funds went to a small number of environmental organizations and their attorneys.
- SCI supports reforms that prevent abuse of taxpayer-funded litigation and ensure conservation dollars are directed toward wildlife and habitat management rather than lawsuits.
- During SCI's Annual Congressional Fly-In, members advocated for EAJA reform in more than 150 congressional meetings.

State Mgmt. of Grizzly Bears

SCI also welcomed a new U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service rule giving Western

states greater flexibility to manage recovered and expanding grizzly bear populations under Section 4(d) of the Endangered Species Act. Key points:

- Grizzly bear populations in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming have met and, in many areas, exceeded recovery goals.
- Expanding populations have increased conflicts involving:
 - ◊ Livestock depredation;
 - ◊ Property damage;
 - ◊ Public safety concerns; and
 - ◊ Residential-area encounters.
- The new rule provides states with additional management tools while maintaining conservation protections.
 - ◊ SCI views the rule as an important step toward recognizing successful recovery efforts and ultimately returning full management authority to the states through delisting.

SCI Defends Hunters' Interests

SCI has filed a motion to intervene in a landmark firearms case before the Supreme Court of Canada involving the country's prohibition and confiscation of

certain firearms commonly used for lawful hunting. Key points:

- If granted intervention status, SCI will be the only hunting organization directly representing hunters before Canada's highest court.
- SCI's filing highlights the impacts of firearm restrictions on:
 - ◊ Canadian hunters;
 - ◊ International hunters traveling to Canada;
 - ◊ Canada's hunting economy; and
 - ◊ Rural hunting traditions and heritage.
- Thousands of SCI members either reside in Canada or travel there to hunt.
- SCI is working to ensure courts understand the conservation, economic, and practical implications of policies affecting lawful firearm ownership and hunting opportunities.

Together, these efforts reflect SCI's continued commitment to advancing science-based wildlife management, protecting hunters' rights, and ensuring sportsmen have a strong voice in legislative and legal decisions that affect our hunting heritage.

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SCI Illinois-Chicago Chapter Wildlife Trailer

by Annette Jones, Secretary

The SCI Illinois-Chicago Chapter's Wildlife Trailer serves as a mobile educational exhibit, helping the public learn about wildlife conservation and the vital role hunting plays in sustaining it. The trailer was created in 2007 and for almost 10 years the trailer has introduced communities to our chapter and to Safari Club International. Inside, visitors can view an impressive collection of wildlife

mounts representing species from North America, South America, Europe, and Africa.

When the trailer arrives at an event, many of the larger mounts are positioned outside for display. These full-body mounts include an African lion, grizzly bear, black bear, whitetail deer, mountain lion, wild turkey, and coyote. Additional mounts—such as an Alaskan moose head, a caribou head, game birds, and various skulls—are

secured to the exterior of the trailer. Altogether, the exhibit showcases approximately 50 educational pieces highlighting diverse wildlife species. A TV screen also plays SCI-related videos to further enhance the learning experience.

If you know of an event, school, or organization that would benefit from hosting the Wildlife Trailer, please contact Annette Jones at amj223@outlook.com for more information.



HUNTERS' HAPPY HOUR

Join the Illinois & Chicago Chapter of Safari Club International (SCI) for Hunters' Happy Hour to mingle with other hunters and Chapter Members. Bring a friend, enjoy food & drinks, share stories, and learn about upcoming events.



Enjoy a night of food, camaraderie, and door prizes!

When is it? Wednesday, November 11, 2026

What time is it? 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Where is it? Shoeless Joe's Ale House & Grille
1480 West Lake Street
Addison, IL 60101

Coming soon to your email and our website
www.sci-Illinois.com
on how to register for this upcoming event!



RSVP to: Annette Jones, Secretary for the SCI
Illinois & Chicago Chapter, at (630)864-8351 or amj223@outlook.com.
Please RSVP by November 7

FFA Wildlife Careers Team Says Thanks

by Mark LaBarbera

School districts across Wisconsin are creating future leaders with support from groups and individuals. One successful program focuses on conservation and agriculture. It's the FFA's Wisconsin Wildlife Career Development Education Exam, thanks to groups as diverse as SCI, Izaak Walton League, Cuba City Lions, Pheasants Forever, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, National Wild Turkey Federation, and State Farm Insurance Agent Jordan Holthaus.

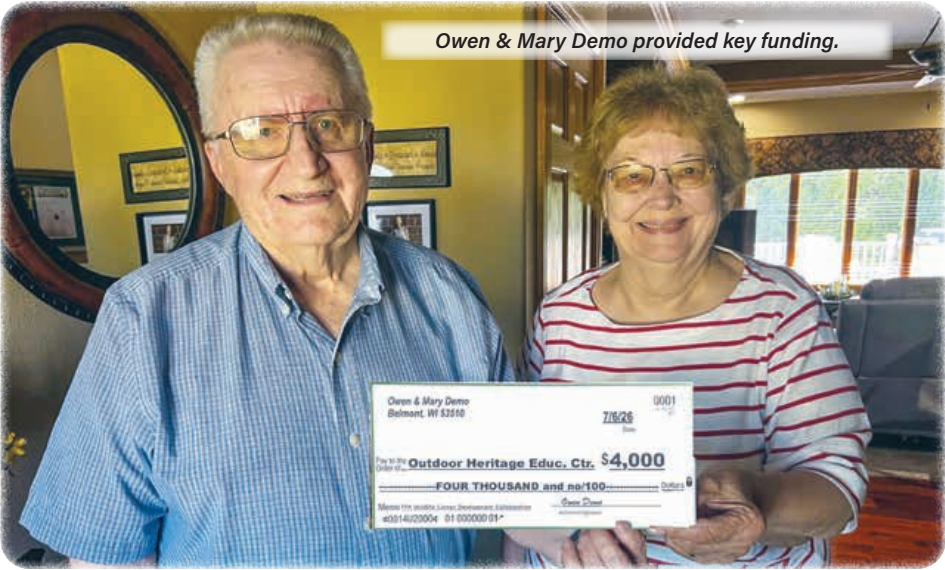
Ruth Ann Lee has been serving the ag and wildlife communities for years as superintendent of the State Competition of the Wisconsin FFA WCDE as part of her Executive Director role at the charitable nonprofit Outdoor Heritage Education Center organization. Regional WCDE competitions culminate with the statewide exam she creates and administers each spring. Students from school districts across the state are welcomed to the UW-Madison campus to share what they have learned with the judges panel she leads. Lee works with FFA and OHEC partners to create the written and identification exams and team practicum exam.

This year, a new fall workshop was added at UW-Platteville with key funding from Owen & Mary Demo of Belmont and others. The couple's commitment to conservation and education is part of their ongoing legacy. Their matching funds helped multiply the impact of many other groups to make this all come together for students, educators, parents, and partners.

Designed to enhance student achievement and knowledge and set them up for success at the regional and state competitions, the new workshop will add to the year-round value of this statewide educational initiative. Each donation to the October 2026 workshop and May 2027 state competition plays a key role for FFA WCDE to not only create more conservation-minded citizens but also steer students toward careers that serve all of us who care about wildlife conservation and healthy natural resources.

Leaders of the OHEC FFA WCDE collaboration will be generating publicity for the initiative and the current roster of donors. For now, Lee said, they simply want to say thank you

to the following featured sponsors who are helping support expansion to recruit, educate, and train future leaders who can help conserve wildlife resources long after we're gone.



