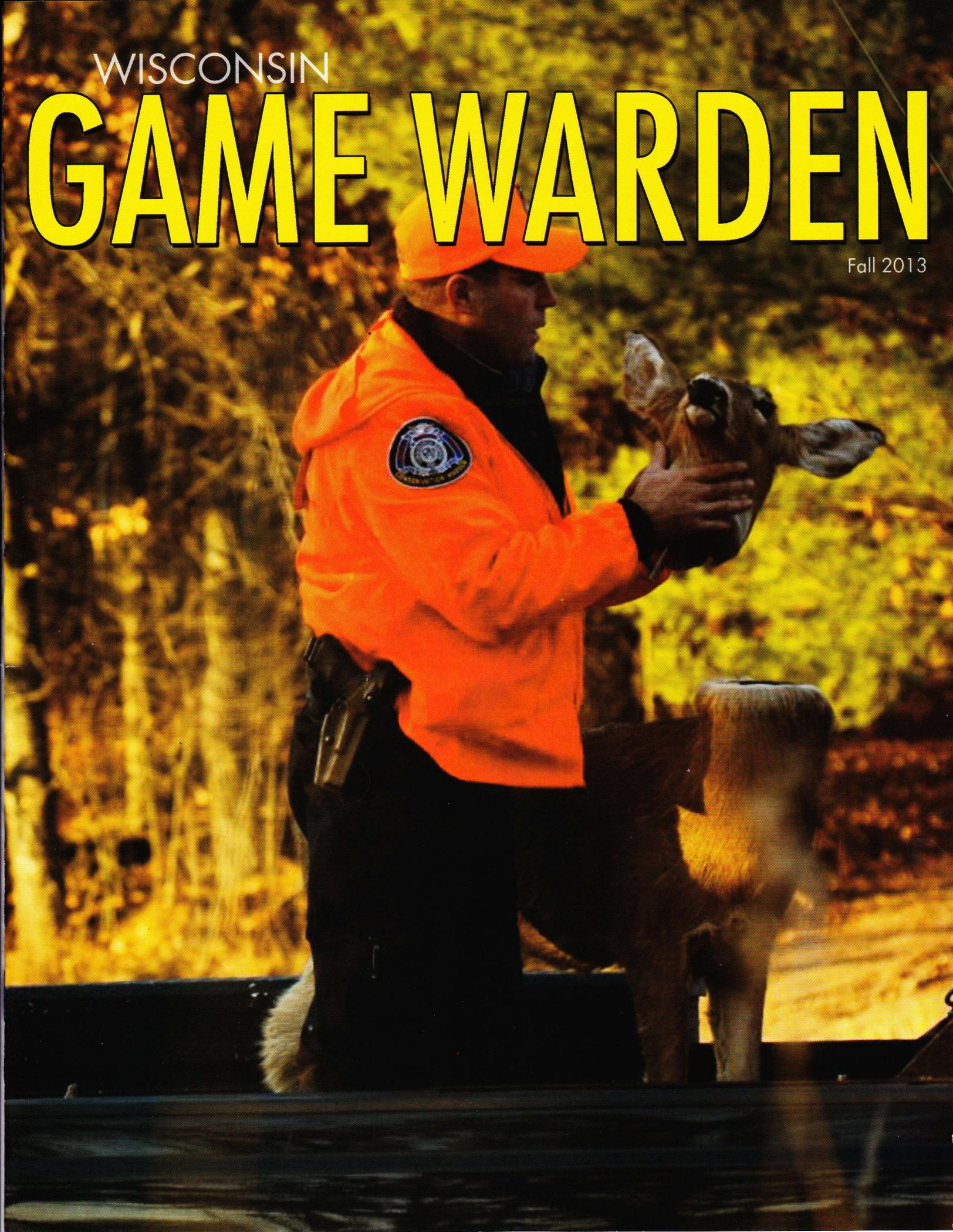


WISCONSIN

GAME WARDEN

Fall 2013



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On the Cover: Russ Fell is the 2012 recipient of the Haskel Noyes Award. See story on page 14.

FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

By Matthew Groppi

This summer has been a busy one for the WCWA board. We had two WCWA Board meetings and we were able to get things resolved that have been on our radar for a long time. Our June meeting, originally scheduled for May, was a joint Board meeting with the Wisconsin Conservation and Education Foundation, our partner foundation. We held our annual elections, reviewed the draft business plan, passed our budget and began planning the 2014 banquet. We also began a preliminary review of our bylaws.

During our August meeting, we were able to complete a full review of the bylaws and adopt a new draft version, organize a committee to begin planning the 2014 banquet with the WCEF, and approve the 2013 regional grants. Our agenda for the next Board meeting will include developing a plan for the Warden Museum Exhibit, approving our bylaws, and working more on the 2014 banquet.

The Board will continue to meet once every quarter, either on-line or in person. We are looking for input from our members. We want to know what you want the Association to do for you. With the success of the 2013 WCEF banquet and with our partnership

with the WCEF, we were able to once again fund our regional grant program this year. This program is very popular among our members who are looking for additional ways to support their community events. We view this as one of the main ways we support our members; it is also one of the main recruiting tools we have for new members.

In addition, our magazine and calendars are popular and we plan to continue both, as they are important outreach tools. We have also started an e-newsletter to keep our members updated on the Association. We will be continuing our support for the WCEF banquet as many members felt this was not only a great fundraiser, but it was also a great way to connect with members we don't often get to see.

Our main purpose is to support the profession of natural resource law enforcement, and central to that is supporting our members and their career goals. We look forward to obtaining your feedback as we continue to move ever forward while paying homage to our past. Thank you for your continued support of the WCWA!

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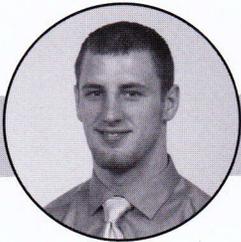
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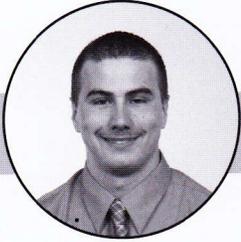
WCWA awards UW-SP scholarships



Chojnacki



Schultz



Hackett



Deitelhoff



Koscher



Van Offeren

The Wisconsin Conservation Warden Association through its educational foundation, the Wisconsin Conservation and Education Foundation, awarded six \$1,000 scholarships to University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point students enrolled in the College of Natural Resources.

The 2013 scholarship recipients include:

Steven Chojnacki

Harold Hettrick Memorial Scholarship

Chojnacki, from Boyd, Wis., is majoring in resource management and law enforcement. He hopes to pursue an internship with the DNR in the summer.

This scholarship honors the memory of Harold Hettrick, who worked as a Wisconsin conservation warden from 1950-57, chief training officer from 1957-67, and assistant chief warden from 1967-1982 when he retired. He died in February 2004.

Elizabeth Schultz

Andrew A. Krakow Memorial Scholarship

Schultz, from Tomahawk, Wis., has a major in wildlife ecology — research and management and a minor in environmental law enforcement. She has been a member of the Wildlife Society, Women in Natural Resources, and the Student Law Enforcement Association or SLEA. Schultz has also been involved in a number of volunteer opportunities with the Wisconsin DNR, helping band ducks, working bag check stations, and aging deer.

The Andrew A. Krakow Memorial Scholarship remembers Krakow, a

Wisconsin conservation warden who was killed in the line of duty on June 5, 1990 as he was assisting the Marquette County Sheriff's Department at a domestic disturbance call.

Isaac Hackett

Robert Markle Memorial Scholarship

Hackett, from Holmen, Wis., is majoring in resource management — law enforcement. He is involved in the local Campus Crusade for Christ chapter and is a target area leader for his residence hall.

The Robert Markle Memorial Scholarship remembers Markle, a conservation warden supervisor who was killed in 1966 in the line of duty. Markle and another warden were attempting to apprehend violators in Price County for illegally spearing fish when his vehicle crashed during a chase.

Elizabeth Deitelhoff

Emerson Noyes Memorial Scholarship

Deitelhoff, from Cazenovia, Wis., has a major in resource management — law enforcement and a minor in forest recreation. She is involved with SLEA and is the future secretary and treasurer of the Parks and Recreation Association.

This scholarship, in the name of Emerson Noyes, remembers Noyes who faithfully carried on his family's tradition of presenting a gold pocket watch to an outstanding Wisconsin warden each year.

Samantha Koscher

Tyler Kreinz Memorial Scholarship

Koscher, of Berlin, Wis., is majoring in environmental law enforcement, and

hopes to become a conservation warden after graduation. Koscher is currently a board member of the SLEA and has taught hunters' safety classes. In addition, she has participated in the conservation warden internship program with Warden Heather Gottschalk in Beaver Dam, and she is currently employed by the Wisconsin DNR as a deputy conservation warden in the Madison area.

This scholarship is given in memory of 21-year-old Tyler Kreinz, of Beloit, who died in June 2011 while serving in the U.S. Army in Afghanistan. Kreinz had hoped to become a conservation warden when he finished his military service.

