

WISCONSIN Game Warden

Fall 2018



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Articles, photos sought for Spring 2019 issue

Wisconsin Game Warden magazine is looking for articles. The deadline for the Spring issue is Jan. 15, 2019. We are particularly looking for stories that highlight the history of the warden force, as well as highlight the great work that wardens do in their communities to protect our natural resources and promote outdoor recreation.

Articles can be submitted to Managing Editor Barbara Schmitz at 1705 Gruber St., Oshkosh, WI 54901, or emailed as a Word document to barbara.a.benish@gmail.com. Photographs are strongly encouraged. Please remember to set your cameras to the highest resolution setting.

Photos can be emailed or mailed to Schmitz at the above address. If you have questions, you can also call Schmitz at (920) 235-0972.

Tell us when you move

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Go to www.wigamewarden.com, click on the "About" link and then "Become a member" link.

All memberships expire June 30. A one-year membership is \$25, a three-year membership is \$50, and a lifetime membership is \$250.

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What you do **IS** IMPORTANT

By John Sinclair

I was fortunate enough to attend the recent funeral of fallen Milwaukee Police Officer Michael Michalski. He was shot and killed in the line of duty on July 25, 2018.

Hundreds of law enforcement officers, family members and friends filled the visitation and funeral service. I saw officers there from as far away as Massachusetts, Florida and Kentucky. We waited in line for an hour and a half just to salute Officer Michalski at his casket. Our Conservation Warden Honor Guard and Tactical Team were there assisting, and several other wardens from around the state came to pay their respects.

I realized I was fortunate to be able to attend. Many other wardens were committed to DNR property shifts that day, were working on investigations, responding to complaints, or taking a well-deserved day off. I write this, not because I want to take any sort of credit or one-up a warden who didn't attend, but because I want to share with you what I saw and what I felt.

The visitation and funeral service were well attended and beautifully carried out. Officer Michalski's faith, values and commitment to his community echoed through the words of the pastor. What truly caused me to pause, though, was what came next. The police procession to the cemetery was delayed due to a heavy, but brief rainstorm that swept through the area. As they brought Offi-

cer Michalski out of the church, a massive rainbow filled the sky over Milwaukee. At about 6 p.m., the procession from Oak Creek to Brookfield began. Hundreds of law enforcement vehicles filed out of the parking lot.

If you've ever seen rush-hour traffic in Milwaukee at 6 p.m. on a weekday, you know the interstate is probably the busiest in all of Wisconsin. Yet in the middle of this rush-hour traffic, the State Patrol shut down all northbound lanes of I-94. This space, at that moment, was solely for Officer Michalski. As we drove single file down the interstate, lights flashing, I noted every single highway overpass was lined with local citizens, firefighters, truck drivers and the like. American flags, thin blue line flags, and messages of support were displayed. Many drivers even pulled over on the opposite side of I-94 to stop their lives for just a moment and pay their respects.

Children waved, many holding their hands over their hearts. Military members and firefighters saluted. Thousands of people of all races, religions and ages took the time to ac-

knowledge our loss.

This continued for miles and miles, as we traveled the procession route through downtown Milwaukee to Brookfield. The outpouring of grief, support and respect was nothing less than astounding. For one short moment in time, it felt like the big-

them, or who simply put on the uniform with pride every day, thank you. There are an infinite number of ways to pay our respects to the fallen.

We are going through a lot at the DNR right now, and we face difficult and uncertain times. We have taxing schedules and a



gest city in Wisconsin paused.

It was a moving experience that I'm sure every person there felt, and was one that I wanted to share. Unfortunately, I know many of you have attended law enforcement funerals before, and have experienced similar powerful and sobering moments. To those of you who attended, who said a prayer, who told your family you loved

heavy workload, and often balance is hard to find. As we stood at Officer Michalski's funeral, the faces of citizens, officers, family and friends all silently shouted: Don't forget what's important. Don't forget that what you do is important.

JOHN SINCLAIR is a conservation law enforcement supervisor for the Wisconsin DNR's Bureau of Law Enforcement.

on the cover:

Makenna Orsund, then 10, shot her first deer at the Learn-to-Deer Hunt on Oct. 28, 2017, that was sponsored, in part, by a WCWA grant. See story on Page 20. Photo by Joe Orsund

2017 Haskell Noyes Conservation Award Winner, Ed McCann



From left, Warden Supervisor Tyler Strelow, Chief Warden Todd Schaller, Award recipient Ed McCann, his wife, Beka, and NR Manager Rick Rosen, pose for a group picture during the watch ceremony and presentation.

MCCANN: THE PERSON WHO **CATCHES BAD GUYS**

ED MCCANN HAS NO RESEMBLANCE TO THE ENERGIZER BUNNY. BUT THERE IS ONE IMPORTANT SIMILARITY. GETTING THE "BAD GUYS" IS WHAT KEEPS MCCANN GOING, AND GOING AND GOING.

McCann, a conservation warden stationed in La Crosse, was named the 2017 Haskell Noyes Conservation Efficiency Award recipient in April. Then in June, McCann was named the 2018 Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Law Enforcement Officer of the Year.

McCann is quick to praise the many people who helped him become the warden he is today, and says the awards also belong to them. He says it is difficult for him to discern why he received the award.

"But if I had to guess, I would guess that it is because I strive to

be a 'catcher' – a person who catches bad guys. That's what I always thought the job was supposed to be," McCann says. "I go after the people who deserve to be caught. I've spent my career doing that, and slowly I've become better at catching people and using better discretion in determining who was bad in the first place. I've spent lots of time stealing ideas and positive traits from other wardens I greatly respected, and fashioned my own style by taking the best traits from the best in the field."

But those close to him say they weren't surprised that McCann received these top awards.

Chief Warden Todd Schaller, who was McCann's direct supervisor when stationed in Fond du Lac, says McCann's people skills make him stand out as a warden. "It's his ability to connect and talk to anyone — from a fisherman along the shoreline to a business owner."

But it's also McCann's passion for the mission and what they do in the Bureau of Law Enforcement that sets him apart, Schaller says.

As a new warden, McCann had a lot of energy, which he used to energize the people around him, Schaller says. He talked about days when he worked beside McCann. "I felt a lot like a ping-pong ball because of his passion and energy," Schaller says. "He was going in so many ways and places, bouncing left, right and forward" to make a case or get the job done.

McCann's current supervisor, Tyler Strelow, says it's McCann's dedication to the Department that makes him worthy of the Haskell Noyes Award. "He lives and breathes being a game warden since it is something he always wanted to do," he says.

In addition, McCann is persistent. "As an investigator, I don't know if there is anyone in the state who can match him," Strelow says. "He's very skilled in interview and interrogation, and in fact, created a training program on those topics for the warden service."

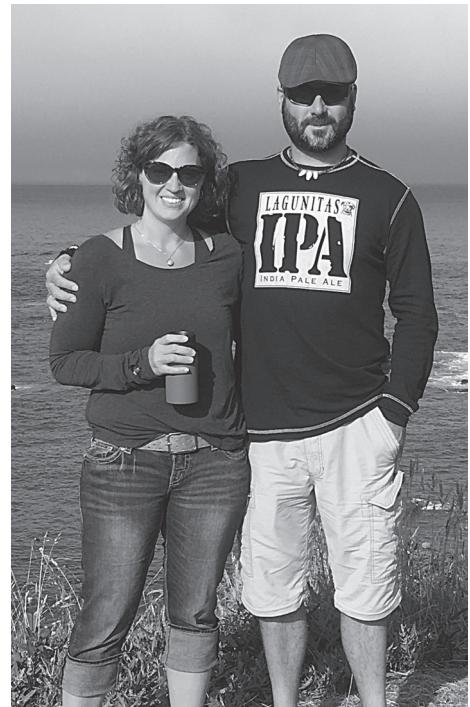
But Strelow says McCann is also a "think outside the box" type of person. "He gets creative with his work and with his creativity comes some pretty amazing outcomes," he says. In addition, McCann has served as a field-training officer for most of his career, Strelow says, and has taken a lot of new wardens or people interested in the career under his wing. "They wouldn't have that level of success without Ed's coaching."

Meghan Jensen says she is proof of that. The Trempealeau County warden was one of two wardens (the other being Trevor Tracey) who started the McCann nomination process for the Noyes Award, making McCann the first to receive the award from a nomination by his co-workers.

Jensen says McCann took her under his wing when she was a deputy warden in 2015. "I had great respect for him, even before I was hired. I owe a lot to him for making me the warden I am today, starting with what he taught me."



Chris Shea, then a warden in Trempealeau County, and La Crosse County Warden Ed McCann confiscated over 30 pounds of dried ginseng from a suspect who was digging up the plant prior to the season and creatively trespassing. The ginseng was valued at between \$15,000 and \$30,000.



As a fulltime warden, Jensen says she continues to look to McCann for advice and guidance, adding, "Everything is a learning moment with him."

Jensen says McCann is a "brilliant person" who doesn't take things at face value. "He is always researching things to find out why it is that way. He taught me to ask more 'why' questions. He's also good at making sure things are done the right way, not the easy way."

She agrees with Strelow that McCann "thinks outside the box."