Featured Sponsors (as of 8/5/26)

- Owen & Mary Demo
- Wisconsin Wildlife Federation
- SCI Wisconsin Chapter
- SCI Northeast Wisconsin Chapter
- SCI Badgerland Chapter
- Pheasants Forever Marquette/Columbia Co. Chapter



- National Wild Turkey Federation
- Tri-state Gobblers Chapter
- Jordan Holthaus, State Farm Insurance
- Izaak Walton League of America Watertown Chapter
- Izaak Walton League of America Southwestern WI Chapter
- Izaak Walton League of America A.D. Sutherland Chapter
- Cuba City Lions



Hall of Fame Inducts Slawa Swiderski

by Dale Rimkus

The Illinois & Chicago Chapter, founded in 1972, is one of the two original chapters of Safari Club International. Our Chapter established a Hall of Fame for those individuals who have served SCI and our Chapter in truly exceptional ways, demonstrating their value far above and beyond the average.

This year we have honored the first woman to be inducted into our Hall of Fame, Slawa Swiderski.

She came to the United States from communist-controlled Poland as a young woman and quickly made the most of our country's individual freedoms to become an accomplished artist and photographer. Slawa and her late husband, George, built a world-renowned taxidermy business. They spent many days together in the field hunting on several continents. Slawa

has been a member of Safari Club International for decades, and she and George were the first two Lifetime Members of the Illinois & Chicago Chapter. She served on the Board of Directors of the Chapter for more than 20 years and is currently a Director Emeritus.

Slawa, George, and their daughter Krystyna have supported our Chapter with valuable donations of unique artwork and one-of-a-kind artifacts they collected through their world-wide travels. For 30 years they hosted our annual Member Appreciation event as they opened their beautiful home, studio and park-like grounds to all members of our chapter. Their home was the meeting place for our Board.

Slawa has been an amazing friend to all of us as she has shared her passion for hunting and freedom, and she is truly the "First Lady" of our Chapter.



Bezoar Ibex in Türkiye



by Brandon Goodwin

The first time I spoke with Temir Ekenler of WILDHunting in Türkiye and Asia about hunting Türkiye was 14 years ago. Why did it take me so long to book this trip I do not know, but now I eagerly counted down the days. Travel to Türkiye was easy with a direct flight from Chicago to Istanbul and then on to Adana. After that, I drove for a few hours towards the Mediterranean and reached Temir's wonderful lodge. I was immediately impressed by the kindness and hospitality of the staff, and everyone I encountered on my trip.

After dropping luggage at my room, it was time for a quick trip to the rifle range, where I confirmed my 12-year-old GunWerks 7mm LRM had made the trip in perfect condition. The 400-yard shot was just an inch above the bullseye.

Back at the lodge I unpacked and readied my pack for the next day's adventure. That evening, I was treated to a wonderful Turkish dinner with Temir, and we discussed the plans for the morning. He informed me that his crew had been on the mountain for days and had a prime candidate for my

Bezoar tag located. After the long travel day sleep came easy but seemed short as the alarm woke me at 4:30am.

We ate a quick breakfast and headed out for an hour-long drive into the mountains. The drive up into the mountains was more of narrow cart path with one switchback after another as we ascended into the amazing mountain country. On more than one occasion I looked out my window only to find myself staring down a cliff that was so close to the truck I could not see the edge. Up and up, we went until we came out on top and a beautiful valley sprawled out in front of us. This is where we met up with the rest of the crew.

Besides Temir and I, we had two additional guides and two government game keepers, all helping to find the big billy they had watched the previous evening. It did not take them long to find him 2000 yards straight across the valley and up the far side cliffs. He kept himself separated from a larger group of 20+ Ibex and was clearly the largest of the group. Even from this distance I could clearly see his horns were thick and swept way back before



making their deep curl. He was magnificent.

I also discovered that just because you see a big Ibex does not mean you can either get to him or recover him. Our dilemma was he was lying on a shelf 400 yards above the valley floor in an area no man could climb into let alone try and find a place to shoot from. All we could do was watch and hope he moved down, which he did not do on that day.

Day One complete and I had seen some great country but felt a little regret we were unable to make a move on him.

The next morning was a repeat and again the crew found the big billy quickly, only this time he was lower and as were all the other animals in the group. We decided it was worth a try, and we bailed off the mountain top to

try and intercept him as he fed along the cliff base.

I have hunted my fair share of mountain ranges around the world and none of them have anything on these mountains. Immediately I realized that what looked like a simple down, over and up was a series of small drop-offs and boulder strewn hillsides much steeper than they looked. The down was hard, the bottom was welcome and flat, the up was brutal. We quickly made it to where we wanted to be only to find that our quarry had climbed back up to his perch in the cliffs and was working his way around the mountain away from us.

Just like that he was gone.

Not wanting to spook the group and possibly chase him out of this area we had no choice but to return to our vantage point on the mountain top.

The climb back up was miserable because of how steep it was and with having to go between the drop offs zigzagging to cut the incline was nearly impossible; just brute force vertical climbing was the best and safest way up.

Of course, my three guides made it back up before me and did not give me too much grief. They were after all half my age and part mountain goat themselves as they effortlessly climbed the vertical mountainside like I might walk down the street. These guys were definitely in shape and well acclimated to the altitude, which was only 6700 feet but I'm a flatlander that lives at 550 feet above sea level so for me the struggle was real. We took a break and they took me to their mountain camp where they stayed during the hunting season.

We had a quick lunch of sliced meat, bread, and wonderful Turkish tea. As we ate a fog blew in over the mountain and settled in and ended our hunt for the day.

The next morning back at our glassing positions we waited for the fog to lift and found the herd and the big billy had moved way down the mountain range and way to our left in a more remote area that gave even less access for us. The head guide decided to send one of the guides down that side of the mountain to see if he could find a safe path and locate the Ibex that were now in the timber. They would watch him from above and, if all looked good, he would signal us from a clearing and meet us as we descended.

The hours passed and he was never able to find the big billy. Instead of

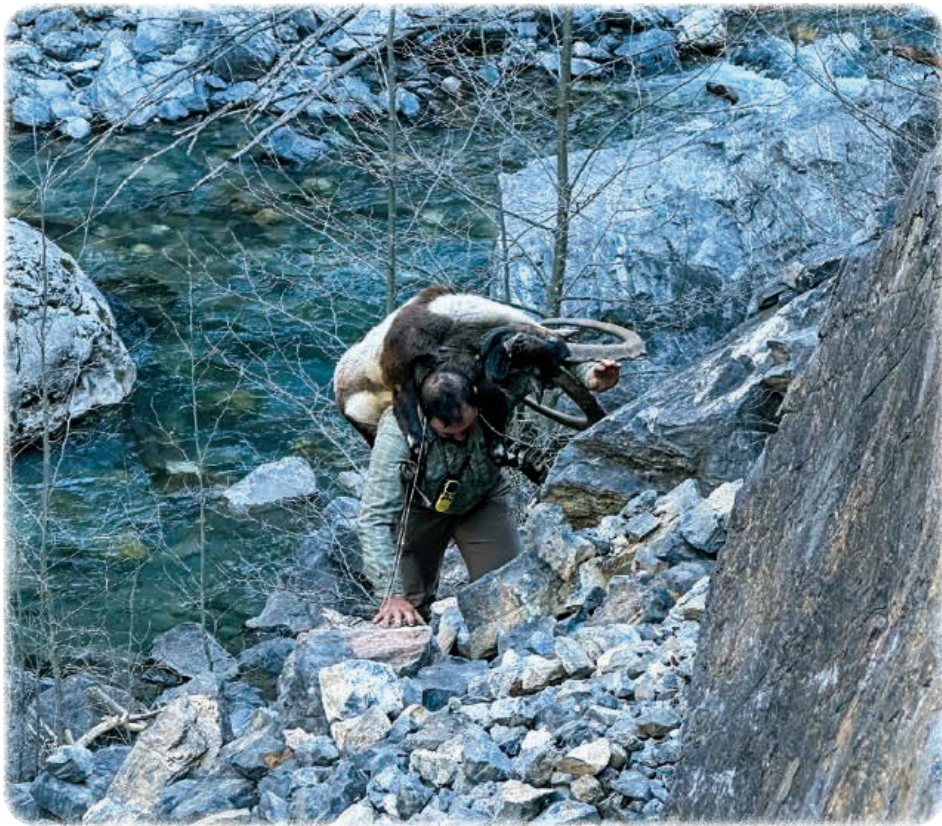
having him climb back up, he climbed down to meet us at the bottom. We took a different path along the river that followed the bottom of the valley and eventually met up with him. He was very excited and, although I don't speak the language and he spoke no English, it was clear he had seen something and was relaying it to Temir. Temir relayed that the guide had seen a group low right at the river that had a different billy with them that was exceptional and we should quickly go back with him to take a look.