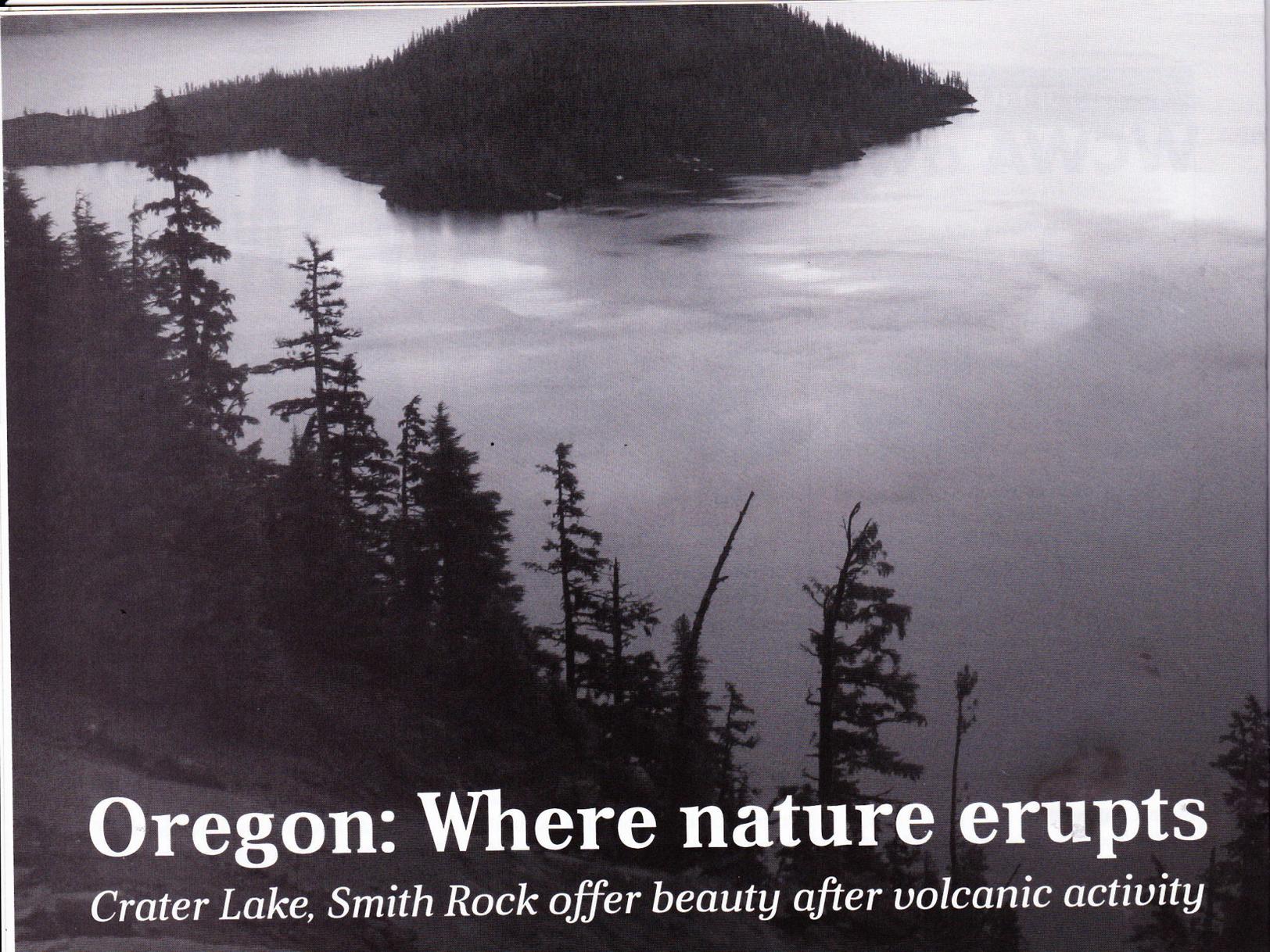
Michael Van Offeren

Cordero "Cord" Rodriguez Memorial Scholarship

Van Offeren, of Chilton, has a major in environmental law enforcement and a minor in wildlife. An Eagle Scout, he is involved in the SLEA and is certified to teach hunter, boater, ATV and snowmobile safety.

A new scholarship, the Cordero "Cord" Rodriguez Memorial Scholarship, remembers Rodriguez and his love for the outdoors and interest in conservation. His goal had been to become a conservation warden before he died in October 2012 at the age of 17.

The WCWA was founded to further conservation efforts within Wisconsin. The association is open to anyone interested in joining and is dedicated to all of the women and men who have served as Wisconsin conservation wardens since 1879.



Oregon: Where nature erupts

Crater Lake, Smith Rock offer beauty after volcanic activity

By Barbara A. Schmitz

Volcanoes, by definition, are an opening in the earth's crust through which molten lava, ash and gases are ejected. But after the lava, ash and gases are gone, they can transform into objects of pure beauty.

Oregon has proof of that in Crater Lake and Smith Rock.

Crater Lake

Located in southwestern Oregon, Crater Lake is a national park known for the nation's deepest — and bluest — lake. How did a mountain become a lake? A massive volcanic eruption 7,700 years ago left a deep basin in the place where a mountain peak once stood. Centuries of rain and snow filled the basin, forming a deep lake whose waters are of unmatched color and clarity.

Why is it so blue? The water absorbs other colors of the spectrum, but blue wavelengths are scattered and seen by human eyes.

Crater Lake isn't only blue and deep — 1,943 feet at its deepest point — but it is also large. It is 6.02 miles across at its maximum, 4.5 miles across at its minimum and holds 4.9 trillion gallons of water.

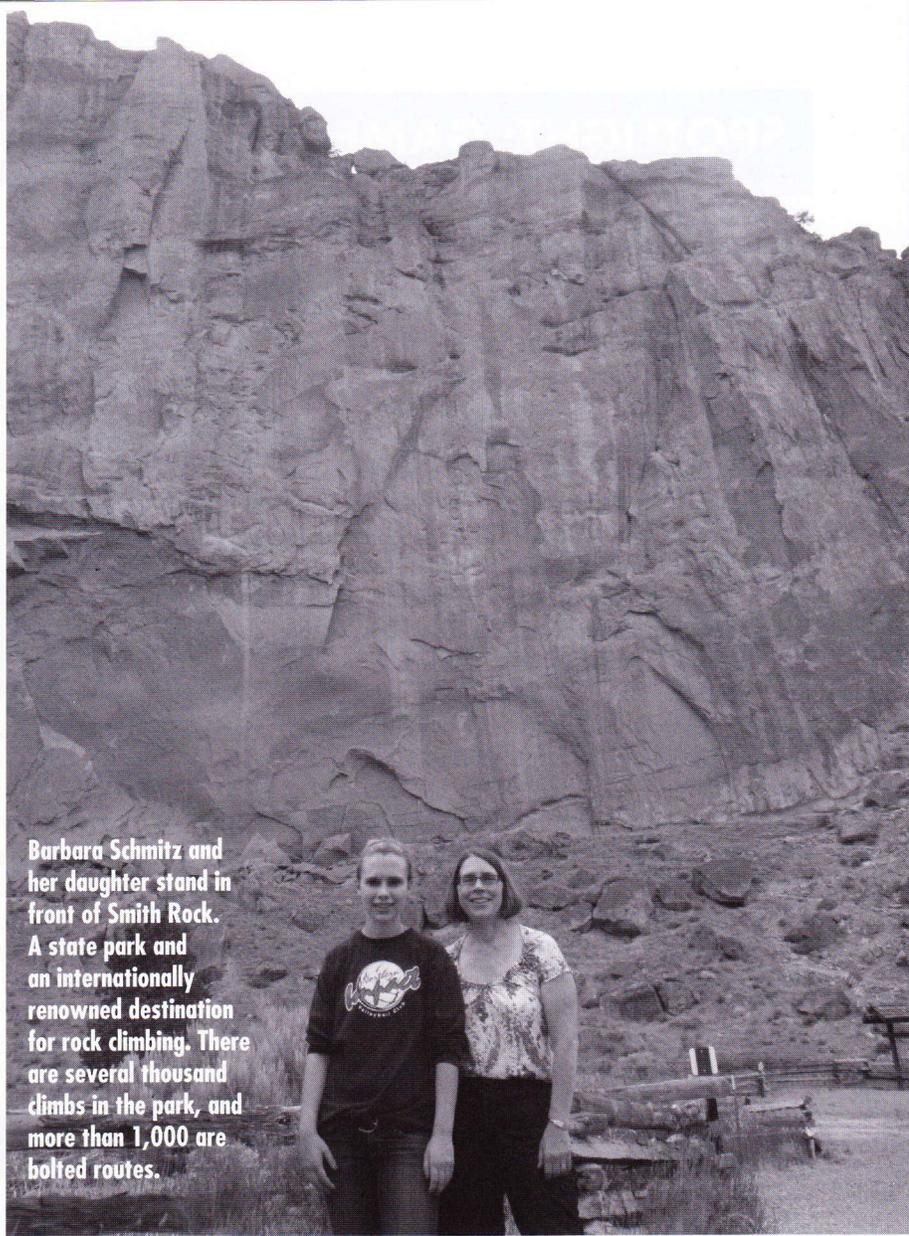
Because you must drive up steep and winding roads to reach the lake, expect cooler temperatures and snow. We went in late June and the temperature was 41 degrees. I was the only one NOT wearing shorts, and I was the only one not shivering.

In fact, annual snowfall averaging 44 feet closes the rim drive from mid-October to late June. While we visited Crater Lake on June 25, the entire park didn't open until July 1. That meant we couldn't explore the east rim drive, which is open only in the summer.

Unfortunately for us, that drive includes several of the most beautiful features in the park: Vidae Falls, a small island named Phantom Ship, and Pumice Castle, a narrow tower of reddish rock on the eastern caldera wall. A side trip down Pinnacles Road off the east rim drive also takes you to the Pinnacles, eerie spires of volcanic ash sculptured by erosion.

Also, unfortunately for us, the weather wasn't perfect. It was cloudy and the blue lake wasn't nearly as blue as we had seen in many pictures. But despite that, it was still amazing to see.

You can enter Crater Lake National Park by its south entrance to Annie Springs, off Highway 62, or by its north entrance off Highway 230. The \$10 admission to get into the park is good for one week.



Barbara Schmitz and her daughter stand in front of Smith Rock. A state park and an internationally renowned destination for rock climbing. There are several thousand climbs in the park, and more than 1,000 are bolted routes.

At the south entrance, you'll find a restaurant and gift shop, as well as Mazama Village, where you can find lodging, food, gas and more. Park Headquarters isn't located far from there, and rangers and staff can tell you about hiking trails or answer your questions. (We had limited time so we only hiked Godfrey Glen, a 1-mile easy trek offering some beautiful views of caldera walls and cliffs.)

But the west rim also has many pull-offs where you can stop, get out and enjoy the amazing view and maybe even see a feathered resident called the Clark's nutcracker. Two stops you shouldn't miss: Discovery Point and Watchman Overlook. It was at Discovery Point that gold prospector John Hillman came across the "deep blue lake" on the back of a mule in 1853. Watchman Overlook provides an unmatched view of Wizard Island, a cinder cone that erupted out of Crater Lake approximately 7,300 years ago.

Smith Rock

Smith Rock, located 9 miles northeast of Redmond in central Oregon, is proof of what volcanic forces and the erosive power of water can do. Millions of years ago, this area was a center of volcanic activity. After a period of localized eruptions, lava

flows entered the canyon and crowded the river into the flanks of the main volcanic structure. Forced to establish a new channel, the Crooked River eventually eroded the interior of the volcanic vent. The multicolored formations are composed of rock known as "welded tuff," volcanic ash erupted under conditions of extreme heat and pressure.