"If you fish without a license, you'll get a ticket. But Ed looks at the overall goal. If someone who has never fished didn't know they needed a license, he realizes they may never fish again if they get a ticket because of the negative experience," Jensen says. "So he may give them a couple days to go out and buy a license. His goal is to get voluntary compliance, and he looks at the bigger picture of how his actions will play out."

Jensen says McCann also has a good ability to build relationships

"SHE HAS MOVED ACROSS THE STATE TWICE TO FOLLOW ME AND MY JOB, AND IS CONSTANTLY PUTTING UP WITH ME MISSING NIGHT OR WEEKEND ACTIVITIES, OR PARTIES. IF IT WASN'T FOR HER, I WOULDN'T BE AS SUCCESSFUL."

McCann referring to his wife, Beka (pictured above)



Warden Ed McCann, right, pictured with his brother, Nick, and father, Ed.



Ontario warden Smokey Cole and Ed McCann, who was about 17 in the photo, with walleyes they caught. Smokey was a role model to McCann and one of the reasons he became a warden.

with program staff and other law enforcement agencies, as well as other wardens throughout the state. “If he does something, it is intentional, and you can be sure there is quality reasoning behind it,” she says. “He takes a lot of pride in what he does...”

Growing up in the north suburbs of Chicago, McCann says he always knew he wanted to be a game warden. Retired Ontario, Canada warden and family friend Smokey Cole is a primary reason for that.

McCann says Cole had a great reputation and he put a high value on that reputation; McCann knew he wanted a similar reputation as a warden. “Smokey was always putting in the extra effort and time to get the bad guy,” he says. “Thirty years of him telling me game warden stories rubbed off. Some of the best training you can get is listening to the stories that older wardens pass down.”

McCann says he enjoys being a field warden because it gives you a lot more freedom. “You’re trusted to make your own decisions and make your own schedule and be successful on your own terms,” he says. “I can cut out in the afternoon to go mow my grass, and then go back in the evening to catch the guy I watched in the morning. You can work the hours that need to be worked, and catch the guys that need to be caught.”

While he has investigated hundreds of cases, some of the most interesting ones involve the illegal harvest, sale, purchase and transport of wild ginseng, he says. “I’m really proud of coming back to the field and demonstrating the type of work I can do when I have the freedom to do that,” he says. “When I came back to the field in La Crosse, we didn’t have a good grasp on what was going on with that plant.”

But working with now retired Gary Jagodzinski, a special agent with the Fish and Wildlife Service, and John Welke, then a DNR investigator, the trio exposed the illegal trafficking of wild ginseng plants in large quantities by several different companies. McCann

says some of the penalties were significant — one company in La Crosse paid \$100,000 in fines — while individuals in Galesville, Wisconsin, and Iowa were convicted of felonies. “We wrote a myriad of citations, but we didn’t just stop with catching the bad guys. We put together a plan to make the program better internally.”

Calumet County Warden Mike Dishner recalls other cases the two worked on when McCann was stationed in Fond du Lac that demonstrate why Ed is deserving of the awards.

In one case from the mid-2000s, fur prices were high, and otter were selling for \$100 to \$150 a pelt, Dishner says. Trappers would bring fur to McCann to register so they could sell the pelts. But Ed realized a lot of people were borrowing tags, and so he asked questions, often discovering their lies.

“There was a period of time when Ed was seizing more fur than he registered,” Dishner says, laughing. In particular, there was a case involving an otter trapped in the southern zone, but brought in with a northern zone tag, which was illegal. Being suspicious, McCann actually had strontium isotope testing done on the animal, which determined what region of the state the animal was from, the south. “Ed was at the forefront of using science in case investigation,” Dishner says.

Another case occurred during a routine taxidermy audit. “We uncovered a single duck that looked too good to be true,” Dishner recalls. “The suspect had brought the duck into the taxidermist for mounting in spring, and most people aren’t bringing in ducks then. When we went into the freezer and looked at it, it was pretty obvious it was shot in spring. It was a drake pintail that had the most beautiful spring plumage you have ever seen.”

Because of that one duck and McCann’s persistence, they discovered that the suspect had shot other migratory birds, too, while hunting in the Dakotas. The fact that the suspect transported the birds to Wisconsin meant that the case turned into a federal Lacy



Wardens Ed McCann, left, and Mike Disher with an illegal deer that was shot with a rifle during the archery season.

McCann's career at a glance

- Graduated with a bachelor's degree from UW-Madison in 1998 with a major in wildlife ecology
- Worked for a furniture store making deliveries for a few years to save money to put himself through the 10-week Law Enforcement Academy
- Worked a couple seasons at Devil's Lake State Park as a park ranger and in DNR customer service before he was hired as a warden in 2001 and underwent a year of training
- Worked in Fond du Lac from 2002-2008 as a field warden
- Promoted to an investigator position for what was then called the DNR's Special Operations Unit and moved to La Crosse
- In 2011, became a field warden in La Crosse, where he is still stationed
- In 2017, was named the Haskell Noyes Conservation Efficiency Award recipient

Act investigation, Disher says.

"It turned out he had a bunch of other illegal activities — with deer, other ducks, etc. — and it snowballed into a lot of violations, all because of one duck in a taxidermist's freezer," Disher says. "That's just how Ed is. He could have easily gone to the suspect's house and written a ticket for an illegal duck, and be done with it. But by digging a little more it turned into a great case."

Jagodzinski also worked with McCann on that taxidermy case because of the migratory bird violations. He says the case is an example how McCann is willing to seek out others' help to get a conviction. "Ed knows that no one is an expert at everything, including himself. Some folks will look at their lack of knowledge as a liability, but Ed turns the liability into an asset."

But McCann also makes a "fantastic officer" because he is genuine, Jagodzinski says. "In Ed's mind, being a conservation warden is not about the status it brings him in the community. It is about doing all he can to protect our natural resources from people who will exploit it."

Strelow says McCann is always looking for ways to make processes more efficient. "He is quick to find out what is inefficient and work to fix it," he says. For instance, in the past when executing search warrants and taking evidence, wardens would individually tag each piece of evidence. But McCann created a form and went through the process to get it approved that allows multiple pieces of evidence to be logged on one form, Strelow says.

McCann says he couldn't do this job without the support of his wife, Beka. "She has moved across the state twice to follow me and my job, and is constantly putting up with me missing night or weekend activities, or parties. If it wasn't for her, I wouldn't be as successful."

He also credits his parents with his success since they pushed him

to attend college and pursue his dream of becoming a warden.

When he's not working, McCann says he enjoys his "way too many hobbies."

"My new passion over the last three years is playing ice hockey," he says, adding that he usually plays three times a week and that the game allows him to escape "the normal things" he does. He also enjoys traveling with his wife, and stopping by as many breweries as they can while on vacations. (So far, the two have visited 109 breweries, and that doesn't include those they have been to more than once.) And then there is fishing, hunting and gardening, too.

Jagodzinski adds that McCann also plays the banjo, and is a talented artist who carves decoys and does metalwork. No matter what he does, McCann puts in the time to hone his skills, he says.

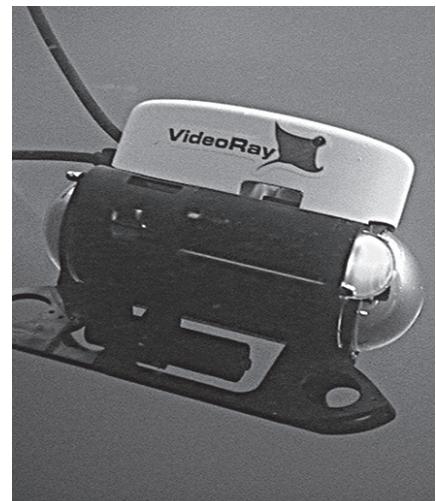
"He even built himself a small rink in his backyard so he could work on his skating and puck handling skills," Jagodzinski says. "There may be only one Earl Scruggs and one Wayne Gretzky. But Ed McCann makes sure he is the best he can be."

While McCann is proud about receiving the coveted Haskell Noyes Award, he is equally proud of one other thing: that he is the first field warden to receive the award after being nominated by his peers.

"That means as much to me as winning The Watch itself," he says.

About the award

Haskell Noyes, a Milwaukee businessman and early chairman of the Wisconsin Conservation Commission, created the award and presented the first gold watch in 1930. Every year since, members of the Noyes family have been at the banquet to make the presentation.



MISSION AGAINST the clock

By Joanne M. Haas

Minutes pass differently.

A clock is cruel when its minutes are agonizingly slow, creeps of a single heavy second after another, tracking a timeless, helpless wait. The minutes all feel the same, and they all hurt.

Or, the clock goes into rapid fire, spewing turbo-charged minutes in a race with responders who pull their underwater mobile search cameras, laptops and expert search skills

together in honed efforts to find and retrieve submerged victims before the water shows its truly wicked side.

"Sometimes," says DNR Marine Unit Warden Mike Neal of Door County, "you don't have a lot of time."