We hiked the riverbank path for about a mile and came across a group of about 10 Ibex, mostly females, but with two large billies also. The light was fading fast, and Temir and the guides were able to make out the horns clearly. It was decided that we

would be back at daybreak to see if they stayed low overnight.

We left the lodge an hour earlier the next morning and, just as the sky in the east was beginning to turn a pale grey, we headed up the mountain/cliff on our side of the river hoping to gain elevation and also traverse the mile around the mountain to where we had left the billies.

From the lower path the night before we had extremely limited shooting lanes and the timber would be an issue, but if we climbed 300 vertical feet on our side, we should be almost level with where we hoped to find them. The hiking was tough and more like walking along a ledge 300 feet down on one side and 300 feet up to the next ledge above us, all while trying not to fall off the 12-inch ledge we were on.



Finally, I saw one of the guides and Temir go prone on a spot where the ledge widened to about three feet. They motioned for me to crawl up to them. As I reached them, Temir said get your rifle ready and wait.

I opened the bipod, set the rifle in front of me, and settled in behind the scope on the lowest magnification and scanned the opposite hillside above the river. The group from the night before had grown in numbers and was now 30-plus. Two billys were out in the open, but both were still young. The animals we wanted to see were together behind two bushes and we only could see glimpses of horns through the brush.

I asked Temir to get me the range, and I dialed my rifle, checked my level, and adjusted the magnification up to where I could clearly see the entire billy in my scope.

The first one that stepped out looked huge, but Temir pointed out that his one horn had about four inches busted off and, although he did have lots of mass, that gave him a pass.

The second big billy finally stepped out, and Temir checked and rechecked the horns, then gave me the option to take him or we could continue looking for the larger billy we had seen the previous days.

I asked what the difference in horn length was and Temir said maybe a little more than an inch. Well, this was well into my hunt, and there was no guarantee we would ever see that other billy. For such a small margin my choice was easy. I told him, "When he steps clear I will take him."

As the billy walked along the hillside I followed in my scope and Temir talked me through what was happening to make sure I was on the correct animal. With that Ibex confirmed, I waited for him to stop. When he did it was in an open area.

I settled the crosshairs on his shoulder as I wanted to anchor him there and not let him run into the thick brush ahead of him.

I asked if they were ready.

As they replied yes, I began to slowly squeeze the trigger.

The rifle pushed into my shoulder and I quickly reloaded and regained sight picture. I saw nothing but ibex running across my field of view.

I said, "I don't see him, was the hit good?"

"Yes," replied Temir, "He is lying dead 20 feet below where you shot him."

During the recoil I missed him go stiff and slide down the small cliff and come to rest in the scree below. He was dead before he hit the ground, a plan well

executed and the outcome for which I had hoped.

Once I sat up and looked through my binoculars at the big billy lying there, we all looked at each other and burst into the excited state that happens to hunters and guides when things come together.

As we gathered our gear and planned to retrace our steps in, I asked, "So how do we get over there to get him out now?"

Temir replied, "That's our job, and he is in a good place to get him out."

Well, their job consisted of our head guide climbing down the cliff on our side as we continued back the way we came and by the time we could get off the cliff safely he was already halfway up the other side. I asked if we needed to help and the reply was no, "He can do this alone," to which I replied "Really?!?" with a look of bewilderment.

As I watched in my binos, he tied the Ibex's feet together and slid an arm through each set like a backpack. Then he stood up with this 180-pound animal on his back and walked down the hillside to the river! Not done yet, he stripped down to his underwear and walked his boots and clothes across the river to our side and went back and put the Ibex back on his back and crossed again. I have seen guides perform some pretty amazing feats of strength, but this was by far the most impressive performance I have ever seen. When he made it to us and we were admiring the size of the billy and how he was better than we thought, I made a point of acknowledging his strength in front of his men and told him I will never forget watching him bring that Ibex out or the strength it took to do that. I was thoroughly impressed.

We set out to take pictures and the place they picked was absolutely incredible and a fitting location for this billy to be immortalized. Türkiye had beat any expectations I had before the hunt, and Temir and his crew are outstanding at not only locating world class animals but getting their clients to where they need to be to make a successful shot and recovery, a class act from start to finish and for me, the successful completion of my Ibex Diamond Slam and my OVIS Capra World Slam.

Long Ranger Hank

There are tools you use, and then there are the pieces of gear that become part of the family. Henry Rifles shares a video at https://youtu.be/n1jY_rIVzvK to take you behind the story of one such rifle, a Henry Long Ranger .308 affectionately known as "Hank."

Some rifles are strictly functional, but others earn their place in family lore. That's certainly true for Jeremy's Long Ranger. It's the rifle he reaches for year after year when hunting season rolls around. It's the rifle he shared with his dad for a once-in-a-lifetime bull elk hunt. It's the rifle he'll share with his kids when they're of age.

What makes hank so special? In this video, Henry steps away from specs and performance charts to focus on something deeper – the personal history and meaningful role this rifle

plays in a hunter's life. SCI members can check out the video to hear about:

- How Jeremy ended up with this specific rifle as his go-to hunting companion.



- The memories he's made with it over the years.
- How a firearm can become more than a tool.

Whether you're a seasoned hunter familiar with long-range calibers or someone who appreciates the stories behind the gear, this video highlights the emotional connection between a hunter and their rifle.



In Memoriam:

Anthony Amodio

Anthony "Tony" Amodio was a man whose life was a tapestry woven with the threads of deep connection, unwavering determination, and boundless love. Known for his stubborn spirit balanced by a heart as huge as the skies beneath which he hunted and fished, Tony was a beacon of loyalty and warmth.

To share time with Tony was to know him as both steadfast and generous, a rare combination that left an indelible mark on all who knew him. His greatest joys flowed from the outdoors, where the thrill of the hunt and the competitive

field of tournament bass fishing became more than hobbies—they were expressions of his soulful communion with nature.

Tony was a devoted member of the Illinois & Chicago Chapter of SCI, serving on its Board of Directors for 20 Years.

He was also a longtime volunteer and coordinator with Helluvahunt, an organization dedicated to enabling handicapped hunters experience the outdoors. This commitment reflected the very essence of Tony's character—a man who carried compassion and generosity like a badge of honor.



Greater Prairie-chicken Facts

by Sharon Schwab

The last Wisconsin hunting season for Greater Prairie-chickens was in 1955.