Today Smith Rock is a state park and an internationally renowned destination for rock climbing. There are several thousand climbs in the park, and more than 1,000 are bolted routes. You'll see majestic rock spires that raise above the winding Crooked River in Oregon's high desert and on most days you'll see someone climbing to the top.

You don't need to be an expert climber, however, to reach the summit. The winding Misery Ridge Trail, not quite 1 mile long but appropriately named, will take hikers to the top for some amazing views.

While you will likely get winded on the way up, it is much easier to go down.

BARBARA A. SCHMITZ is editor of Wisconsin Game Warden magazine, and a journalism instructor at UW-Oshkosh.

SPOTLIGHT: GAME WARDENS OF THE PAST

By Harland Steinhorst

If you have a copy of "The Wisconsin Warden" by Walter E. Scott and read page 79, you will come across this item:

"The Watertown Times (begun in 1895) reports three wardens were killed by an enraged fish dealer who turned the gun on himself and committed suicide."

End of item. One would think this event occurred in Wisconsin, being reported by the Watertown Times. But this event occurred on a farm near Waterville, Minn. on July 12, 1940. Details of this massacre are described on the Minnesota Law Enforcement Memorial Association website.

"On Friday, July 12, wardens Melvin Holt and Douglas Brady traveled to Bryant Baumgartner's farm to question him about illegal shipments of bullheads to Iowa. Baumgartner ordered the two wardens off his property and told them not to return without warrants.

They left and returned in the afternoon with a third warden, Marcus Whipps. Baumgartner was not home this time, but his crew was getting a shipment of fish ready to ship. When

IN MEMORY

- Douglas Brady, 50, 22 years service
- Melvin Holt, 55, 4 years service
- Marcus Whipps, 45, 3 years service



Baumgartner returned home, he again asked for warrants and ordered the three wardens off his property.

As they left the barn, Whipps asked Baumgartner for his license to handle fish commercially. Baumgartner said he would get the license, but he returned instead with a semi-automatic 12-gauge shotgun. Whipps

said, "It's no use trying to get smart with that thing, Baumgartner."

Baumgartner replied, "I'll show you whether I'll get smart."

He then fired three shots and hit all three wardens. Whipps and Holt were shot in the chest and fell to the ground. Brady was shot in the back as he tried to run. All died instantly. Baumgartner, 60, then walked over to a picket fence and turned the gun on himself."

The following year, the state of Minnesota issued uniforms and a duty belt with a firearm, a .38-caliber handgun, to all wardens. In 1967, the title of warden was changed to conservation officer. It is noted that the city of Waterville annually celebrates "Bullhead Days."

HARLAND STEINHORST is a retired Wisconsin conservation warden now living in LaValle.

Fish history: The lakes of 1887

Editor's note: Retired warden Jim Chizek submitted this article, published by the Milwaukee Journal in 1933. Chizek notes that you'll see that there was a concern then, as there is today, about protecting our natural resources.

Why isn't fishing what it used to be?

Why aren't the woods as green, the wilderness creatures as abundant? Or are they?

Wisconsin's people may find the answers in a letter sent to resort owners by the passenger traffic department of the Chicago & North Western railway. It begins:

"Thanks to the kindness of one of the old-time conductors on the old Milwaukee, Lake Shore and Western, which ran through Milwaukee, Sheboygan, Manitowoc, Two Rivers, Oshkosh, Hortonville, Clintonville, Wausau, Rhinelander, Three Lakes, Eagle River, Watersmeet and Ashland, we secured a copy of a Fishing

Guide, issued by that railroad in 1887."

About three pages of the guide are devoted to a list of "fish scores," the catches made by fishermen in Wisconsin waters in those days. Here are a few extracts:

W.L. Gray and two friends from Chicago caught, in two days fishing on Big St. Germain Lake, a total of 1,466 ¼ pounds of fish.

J. Frank Lawrence, of Chicago, caught 79 bass in May on Lake Gogebic.

R. J. Flint, of Menominee, Wis., caught 105 trout on Lake Gogebic on June 5.

C. Waterhouse and wife, of Decatur, Ill., caught 59 brook trout in one hour on Lake Gogebic on July 21. That's at the rate of about one a minute.

G. F. Jennings and H. Jones, both of Chicago, caught 20 black bass and 130 walleyed pike in Pelican Lake.

H. L. Birchard of Milwaukee, and B. S. Young and S. Hubbard of Oconomowoc, caught 113 muskellunge and a number of

pike, pickerel and bass in Three Lakes.

G. W. E. Richards and four friends caught 89 muskellunge, 181 black bass and 33 walleyed pike in Plumb Lake near Eagle River.

There are many other such "fish records" in the long list.

Well, why isn't the fishing in Wisconsin what it used to be? Or is it?

As men looted the waters in those days so they burned and looted the forests. They're doing it yet, only there isn't so much to loot. It was lack of restraint in 1887 and the years following that reduced fishing, wilderness beauty and wilderness abundance.

It is lack of restraint in 1933 that will contribute to further reduction in the future, as year after year we go along, wondering where the game has gone or arguing that it is as abundant as ever.

JIM CHIZEK is a retired Wisconsin conservation warden now living in Lodi.

Wardens to the rescue

Mike Cross and Pat Lisi get a surprise while helping a couple from a capsized boat on July 4

By Pat Lisi

Warden Mike Cross and I were working Lake Mendota, mainly watching for intoxicated operators on the Fourth of July in 2005. There were other wardens and sheriff deputies on the lake, too, and all of us were charged with making sure everyone and their boats got off the lake safely at the end of the "Rhythm and Booms" fireworks display that would light up the skies from Warner Beach on the north shore after dark.

Mike and I launched our DNR rig from the Tenney Park boathouse just before dusk and stayed close to the south shore, making ourselves visible to other boaters who were out on the lake enjoying the evening. The lake was very quiet, aside from issuing a ticket for non-registration and a couple of warnings for lesser violations, until the fireworks began.

Just as the show was about to reach its conclusion when all remaining fireworks are launched in a symbolic reenactment of the Battle for Fort McHenry in the War of 1812, a disturbing call was broadcast to all law enforcement teams on the water. A man and a woman had capsized a small vessel and were now treading water, hoping for rescue before the hundreds of boats head into various landings when the fireworks were over.

It was well after dark, and the last place you want to be is in the water, completely unseen by oncoming boats until it's too late. The good news was that the two were wearing PFDs and were clinging to their wrecked vessel, which turned out to be a paddle boat that had somehow come apart and listed badly enough to the side to actually throw them overboard. The other bit of positive news was that the call had been placed to the sheriff's department by one of the two boaters by way of his cell phone, and he would also be using the dim light of the gadget to try and attract the attention of any rescuers.

The pair had launched from Tenney

He had moved behind our boat right next to the motor; his hands were wrapped around the lip of the water well. Mike and I crouched over the well and told him we'd have him out of the water in a jiffy. He responded, "I don't have any legs!"

Park, and since Mike and I were about a mile offshore from there, we immediately began a search for two people bobbing around on the surface of the lake. Mike operated the boat while I used a powerful searchlight as we strained our eyes to find the pair before boats from the middle of the lake reached the south shore area. We could already hear the ominous din of dozens of high-powered engines bearing down on us.

Just then I saw a very faint light a few yards from our boat. Mike, who was already operating our boat at almost a neutral speed, cautiously steered in the direction of the light that now became a bit brighter. I hollered out that we would be coming alongside. They responded back, and then waited for us to get into position while clinging to their damaged paddle boat.

Mike positioned the DNR boat so that we could bring the couple onboard more "aft" than "amidships" (to the rear of the boat instead of in the middle), and he then shut our engine off. The pair was now hanging onto our boat for dear life and I could see that the female was trembling from both fear and from the relatively cold air that now blanketed her. She definitely needed to come aboard first. Mike and I each grabbed an arm and with little

difficulty hoisted her aboard. She sat on the floor of the boat right away and we covered her with every available PFD and boat cushion we could find.

Her boyfriend was still in the water, but he had moved behind our boat right next to the motor; his hands were wrapped around the lip of the water well. Mike and I crouched over the well and told him we'd have him out of the water in a jiffy. He responded, "I don't have any legs!"

This statement took us both aback and I asked him to repeat what he had said.

"I don't have any legs," he said, and for a split second I thought to myself, "Oh no, did we amputate his legs with our motor?" Instinctively, I looked for blood in the water. He could see the confusion on our faces and then he told us that he was born without legs and that he did not need our assistance to get into our boat. He asked us to get out of the way.

When you go without legs long enough your upper body usually takes over and you develop tremendous arm strength. This guy was that person. His forearms rivaled those of Popeye and his biceps and triceps were like those of an Olympic class weight lifter. With very little effort he 'popped' out of the water, sort of the same way Emperor Penguins suddenly appear from the sea through a hole in the ice. Just like that he was in our boat and resting next to his friend.

The paddle boat, rigged so that hands or feet could use it, was still adrift; we attached a line to it and slowly maneuvered our way to the Tenney Park locks where the attendant gave us priority by immediately opening the gates. The couple's car was parked downstream along the Yahara River and it only took a few minutes to deliver them safe and sound. They thanked us, Mike and I loaded up their dilapidated paddle boat, and the couple went on their merry way.

It was an unbelievable night; one that I'll never forget ... and I bet they won't, either!

KUBISIAK BOOK RECALLS HUMOROUS STORIES OF BEING A GAME WARDEN

By Barbara A. Schmitz

After 35 years of being a Wisconsin conservation warden, it's no surprise that retired warden Harold Kubisiak had stories to tell.

"Lots of things took place," Kubisiak recalls. "Some were funny, others were not so funny."

But the best of those stories have been compiled into a book titled, "Humor in Gray. (Mostly) True Tales of a Retired Wisconsin Game Warden." You can read one of Kubisiak's favorite stories, "Sink or Swim," on Page 9.

Kubisiak says his wife, Kathy, came up with the idea for the book's title since wardens are known as "men of gray" and the 94-page book is mostly about the humorous things that happened on the job.



Being a conservation warden runs in the family for the Kubisiaks. In this undated photo are, from left, Ron Kubisiak, Harold's brother; Ron's son, Roy; and Harold. Harold recently published a book about being a Wisconsin conservation warden.