Search and recover: This is the story of how specially trained Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources conservation wardens use underwater

(top left) Warden Mike Neal on a dive. One of the advantages of ROVs is that the technology helps to keep divers safer. (top right) Once a "target" has been located, divers follow the ROV's tether line, visible at the rear of the ROV, to the "target" and confirm what it may be. (above) Lt. Joe Jerich.

mobile search devices equipped with lights, cameras, sonar/radar and tether lines of 400 to 500 feet to search for things like sunken property lost in floods, capture free-floating fishing nets killing fish and waterfowl or scale under-water surfaces for potential explosive devices near large-scale public events. These units are known as Remotely Operated Vehicles or ROVs. But, without a doubt,

the most heartfelt job is the mission to locate a drowning victim for a survivor suspended in agonizing waits when time ... stands ... still.

Four and one-half minutes

That's how long it took in a recent January's sub-zero air for DNR Conservation Warden Phil Dorn to assemble his ROV, glide it under Rice Lake's ice cover in Barron County and remotely drive it until the submerged body of a missing 42-year-old snowmobiler was visible on a laptop monitor.

14 minutes

That's how long it took Warden Mike Neal to deploy his ROV into the dark water near a hydroelectric dam and locate a drowning victim. He mapped the area. He then directed the local Public Safety Diver on the detailed course, telling the diver what to feel for as he followed the tether line that linked his laptop

computer to the ROV, which was waiting deep in the water. The diver followed the tether, making a recovery before the dam was programmed to open and release rushing water that was certain to push the victim's body and the diver far away down river.

"That was a black water dive," Neal says. "You literally have 12 or 16 inches of visibility. For the diver's safety, I sent him down following the ROV's line. He made the recovery and was up – in less than a minute."

The recovery missions led by Dorn and Neal were close to textbook cases and were done by the time it took to read about them.

"They all don't go that fast," Lt. Joe Jerich of Milwaukee County says of body-recovery missions. Jerich heads this specially trained mission-ready warden team who assist local search efforts when requested. "The value of these underwater units is that they can bring swifter closure for the families. Maybe we can minimize the

time of not knowing."

A longtime diver, Neal says he's no equipment expert, but it may be harder to find a greater fan of the ROV. "When you can take a piece of equipment and use the technology and the sonar, and find things in black water you can't see 6 inches in front of your face, that is huge!"

The ROV is a relatively new addition to the Wisconsin Bureau of Law Enforcement's Warden Service. A ROV is amazingly portable for such a big job. It can weigh as little as less than 6.6 pounds to possibly 50 pounds.

Joystick drives mission-ready team on sad business

Jerich says the ROV/sonar units operate much like a video game – complete with joystick and screen. The wardens drive the unit with the joystick and watch it travel on the laptop monitor that is linked to the ROV's camera. The warden can be on land, or in a boat on water or on the ice.

The 19 wardens who are part

of this mission-ready team regularly train with the ROV/sonar in between all their other duties to improve their skills and success rate. "It's not a 100 percent guarantee," Jerich says. "But they do have a lot of success at finding people. In fact, it's more than 50 percent now."

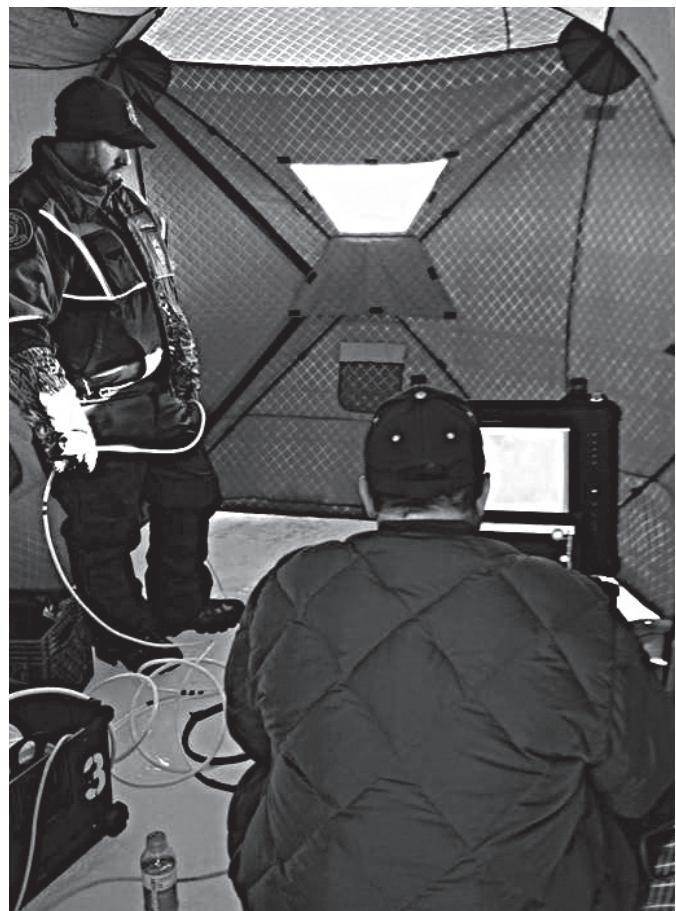
That success rate also weighs on the wardens who respond with the goal of helping the family and friends get back their loved one to have their final goodbyes. Some travel hours to get to the search site with the sole goal to help as they understand the emotional impacts, and a lack of success makes for a long, tough drive home.

A tool for the living

The role of the DNR's ROV/sonar warden team is about as serious as life gets because it can negate a life or death situation – not for the victim who tragically already is gone, but for the public safety diver who stands by ready to search and retrieve. "Can you imagine how long a

(left) DNR Marine Warden Amie Egstad, Bayfield, supervises Bayfield Elementary School fifth grade students as they take the controls of the remote operation gear to maneuver the ROV. (right) The Saxon Harbor after the 2016 storm. It's difficult to use ROVs in flood conditions because the equipment can get tangled in things people can't see.





diver might have had to crawl around in that water, in minus 5 temperatures, to find the individual Warden Phil Dorn located on that January day?" Jerich says.

Neal can because he's done recovery dives that today he classifies as "just stupid" with a splash of wonderment to how he survived. "This is all about the safety of the diver because by the time we (ROV team) get called, it is now likely a recovery," says Neal, also a longtime member of the Door County dive team. The goal is to find the deceased, but the safety of those involved is paramount.

"When it is a recovery, we do not want to see anyone else get hurt in the mission."

In the past, it could've meant swimming for extended periods with little luck except ensuring fatigue – or looking in conditions known as 'black water' – when divers can only see inches in front of their faces and hop-

ing they will bump into what they are looking for.

What is his best example of how important the equipment can be? Consider that case of a person who drowned near the hydroelectric dam. The dam operator told Neal he had about 90 minutes to find and to retrieve the victim because the dam was slated to open, which meant the body would be swept downstream.

Neal says knowing about where the person disappeared is crucial in mapping the search area to find the body quickly so a diver can be sent on a fast mission. A fast, efficient driver, in turn, helps the survivors and minimizes the risk to the divers. Once a "target" has been located, the divers follow the ROV's tether line to the "target" and confirm what it may be. Some ROVs have grabbers that can hold onto the target – especially helpful if currents are strong – as part of the mission

to retrieve the body.

Neal says these moves are done as quickly as possible not only to increase the chances of a recovery, but also to help the survivors who are enduring the wait. "In their minds, they know their loved one is gone. But they can't move forward until they can have the funeral and everything else that goes with it for closure."

"The ROV has its limitations," Neal says. "It may not work well if there is a strong current or too much time has passed since the drowning. It is not perfect, but it is an invaluable tool."

Most of the uses by wardens have been to assist in recovering underwater victims — but not all.

Program tied to Homeland Security efforts

The roots of how the DNR Bureau of Law Enforcement got into this type of ROV/sonar ex-

pertise stretch back through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security as it sought ways to bolster on-water security.

Wisconsin is known for water. Bordered by Lake Michigan, Lake Superior and the Mississippi River, Wisconsin is home to 84,000 river miles and more than 5,000 lakes.

ROV/sonar team member and Marine Warden Amie Egstad serves Bayfield County where she patrols Lake Superior. Egstad was called as a responder to a massive flood in July 2016 at Iron County's Saxon Harbor where one man died and millions of dollars' worth of damage was caused to boats, the harbor and the campground. The floods that came through washed out roads, boats, campers and docks, and shoved a boat into Lake Superior.

Egstad says it was hard to use the ROV in those kinds of flood conditions. "The problem was it was brown water from the

(far left photo) A warden launches a ROV to scan a ship for possible explosive devices. (left photo) A warden team stands on ice under a shelter as one feeds the tether line into the water as another warden drives the ROV and watches its camera on the laptop monitor.

runoff. We had everything from boats, to pieces of the docks, dock wires, little boats and more in the water. When the water is brown, it is not safe to use the ROV because it can get tangled in things we simply can't see."

However, they were able to use their side-scan unit on their boat to find several 30- or 40-foot boats that were sunk on the bottom of the lake, which they then retrieved and stopped further fuel leakage, she says.

Another use of Egstad's ROV is the search for invasive species, such as quagga and zebra mussels. She can use the ROV to get close views on pipes and rocks where the mussels can gather and multiply rapidly.

Egstad also works with fisheries and other agencies to locate reports of ghost nets or free-floating commercial nets that can cause havoc for fish and aquatic life.