- The foot stomping breeding display of male prairie chickens probably inspired their scientific Latin name, Tympanuchus cupido pinnatus, which means “drummer of love.”
- Other names for Greater Prairie-chickens have included pinnated grouse, prairie hen, and old yellowlegs.
- The breeding grounds of prairie chickens, also known as booming grounds, gets its name from the low, resonant call of the males during the breeding season.
- The long neck feathers that stand up on males during breeding displays are called pinnae.
- Following extensive logging in the late 1800’s the Greater Prairie-chicken spread throughout the entire state.
- By the early 1900’s, there were Greater Prairie-chickens in every Wisconsin county.
- The Greater Prairie-chickens existed in such great numbers that market hunters sent them in barrels to the restaurants of Chicago by train.
- The Greater Prairie-chickens of Wisconsin were listed as a state threatened species on October 1, 1979.
- The original Greater Prairie-chicken range was the prairie and savanna areas of southern third of Wisconsin, but today they are only found in Central Wisconsin.
- The Greater Prairie-chicken is one of four native grouse species in Wisconsin, the others are ruffed

grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, and spruce grouse.

- Prairie chickens are the most intensely managed grouse species in North America.
- Grasslands are the most endangered vegetative ecosystem in Wisconsin.
- Early research on Greater Prairie-chickens (GPC) by such individuals as

to the pioneering work of Drs. Frederick and Frances Hamerstrom in Central Wisconsin. Their work helped save the GPC from extirpation (local extinction) from the State where these birds remain in low but relatively stable numbers (est. 500 birds).



Leopold, Grange, and Schmidt led



Photos by Bob Haase & Mark LaBarbera

Editors Mark & Coni LaBarbera viewed prairie chickens from blinds available for any SCI member to reserve each year. Visit dnr.wisconsin.gov and search Buena Vista.



Conservation and the Rhino

by Nick Meier

I have written this article in hopes that not only will young men and woman become more motivated to help with conservation as a whole and to protect wildlife for future generations, but also that we all work at becoming better stewards towards God's creations. I also want to help further educate the young and old hunters on the importance of rhino hunting and why I made the decision to hunt one of these incredible animals in the name of conservation. To the non-hunter, I hope that this article helps give a better understanding of the "why" behind hunting and how it should be used for the conservation of all wildlife and more specifically in this case, the rhino. I hope that with this information you become better informed and see the importance of hunting globally.

Back in 2009, during my first trip to Africa with family, Wiaan Van Der Linde, the owner of Wintershoek Safaris, told me once that a past client had asked him if there was anything they could do to help his company. Wiaan responded with a yes and simply asked if they would be willing to hunt their one, and only, male rhino, so that with that money he could then purchase two pregnant females and a younger male. Because of that hunt 16 years ago, Wintershoek's current rhino population is now over 300, with roughly 40 calves being born each year making the birth rate between 10% - 13% of their

population. They are one of the largest rhino owners, who allow the hunting of their rhinos, in Africa. This is a perfect example of how to not only grow a population and protect it, but also how to make the value of an animal necessary for its survival.

Looking at the statistics when it comes to the non-hunting land in South Africa versus the hunting land, you can see a decline in the numbers that were reported with SanParks (Kruger National Park) on their annual report for

2022/2023. This report states that there are only 2,060 rhinos left in Kruger National Park as of 2022. However, in 2011 the population of white rhino was somewhere in the range of 10,621. This is a staggering 81% decline of the rhino population in Kruger National Park over 10 years due to poaching and die off, as well as the restriction of hunting laws in some of those areas. Also, the corruption within Kruger National Park has unfortunately touched everything from rangers, politicians, judges and even

some of the anti-poaching rangers which doesn't help with the preservation of this species. So, when looking at the private landowner who represents about half (53% as of 2021) of the total population of the 16,000 rhinos left in South Africa that allow hunting, versus some government land that does not, you can see the positive effect that it has on both conservation and preservation of this animal. What has shown to be true is the statement, "If it pays it stays." If landowners and individuals who not only invest in land that allows hunting, but also in breeding herds who then work with hunters who not only pay to contribute but also pay to hunt, then without question this cycle would allow for the rhino to be around for generations.

If you further look at the statistics of the decline in the rhino population in an area like Kruger National

Park, as well as pair it with the knowledge of what a poached rhino horn on the black market will bring in and what it is used for, you can see that without proper regulations and hunting efforts in more of those government areas you are adding to that decline and issue. A poached rhino horn is worth roughly \$400,000 per kilogram or \$11,000 an ounce and is being sold and used as a status symbol and currency backer in





countries that might not allow individuals the freedom to hold gold, cash or

young bull rhino, worth \$6,400, is sold

investment and if we bought and sold rhinos like dairy cows, the number of rhinos would be far greater than they are currently.

Thankfully, we are currently seeing a positive shift in the rhino population where companies are leaning more and more into the private sector to help lower the poaching numbers. However, there are always negatives with any positives. What I

mean is that when a 4-year-old

minus the K9 team would take around 150-250 photo safaris/ecotourism trips to generate the revenue to cover the costs. When you dive deeper into details like this, it is important to see and compare everything before forming an umbrella argument that says hunting hurts wildlife and conservation. Now, if you add in the amount of rhinos that Wintershoek has versus just one single rhino, you would additionally be adding in a larger cost for security, vet bills, supplemental feed and minerals. You could estimate around another \$20,000

transport to new locations due to its age. This bull was also taking away vital resources from the younger rhinos and posed a threat to the newborn calves. With the good growth rate of calves each year, the hunting of these old bulls is vital because of the need to balance both the bull and female population, as well as to help alleviate the mortality rate of calves due to older bulls. This bull was not in his prime for breeding, and he was too old and fragile to move or to dart. However, he was by every metric the perfect bull for me. I saw his value

hear him breathing and noticed that he had a slight wheeze. It was later explained to us that this bull barely survived the last transport from about 5 - 6 years ago. The second stalk allowed us to have the perfect position, and one shot was all that was needed once I took it. However, as a hunter and respect for animals, I put a few more shots into him so that he would go down as quickly and with as little pain as possible. No matter what animal, they deserve respect and honor to be hunted properly and ethically to the best of our ability.

This rhino hunt truly allowed me to see the hard work that is being put forth to not only protect wildlife and conservation, but to also solidify my contributions and work towards conservation as well. The horn regrowth that my rhino had was donated back to the government to hopefully one day be used for conservation. From the beginning of my childhood up until now I can say that I have been able to help give back what I hope to see our future generations be able to preserve. I hope this is seen as another steppingstone in my continued commitment towards conservation.

Taking a step back and looking at where this all started and how I can say that I have contributed to the betterment of wildlife and conservation, would show my 11 years of experience as a K9 trainer and current owner of MeierK9, as well as having used eight of those years to work with anti-poaching teams all over Africa. For the majority of those

years spent traveling to Africa, every dollar that was spent and all of the gear and time that was donated was from myself and my business.

About four years ago, the Safari Club International Wisconsin Chapter noticed the work I was doing over there and offered to start sponsoring my flights and some of the gear that was needed for those K9 teams. Then, the word grew even further about my efforts in 2024 and now continuing, that the Safari Club International Illinois and Chicago Chapter has donated funds that are being used for purchasing three K9's and a K9 handler's course. What started eight years ago at only two weeks of donated time, has now turned into being gone for over a month during each visit and working with multiple African countries.