Kubisiak retired in January 1991, but he waited nearly 10-years before writing the compilation of short stories. "I was always a good writer, but I don't know how to spell worth a darn," he says. The book was "just something to do."

It only took him one or two months to finish it, he says, and then he self-published it through Amazon, thanks to the help of his wife and daughter-in-law.

Kubisiak says he's received a lot of good feedback on the book, even from those he didn't expect.

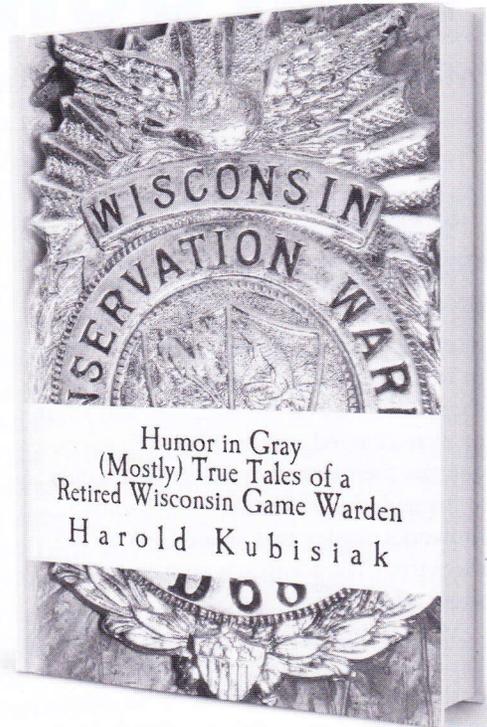
"One story is about a guy nicknamed Dirty Ernie who thought he was a tough dude," he recalls. "But the reason he was nicknamed Dirty Ernie is because I stopped him for shining at night and he was so nervous he wet his pants."

So imagine Kubisiak's surprise when a van stops him as he's riding his moped, and asks him to autograph the book, which the driver has with him. "I signed it and gave it back to him, and he said thanks and drove away," he recalls. "The next day I saw him in the grocery store and he asked if I remembered him. I said, 'Yes, I signed your book.' That's when he told me he was Dirty Ernie. He had changed a bit, and we stood there together, laughing about it."

A reviewer on Amazon also liked the book. He wrote: "If you are looking for a book to make you laugh out loud, this is it. It is a colorful retelling of Mr. Kubisiak's adventures as a Wisconsin game warden and you could just imagine being out there with him as he ran into a great cast of characters along the way."

Kubisiak isn't sure how many books have been sold, but said it is several hundred.

Despite the good reviews, Kubisiak says he doesn't think he will write a second book. "I could write about the serious stuff, but I'm not sure I want to,"



he says. "A warden's job is a dangerous job because you are alone a big share of the time, and especially in the fall, you're dealing with people who all have guns. Sometimes it's a little nerve-wracking..."

Still, Kubisiak says he enjoyed every minute of the job. "I wouldn't trade it for anything, even though I twice got Lyme disease," he says.

Now that he's retired, Kubisiak says he keeps busy hunting and fishing, or going to his property on the Mississippi River or his cottage in Vilas County. "I've also got the biggest garden in town," he says, "and there's no weeds either."

Kubisiak at a glance

- Grew up in Stevens Point
- Served in the U.S. Marine Corps
- Started as a special warden with the DNR in Oshkosh
- Primarily served in Trempealeau County, as well as parts of Buffalo and Jackson counties
- Retired in January 1991
- Currently lives in Whitehall with his wife, Kathy

Winning the lottery warden style

By Duane Harpster

Forest County wardens Rick Koch and Dick Abney held bear hunt camps a couple years. One year, Bill Miller and I teamed up since I knew my way around Forest County after my years of being a special warden.

We located several baits, but since we had nothing in particular to work on, we just picked a bait and worked late hunting on opening night.

Bill dropped me off an hour or so before dark, and I walked in and saw a 5-gallon pail sitting on the trail. Since it hadn't been there the day before, and since it was now empty but had been full of bear bait earlier, I guessed there was a hunter on the bait.

I advised Bill, found a comfy spot to sit and began waiting for closing. I soon heard the sound of footsteps, obviously running, coming my way. Peeking out, I saw a fellow in camouflage stop, wind up and fling a recurve bow and quiver off into the brush, and continue my way.

As he passed at a trot, I stood up, introduced myself and asked him to stop. He was obviously excited and immediately stated that there were bears there and he pointed back the way he had come. I asked if that was what he was hunting, and after a little stuttering, he said he was. I asked to see his bear license, and after a short

search, he said he didn't think he had one.

I called Bill on the portable, and Bruce Nimz said "go ahead." I knew Bruce because he was the Three Lakes warden, and I had worked with him quite often. I said I was trying to get Bill Miller, and again Bruce said to "go ahead." Confused, I again said I was calling Bill, and Bruce said "go ahead; he's right here." I then told Bill I had a fellow who had come running out and he should come over. Then Bruce called someone else whom I didn't know. That warden answered, and Bruce asked him what was going on at the bait. The warden, who I was soon to learn was Bruce's trainee, responded that the guy shot a bear, then bailed out of the tree, and took off running.

AH HAH, now the fog was lifting! It appears that of all the bear baits in northern Wisconsin, we had all arrived at the same one. However, I now had the hunter, his bow and knew he had no bear tag. This was the first year that the fine for hunting bear without a license was \$2,000. We had won the lottery.

Shortly Bill and Bruce walked in. Bruce was not happy that Bill and I had set up on a bait in his area without telling him. Bruce immediately started to question the hunter about the presence of illegal bait. I tried to say something, but Bruce was pretty intent on this fellow having shot a bear over illegal bait and he wanted an

admission. I finally butted in, and said it really didn't matter since the hunter didn't have a tag. As the realization sunk in that we had "the big one," Bruce became a very happy man.

Bill, however, thought there must be more to the story and began questioning our hunter. Soon he admitted that his brother had dropped him off, and said his brother was on another bait site and had a tag.

It was then that I knew Bill would eventually be Warden of the Year. He told the hunter to show us where his brother was. A brilliant move because we would not only get more pinches, but we wouldn't have to gut and drag the bear!

Long story short, we got to the other bait after close of hours, and Bill ran in to find the brother too scared to climb down from his stand because there were bears there. In fact, he said he was glad to see Bill. Eventually, however, he wasn't quite so happy to see him. So Bill and I claimed the first arrest under the big fine for bear hunting without a license. Technically, we had to share that with Bruce, but there was much joy in bear camp that night!

That was the only time I worked with Bill Miller, but it is one of my favorite warden memories.

DUANE HARPSTER is a retired Wisconsin conservation warden and lives in Boulder Junction, Wis.

Sink or swim?

Editor's Note: This is one of the short stories included in Harold Kubisiak's book, "Humor in Gray: (Mostly) True Tales of a Retired Wisconsin Game Warden." It is reprinted with his permission.

This incident took place in the spring of the year, before wall-eye season developed. The fish were concentrated by the dam on the Minnesota side of the river. A fishing float, privately owned and operated during the season, was anchored below the dam. This was a very popular spot, and I spent many hours after dark watching the area. It finally paid off!

It was raining hard, but I was able to see someone fishing from one of the floats. I put my boat in the water below the dam on a private landing and motored as quietly as I could to an area below the float. I walked to where the float was tied to the shore and walked up the gangplank. I got up behind a fisherman who was busily landing a walleye. I asked, "How're they biting?"

Well, the walleye turned into a flying fish and both the fish and the fish pole went flying into the river. But not to worry. He had

three more tied on a stringer and two extra poles that were also being used.

So far, he was in possession of fish during the closed season and fishing with three lines, one too many at that time. I asked to see his license and guess what? He meant to get one, but you know how that goes. One thing I failed to mention. He was wearing chest-type waders and a very heavy rain jacket.

I started to take down the information that I needed from his driver's license and he started to lose his cool. In very broken English with a heavy German accent, he said that he had half a mind to toss me into the river. I put my pen and book into my pocket and stepped back to size up the situation. He was shorter than I was, but he had me by 50-plus pounds. Being the smooth talker that I was, all I could think of to say was, "One thing's for sure, Lard Ass, I hope you're able to swim with those waders on because if you lay a hand on me, we'll both go into the water. I don't know about you, but I'm a good swimmer."

Talk about a change in attitude. Even his English improved. I suppose I could say that we made up and were good friends after that, but it would be a lie. I checked him a year later while he was fishing from shore. He had a license, but the same smart mouth and probably 20 more pounds on his fat butt.

WARDEN IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Racine County Warden Mike Hirschboeck and Jason Meisner participated in a successful waterfowl Learn to Hunt in 2012.

By Stephanie Daniel Merkel

Catching the “bad guy” is one of the most exhilarating parts of a conservation warden’s job. But bringing violators to justice is not a one-man job. Wardens know it requires the help of their peers and the community they work in.

Mike Hirschboeck, conservation warden in Racine County, loves the law enforcement aspect of the job, but he also does understand the importance of his team. It is one of the main reasons he is so passionate about his job.

“Ultimately, we wouldn’t function without each other,” said Hirschboeck. “I’ve had many cases where I’ve had to call someone with more expertise than myself.”

He said teamwork is not only relevant to catching violators, but in all aspects of the warden’s job including educational programs.

Hirschboeck enjoys working with youth

in the learn-to-hunt programs like the deer LTH in Burlington, where he has teamed up with Trent Tonn, Dyer Elementary teacher and outdoors skills teacher.

“We receive nothing but great comments about the program from the youth and their experiences,” he said.

This collaboration of individuals like Tonn, other wardens and the mentors, makes these events possible.

“All of the team wardens participate in each other’s learn-to-hunt programs, which help make them a success,” explained Hirschboeck. “The mentors also help make these LTHs happen. It wouldn’t be possible without their dedication and efforts.”

Hirschboeck’s interest in the outdoors began at a young age. His father, Jack, unknowingly influenced his career path by introducing him and his twin brother to hunting. A Korean War veteran and career steamfitter, Hirschboeck’s father taught his sons important lessons about the sport and

about life.