One of her favorite things to do with the ROV is to help area school children learn about their water resources by seeing what's in there. "That generation grew up with video games and joysticks. They have the eye-hand coordination down. This can get them thinking about robotics, the outdoors and their resources," she says. "This absolutely gets kids out of the indoor classroom and into the outdoors to learn. Some of them have been very surprised to see the litter and debris lying on the bottom of the lake."

The students watch in real time what the ROV sees through its camera on Egstad's laptop on the dock. She says the students were disgusted that some use Lake Superior as

a dump, and that the beauty of the lake from the shore didn't always match what was in store below. "That's wrong!" one student says as the ROV's camera displayed all the trash.

So popular are Egstad's ROV days that the inquiries from other teachers are rolling in.

A new DNR warden service to help communities

"We have a niche for on-water security stuff," Jerich says. "We have highly trained staff, the boats and all the water equipment for the state agencies. That's what we are known for."

The ROV/sonar warden team typically travels in pairs when their services are requested by local officials looking to find a missing person in the water or to search an area as needed for Homeland Security reasons. One keeps watch on the computer monitor and "flies" the ROV while the other feeds a tether line to allow the unit to power through the water.

"You do need precision to operate these and that's why we train to create what is a subset of wardens specially trained in using these units," Jerich says. The training consists of three-day operator classes using the classrooms, pool and shorelines at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point campus, under-ice training at Ashland and sonar training in Illinois.

There are six ROV units strategically placed statewide, based upon locations of the most calls and water. And members of the mission-ready team also are located statewide – mostly around the borders

or within a drive of an hour or two. There also is specialized sonar known as a "tow fish" that is a high-resolution sonar that looks like a torpedo. Neal calls it invaluable and Jerich agrees. "You drag it in the water behind the boat and it can cover a lot of ground in a hurry compared to traditional search methods," he says. "If we have a drowning in Lake Michigan, we can cover a lot of area in a hurry. The program is growing and word is getting out," Jerich says. "We are getting more and more calls."

In 2014, the team performed 12 deployments to rescue requests. In 2015, the team was deployed 24 times. In 2016, it was 26 deployments, and in 2017, 24 deployments.

So far in 2018, the ROV team has had eight deployments.

Jerich says there are other uses for the units, such as radiation detectors that can monitor for nuclear radiation or a dirty bomb. There is an attachment called a hull crawler that allows for the inspection of the underside of a ship. Neal says he prefers using the ROV/sonar to examine an underside of a ship's hull or wall as it is more effective in locating something vs. missing something due to visibility conditions. With the sonar it doesn't matter if it is black water or crystal clear, the sonar can "see" objects more clearly than a diver can at times.

"You map the area and look at it compared to your data base from a previous scan. Is there an anomaly? If there is, then we can clear it. It's a lot more efficient that putting someone in harm's way and trying to swim underneath a 1,000-foot

freighter."

The deepest the device can go is about 1,000 feet. Jerich says one of the ROVs went to 475 feet to assist the State Historical Society in an underwater archeology case in Lake Michigan.

Finding a sunken ship along the way

And then there was the time Neal found a shipwreck.

"The Hanover sank in 1869 near Fish Creek on Green Bay," he says. Someone told him about an old commercial fishing boat. "So, we went out, found it and measured it."

It was 24 feet wide by 109 feet long. Knowing that it wasn't an old commercial fishing boat based upon what Neal could see, "I got ahold of the State Historical Society who physically dove on the site and mapped the wreckage." The State Historical Society confirmed that the sunken ship is the Hanover.

Jerich says the wardens also have been called upon to do bridge inspections after a flood, as well as inspecting commercial nets – both jobs considered dangerous for divers. While the units have various uses, Jerich says there is a top use that trumps all of them.

"Victim recovery is No. 1," he says. "If we can help a family find closure at the time of great loss, that's the mission."

A mission against the clock.

JOANNE M. HAAS is the public information office/law enforcement fitness specialist with the Wisconsin DNR Bureau of Law Enforcement.

obituaries

RUSSELL CHRISTENSEN

Russell Christensen, 89, of Suring, Wisconsin, died on March 29, 2018, while under the attentive care of his family and Heartland Hospice.

Christensen was known for his love of the outdoors, considering it precious time spent

with family and friends hunting and fishing. Along with his family and wife of over 65 years, he enjoyed many happy hours in the garden. He served as a conservation warden for the Wisconsin DNR from 1956-1980.

He is survived by his wife, Arvilla; sons, Howard (Karen) Christensen and Jeff (Nancy) Christensen; daughter, Toni (Kurt) Zastrow; granddaughter, Heidi (Adam) Brickner; and grandsons, Mike (Jinhee) Christensen and Jonathan Christensen.

He was preceded in death by his father, William; mother, Clara; brother, Conrad; and sister, Constance.

Christensen's funeral was held April 7, and he was interred in Breed Union Cemetery.

ELMER R. LEWAN

Elmer R. "Butch" Lewan, 88, of Brule, died on April 7, 2018, at Twin Ports Health Services in Superior, Wisconsin.

Lewan was born on April 29, 1929, in Hamtramck, Michigan, to the late Stanley and Frances (Szemraj) Lewan.

He was raised on the family farm in Lublin, Wisconsin, and attended schools in Lublin and Gilman. He moved to Chicago and was employed there for several years before he returned to central Wisconsin to begin a job as a road inspector for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

Lewan's love of the outdoors steered him to be a conservation officer with the Wis-



consin Department of Natural Resources. He was hired in 1977 and served with great distinction for 27 years. For 15 years after retirement, he devoted his time as the trail manager for the 62-mile Tri-County Recreational Corridor that ran from Ashland to Superior. In addition, Lewan also worked for Hood Trucking Company and delivered equipment to Canada, Minnesota and Wisconsin after his retirement.

Lewan's fishing and hunting skills were an important part of his life. He enjoyed fishing trips to Canada with family and friends, playing baseball and watching his favorite team on TV – the "Braves." He loved to garden and took pride in it. Lewan also was very talented playing polkas on his concertina, which entertained thousands over the years. He was very proud to play polkas with his idol, Elmer Scheid, a renowned concertina player from Minnesota who produced 15 albums.

In addition, Lewan was a great cook who enjoyed cooking for the various fish camps in the area. He truly loved the outdoors and respected the deer, bear and turkeys that stopped over daily to visit him.

He was a devoted member of the Brule River Lions Club, where he received local and national awards, including the prestigious Melvin Jones Award. In addition, Lewan earned the Excellent Service Award for his years of service to the Tri-County Corridor. He had a great love for the outdoors, the environment and spending time with his family and friends.

He is survived by his two brothers, Ray (Pauline) Lewan and Sylvester "Silver" Lewan, both of Lublin; two nephews, Randy (Pam) Lewan and Tim (Deb) Lewan, both of Thorp; two nieces, Michele (Eugene) Pogodzinski, of Thorp, and Lisa (Jim) Turenne, of Merrill; 12 great-nieces and nephews; four great-great nieces and nephews; cousins; other relatives and special friends Tubby (Norma) Olson and family, John Burzynski, Richard (Kathy) Mackey and family, and Ed (Kay) Hill and family.

His parents preceded him in death. Funeral services were held on April 20, 2018, at St. Mary's Polish National Catholic Church in Lublin. The Rev. Marion Talaga officiated and burial followed in the parish cemetery.

KEITH "TRAPPER" VANCE

Keith "Trapper" Vance, 65, died on Feb. 10, 2018, of pancreatic cancer.



Vance was born in Viroqua, Wisconsin, on March 19, 1952, to William and Freda (Fredrickson) Vance. He married his wife, Kay, on July 25, 1981, and they had one son, Max.

As Keith would often say, he was a jack-of-all-trades and master of none. Although, technically speaking, he was a master electrician.

Over the years, Vance held many occupations. At 14, he started running projectors and later took ownership of the Viroqua Theater. He was a special conservation warden from 1980-2003, where he worked in Vernon County with retired Warden Dick Wallin. He also worked with many wardens in the La Crosse area.

In addition, Vance was a hunter safety instructor for more than 20 years, a volunteer firefighter in Viroqua for 14 years, and an officer, dispatcher and K-9 handler and trainer in law enforcement.

He also wore many other hats, such as farmer, beekeeper, trapper and "professional" rendezvous re-enactor.

He is survived by his wife, Kay Vance; his son, Max (Kelsey) Vance; and granddaughter, Madelynn. He was also excited for the arrival of his second grandchild in July.

A memorial service was held on Feb. 15 at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Viroqua. The Wisconsin Conservation Warden Honor Guard was in attendance.

The Wisconsin Conservation Warden Honor Guard is available upon request for the services of retired or active conservation wardens or deputy conservation wardens.

Arrangements for the honor guard should be included in final affairs planning and then by contacting the chief warden when services for the deceased have been scheduled. For more information, contact Lt. Jeremy Peery, honor guard coordinator, at 715-210-0164 or Chief Warden Todd Schaller at 608-381-8927.

TRAPPER'S LAST SCOUTING RUN

By Cletus Alsteen

Trapper and I had a great conversation on the ride back to Green Lake. Upon arriving along County Park, we chuckled at the folderol and foils of removing the lakeside blind. We arrived at Ehrenberg field, his favorite place to hunt.