Over my entire young and adult life, from helping with youth hunting programs, guiding, my enlistment into the Marine Corps, training bird dogs and anti-poaching K9's, as well as hunting a rhino, I can truly say that I have been able to better understand conservation as a whole and I can only hope that I am able to continue to hunt, as well as contribute more of my time to conservation. To those reading this, I hope you see that this article was not written out of pride, but rather for my love and continued contribution towards conservation. I do hope that any hunters who might be interested in hunting a rhino take up the opportunity. Your commitment to conservation is important and I hope we can look back and say, "Yes, rhinos are alive and thriving today because of our ability as hunters to hunt them and to be able to donate our time, money and resources in the name of conservation." May those reading this not be concerned about what others think, may they see truth where truth is and be better stewards towards God's creations.



diamonds, unlike what you might have heard that it's being used for, which would be Asian medicinal medicine. I have no issue with using something as a status symbol or currency backer because it is no different than owning a luxury bag from Italy or having a special car made in Europe. The issue lies unfortunately with the fact that rhinos have limited venues for capital

and transferred to a private owner they must individually take on all the costs and security risks for that animal, with a limited way of recovering that investment if something were to happen. So, to help secure that investment, you would need to bring in a security team. A four-man security team would roughly be \$56,000 a year and this would only include a manager, assistant manager, two rangers and a vehicle. This would not include a K9 team. This number is astonishing when you look at covering this cost to protect rhino. With legal hunting, the funds brought in can help counteract these costs. A legal rhino hunt, consisting of an adult horned male, could cover that entire cost, as well as a K9 team. Without hunting, this same cost,

- \$25,000 per month, during the dry season, just in feed. Without legal rhino hunting or trading, it is hard for a general security team to protect these animals. With better security measures, private owners can use the funds from hunters to better secure their animal population, overall investment and further contribute to conservation. This information was just one of the reasons why I decided to hunt a rhino bull. It was to help support the private sector and the good they are doing for not only conservation, but also their animals.

The bull that I hunted was aged between 30 and 35. The South African National Environmental Management representative believed it was around the 33-year mark based on all its features and according to the World Wildlife Fund, a rhino can live up to 40 years old. This bull was dehorned and was no longer considered safe to dart or

and he had my respect.

This hunt was on foot and had multiple stalks before we were in a proper position to shoot. During the first stalk, we ended up extremely close, within yards of him. I was prepared to take a broadside shot as he came in even closer, but unfortunately, he was facing us and presented a wrong angle to be able to take an ethical shot. Because we were so close, we could



Bow & NE Chapters Fund Ft. Atkinson NASP



Dan Trawicki handed the donation to Coach Jeff Jensen with SCI NE WI Chapter's Mark Jablonic.



by Mark Jablonic

They want how much for archery targets? That was my initial reaction to the \$3,540 donation request that had been sent to the Southeast Wisconsin Bowhunters chapter of SCI. Dan Trawicki, president of the Bowhunters chapter, had invited me to their Board meeting as a guest from the Northeast Wisconsin chapter of SCI. Treasurer Pete Jungbluth had just read a funding request from Jeff Jensen, NASP coordinator for the Ft. Atkinson schools. At that time, it sounded like “a lot” of money for what I thought was a “little” school archery program. I would later find out just how wrong I was.

Pete started to read off some statistics of how successful this “little” school archery program was:

- Of 140 archers, 128 advanced to the state tournament;
- Elementary school Bullseye team finished in 2nd place;
- Middle school Bullseye team finished in 4th place;
- High School Bullseye team finished in 7th place;
- Elementary school 3D archery team finished in 3rd place;
- Middle school 3D archery team finished in 4th place; and
- High school 3D archery team finished in 10th place

No wonder they needed new targets; these kids can shoot!

Turns out, I’m not the only one sitting there who thought that was a lot of money. After some discussion, I volunteered to bring their request to our Board at the Northeast Wisconsin SCI chapter to see if they wanted to split the donation with the Bowhunters. And we did, so we decided on a time to get together to present the check and meet Jeff at the school. That’s when I found out how wrong I was and why they were looking for funding. While we were there, Jeff told us they were prepping for the national shoot and with any luck, the world shoot after that. After seeing what he and his students were doing I wasn’t surprised.

Jeff Jensen is not only their coach; he is also the physical education instructor. Like in most schools, the program is part of the school’s curriculum. Jeff has been the head archery coach for three years. Prior to that he was the assistant coach for two years and has been teaching archery as part of his PE classes since 2015. Archery is taught in all grades as part of the NASP criteria to be eligible. His gym is wall to wall bullseye targets and 3D targets. Different distances are marked off on the gym floor for the archers. There are racks and racks of Original Mathews Genesis Bows. Jeff wants every student to have their own bow to shoot, and no one has an advantage. Just off the gym is Jeff’s office where they fletch and re-fletch the most arrows I think I have ever seen. All archers use Easton 1820 aluminum arrows. And Jeff doesn’t just fletch, the students come in during a free period and do it as well. He’s got jigs, fletching and bare arrows that fill, and I mean fill, his office.

Since our meeting in Ft. Atkinson at the end of June, both the national and world tournaments have taken place. According to Coach Jensen, “The highlight of our archery season was the Championship/World Archery Tournament in Daytona Beach, Florida. Our Fort Atkinson archers truly showcased their hard work, focus, discipline and determination throughout the prestigious event. Whether it was achieving personal bests, encouraging teammates, overcoming challenges or

learning from tough moments, every member of our team gave their very best effort. The tournament was about much more than scores; it was about

growth, sportsmanship, perseverance, and proudly representing Fort Atkinson on the world stage. I am incredibly proud of how our archers conducted themselves both on and off the range. They demonstrated outstanding character, supported one another and represented our community with class and integrity.”

Yeah, SCI money well spent.



SE WI Bowhunters Chapter President Dan Trawicki and Treasurer Pete Jungbluth appreciated the school recognizing the donation by putting the chapter’s logo on the archery trailer



NASP is a Key to R3 Success

by Mark LaBarbera

Illinois, Wisconsin and states across the country benefit from generous SCI chapters contributing to natural resource agencies’ programs that recruit, retain, and reactivate hunters, trappers, and anglers. SCI donations of cash, equipment, volunteer time, and other in-kind support are making a difference.

Decades ago, at a special summit, the National Shooting Sports Foundation (the gun industry trade association which also owns the big Shooting, Hunting, & Outdoor Trade, or SHOT Show) rallied efforts to address declining participation in traditional outdoor sports. In collaboration with state, national, and tribal natural resources agencies, NSSF manufacturers, marketers, and outdoor media, along with ranges and retailers, coordinated efforts to stop or slow the decline in hunting license sales and target shooting participation. Their first-year NSSF \$1 million check provided seed money that was matched many times over by NSSF members and others in the shooting sports and conservation community. That included SCI nationally and here in the Midwest.

Those strategic thinking leaders put their time and money together for the future of the shooting sports, and it sparked action and built momentum that led to the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies helping to launch the Council to Advance Hunting and Shooting Sports, and the national umbrella movement simply known as R3. Over the decades, more and more groups have begun engaging in learn to hunt programs and other efforts that fit comfortably under the R3 umbrella as they recruit, retain, and reactivate hunters.

SCI chapters support many of those efforts, whether its local hunter

education, big Midwest Outdoor Heritage Education Expos, or the National Archery in the Schools Program.

Efforts include both adult and youth students, recognizing that it’s important to plant the seed early, but there are also benefits to recruiting new hunters and shooters who already have their own driver’s license, discretionary income, and ability to quickly become active participants with needing parental support.

Measuring results is a desirable objective as part of an adaptive management approach that monitors what’s working so agencies, NSSF, SCI and others can focus on replicating success.

Good examples of measuring success and gathering insights comes from Wisconsin’s R3 Team Supervisor Bob Nack. He shared an infographic and these statistics:

- We listed all the clubs and organizations that contacted the DNR about an R3 program they were offering. We appreciate their efforts and couldn’t do this work with the help of dedicated volunteer instructors.