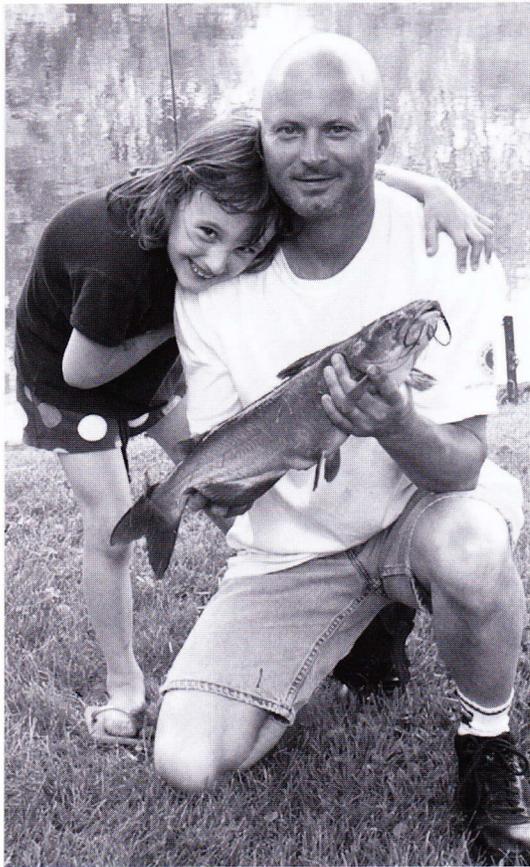
“He instilled safety first while we hunted, and anything else was a benefit,” said Hirschboeck. “He never pushed me or my brother to be anything other than happy at what we did or strived to do.”

After graduating from Muskego High School, Hirschboeck joined the Marine Corps Reserve and was deployed to Guantanamo Bay during Desert Storm. He later earned his associate’s degree in police science and began pursuing a career as a police officer.

The town of Waterford Police Department hired him in 1996, and he served there for almost 10 years. Through their law enforcement ties, he met Russ Fell (R.T.), who had been a warden in the county at that time.

“The more I worked at the police department, the more contact I had with R. T.,” he said. “He encouraged me to work or apply to be a conservation warden.”

With Fell’s help, Hirschboeck applied in



Mike Hirschboeck and daughter Ellie fish off the shoreline at their home.

Racine County and was hired to work part-time as a special warden, while continuing to work full-time with the town police department.

Hirschboeck had an opportunity to work with Warden Ted Dremel, who had also been a special warden at that time. Later Dremel was hired as a full-time game warden stationed in Racine County.

“As time passed, there were more opportunities to work with Ted,” he humorously recalled. “It seemed as though I was calling Ted with traffic stops involving shining and shooting deer more than he was getting on his own.”

Hirschboeck’s wife, Geri, gave him the last bit of encouragement he needed to apply full-time. She told him, “If you don’t apply, you’ll regret it for not trying.”

And as they say, the rest is history.

Hirschboeck feels fortunate that he has a job he enjoys and a family he adores, which

includes his wife of 15 years and an 8-year-old daughter, Ellie. Teamwork is important to the family dynamics, just as it is on the job.

“While it is my dream job, it does come with a price,” he said. “What people don’t understand is how difficult life of a warden can be at times.”

Being on call 24/7, responding to emergency situations, and answering calls night and day, can all interrupt time spent with the family.

Both he and Geri agree, “My wife is truly the glue that holds our family together.”

Family time is important to Hirschboeck, so when they have the opportunity they participate in activities that the whole family can enjoy including bow hunting, goose hunting and fishing.

With continued support of both his team on the job and at home, Hirschboeck hopes to continue for many years serving the sporting men and women of Wisconsin.

STEPHANIE DANIEL MERKEL is an Oskosh freelance writer.

Articles, photos sought for Spring 2014 WGW issue

Wisconsin Game Warden Magazine is looking for interesting articles that deal with the great outdoors. The deadline for the spring issue is Jan. 15, 2014.

Possible topics include ecology, warden cases made, places to go, resource conservation methods, gotcha-type stories, animal rescues, history of the warden force, and articles dealing with the natural world.

Other possible story topics include vacations, recipes and the future of the warden force.

Articles can be submitted to Managing Editor Barbara Schmitz at 1705 Graber St., Oshkosh, WI 54901, or emailed as a Word document to write2us@sbcglobal.net. When possible, include photographs to go with your story. They can be mailed or emailed to Schmitz. Emailed photos should be at least 4” x 6” and 300 dpi, or 8” x 10” and at least 150 dpi.

In addition, the magazine is also looking for photos for its Fruits of their Labor feature. Do you have a picture of your family with fish and game they’ve harvested in Wisconsin? Or how about one of you and some game? Send it in!

Photos can be mailed to Schmitz at the above address. They will be returned, if requested. As before, photos can also be sent electronically to Schmitz.

If you have questions, you can also call Schmitz at (920) 235-0972.

Don’t forget WGW when you move

If you are moving or have moved, don’t forget to tell *Wisconsin Game Warden Magazine*.

The post office does not forward or return the magazines since they are mailed Third Class. That means the Association has no way of knowing which members are not receiving their copies.

For address changes or general mailing questions, contact Ryan Propson at wcmembership@gmail.com.

We want to stay in touch with you

But we need your help to do it. The easiest — and least expensive — way to communicate and keep in touch with our members is through email. But to email you, we NEED your email address!

Please send your current email address to Ryan Propson, the WCWA membership coordinator, at wcmembership@gmail.com.

WCWA President Randy Dunkel said many members are missing out on information because the organization does not have an email for them or has an incorrect email. So please email Propson today with your current information.

Jennifer Niemeyer, warden supervisor for Racine, Kenosha and Walworth counties, received the 2012 Shikar Safari Club International Officer of the Year Award at the June 2013 Natural Resources Board meeting. In a press release, Chief Warden Randy Stark, right, says Niemeyer's dedication to the state, the DNR and the warden service is visible through the passion she brings to her work.



'Like a mama bear looking out for her cubs'

Niemeyer wins Shikar-Safari Award for passion on the job

By Barbara A. Schmitz

All it took was a chance encounter and Jennifer Niemeyer knew what she was meant to become.

"A warden checked us when I was fishing with my dad on the Mississippi River," Niemeyer recalls. "My dad is the one who got me doing things in the outdoors. But from that point on, I knew it was what I wanted to do."

It just so happens that Niemeyer is also good at it. Now warden supervisor for Racine, Kenosha and Walworth counties, Niemeyer was presented the Shikar-Safari Club International Officer of the Year Award at the June 2013 Natural Resources Board meeting. The award is presented annually to wildlife law enforcement officers in all 50 states and 10 Canadian provinces and territories by the Shikar-Safari Club, which supports conservation and education through a worldwide foundation.

Niemeyer says she was surprised to receive the award. "There are many very good warden supervisors who have won this award," she says. "I personally don't see myself in their category, but I am very honored."

Niemeyer's supervisor, Kevin Mickelberg, southeast regional warden, nominated her for the honor.

"She has a keen ability to build trusting relationships with people fast," he says. "When you are working in this job and dealing with some of the people she is required to deal with, that is important."

Mickelberg says Niemeyer works in the southeast region where "transition is the name of the game." Being able to form relationships quickly, often with newly assigned warden recruits who are just starting out in their careers, is vital because it allows her to coach and guide those people quickly.

"The people she has mentored have become successful employees as they moved on throughout the state," Mickelberg says. "Whatever she is doing, she is setting the stage for success for her employees."

In the nomination paper, Mickelberg also wrote that Niemeyer is a strong leader for a team that is often called upon to assist in emergency situations, including tornados, a snow storm that left travelers stranded on the interstate and an unknown shooter in the Kettle Moraine. She and her team have also been called upon to



(Left) Wardens Jennifer Niemeyer, left, and Jill Schartner show off an illegal albino deer harvested in Bayfield County during the 2010 gun deer season. (Right) Wardens Paul Sickman, Jennifer Niemeyer, Ted Dremel and Tim Price do some "urban" goose hunting on their time off.



navigate through contentious and controversial issues facing the department and communities, such as law enforcement management of Chronic Wasting Disease, citizens illegally possessing and raising deer, and invasive species control.

Mike Hirschboeck, field warden in western Racine County, says Niemeyer is fun to work with as a co-worker and as a supervisor.

He recalls one case where the two were surveying a group of five goose hunters in a field during early goose season. "You could see how obviously passionate she was," he says. "This group was having a great day harvesting geese ... and were running all over the place." They even watched as one of the men shot and killed a sandhill crane.

"She has always been good at her job," Hirschboeck says. "She is a great resource, and field wardens look to her for advice. She is hands-on, and lives to be involved, but she doesn't over manage."

In addition, Niemeyer has a non-stop work ethic, Hirschboeck says. "She has so much on her plate, yet she manages to get it all done and still have a positive attitude, and help us keep positive attitudes," he says. "She's like a mama bear looking out for her cubs."

Niemeyer says she has an open door policy with her employees, and isn't afraid to communicate with them, even when it is difficult. "I'm a very blunt person," she says. "People never ask me what I'm thinking because I've already usually said it."

Her favorite part of the job is watching her employees grow in their jobs and be successful.

"I work behind the scenes, helping them be successful as a field warden," Niemeyer says. "I get a lot of new wardens ... and I have an opportunity to mold them into what we expect."

Niemeyer has a passion for her work because she believes in what the Department does. "I believe in protecting the natural resources, and as a supervisor, in helping to promote our personnel from within," she says. "That is what drives me."

But she also tries to improve herself as well.

"Every year I ask the people who work for me what I can do to help them become more successful," she says. "If you don't ask the hard questions how to make yourself better, you'll never be successful."

Niemeyer also has a sense of humor, and believes in treating people the way you would want to be treated — with respect. Her

favorite stories from work revolve around working the fish run each spring and fall.

"So many wardens have come through this part of the state, but they'll always come up to me and have many fun stories of working the fish run — of bad guys who needed to get caught or of those who ran from us that we captured."