Oh, what memories we cherished. The initiation of GKD - Goose Killer Dave - and the wayward goose that just wouldn't leave when picking up decoys. As I recalled that cold day, when I hobbled with my back out and used a shovel as a support staff, we laughed at the calamity of setting a big spread and the stupidity of camouflage and long hours in layout blinds at the corner of the ditch line where we parked amongst the decoys. Later, we gathered everyone for hot lunch on that cold day when Doc shot the goose.

We graced the west fence line, where he doubled midday, even before I had walked back from parking the truck at the road. We laughed once again at the "alleged long sailor," who surely made the far woods or creek bottom a half mile away during the blinding snowstorm, remembering how Bob Constalie and Trap trudged out for the long hike and search, each on a separate line, and young pup Kolachee "pounced like a fox" between them at 200 yards. We laughed again at how badly we misjudged that one, and Kolachee's antics. We visited the wildflower patch, ¼ mile north uphill, where we jumped the coyote on an earlier scouting run. We gave thanks to all the furbearers that graced his life.

We ate late lunch at Walkers,

having enjoyed so many "buck burger" nights.

We again scouted the "tranny field" and snickered at all the adversity life had thrown at us and that we were able to overcome. We marveled at how a young son grew to become a dedicated waterfowler, harvesting four greenheads and a pair of honkers, while these two old dogs licked their wounds from "too much chick" at Lakeview.

We gazed at the hilltop field where we scrambled to set decoys with Doc, while ducks tornadoed in upon us, and then the geese came. And oh, how they came. That night's blizzard left us all snowbound.

And at the grain bin field, how appropriate and fitting a tribute as a trio of geese lifted, and then seven mallards. The last duck was very, very dark, and I immediately thought of the enjoyment of a father watching his son fulfill a lifelong dream of bagging a black duck. But I just can't totally swear to it. Age and these eyes have taken its toll.

We relished at the spot; that black duck meant so much. We prayed... and we cried.

We ventured to the west fence line and recalled Snicky on top of the snow bank, and then with just her butt sticking out and tail wagging, watched as she pulled that wounded hen mallard out of a rabbit hole. And we thanked God for all the wonderful dogs He had given us, to share and enjoy, to laugh at their antics.

As we drove past the airport field, a flock of 30 geese saluted us, a final farewell as they flew toward the sacred grain bin field.



Upon the ice of Green Lake, we blessed the spot of Max's first lake trout. We sat and fished together as we watched the sunset at the very spot Trap caught his first lake trout, and got his second as the bait was on its way back down. A limit of trout in less than 10 minutes.

We fished together to full dark, recounting the blessings of true friendship. And as I

stepped out of the ice shack, there was Orion, the constellation of the hunter. And I knew in my heart and soul, Trapper had reached heaven.

Eternal rest, Mountain Man.

CLETUS ALSTEEN is a retired conservation warden from Green Lake, serving from 1999 to 2006.

WCWA store to add new T-shirts

Check out the Wisconsin Conservation Warden Association online store for all your WCWA merchandise needs.

Go to wigamewarden.com and click on the "WCWA Store" icon. There you will find WCWA hats, shirts, sweatshirts, posters, prints, cookbooks, and coaster sets. You can also place a phone order by contacting Sean Neverman at 608-770-8096.

New T-shirts with the logo on the right will be added shortly to the store, Neverman said. The shirts can be purchased online or by phone.

Don't see something you want? Contact Neverman and let him know what items you'd like to see.





looking back

By Bill Schwengel

June 1956

The Conservation Commission approved a reorganizational plan for the fish management, game management and law enforcement divisions. This was the counterpart of a plan by the forestry divisions.

The Conservation Commission adopted a policy on uniforms for Conservation Department personnel, stipulating that, at the discretion of the conservation director, uniforms may be supplied to supervisory personnel in law enforcement, fish management, game management, forest and parks, forest protection and forest management, as well as supervisory personnel in information and education who regularly come into contact with the public. Uniforms were to be of similar color, texture and quality, although the arm patches differed and included distinctive divisional insignia.

February 1960

J.R. Smith, superintendent of game management, reported the registered deer kill was more than 105,000 in the 1959 deer season and that interest was high in the early bear season, which was limited to eight northwestern counties that suffered heavy bear damage. About 14,000 permits were issued for this special season and 182 bear were taken. In addition, 397 were shot during the regular [gun deer] season.

Since 1974, hunters using firearms have been required to possess a separate big game license to hunt bear, and bear could no longer be taken during the November gun deer season. Since 1956, all bears harvested had to be registered, but a carcass tag was not required until 1974, according to retired wildlife biologist Mike Gappa.

May 1960

The Wisconsin Conservation Bulletin became a monthly issue after July 1, 1960, due to a funding shortage. "This is a reflection of the fact that the information and education budget, like the budget in all other divisions in the Conservation Department, had to be cut in order to get by on the funds now available," the

article stated. Tentative plans are to revamp the Bulletin's format with the January-February 1961 issue, going to a larger page size, but fewer pages. (Note: The department's original publication, *The Wisconsin Conservationist*, was started in 1919. The current predecessor of the Conservation Bulletin, the *Wisconsin Natural Resources* magazine, changed from a bimonthly to a quarterly publication this year.)

June 1960

By unanimous vote, the Conservation Commission decided to ask the Legislature at its spring session to improve the department's financial situation by enacting a park sticker bill and by providing relief from the burden of making bounty payments entirely from conservation funds.

The Commission approved requisitions: law enforcement uniform replacements, \$3,847.13; 30 mobile radio units for law enforcement, \$20,000; and 12 boats, motors, trailers and miscellaneous equipment for enforcement of the boat safety law, \$14,817.

July-August 1966

A new law authorizes retirement at 60 instead of 65 for state employees in protective occupations. The commission decided to apply the rule gradually, beginning with employees who are 64, then those who are 63. Protective occupations included law enforcement, corrections, fire control and pilot staff.

Happy anglers have taken rainbow trout from streams flowing into Lake Michigan this year – and the explanation came in a report the commission received from Charles N. Lloyd, superintendent of fish management. The department has had remarkable success with experimental stocking since the sea lamprey came under control. Rainbow trout apparently feed on abundant alewives in Lake Michigan, and grow fast to reach trophy size in two years. As of now, Lakes Michigan and Superior offer unusually high returns.

BILL SCHWENGEL is a retired conservation warden from Eau Claire.



(left) Joey Esterline named this deer "Chemo Challenge" since even going through chemotherapy during the fall gun season couldn't stop her from hunting. (right) Joey and her husband, Scott, worked with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to implement several pollinator plots on their property.

WCWA awards 'Mama Bear' lifetime membership

By Barbara A. Schmitz

She is known simply as "Mama Bear" since most the recruits view her as their "Academy Mother." That's because whatever they needed or wanted, Joey Esterline always had time and an answer for them.

Esterline, of Sparta, retired in August after spending 11 years as the law enforcement training assistant. In that time, she estimates she has worked with about 150 warden and park and forest ranger recruits. Her job meant that she kept track of everything related to the recruits' training at the 720-hour law enforcement academy. But she also coordinated lodging and logistics for recruit trainings held throughout the state, purchased needed equipment for recruits and much more.

"If recruits had any needs, I was their contact person and I usually could fulfill their needs," Esterline said.

For her work with the warden force, the Wisconsin Conservation Warden Association presented her a lifetime WCWA membership during a team meeting/retirement lunch at the Academy. "I was so surprised and appreciative of the lifetime membership," she said. "It is such an honor and, for me, it qualified all my years of being an LTE; my work and dedication was valued by those I worked closely with in the Bureau of Law Enforcement training section."

Esterline said her favorite part of the job was always the beginning and ending of



Lt. David Holmes presents Joey Esterline with a WCWA lifetime membership at her retirement party.

the training academy. "It's so exciting to meet the new recruits and learn their personalities. And then seeing those recruits graduate is such an emotional experience. It's kind of like watching your own children grow up. You see them struggle, pick themselves up by their bootstraps and keep going."

She previously worked as a 4-H youth development agent and saw the LTE job posting for the DNR in the local paper. "I'm an avid hunter and outdoors person and I always appreciated the DNR," she said. "I thought this would be an OK job for a while."

So she applied for the job and got it, thinking it would only last 6 months. But that one LTE job soon turned into two LTE jobs, and since Esterline liked the work,

she stayed.

"I really appreciated seeing what the DNR does to train wardens and rangers," she said. "I could relate to a lot of it, and I have always had really great supervisors."

Her current supervisor, Lt. David Holmes, said Joey had an impact on 13 recruit classes that she supported with meals, lodging, expenses and advice. "Joey's assistance with these new staff in their career formative years has been vital to their success and left a lasting impression on wardens and rangers."

Even a diagnosis of breast cancer a year ago couldn't keep Esterline down. She went through surgery and chemotherapy. If she'd have chemo on a Wednesday, she would be off Thursday and Friday. But Monday morning she'd be back at work. "I'm a fighter," she said, adding that her co-workers were so supportive.