We know this list may not be complete.

- We determined that 67% of 2024 hunting R3 program participants purchased a hunting license in 2025. We are pleased with those results and recognize the opportunity for improvement.
- Archers that participated in National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) tournaments were required to provide a DNR customer ID number. This allowed us to evaluate and understand their participation rates in other activities and identify opportunities to get them involved with hunting and shooting sports. We found that:
 - ◊ 31% completed a hunter education course
 - ◊ 32% purchased a hunting license (any)
 - ◊ 5% participated in an advanced hunter education course (Learn to Hunt, etc.)
 - ◊ 27% purchased a gun deer license
 - ◊ 12% purchased an archery license
 - ◊ 9% purchased a small game license

Nack also thanked all of the members, donors, and supporters who add to R3 success and help assure that program participants continue to have a very positive overall experience.

He said it’s important that survey results show, “R3 program participants continue to indicate they are much more likely to participate in the activity because of their experience with the program.”

SCI chapter leaders, members, and donors in Wisconsin and Illinois can be proud of their contributions to this success while redoubling the commitment to outdoor education and its critical impact on the future of conservation, wildlife management, hunting, and the shooting sports.

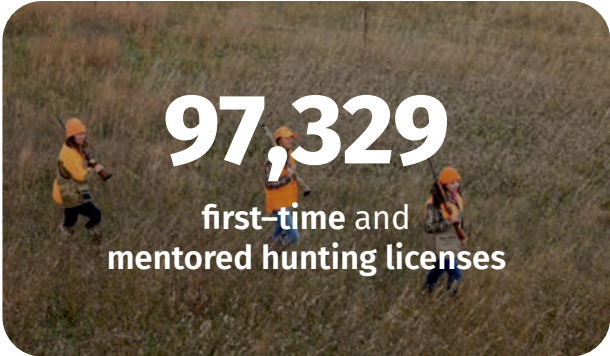
Current SCI Life Member Mark LaBarbera (center) was part of the summit with gun company executives as captured on the shooting sports industry’s national publication.



Hunter R3 2025 Annual Update



Efforts to Recruit, Retain And Reactivate (R3) Hunters In Wisconsin



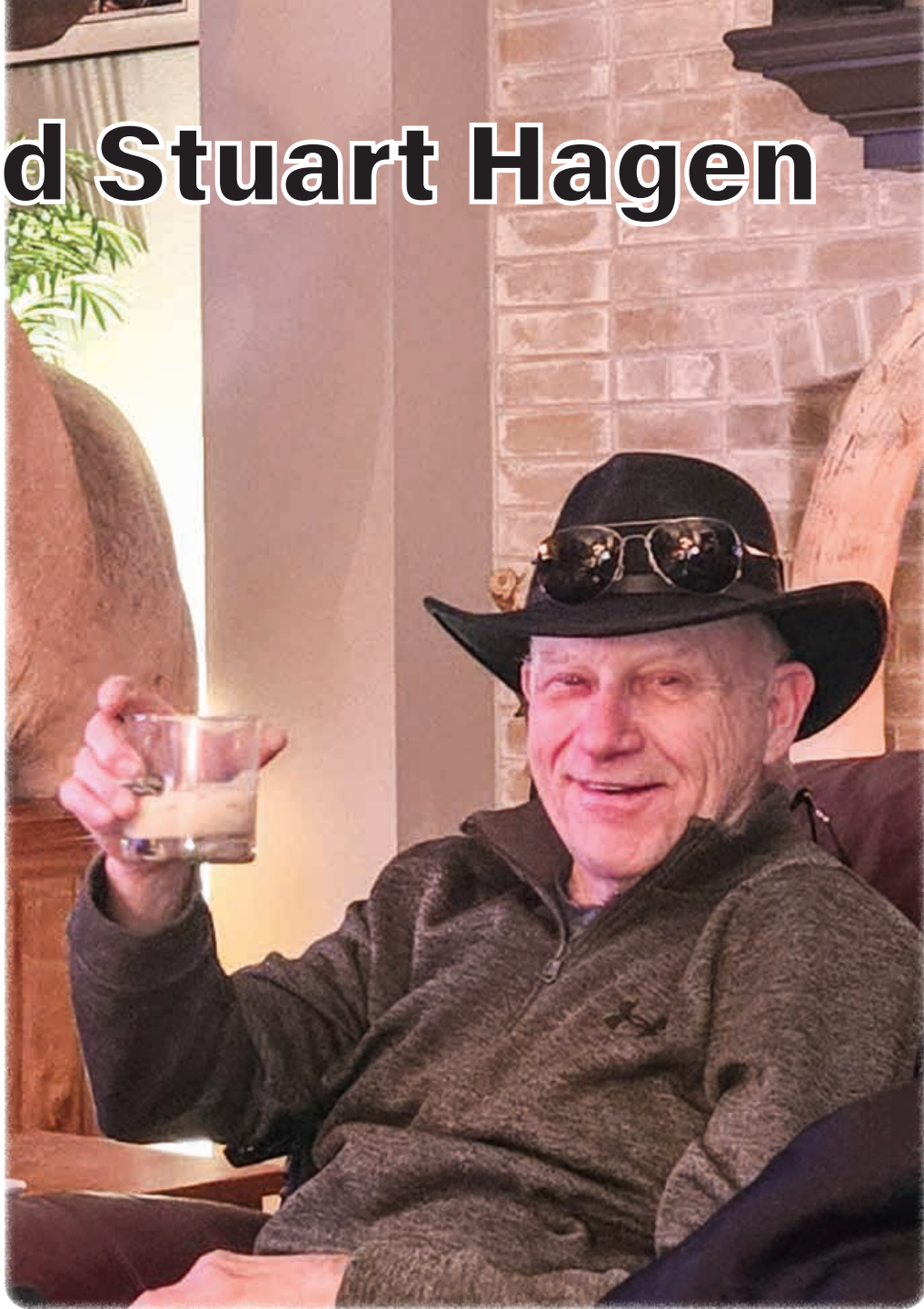
My friend Stuart Hagen

by Dan Trawicki

I first met Stuart some 30 odd years ago. I was looking to buy land in Buffalo County Wisconsin, and Stuart was a real estate agent specializing in hunting land in that area. What started as a casual knock on his door, looking at land turned into a 30-plus-year friendship, mentorship, and partnership. I built a house on land that Stuart and I owned together. My house was just a couple of miles down the road from his. Stuart had some of the best land in Buffalo County, and he showed me what he had done to develop property and maximize his investments. We both also shared a love of turkey hunting, and together hunted birds in Missouri, Kansas, North Carolina, and a few places I can't remember.

Early on, I had been intrigued by the state of Iowa, and the stories of big whitetails. I spent a lot of time researching areas, knocking on doors and gaining access. I managed to talk Stuart into leaving Buffalo for a bowhunting trip down there. Keep in mind, this was 25 years ago. Iowa was an untapped resource with little pressure. It only took a few trips down for Stuart to say to me "We need to buy every single farm we can down here. This is Buffalo County 20 years ago." When I told Stuart it sounded like a good idea, but I had no idea (or money) on how to do that. His comment was "I will show you!" I found and bought our first farm down there for \$530/ acre. When I pulled out of the landowner's driveway after shaking hands, my first thought was "I have absolutely no idea how I'm going to pay for this," but I shook their hand! My first call on the way home was to Stuart. He put the wheels in motion, and along with several other partners started buying farms. Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, and North Dakota were all locations we researched, bought land, and invested in the area.