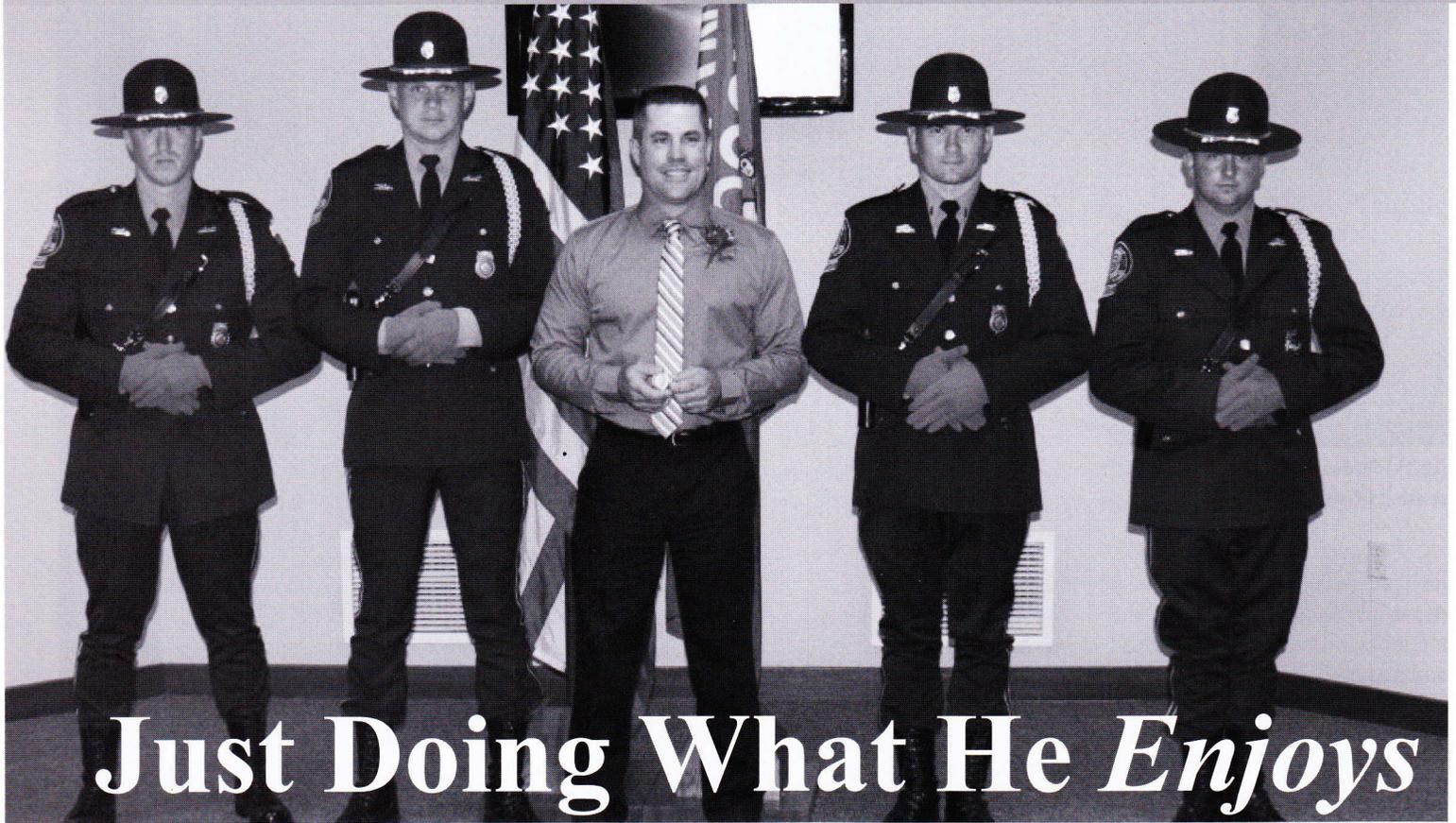
One of her other favorite activities is the COPS camp. For 10 years, COPS — Concerns of Police Survivors — has held a camp in Army Lake in Walworth County for youth who have had a law enforcement parent die in the line of duty. For the first five years, Niemeyer worked the camp, which allowed her and other wardens to teach children about things like archery, fishing or boating safety. But for the last five years, Niemeyer has coordinated the activities between the wardens and the children and their families.

"It's a prime example of her ability to build relationships," Mickelberg says. "She has a great rapport with a lot of the survivors while serving as the liaison for Wisconsin with the national organization."

"For me, it is a reality check," Niemeyer says. "These children have lost a parent in law enforcement, and it puts everything in perspective when you go home at night."

Niemeyer at a glance

- Graduated from UW-Platteville in 1998 with a major in criminal justice and a minor in biology
- Worked as a LTE for fisheries throughout college
- After receiving law enforcement certification through Chippewa Valley Technical College, she became a deputy warden on the Madison team.
- Was hired full-time by the DNR in January 1999. Her first station was newly created at that time, Paddock Lake in Kenosha County
- Promoted into the special investigation unit in 2008
- In 2009, she became supervisor for Racine, Kenosha and Walworth counties, the position she still holds.



Just Doing What He *Enjoys*

Russ Fell wins prestigious Haskel Noyes Efficiency Award

Russ Fell says he didn't follow in anyone's footsteps. Nor did he have a revelation.

But a natural resources class taken in high school was enough to convince the West Bend native that becoming a game warden or park ranger might be the right career for him.

"My parents pushed me to do something I enjoyed," Fell says. "I enjoy being in the outdoors, and ever since that exposure to the natural resources class I knew what I wanted to be."

Fell, who was promoted to warden supervisor for the Northern region in February 2013, received the 2012 Haskell Noyes Efficiency Award in June 2013 at a ceremony at the Turtleback Country Club in Rice Lake. He has been stationed in Rice Lake since 1998.

Fell says he was surprised to receive the award. "My immediate supervisor, Rick Rosen, compiled the nomination papers and it's an exorbitant amount of work to justify why your candidate is the best," he says. Rosen told him he had won the award in a memorable way.

"I was working with Walleyes for Tomorrow on Silver Lake, and he called and said he needed to talk with me," Fell recalls. "I told him I was really busy."

But Rosen didn't give up. Instead, he came to where Fell was working and told him to jump into his truck. "I thought something was wrong," Fell recalls. "He asked me what would make me more efficient, and what he could give me to make me more efficient."

Fell told him perhaps a secretary or pay raise, but Rosen asked if a watch would do. But not just any watch — the gold pocket watch inscribed with "Faithful and Able Service" given to all Haskell Noyes recipients by a member of the Noyes family.

Rosen laughs as he recalls how worried

Fell looked when he told him he needed to talk about his time management skills.

"He took the defensive, as if he was doing something wrong," Rosen says. "But when I told him he was the 2012 award winner, he looked a little dumbfounded at first. But it really touched me to present it to someone who had earned, and not won, that award."

Rosen, now West Central regional warden, says he nominated Fell for the honor for his well-rounded program. "He not only has balanced enforcement efforts, but also education and community involvement programs," he says. "His workload and output is just phenomenal."

Fell also helps train other law enforcement agencies and his own department, as well as train the law enforcement academy recruits, Rosen says.

"Once he was gone for a month for training and I called his wife to ask if there was anything I could do to support her," Rosen says. "Russ puts so much into his career. He is so dedicated that he truly lives, breathes and bleeds gray. But when he is back home, he puts that much back into his family. It's amazing how he can balance it all."

Rosen says Fell has numerous civil and criminal investigations every year, spends countless hours educating the community



Russ Fell and his family — wife, Staci, and daughters Megan and Emily.

through speaking to civic groups or schools or participating in learn-to-hunt programs, and often assists wardens outside of his administrative area.

“Russ has become a household name around the area,” Rosen says. “He has a superb attitude and always holds himself to incredibly high standards. He is well respected by other wardens, and people seek him out for advice. We’re truly blessed to have him within the agency.”

In addition to the Haskell Noyes award, Rosen says Fell has received all five regional awards that are offered for outstanding performance in specific law enforcement program areas.

Fell says it is easy to be a warden when you like the work. “I love to meet the public and to be a presenter and speaker,” he says. “I’ve also put together some pretty good cases.”

Fell arrived at the Racine County station at the tail end of the largescale commercial fishing undercover investigation on Lake Michigan. Years of investigation culminated in surveillance and audits on local fishermen. Several fishermen went to prison, had boats confiscated and lost their commercial fishing license. He’s also worked some big deer cases.

“It’s really the diversity of things that I remember,” he says. “I never thought that I’d be hiking through the backwoods to watch people shoot deer out of their back window, or that I’d be using waders to take samples when I’m knee-deep in human sewage.”

Fell has given a lot of his time to the Department. He’s done training, taught at the academy, taken part in interviewing panels, and served on various committees.

He has also been an advocate of learn-to-hunt programs. “We do learn-to-hunt turkey and bear, and then started an outdoor field day in Barron County,” he says. “The camp is for youth under 18, and each year we introduce up to 200 youth to the world of shooting sports under the mentorship of hunter safety instructors.”

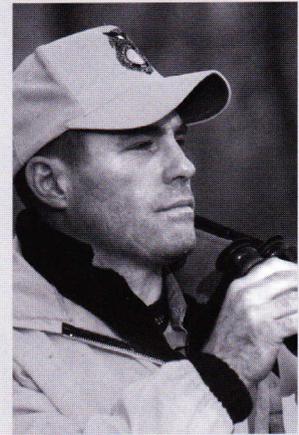
The youth come to the Rice Lake Rod & Gun Club, and can practice shoot at a variety of stations, including muzzleloader, pistol, rifle and others. If they’ve passed hunter safety, they also have an opportunity to shoot a pheasant.

Fell says the idea of the field day came from a survey that showed the main barriers to getting youth involved in hunting activities is that there is no one to mentor them and that they have no place to go. “At least for one day each year, they can overcome these barriers,” he says. “It is a free day; we provide all the equipment and we provide them a place to shoot and mentors to help them.”

Fell says the cards, emails and wishes sent by friends and co-workers after they learned he was the 2012 Haskell Noyes recipient were overwhelming. “A lot of people wrote: ‘It’s about time you got this award’ or ‘I thought you won it a long time ago.’ That tells me I wasn’t an anomaly and that I deserved it.”

Fell says he is ready for the new challenges that being a warden supervisor brings. “I like directing people ... and highlighting other people’s achievements. A warden supervisor has a lot of influence on the day-to-day operations of a field warden. I’ve had some very good supervisors ... and I hope to build on that.”

Photo on previous page: The DNR’s new honor guard made its first appearance at the Haskell Noyes ceremony where Russ Fell received the coveted award given to wardens for “faithful and able service.”