Esterline said she plans to keep busy in her retirement. "For 26 years, I've been a Farmer's Market vendor, which was like having a second job. So I'm doing catch up on all my gardening and that's keeping me busy."

But she and her husband are also doing habitat and prairie restoration on their 80 acres, and both are avid hunters, archery and firearms. In fact, they've scheduled a hunting trip to Wyoming yet this year. "It will be nice," she said. "Since I'm retired, I won't have to rush back to work."



Gotcha!

Cartoon razzes warden who got violation wrong

By Barbara A. Schmitz

Dane County Conservation Warden Jake Donar had been working a shining complaint all fall, and hadn't had much to show for it. But he hadn't given up, either.

"I have had lots of complaints over the years of people shining at odd hours on that road," he says. He suspected that persistence would eventually pay off.

So on this particular night around Thanksgiving 2017, Donar set up about 11 o'clock on the isolated road with binoculars. He rolled his window down so he could listen for gunshots. Then he watched, listened and waited. And waited.

Finally, at about 4 a.m., he saw a vehicle slowly moving down the roadway.

"From where I was situated, I couldn't tell what type of a vehicle it was," he recalls. "But they slowed down by one of the fields that deer were in, and it looked like they shined headlights into the field. I heard a side door or window open and thwack, and then the deer I could see in the head-

lights ran off the field. I thought they had shot with a bow or crossbow..."

The vehicle took off again, proceeded down the road, took a turn and headed down a different road. The vehicle drove a short ways and turned into a driveway before turning around to come back toward Donar. Still in darkness, Donar pulled off into a field until the vehicle passed. He turned his vehicle around and started following it.

The suspicious vehicle again slowed down and stopped. Someone got out of the vehicle for a few seconds and then got back in. "I figured I had enough," he recalls, "so I got up behind the vehicle and initiated a traffic stop."

He announced himself as a state conservation warden and told the occupants to keep their hands where he could see them. After looking inside the vehicle Donar noticed two older women, one smoking a cigarette, both with their hands up. When Donar asked what they were doing, they replied, "Delivering newspapers."

Donar shined his flashlight into the vehicle and saw newspapers all over; it was apparent the two weren't lying. "So I told them to have a great morning and they took off," he chuckled.

He went back to his spot to watch for vehicles, and about an hour later, Donar caught the shiner who was the reason for the complaint. "It wasn't a wasted night," he laughed and said, "I guess you just have to believe in the complaints you're working."

Donar says he truly thought he had a good case until he saw the two old ladies delivering the morning news. And when it turned out he was wrong, he saw the humor in the situation, too.

Not surprisingly, so, too, did his co-workers, who gave him the cartoon, pictured above, which was presented by Kyle Dilley during a team meeting. Created by Jim Dilley, Kyle's father, the cartoon exaggerates what happened that night, but Donar says it is always important for wardens to have a sense of humor.

It was a race against time as Warden Jake Donar and other rescue personnel tried to free a man stuck in his car after flash floods swept the car off the road into the rising Sugar River.

Donar: 'Everyone deserves credit'

By Joanne M. Haas

Conservation Warden Jake Donar's preparedness, expert boat handling in dangerous currents and teamwork with Dane County Sheriff's deputies and area agencies helped save a man's life after flash flooding swept his car off the road and into the rising Sugar River.

Wisconsin DNR wardens were among numerous emergency response agencies at flooded and washed out roads that caught drivers by surprise in Madison and other western Dane County communities overnight on Aug. 20, 2018, as a record-setting rainfall pummeled the area.

"This rescue would not have been possible without every person working together - and there were multiple emergency responders," said Donar about the rescue off Highway PD near the Military Trail area in southern Dane County. "Everyone deserves credit."

The torrential rains fueled damaging widespread flash floods that forced drivers to abandon their cars as roads and some bridges disappeared into newly formed lakes in Madison and beyond.

The National Weather Service estimated western Dane County area received 13 to more than 15 inches as the storms pounded the area like a bull's-eye.

Madison officials confirmed the death of a man who was swept away after he emerged from his stalled car in a flooded city intersection as bystanders tried to save him.

Donar did not know of the loss of life at that Madison intersection as he was finishing his Monday shift about midnight. But he knew the storms were causing havoc everywhere. And he was about to be pulled into it.

He was on the other side of Sugar River when he got the Dane County emergency call about a man in trouble at the river.

When deputies arrived on scene at the Sugar River, the man was sitting on his car but his leg was pinned in the car.

"Nobody could get to him because of the ripping current," Donar said. "And the water was rising rapidly."

The emergency responders hatched a plan and requested a boat built for these swift water situations. This is where Donar came



in. He raced to the Wisconsin DNR Fitchburg Service Center to get his flat bottom boat and grabbed enough life jackets for all. Meanwhile, back at the river, emergency responders were able to toss the trapped man a flotation ring.

Donar arrived and dropped the boat in the rising, rushing waters. Then he and the two deputies -- Deputy Schiro and Deputy Katzenmeyer -- geared up with the swift water life jackets. Together, they sped into the rushing dark water with Donar at the helm.

Donar tapped his training and knew exactly how to operate the boat in these harrowing conditions. By the time he and the two officers got to the man, the man was holding the ring around his chin to keep his head above the water line. And he was still stuck to his car.

Emergency responders in a second boat were able to get to the deputies and somehow provided a crowbar.

As Donar tells it, one deputy held the man up so he wasn't gulping water as the other deputy used the crowbar on the car to free the man and guided him quickly into the boat, then back to shore to the medical personnel on site.

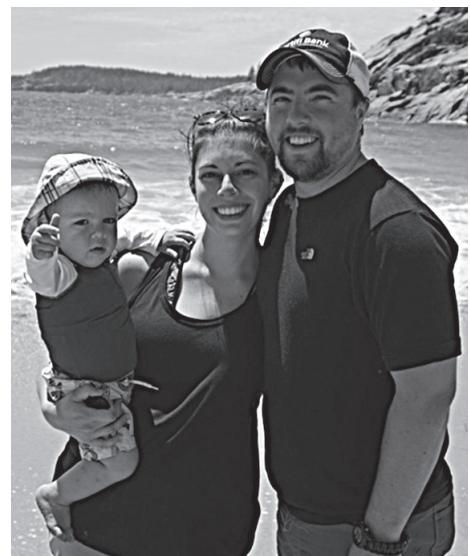
How did that all happen? Donar isn't sure but it worked; and, he is certain the man is safe today because of everyone at the scene. Things happened so fast that Donar isn't sure of all the agencies involved in the rescue, but guesses personnel from the Madison Fire Department, as well as from agencies in Pine Bluff, Verona, Fitchburg and other municipalities, helped out. As he puts it: "They all were there!"

"In the time we were out there, the water went up about another several inches," Donar said. "That man would have drowned without the teamwork of all the emergency responders who came to the scene."

JOANNE M. HAAS is the public information office/law enforcement fitness specialist with the DNR Bureau of Law Enforcement.



warden in the spotlight



(left) John Schreiber poses with an elk shot in Colorado while on a hunting trip with his brothers and father. (right) The Schreiber family in Maine's Acadia National Park: John, wife Brandi, and son Cameron

By Stephanie Daniel Merkel

As a college freshman at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, John Schreiber was out on his own for the first time. While many kids went back home during their summers off, Schreiber remembers the compelling urge to leave his comfort zone and make his own way.

He applied for jobs outside of the area in national parks, the western United States, Alaska and Canada. He would land a job in 2009 at Northern Tier High Adventure, a Boy Scouts of America adventure camp at their Ely, Minnesota and Atikokan, Ontario bases. For five months, he prepped and guided groups of young people on Boundary Waters adventures lasting 5-14 days.

On the edge of civilization, he realized something that would impact his future. "It was my first natural resources-related job," he recalls. "I gained independence and leadership skills, and knew that I wanted to do something like this, or (be) in the outdoors for a career."

Schreiber would initially take classes to become a soil and water conservationist, but decided that he wanted to interact with people and be more hands-on. That is when he decided on the warden career. "I have always enjoyed hands-on work in the outdoors," said Schreiber. "Outdoors service and working with the community are important to me."

His path would include working as a trail ranger in Stevens Point, attending the police academy at Mid State Technical College (in 2010), and working two summers as a park ranger in Hartman Creek State Park, all while pursuing a degree in resource management conservation law enforcement, and a minor in forestry management and recreation.

Schreiber went through the warden hiring process and was hired in December 2012 at graduation. He trained at the academy in Fort McCoy and then did field warden training in Hayward, Trempealeau and Green Bay.

His first station was in Chippewa County, and then in fall 2017 he was transferred to Green Lake County.

"I enjoy working with the fish and game community," said Schreiber. "I also really enjoy that if working in the office gets mundane, I am able to jump in my boat, truck or ATV and discover new areas of my county."

Schreiber's passion and work ethic have not gone unnoticed by his peers. As recipient of the 2017 Wisconsin Bow Hunters Association's Warden of the Year award, the 2017 National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) Operation Dry-water National Officer of the Year, and the 2018 North American Wildlife Enforcement Officers Association's (NAWEOA) Torch Award, he has demonstrated profes-

sionalism, initiative and a strong focus on resource protection and public safety.