As we started spending more time together, we started hunting together. I introduced Stuart to Africa and other far away destinations, and he fell in love



with the ultimate hunting experience. We hunted South Africa, Zambia, Argentina, Manitoba and other distant locations. Stuart of course had already by this time done more than his share of far away hunting. He was always up for adventure and, along with his son Gunnar and other partners, had been traveling the world.

Stuart was a lifetime member of SCI. We were regular attendees at the national convention, as well as the Milwaukee chapter and SE Wisconsin Bow chapter. Because our homes were so close in the Mondovi area, any time I was up, we had dinner together. For

probably close to 25 years, we had dinner either at his house or mine every time I was up. A year ago, in March he came down for the Bow chapter banquet in Okauchee. The night before, Stuart, John Miller and I went out for a big steak dinner in Milwaukee. Friday was the SCI banquet, Saturday we all went for breakfast and he drove home. On Sunday, he had a medical episode that was troubling. After a round of tests, it was determined he had Stage 4 brain cancer. As you can imagine, for his wife, children and friends it was shocking news. Stuart continued to fight. He took my daughter Abby turkey



hunting that spring and we went to Zambia in July as planned. He didn't plan on hunting but wanted to introduce his son Gunnar to Africa. Our friend Chris McClain was also there. We hunted with long time outfitter Derick Van Staden in his traditional



camp on the Luangwa River. It was a happy and sad camp all at the same time.

When we got back from Zambia, Stuart continued his treatments but passed away on December 28th.

It's hard for me to put into words what Stuart meant to me. In some ways he was a father figure to

me; in some ways like a brother. But most of all, he was my best friend. I obviously continue to go to my farm, continue to hunt there and other places, but it's not the same, and never will be. We all have those people that have a major impact in our lives. Stuart was that to me and more.



SCI SOUTHEAST WISCONSIN BOWHUNTERS CHAPTER

WILD GAME DINNER

WED, AUGUST 5TH, 2026
WEISSGERBER'S GOLDEN MAST INN
W349 N5293 Lacy's Lane ~ Okauchee, WI 53069

Join us for gun and bow raffles, food and drinks, and of course, FUN!

REGISTER ONLINE ONLY
at sciwiibowhunters.com
?s - call Dan Trawicki @ 262-408-7632

TICKET PRICES - Sign Up Early!
Adult \$60 thru August 1st ~ \$70 after August 1st
Table of 10 \$600 by August 1st ~ includes 10 dinner tickets, \$150 in board tickets and food and drawing

SEATING IS LIMITED - RESERVE YOUR SPOT TODAY!

RAFFLE TICKET PRICES
4/\$20 11/\$50 24/\$100
40/\$150 60/\$200 100/\$300
145/\$400 200/\$500

SPECIAL GUEST:
CONGRESSMAN TOM TIFFANY
CANDIDATE FOR GOVERNOR

Join us as SCI will be presenting Tom with a check for \$65,000 to support his race for governor.



SCI Southeast WI Bowhunters
TUE AT 12:26 PM

DOORS OPEN 5PM
DINNER 7PM

MEMBERS DRINK FREE
All individuals who are both SCI National and SE WI Bowhunters Chapter members receive an SCI glass and bottomless select tap beer! Sign-ups & renewals at the event welcome!

A Cut Above

The Pareto Principle states that 80% of the results come from 20% of the effort. Members of SCI and other clubs often refer to the "80/20 Rule" as we describe a handful of very sharp volunteers with or without finely honed skills doing most of the work.

This summer, an SCI member introduced me to a couple of 20-percenters at the Viola Sportsman's Club in Vernon County who are on the cutting edge. VP Gary Erlandson of Viola said they welcome new members, volunteers, and partners as they rebuild the historic club.

Board Member Steve Svacina of Richland Center said VSC is dedicated to promoting safe, enjoyable shooting sports & preserving outdoor traditions for all ages. Serving the Kickapoo Valley since 1973! The VSC offers trap, rifle, pistol, and archery ranges, along with community events and youth programs.

The Viola Sportsman's Club grounds are open to all members nearly every day of the year. The trap season starts when spring weather cooperates and ends in late October.

For rifle, pistol and shotgun ranges, they added new shelters with grants from the NRA Foundation, thanks to Coulee Region Friends of NRA and other fundraising efforts. Whether you're shooting small bore silhouettes,

large caliber guns, or archery, handicap accessible shooting stands, variable distance targets, and more parking have made the property and its new or renovated ranges more inviting. They also improved the main building known as the VSC Education Center, a comfortable setting for hunter education, firearms safety, conceal carry, and the club's other gatherings.

Erlandson and Svacina said a lot of the work and equipment was donated by members, local businesses, and other collaborators.



While DNR funding issues currently hinders or halts fish stocking collaborations, the club's shooting sports opportunities are thriving. Svacina and Erlandson point to VSC's work on growing the hunter education program. The club's online site

says, "We now offer one class in the late spring or early summer and have increased the number of instructors considerably to help improve the one-on-one time our students get with the instructors. We are proud to say that each year, more than 20 area youth and adults earn their hunter education certificate through our program. The Viola Sportsman's Club is proud to be partnered with Freedom Firearms 101 (John Clark). We offer concealed carry classes multiple times per year. Check out the events tab on our Facebook page or email us at contact us@violasportsmansclub.com"

Before the DNR's recent change to fish stocking programs, VSC and the Rockton Sportsman's Club had raised and stocked more than 70,000 wild brook trout in local streams (and added Rainbow Trout in recent years) from Yuba to LaFarge, to near Rockton. Local schools participated with more than 50 students actively participating in stocking. The club also won an award from DNR Fisheries.

Since 2016, the Viola Sportsman's Club has been proud to sponsor the Kickapoo Area Schools Trap Team and has taken major steps toward improving accessibility and preserving the future of its trap shooting program. For example, VSC installed new concrete walkways on its trap range.

Club President Phil Ellefson expressed his heartfelt appreciation for members, partners, and Friends of NRA volunteers who made this possible, saying the project represents more than just an infrastructure upgrade; it's an investment in the future of shooting sports. VSC will continue recruiting, reactivating, retaining, and creating new shooters in a safe, inclusive, supportive environment.



Skyler, Brylee, and Abrina competed in the USA High School Clay Target League National Championship Individual qualifier in Mason, Michigan.



Special Message:

Best Experiences Are Shared

SCI members contribute greatly by helping to introduce others to the outdoors, directly and through sponsorship.

by Cassie Mordini, Director
WI Office of Outdoor Recreation

The best outdoor experiences are the ones shared and enjoyed by all.

Whether it is introducing a child or adult to their first hunting or fishing trip, helping a friend discover a new trail or welcoming visitors to a favorite destination, outdoor recreation has a unique way of bringing people together. Those moments of connection are often what turn a one-time experience into a life-long passion for the outdoors.

Recently, we had the opportunity to celebrate the nominees and recipients of the 2026 Wisconsin Governor's Outdoor Industry Awards. Their accom-

plishments are a powerful reminder that Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry is fueled by people who are constantly finding new ways to innovate, collaborate and create opportunities for others. The individuals, businesses, organizations and communities recognized this year are helping strengthen Wisconsin through leadership, creativity and commitment to the outdoors.

Recent participation data shows more Americans are enjoying the outdoors than ever before, and that's worth celebrating!

At the same time, people are getting outside less frequently, reminding us of the opportunity we have to create

experiences that inspire people to take one more hike, one more paddle, one more ride and ultimately build lasting — and more frequent — connections to the outdoors.

Whether you're spending your time or contributing to others removing barriers, introducing someone to a new activity or helping others discover a favorite place, you are helping to turn first-time participants into lifelong outdoor enthusiasts.