Fell at a glance

- Graduated from UW-Stevens Point in 1990 with a major in resource management and minors in environmental law enforcement and wildlife management
- His first job was a LTE position as a park ranger at Pike Lake State Park in Hartford. After that, he was hired by the West Bend Police Department.
- In January 1992, he was hired by the DNR as a warden. He was temporarily assigned to Beaver Dam for 11 months, and then transferred to Union Grove.
- In October 1998, he transferred to the Rice Lake station and served as Rice Lake warden until March 2013.
- He was promoted to warden supervisor in February 2013, the same month he was notified that he was the Haskell Noyes recipient.
- He is married to Staci, and they have two daughters: Megan, 15, and Emily, 13.



Warden Don Euers, stationed in Green Bay, took this photo in the late 1950s when the ice sled was brought in to help Green Bay commercial fishermen get their under-ice gill nets and bring them back to shore.

ICE SLEDS MADE IT SAFER FOR WARDENS WORKING ON RIVER ICE

By Harland Steinhorst

Wardens working on river ice are subject to dangerous ice conditions, regardless of their model of travel: foot, four-wheeled vehicle or snowmobile.

The Conservation Department contracted to have two “ice sleds” constructed. The sleds were constructed of 1/8-inch steel, and were 12-feet long and 5-feet wide with a metal cockpit near the front of the slide. The power plant was an aircraft engine with a large rudder to steer it over the ice and snow.

The two sleds were issued in 1956 to wardens working on the Mississippi River watercourse: David Hammes of the La Crosse station and Stan Apel of the Cockrane station.

But the sleds were occasionally used elsewhere in the state. For instance, during the late winter of 1958-59, a snowstorm dumped a deep, wet snow on the ice of Green Bay. This caused the ice, less than a foot thick, to sink and two feet of water flooded the top of the sunken ice. Normal fishing vehicles, some called half-tracks, could not negotiate the water and snow mixture. So Warden Art Odall of Oconto requested Apel to bring his ice sled across the state to assist the Green Bay commercial fishermen.

The spring break-up was coming soon and the commercial

fishermen needed to recover their gill nets, which were under the ice, and bring the nets back to shore in canvas bags. Some of the nets were transported in the ice sled and others in a sled pulled behind the ice sled. If the nets were not pulled come ice out, they would be all over lower Green Bay, killing many more gilled fish and bringing financial hardship to the anglers.

An ice sled was also used on Lake Winnebago during the winter of 1967-68. Warden Keith Reichenbach of Chilton and I had the opportunity to use the ice sled while checking sport fishermen. However, we learned ice sleds are not the best vehicles to check sport ice fishermen with.

First, fishermen knew you were coming since there wasn't a muffler on the 125-horsepower aircraft engine that pushed the sled. Second, we had no brakes, and had to cut power long before getting to the area of the fishermen. Third, we needed ear plugs. Last, we had to watch our prop wash; we could trip-up a lot of the ice fishing flags as we left.

We got hung up on some ice jams and froze to bare ice. However, we had equipment onboard to help free us when needed. The sled was very heavy due to the steel construction, plus the weight of the engine and extra equipment.

HARLAND STEINHORST is a retired conservation warden now living in LaValle, Wis.

One sail of a good time

By Pam Buss

Did you know that there are Pacific and Atlantic sailfish?

The Pacific species is about twice as large as the Atlantic. The maximum size for the sailfish from the Atlantic region is 124 inches total length and around 128 pounds. In waters of the Pacific Ocean, the maximum size for the sailfish is recorded at 134 inches total length and around 220 pounds in weight. The largest fish are usually female.

Sailfish have a very large dorsal sail fin and are easily recognizable. They also are the fastest swimming fish with a recorded top speed of up to 68 mph.

Sailfish are a "billfish," which is a general term that includes all fish with the upper jaw prolonged into a sword or bill. This also includes marlin, broadbill and spearfish. Billfish can throw their stomachs out and swallow them back in without any damage.

I learned all of this and more after John and I took a weeklong trip to Mexico to fish for sailfish. In February 2013, John and I had the opportunity to combine our love of fishing with our love of traveling. I had done quite a bit of research about fishing for sailfish and I found a location that I thought was intriguing. The site was in remote Mexico, located well off the usual tourist haunts. What we encountered was an all-inclusive trip that surpassed all of our expectations. We also found a bit of paradise in Puerto Vicente, Guerrero, Mexico.

John and Angie Lorenz dreamt, and ultimately built, a fishing lodge called Bahia La Tortuga. We could keep this place a secret and never share it with anyone, but we would love to have others experience the same magic. I've come to the point in life where it's more fun to share the joy than it is to hold all the secrets. Bahia La Tortuga is a small lodge with a dedicated staff. Angie runs the lodge and kitchen. The meals and accommodations are outstanding. We had fresh shrimp, oysters, lobster, sailfish, Mahimahi and octopus, as well as traditional Mexican food.

One day we encountered local divers. They had fresh scallops and lobster in their tiny boat. We ate scallops right from the shell. The divers were diving approximately 40 feet down using what appeared to be a garden hose for air from an ancient compressor.

John runs the fishing end of the business. If he or his other captains can't get you on fish, no one is catching anything. The vast ocean surrounds you and usually no other boats can be seen. Depending on the time of the year, the distance from shore varies. In early February, we were about 17 miles offshore in beautiful blue water. We fished on John's panga, which is nothing like the upscale fishing boats you see on television shows. Some of the panga boats that John's captains use don't have electronics. Add to that the fact that you buy fresh bait every morning from local fisherman, and you have a truly unique experience! Among the 14 sailfish and the 55-inch Dorado that we caught, we saw manta rays jumping from the depths, sunrises, beautiful hills, unique vegetation, migrating humpback whales, hawksbill turtles floating on the ocean's surface, pods of dolphins, and mesmerizing



Pam and John Buss show off their dorado that gave John a good fight.



waves of the Pacific stretching to the horizon.

One sailfish literally took me to my knees while another tried to jump into the boat. John's dorado, which is also called dolphin-fish or Mahimahi, gave him the best fight of his life. Watching the sailfish repeatedly jump and dance across the water is truly a remarkable experience. Catching one (or 14) is even better!

We had such a great time that we have already planned a return trip for 2014 with our daughters. We want Natalie and Valerie to experience the magic and lifelong memories.

Since the trip, I have added many other species of fish to my bucket list. I now want to go after blue and striped marlin, roosterfish, yellow fin tuna, and an Atlantic sailfish.

Just in case you are wondering, we rounded out the trip by ordering replicas of John's dorado as well as a 9-foot sailfish for our walls.

Wisconsin has natural beauty throughout the state, but there is no better way to learn about the world than to travel outside the comfort of our state's boundaries. Go off the beaten path, try new foods, talk to the locals, relax and enjoy the experiences.



Tweedlededum and Tweedlededumber vs. the intimidating tape recorder

By Dave Sabrowsky

Every warden has experiences or encounters that stray from the norm. In fact, interesting encounters and incidents should be expected because of the nature of the job. And most of those memorable or unusual experiences inevitably occur during patrol where nothing follows routine.

The last place one would expect the unexpected, however, is in the courtroom. That venue is about rules, order and procedure. There's the formality of the initial appearance. If you have a "not guilty" plea, a trial is set before either the judge or a jury. During a trial, the defendant gives his or her version of the incident and the arresting officer counters with facts. The judge or jury renders a verdict and all parties move on; normally it is procedural boredom. But not so in the case of "Tweedlededum and Tweedlededumber vs. The Intimidating Tape Recorder."

In September 1991, a member of the Antigo DNR office called me with a complaint regarding the overbagging of trout on McGee Lake. McGee Lake is a little jewel of a lake in southwestern Langlade County and is managed by the DNR for

We had recently been issued small voice-activated tape recorders and I was developing the practice of carrying it in my uniform shirt pocket and turning it on prior to an interview or incident in the field. It was an efficient note taker.

quality trout fishing. At the time, the regulations restricted the bait to artificial lures or flies only, with a limit of two trout per day. There was no size limit.

A complainant called the Antigo office stating that he and his wife had been fishing McGee Lake and had witnessed two guys grossly overbagging on trout. They had filmed the violation with their video camera. Oh goodie, a freebie, I thought. What warden wouldn't like an easy ticket like this to write up since the violators were captured on film?

My deputy and I drove to the complainants' house that night, introduced ourselves and were invited in to witness the violators on video. What we saw were two guys fishing from a boat on an unidentified body of water and ... that was it! The short film did not show them catching a fish. However, it did record them cleaning two fish and throwing the offal

overboard. The complainants insisted the two had overbagged so I was obligated to follow up, which I did. The couple had copied down the vehicle license plate of one of the anglers, enabling me to locate one suspect and we drove to his home.

We had recently been issued small voice-activated tape recorders and I was developing the practice of carrying it in

Judge Jansen, far right, talks to Bill Lazarz, Dave Arendt and Dave Sabrowsky at Sabrowsky's hunting cabin prior to working deer shiners. Jansen rode with wardens at least once a year working deer shiners.

my uniform shirt pocket and turning it on prior to an interview or incident in the field. It was an efficient note taker. Before I knocked on the suspect's door, I turned the tape recorder on. Initially, the suspect denied overbagging, but after more discussion, he finally consented to catching one trout over the limit. Not the home run I was looking for, but at least I was on base. I also learned the name of his partner, so before the first defendant could warn him, I called and did my interview over the phone. He admitted to catching two trout over the legal limit, but said they were for his wife on shore. Both stated they had consumed all the trout, yet they would not give a consent search of their freezers. Again, not the round-tripper I had anticipated, but I did have two confessions of overbagging. I would have liked some physical evidence, but since I did have two recorded confessions of a "little" overbagging, I decided to write each a ticket for the generic offense of exceeding the daily bag limit on fish, but not the more serious violation of overbagging on trout.

Not surprisingly, they both pleaded "not guilty" at the initial appearance. I say not surprisingly because a high percentage of defendants plead not guilty at the initial, essentially buying time. Then, just before the scheduled trial, they pay the fine or forfeiture. I thought this was their plan. How could they not be guilty? They had confessed. A trial date was set for a few months later.

When the date for trial arrived, I arrived at court prior to the scheduled time and was surprised to see both defendants waiting in the hall. I met with the district attorney in the courtroom and he asked if the defendants were here. I told him they were waiting outside, but that I wasn't sure why they are going through with the trial; I had their confessions on tape. Our DA was a feisty little barrister, but he did not like trials. In fact, he hated them. He asked me if I really had their confessions on tape and as soon as I acknowledged that I did, he stormed out into the hallway to ask the two defendants if they really wanted to go through with the trial. They said they did and then he reminded them of the consequences of perjury since their confessions were taped.