"As wardens, we are looked at to be ethical in our decision-making. This is something my dad, Michael, instilled in [my brothers and I]," said Schreiber. "He taught us to be ethical, honest and hardworking. He has been by biggest supporter of why I choose this career."

Schreiber and his family, wife Brandi and almost 2-year-old son Cameron, reside in Green Lake where the family enjoys the outdoors.

"Cameron is a little spitfire and loves to play outside and be on the boat," laughs Schreiber. "I have even taken him to trap beavers at 3-months-old in a baby Bjorn!"

Schreiber enjoys hunting and fishing, camping, hiking, snowboarding, meat processing, and even officiating weddings as an ordained minister.

With a young family, Schreiber may have settled down a bit, but that feeling to escape his comfort zone still creeps in.

"I am currently preparing and training to climb Mount Rainier with my brothers and friends, and a mountain goat hunt in Colorado," he said excitedly. "When your mountain goat tag comes up, you have to be ready to go!"

As he sees it, there are plenty more adventures for him yet to experience.

STEPHANIE DANIEL MERKEL is an Oshkosh freelance writer.



During opening weekend of the 2016 deer gun season in Chippewa County, Schreiber, along with Warden Kevin Christorf, seized 12 deer, made multiple arrests, apprehended criminal offenders, issued multiple citations, and caught a repeat revoked offender poaching deer.

Some of the many memorable cases

By Stephanie Daniel-Merkel

Warden John Schreiber enjoys working on all cases from large-scale environmental cases involving septic haulers to fishing and hunting investigations.

A memorable deer poaching case occurred while working in Chippewa County. For months, he had received multiple deer shining and shooting complaints.

"I would be ready to go at any time," recalls Schreiber. "But I was always a day late and a dollar short."

One night, Schreiber had just taken off his duty belt, and was getting ready to settle down for the evening when a call came in. It was a cold November night, and snow was falling.

The complaint was familiar — another report of shining and shooting deer. But this time, the culprits were seen dragging a deer out of the ditch.

Schreiber headed back out and parked his truck in a driveway near the site of the complaint. A vehicle drove by and Schreiber began to follow.

The truck increased its speed, and Schreiber did, too. Soon a high-speed chase ensued along a back-country road.

"There were poor radio signals," Schreiber recalls. "Then, my truck blew a main fuse and all of the truck lights went black." Needless to say, he wouldn't catch the culprits that night either. The next morning, Schreiber's truck was repaired and he called in the help of a posse of wardens.

The wardens searched the area and found a dead deer, but not much else. They canvassed the neighborhood of small shacks, and interviewed individuals regarding the incident.

While approaching one shack, Schreiber noticed tire tracks that matched ones left by the vehicle that fled. He knocked on the door, but there was no answer. After looking in a window, he saw a person hiding under a blanket on the couch.

The individual finally came to the door and after a two hour-long interview, he admitted that he and his two friends had been shining and shooting deer, and had led him on a high-speed chase.

After a complete investigation, the driver of the vehicle received felony fleeing charges, and all three individuals involved were charged with multiple deer hunting violations.

Schreiber isn't afraid of emerging himself in an investigation. While working in Chippewa County, he had received a complaint of a man bragging about keeping sturgeon.

Schreiber went down to where the man was fishing. It was 1 a.m. and Schreiber had made sure to dress appropriately with a flat brim hat and tank top to blend in. He set up right next to the fisherman and started fishing. It wasn't long before the man started to brag.

"I acted like I didn't know what I was doing," recalls Schreiber. "So, the guy offered to let me use his bait saying 'ya wanna really catch some fish? Ever hear of a sturgeon. They're worth lots of money on the black market. Put some meat on your hook.'"

The fisherman proceeded to open his cooler and Schreiber was surprised to see that it contained two big sturgeon filets and a head. He discreetly contacted authorities while continuing to fish with the man until a police officer came and arrested the fisherman for criminal possession.



Big Muskego Lake circa the late 1990s.

2 big duck shoots on Muskego 100 years apart

By Bruce Buenning

In his iconic book, "A Sand County Almanac," Aldo Leopold told of a hunting trip when "on Sept. 10, 1877, two brothers shooting Muskego Lake bagged 210 blue-winged teal in one day."

Big Muskego Lake is situated in southeastern Waukesha County and the northeast part of the lake lies within a mile of the Milwaukee County line. The lake is part lake and part marsh, and it has a rich and colorful history and tradition in waterfowling.

It also has large areas of cattail bogs, some floating, and many large and elaborate duck blinds present during the waterfowl season on this 2,300-acre lake. It is common for Milwaukee hunters to come out to Muskego in the morning to get in an hour or two of duck hunting prior to going to work in Milwaukee factories and offices.

In December of 1976, I arrested an individual who had taken two Canada goose goslings from Muskego Lake the previous spring and raised them in a cage in his backyard. The following November, I received a complaint from this same man that a local bar owner, whose establishment was located on the Muskego lakeshore, had shown him a "large pile of ducks" that the bar owner said he shot on Big Muskego. The ducks, according to the complainant, were located in the tavern's beer cooler and one of the ducks had a metal band attached to its foot. The number, species and sex of the ducks suggested the shooter was grossly over his bag limit. The complainant also said he would testify for a search warrant.

To get a search warrant, I first contacted Warden John Lacenski, the Waukesha court

officer. He, then, talked to the Waukesha District Attorney's office, but the DA was not interested in issuing a warrant. I advised District Warden Norm Wood of the DA's decision and he suggested I contact Wisconsin alcohol and tobacco agents in Madison as he believed they had inspection rights in commercial beer coolers.

So I next contacted an agent in Madison and explained the situation to him. He told me he was a duck hunter himself and that he would be happy to come over and help out. We made plans to meet at 6 o'clock that evening in Muskego.

I recruited Warden Lacenski to help with the case and we met the alcohol agent and his partner in the vicinity of the tavern that evening. John and I waited down the road while the alcohol agents went in first to conduct their inspection of the tavern's business. Shortly after, the agents radioed us that they had discovered the ducks in the beer cooler. John and I proceeded to the tavern and contacted Red, the owner.

John said, "Red, I hear you have some ducks. Mind if we take a look at them?" Red consented and we proceeded to the beer cooler in the basement. Red opened the cooler and we saw a large pile of ducks on the floor of the cooler and one duck did have a metal band attached to its legs. Red stated he had started a plucking service and the ducks belonged to various hunters, but he was unable to give us a single name of any of the owners.

The ducks included 14 drake mallards, 10 hen mallards, three black ducks and one ring-necked duck, which amounted to 1,375 points when the limit was 100 points. The alcohol agents then asked if it was OK

for them to leave and I said sure since they had to drive back to Madison. This almost turned out to be a huge mistake.

John and I finished up the citations, gathered up the ducks and headed up the stairs back into the bar. Much to our surprise and consternation, the room was jam-packed with Red's friends and supporters. They filled the room, all the way to the door, which was our only escape route, taunting us. One heckler said, "You ain't leaving here with them ducks." I looked at John and said, "You ready?" He gave an affirmative head nod, and I said in the best command voice I could muster, "Look out; I'm coming through!" I started for the door with John close behind. The crowd parted, but I was waiting for something to happen until we both made it out the door. As John and I made our getaway across the parking lot to John's squad car, the bartender, Bob, charged out the door, shook his fist and yelled, "Get the heck out of here, and don't you ever come back!" Only he didn't say heck.

Red was convicted of being over the possession limit of ducks, and was fined and his licenses revoked. To add insult to injury, the Madison agents also cited Red for a couple alcohol-related violations.

In the years since the incident, I've thought back to Aldo Leopold and those two brothers who shot 210 teal in 1877, and thought that on Nov. 10, 1977, 100 years later, that a local Muskego tavern owner had a pretty good day of shooting, too. Oh, and I still have that metal duck research band attached to my key ring.

BRUCE BUENNING is a retired Wisconsin conservation warden.

Déjà vu, all over again

By Dave Sabrowsky

Early one morning in October 1986, three friends who had first met in college in 1968 set out to bowhunt in northern Langlade County. The three were Dick Panke, Daryl Persick and me, Dave Sabrowsky. What happened that day would be forever burned into our memories as one of the most arduous, yet rewarding, deer hunting experiences of our lives.

It all began when Daryl wounded a buck while hunting in the early morning. It was a mortal wound, but not the type that quickly kills the animal. A long tracking effort ensued that required all of our skills, but also an inordinate amount of luck.

That buck took us through swamps, into limb littered clear-cuts, through two beaver flowages, and finally died in a manmade impoundment, 8½ hours after Daryl launched his arrow. As hunters, we felt sorrow that the buck had not been immediately killed. But we were proud that we had recovered a deer that very few could have. We were especially happy for Daryl since it was his first bow kill.

Fast forward 27 years to Nov. 7, 2013. The same three friends were back together for another bow hunt, this time in northern Missouri. While many things had changed, including our bodies, one thing had not: our friendship and our desire to be on a deer stand as the day comes alive.

We were all hunting our chosen stands that morning when I received a text from Dick that he had missed a doe and gut shot a buck. Misses are certainly more acceptable than gut shots. The probability of recovery is always precarious when using archery equipment. But the chances of success are reduced significantly with a deer wounded in the paunch.