Thank you for the role you play in helping more people connect with the outdoors. I hope you find time to enjoy it yourself this month.

Onward, outdoors!



Supporting Future Leaders

Evan Casper of Lomira received a \$2,000 OHEC WOCA scholarship August 1 as he pursues his natural resources degree from the University of Wisconsin—Stevens Point. Wisconsin Outdoor Communicators Association Secretary Laurel Steffes of Madison and Scholarship Committee Member Dave Zeug of Shell Lake presented the check during WOCA's annual meeting at Trees for Tomorrow in Eagle River. They were joined by SCI Life Member, OHEC founder, and fellow WOCA member Mark LaBarbera of Hazel Green.

"Evan stands out as an emerging conservation leader that we gladly support," said OHEC Executive Director Ruth Ann Lee, Poynette. "He already volunteers his time to help kids discover outdoor skills, like around the OHEC Touch of the Wild education trailer at the Waterfowl Expo in Oshkosh."

Casper noted, "I remember when I was younger and our school attended the Midwest Outdoor Heritage Education Expo in Poynette. It was the best field trip ever. My dad was a chap-erone, and he also encouraged me

when I was a Wisconsin Youth Conservation Congress delegate. Now it's fun volunteering with kids at the Waterfowl Expo again this year. Thanks for the scholarship. It helps a lot."

SCI members who know of family or friends going to school for natural resources careers can learn more at www.OHECyes.org and search "scholarship."



Laurel Steffes, Dave Zeug, and Mark LaBarbera present the scholarship check to Evan Casper. (Not pictured, WOCA's Art Barlow of Rhinelander.)

founding organizations as the coalition takes shape," said WiWF President Terri Roehrig.

founding organizations as the coalition takes shape," said WiWF President Terri Roehrig.

Roehrig, Executive Director Cody Kamrowski, VP Mark Kakatsch, and leading board members said conservation funding in Wisconsin is at a pivotal moment. WiWF believes now is the time to bring together a focused group of leaders who can help shape both the strategy and the public voice behind a sustainable funding solution for our state's natural resources. This coalition will be responsible for:

- Setting the strategic direction for conservation funding advocacy;
- Shaping the agenda, audience, and communications plan for our Conservation Funding Summit this August;
- Developing a Joint Value Statement that reflects shared priorities across the full spectrum of conservation including clean water, clean air, wildlife habitat, public land and water access and properties, state parks, etc., for broader affiliate sign-on;
- Guiding outreach to influencers, media, and partner organizations to build visibility and public support across all of Wisconsin's conservation-minded communities; and
- Building coalitions with other like-minded organizations to maximize our impact.

As SCI leaders here have taught us locally and nationally, the key to successful wildlife management, public lands access, outdoor education, shooting sports and broader conservation programs is grassroots communications. About the time that leaders feel like they have repeated key facts and statistics ad nauseam, the message may finally be getting through to grassroots members, their friends, and family members. Each coalition member is responsible for sharing Wisconsin Conservation Funding Coalition updates with their network of contacts AND encouraging recipients to share it with their extended networks, whether that's local counties, townships, civic groups, clubs, ranges, conservation groups, co-workers, hunting friends, or others.

The WCFC is already pulling together data that most grassroots outdoor enthusiasts have not seen. There are

unpublished lists of conservation work that is no longer being done. There is a backlog of deferred maintenance. There are cutbacks in fish stocking and number of pheasants being raised at the State Game Farm in Poynette. There are boat ramps closed or in need of repair. There are trails and public access parking areas no longer cared for the way hunters and hikers have learned to expect from the good old days when Wisconsin led the nation. Ranges close or reduce hours that they are open to the public. Wildlife and other statewide plans are not up to date. There is no official strategic R3 Plan to recruit, retain and reactivate hunters, anglers, and trappers. And the price of diesel and supplies and heavy equipment rental have increased dramatically while funding has stayed the same.

Inflation and other real increases in out-of-pocket expenses are making it impossible to do what the sporting conservation community and voting public demand of resource professionals, agencies, and collaborators. When someone says DNR funding has not been cut or increased, remember that double-digit cost increases have the same effects as cutting.

Missouri and Minnesota had similar problems and fixed them years ago. Their voters now enjoy access to healthy, natural resources and well-funded fish, wildlife, parks, outdoor education, and conservation programs. In 1976 Missouri passed (and in 2026 reaffirmed) a 1/8 of one percent sales tax and in 2008 Minnesota passed a 3/8 of one percent sales tax dedicated to natural resources and the arts. When I was President of the Minnesota Outdoor Heritage Alliance/Foundation, we set the stage with voters and legislators to understand the need to supplement conservation funding long term.

Wisconsin conservation leaders could do something similar so all residents pitch in rather than making hunters and anglers pay the bills. While Minnesota citizens could vote on initiatives and referendum to change the state constitution, Wisconsin's process requires a simple majority in the Assembly and Senate during the first legislative session, and then during a second session after an election, the



The author saved items from Minnesota's successful campaign.

same amendment language would need to pass. Then it goes to the voters for ratification. The Governor cannot veto a constitutional amendment. While politicians and voters normally oppose tax increases—both sales and income—this modest, fraction-of-a-penny dedicated sales tax could gain majority support from people who care about fresh air, clean water, healthy fish, wildlife and parks, and passing along our natural resources to future generations.

If grassroots citizens and their grass-tops leaders convinced their elected officials to give people the chance to decide, then the majority would determine our future. Bipartisan support by state senators and assemblymen could put the constitutional amendment on the ballot for all voters to weigh in on whether they care enough about natural resources to pitch in 1/8 of one percent when they purchase goods and services. Not just hunters and anglers, but everyone giving one penny for every eight dollars may seem simple, but the cumulative effect is perfect for regaining Wisconsin's lost role as a conservation leader while remaining fiscally conservative with taxpayer funds. These funds would supplement, not supplant, current funding provided by our license and stamp fees, federal excise taxes paid by gun and bow makers and the shooting sports industry, and by voluntary contributions from myriad sporting conservation organizations and official "friends of" groups.

More facts about the threats to our outdoor way of life and details of how you can get involved with the coalition will be posted or linked at wiwf.org.

★ **SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2026** ★
BEGINS AT 11:00 AM ★ LUNCH SERVED AT 1:00 PM

SCI Wisconsin Chapter
c/o Jen Bachmann
S55W29223 Saylesville Rd
Waukesha, WI 53189

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PLATTEVILLE, WI
53818
PERMIT NO. 124

*Address Change? Email
Jen Bachmann at office@sciwi.org*



WHEN GOOD ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH

***Northwoods Taxidermy is proud to announce
a new, expanded facility coming in 2026!***

Before year's end, we will be opening the doors to our brand-new facility — designed from the ground up to better serve serious hunters and anglers who expect quality, detail, and professionalism.

Our new building isn't just bigger — it's built with purpose:

- ▶ More space for proper specimen care and handling
- ▶ Expanded showroom to display your trophies with pride
- ▶ Improved workflow to maintain our turnaround standards
- ▶ A comfortable, professional setting to meet with clients

This expansion represents our commitment to doing things the right way — investing back into our craft and into the hunters and anglers who trust us with their memories.

Every mount tells a story.

Every detail matters.

And now we'll have the space to showcase that work the way it deserves.

We're proud of where we've been — and even more excited about where we're going.

***Follow our progress and
watch for our grand opening!***

Contact: Kyle Schmidt
262-366-9272
northwoodstaxidermywi@gmail.com

Visit northwoodstaxidermywi.com
Follow us on Facebook: Northwoods Taxidermy