We all entered the courtroom and sat at our appropriate places, the DA and I on one side of the large conference table in front of the judge's bench, and the defendants sitting across from us. I slowly (*admittedly with a little flair*) removed the tape recorder from my briefcase, set it in front of me so the defendants both could see it (*I may have even patted it a couple of times like you would your dog*) and sat back. The two defendants just stared at the recorder like it was a coiled rattlesnake. Judge Jansen entered the courtroom, called court to order, took his seat, and we proceeded. (*I must interject a little about Judge Jansen. Judge Jansen was more than a judge. He was a friend. He was also an avid outdoorsman who liked wardens and who rode with us at least once a year working deer shiners. He was an easygoing, friendly man, not only outside the courthouse, but also in the courtroom.*)

I was sworn in, testified to my involvement, and then Judge Jansen asked if either defendant would like to cross-examine the warden. The two were still staring at the recorder, so he asked them again if they wanted to ask me any questions. One

of the defendants finally came out of his trance (*I think it was Tweedlededum*) and said they had no questions. I was excused, stepped down from the witness box, and sat back with the DA. A smiling Judge Jansen asked which of the defendants wanted to testify first. In unison, they said they didn't want to testify.

Judge Jansen (*still smiling*) patiently explained (*like he was talking to a grade school class*) the purpose of scheduling a trial. The arresting officer testifies, the defendants then get to tell their story, and then he makes his decision based on both sides' testimony. If they didn't testify, he had no choice but to convict them based on only the warden's testimony. Tweedlededum and Tweedlededumber, eyes still fixed on the recorder, reiterated that they didn't want to testify.

Judge Jansen was no longer smiling. In fact, I saw red creeping up his neckline, and with his jaw tightening, he gripped the gavel tightly, and then stated that he had never seen anything like this in all his years on the bench. He turned to the DA and said he was going to take a 10-minute recess and when he returned this matter had better be straightened out. And with that announcement, he marched from the courtroom. The DA asked the two if they were now ready to plead guilty. After a brief huddle, they told the DA they were not going to plead guilty to overbagging. The DA turned to me and asked me if there was any alternative charge. I remembered the throwing of fish offal into the water. The penalty was the same, so I offered him that alternative. The DA asked if they would plead guilty to throwing fish offal into the water. Tweedlededum's light finally came on (*albeit a little dim*) and he agreed. Tweedlededumber just wasn't getting the big picture and said that he would now testify.

Judge Jansen was summonsed and reentered the courtroom smiling again. He was advised of the current status, and Tweedlededumber was sworn in and took his seat next to the judge. The defendant was staring at the recorder in front of me when the judge asked him to proceed. He responded by saying, "I'm not going to testify."

The Clerk of Court's head snapped to the right, the stenographer's head snapped back to the left and Judge Jansen exploded. He did not like this knucklehead wasting the court's time. The mild-mannered judge proceeded to read Tweedlededumber the riot act. When he was finished with his tirade, he found him guilty of overbagging, doubled the forfeiture amount, revoked all DNR privileges for two years, and threw him out of the courtroom, stating that if he ever saw him in his courtroom again he would find him in contempt. I almost felt sorry for the fool.

This case exemplifies the reality that as a warden you can never take anything for granted and that you need to expect what is not expected. I thought I had seen everything, but was dumbfounded by the amount of power that little tape recorder had over those two guys. Do I ever feel bad that it deprived them of their inalienable right to lie in court? No! Do I feel bad that I never got to hear the story they had concocted? Yes! Those are always so interesting!

DAVE SABROWSKY is a retired Wisconsin conservation warden.



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The Wisconsin Conservation Warden Association (WCWA) exists to further conservation efforts within the state, without unionizing or collective bargaining, and is dedicated to all of the men and women who have served as Wisconsin conservation wardens since 1879.

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ABUELO

By Duane Harpster

This man of the sea is 84 years old. Lucas and his wife fled Cuba more than 50 years ago when Castro came to power. I'm sure he has stories to tell, but the bumper sticker on his truck, "Castro Sucks," says all that really needs to be said.

I have known his son, Albert, and fished with him on the "flats" of the Florida Keys for 20 years. Over the years I was supposed to go fishing with Lucas many times, but it never happened. It was apparent to me, and certainly understandable given his life experiences, that Lucas chose his fishing companions and he chose them with care. Just because his son thought that someone should fish with him meant nothing to this man. But I heard enough stories from Albert about his father's fishing exploits — he fished the big water mostly and often alone — that I really wanted to go with him some time. Any time.

It is my good fortune to have great friends, and two of them spend the winter in the Keys and asked me to come down and visit. It was a request that was hard to turn down. We were to fish with Albert and on our own. If the weather allowed, we would fish the big water.

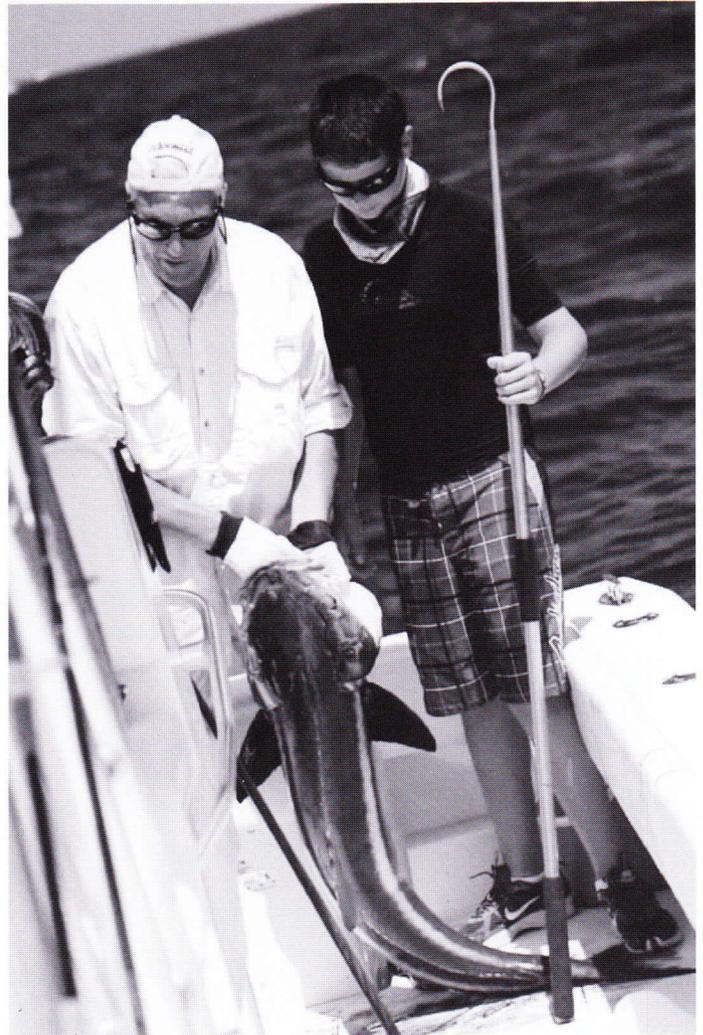
As with all plans, things come up, and while I was there, my friends returned to Wisconsin to attend a funeral, leaving me alone in the Keys. I fished, waiting for their return, when Albert called to say I would be fishing the next morning with his father. I couldn't wait.

My chores were to pick up the other guys who were going fishing with us, and get lunch. So I picked up some subs, Lucas and his two pals, Clay and Tommy, both 11. You might think this was shaping up to be a circus, but Lucas and Clay are very experienced fishermen and Clay goes fishing with Grandpa Lucas quite often. When we got to Lucas' house, the first thing I noticed was the respect these boys had for the man they called Abuelo, or grandfather. The boat, a 32-footer, was immaculate, a pure fishing machine, organized and equipped to fish whatever the captain decided. The boys jumped to their familiar tasks. My job was simply to stay out of the way and fish.

It was a beautiful day, but the fish were not lining up to go home with us, despite Abuelo's best efforts. He and I were each bitten off in 170 feet of water by "kings" while we tried for mut-ton snapper. Then Tommy lost a target fish, and we headed to one last spot.

This last spot was the charm as we hooked up to a big fish in 180-plus feet of water. What was it? The guessing began. A mut-ton? Maybe a king or perhaps a shark? And so we waited until the fish surfaced. A cobia! A terrific eating fish, and this was a big one.

The crew jumped into action, and Clay was the designated gaff man. One swipe and the fish was struck, and with helping hands the fish came over the side and into the boat. The boys stared at our catch in amazement while Abuelo and I congratulated each



After gaffing the cobia and bringing it on board their boat, Clay and Duane Harpster admire the large fish.

other with handshakes and backslapping. Soon the whole crew is hollering, shaking hands, and trying to guess the weight. With the fish on ice in the box, we headed for home; I can tell this is truly a big fish because Abuelo is still excited about it. They called Albert and told him to come over and clean it. Abuelo said Albert does a great job with big fish.

As we pull into the mooring spot, Gram came out on the deck to welcome us; she smiled and spread her arms wide questioningly, and I nodded and spread my arms wide also. As we finished tying up, she walked down, and when she saw the cobia she laughed and said: "I thought you were kidding. That is a beautiful fish. Who caught it?"

"We did Gram," the boys responded. "We did, all of us together."

The boys washed down the boat and readied it for the next day while Abuelo, Gram and I sat in the shade drinking the fruit smoothies she made us. We told her the story of our catch and Lucas talked about fishing on the ocean. From the excitement in his voice, his expressions, and the motions of his hands as he talked, it was apparent that he loves the sea and the fish. What a gift he gives the boys he takes fishing. What a gift, Abuelo.

DUANE HARPSTER is a retired Wisconsin conservation warden who lives in Boulder Junction.

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Learn-to-Hunt a Success



Six hunters from across Wisconsin took part in a Learn-to-Hunt bear event on Aug. 6 in Chippewa and Clark counties. All six hunters were successful in harvesting a bear, thanks to the great mentors involved in the program, according to Chippewa County Conservation Warden Randy Dunkel. The Wisconsin Conservation Warden Association sponsored the program through a regional grant.