We opted to remain in our stands until 10 a.m. and then eat lunch and return to our hunting area around 12:30 p.m. to begin tracking. We hoped that the buck would bed early and never leave that bed.

Even though Dick may have lost his edge when shooting at deer, he was still one of the best at recalling the important details after the shot: where the deer stood and its exact escape route. We found small flecks of blood where the buck had been and were able to slowly follow the sparse blood trail for 80-100 yards before it was lost. Dave searched the line of flight hoping to recover the blood trail or better yet, spot the bedded deer. It wasn't to be, but meanwhile, Daryl found some blood. We again had a line and continued on the trail for another 100 yards, before losing it again.

The deer was headed downhill and toward the river, likely seeking the cooling waters for its inflamed wounds. We spotted a pond and felt sure the buck would be there, but we were again wrong. We had no blood trail and he wasn't hiding near the pond, so the next logical conclusion was that he went to the river and we'd have to search its banks. With Dick hugging the river's west bank, Dave coursing (and cussing) through the thick brush west of Dick, and Daryl searching along an old fence line to Dave's right, the hunt continued. No deer and no blood. As we started to converge near a deep ravine, Daryl finally spotted some more blood. Two drops. That was it. But it was blood and we had the deer's direction again.

I followed the apparent line the deer had chosen and his course seemed to be leading to a small delta along the river. So I eased down into the ravine and out to the river's edge. No buck. No blood. No fresh tracks. Where was that bugger?

Daryl decided to head back to the truck, while Dick and I continued to look for the wounded buck. We eased along on the deer trail and when I started to climb the opposite hill I spotted two more drops of blood. This time the trail went over the bank and directly toward the river. Our hopes of finding the buck were renewed.

But was the buck on our side of the river or did he cross? We couldn't see anything fresh on the opposite bank so we opted to scour the west shoreline. We hadn't gone far when I saw the buck running 60 yards in front of us. The rack matched Dick's description and he was humped so I was certain it was our quarry. After getting Dick's attention, I just stopped and watched. Nothing happened for a few minutes, but I eventually saw the deer go over a small ridge approximately 150 yards south of our location. Dick and I decided to sit down and wait, giving the deer some time to settle and hopefully bed.

After a half hour we sneaked up to that ridge with Dick in the lead, hoping that when we crested the hill, he would spot the deer on the other side. Nothing. Even though we knew his exact route to that ridge, I was only able to find two drops of blood. This deer just wouldn't bleed.

I don't know what forces were guiding us, but we continued on for another 200 yards. As we approached some thick cover, I again spotted a deer trotting through the brush. Was it our deer? We continued toward the brush and I finally spotted some fresh blood. In fact, for the first time, we actually had bright blood and enough to follow as fast as we could walk. Dick said he had heard a crash toward where we were traveling. Finally, we spotted some movement off our left.

It was Dick's buck. He was down, but his head was still up. I didn't want this deer to get up again so I eased an arrow onto the string, attached the release and released my arrow, hitting the small white throat patch of the deer. We had done it. We were exhausted, but we had recovered the unrecoverable. Human error had allowed this contest between the determination to survive against the will to do what was right to evolve, but it was human determination and a great deal of luck that allowed us to return home satisfied that we had fulfilled our obligations as hunters.

When I looked at the wound, it immediately made me think of that chase 27 years ago. The wounds of Daryl's and Dick's bucks were the same. Exactly. The recovery was equally similar in the length of time involved, the distance and the deer's instincts urging him to find refuge in water.

But what was truly remarkable was that every time we thought we were done, that we had no where else to look, something kept us going, kept us heading in the right direction. Accomplishing what we did once was satisfying, but to repeat the exact scenario 27 years later is nothing but *déjà vu* all over again.

DAVE SABROWSKY is a retired Wisconsin conservation warden from Elcho who served from 1977-2002.

wcwa-sponsored programs



All first-time hunters shoot deer at third annual learn-to-hunt

By Jon Scharbarth

There were a lot of firsts at the third annual Standing Rocks County Park Learn-to-Deer-Hunt event, held Oct. 28-29, 2017, in Portage County.

Nine first-time deer hunters, ranging in age from 10-35, along with 11 dedicated mentors, took part in the hunt. And for the first time, every hunter who participated harvested his or her first deer!

The entire program is a collaborative effort involving the Wisconsin DNR, Portage County Parks Department, Bill Cook Chapter of the Izaak Walton League, Almond Rod and Gun Club, and the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point Student Law Enforcement Association, or SLEA.

The hunt not only serves to provide first-time deer hunters with an amazing learning experience, but also as a herd reduction effort to assist the Portage County Parks Department.

Standing Rocks Park is a 524-acre county park located southeast of Stevens Point. Over the years, the deer population in the park had grown significantly, causing very little forest regeneration. Other population control options were tried, but had limited success or public support. Due to the abundance of rolling hills, network of hiking, biking and skiing trails, and a large lodge used for skiing in the winter, a more perfect setup to hold a learn-to-deer-hunt event would be hard to find.

In 2015, Conservation Warden Jon Scharbarth connected with Matt Jacowski and Gary Speckmann to discuss the idea of using the learn-to-hunt program as not only a way to get first-time hunters a chance to experience the great tradition of Wisconsin deer hunting, but also as a management tool for the park. Jacowski was the Conservation Congress chairman for Portage County at the time and also a county board repre-

sentative and member of the Almond Rod and Gun Club. Speckmann was the Portage County Parks Director and just retired from that position in December.

After several Portage County Park Commission meetings, Scharbarth got the green light to hold the hunt and began planning. He enlisted the help of Mike Fuge, a member of the Bill Cook Chapter of the Izaak Walton League and a huge supporter of introducing new hunters, especially youth, to the outdoors. A plan came together, an application was created and made available, and a random drawing of applications was done to select the hunters who participated that first year.

Safety during the hunt is of the utmost concern and so, with the help of park staff, the park was divided into 13 zones. Each zone had its own ground blind situated so that any possible shots taken by the hunters would be safe. Blinds were placed to not

only minimize any safety concerns, but also to reduce the chances of any wounded deer running off the property onto adjacent private lands. Many other rules were put in place to ensure not only the safety of all involved, but also that each participant would have the opportunity for a quality experience.

Two weekends prior to the two-day hunt, a field day is held at the grounds of the Bill Cook Chapter of the Izaak Walton League where topics like deer management, hunting strategies and techniques, and proper care of game are discussed. Participants learn about hunter safety and each hunter sights in the firearm he or she will use during the hunt. For many, this is the first time they ever shot a rifle.

At the field day, each hunter is paired with mentor or mentors from the local

Izaak Walton League chapter, SLEA, Almond Rod and Gun Club, and both active and retired DNR conservation wardens. After the field day, hunters and mentors are then invited out to Standing Rocks Park to locate their assigned hunting blind and to scout their zones with their mentors. Participants are encouraged to return to the park with their mentors as often as they wish to continue to scout and learn about what it takes to become a successful deer hunter.

During the weekend hunt, the park ski lodge serves as headquarters. Hunters check in each morning prior to shooting hours and return for lunch each day. Prior to lunch, a demonstration on how to field dress a deer is given so that each hunter at least has the opportunity to see how that process works. Every deer harvested is

sampled and tested for CWD courtesy of a volunteer sampler from the Almond Rod and Gun Club. Donations from the Wisconsin Conservation Warden Association, Izaak Walton League State Chapter, and local businesses help fund food and equipment costs to ensure all participants have a great overall learning experience. For hunters who do not have access to a rifle to use for the hunt, rifles are borrowed to them.

Over the past three years, 29 first-time deer hunters have participated in the hunt. One year, a mother and son each shot their first deer during the event. This is clearly one of the most memorable experiences I have been involved with during my career as a field warden.

JON SCHARBARTH is a Wisconsin conservation warden stationed in Portage County.

26th annual fishing day a success

By Matthew Modjeski

The Wilton Rod and Gun Club Kids Free Fishing day started a little slow with the weather being cool, overcast and misty, but 126 children ended up catching 89 fish, including one very big hybrid bluegill.

Peyton Green caught the biggest fish, 2 pounds 1 ounce, and won a fully equipped Mathew's youth bow for his efforts. Carter Gugeon won for the smallest fish caught, at just 3 ounces.

However, all youth participants received a prize ranging from balls to fishing poles, lunch and another small prize stuffed into their goody bag, thanks to contributions from groups such as the Wisconsin Conservation Warden Association.

Besides fishing, youth could learn how to shoot bows or BB guns, with the Wildlife Turkey Federation setting up an BB gun shooting inflatable.

One mother came with 4-year-old triplets who didn't have fishing poles, so the group provided them with poles and worms. They did manage to get one trout in. She said the kids had a great time — and that's what the event is all about. It was hard to tell if there were more smiles on the adults or the children.

This event has been going on for 26 years and receives amazing support from the community. Adults who participated in the fishing day when they were young are now bringing their own children.

The Wilton Rod and Gun Club members appreciate the WCWA donation and thanks the warden association for its support.

MATTHEW MODJESKI is a Tomah conservation warden.



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