

## Write



### HUMMER NEST

I found this hummingbird nest on August 12 with two babies. It's at Shep's campground on Island Lake in Rusk County.

Karl Fisher  
Bruce



### KING OF THE FOREST

Pileated woodpeckers approach the size of crows, but are rarely seen up close. I found a nest site in a dead aspen tree this spring and, using turkey hunting gear and techniques, was able to watch the pair exchange duties incubating and brooding. I was also able to clearly see the differences between the male and female. When they changed responsibilities, the mate taking over waited outside the nest hole for the other mate to leave. The mate leaving did so in a great hurry, while the one coming to the nest cavity never flew directly to the tree, but seemed to approach nearby trees before finally landing on the side of the aspen. The male has more red about his head than the female. Here, the male pileated woodpecker waits for the female to leave the nest cavity before entering. He never knocked, just waited for the female to leave.

Jerry Davis  
Barneveld

### COMMENT ON A STORY?

Send your letters to: Readers Write, WNR magazine, P.O. Box 7191, Madison, WI 53707. Or email letters to [dnrmagazine@wisconsin.gov](mailto:dnrmagazine@wisconsin.gov). Limit letters to 250 words and include your name and the community from which you are writing.

### NO ACCESS TO THE WEB?

Don't have access to a link we mention in a story? Let us know when you want to follow a link we list. We'll do what we can to get you a copy of the material if it is available free of charge and is relatively short in length.

### FROG LEGS ON THE MENU

While my family and I were traveling through central Wisconsin the last weekend of July, we visited the Marshfield zoo. While we were there, my son was walking along a small creek that runs through the property. He told us he just saw a mallard eat a frog. I walked over to the creek a short time later to witness and get a picture of the duck eating a second small frog. I was not aware that frogs were a part of a mallard's diet.



David Schmidt  
De Pere

*An online search revealed the mallard's diet varies based on its breeding cycle, food availability and competition, but mostly consists of snails, insects, crayfish, worms and many kinds of plants. Wikipedia states, "It usually feeds by dabbling for plant food or grazing; there are reports of it eating frogs."*



### EAGLE SNOW ANGEL

I read with great interest in the August 2015 issue Readers Write column the account of two eagles battling for "supremacy of the airways" and the imprint in the snow left by the vanquished as it hit the ground. I too came across a similar "eagle snow angel" this past winter as I snowshoed my property just outside of Mercer. While I did not see the activity leading up to it, in the absence of any other prints in the immediate area, I could only guess that an eagle had landed on the snow to capture a lesser bird. While initially thinking I had come across some unexplainable activity on the surface of the snow, with closer inspection I was able to recognize how the tail feathers and wing tips were delicately cast in the snow indicating perhaps the life-and-death struggles associated with Wisconsin's most elegant bird.

Mark Suckow  
Mercer

### EAGLE-EYED OSPREY

I had just stocked my pond with largemouth bass. I think they were on this bad boy's menu.

Steve and Dana Bremer  
Brooklyn



### CORRECTIONS

We heard from several astute readers about a duck we misidentified in our October issue. In the story "An aerie of eagles," on page 24, the duck in the middle photo is a scaup, not a ring-necked duck. One avid reader, Michael Berman, said this: *Being an avid waterfowler myself, I actually recognize this duck as a lesser scaup or bluebill. Since bluebills have a defined limit of three ducks per day of our six-duck bag and ringnecks do not, I would hate for someone to misidentify their birds in the field and over-take their scaup limit.*

We also misidentified a crane in "Wisconsin Traveler" on page 31. The crane in the photo is a grey crowned crane from Africa, rather than a black crowned crane. We regret both errors and appreciate that so many readers pay such close attention to our stories.

Also, two photos in the "Urban coyotes" story had incorrect photo credits. On page 7, the photo should be credited to "DNR file photo" and the large photo on page 9 was taken by Dianne Robinson.



#### NATURE'S ARTWORK

I have wasps in a downspout this year, and found this "work of art" recently. It is a cement bird house that the wrens and bluebirds have used and this year the wasps chose to make it home! We were gone one weekend and when I came back the wasp nest (which I had hung near our deck as a "garden ornament") was all messed up. At first I thought maybe the grandkids had done it. Then this morning I discovered what really happened. The woodpecker stuck his head way in the nest to check for any more pupae. He's come back a couple of times this morning. Nature is so interesting!

Dan Behnke  
Lindsey

#### RED-TAILED HAWK STAREDOWN

For several days this hawk staked out our backyard to hunt and eat prey. When I went out with the camera to take some shots, it flew right at me (wing spread had to be at least four feet!) and at the last second, swooped up into the tree I was standing under. We stared at each other while I got these close-ups. I'm not sure what kind of hawk it is. Maybe you or your readers will know. Thanks!

Bob Schermacher  
West Bend



*This is a red-tailed hawk, one of the most common birds of prey in Wisconsin. Red-tails are generalists in habitat and diet, occupying fields, woodlands, urban areas and suburban backyards where they eat mice, chipmunks, squirrels, snakes and other birds. Populations are doing well thanks to this flexibility, laws against persecution and the banning of DDT in the early 1970s.*

#### FEEDBACK FROM A CONSERVATION PATRON

Conservation Patrons are a loyal group. I read your magazine cover to cover, then pass it on to a school library. Three suggestions:

1. My turkey permit was for April and May. Why does the license expire almost a year later on March 31? Your computer should be smart enough to have the license expire on the last legal turkey hunting day.
2. Print my name and address on a removable label so I can easily recycle it through the school.
3. Allow me to purchase the Conservation Patron's license in the fall (before Christmas) so I will be able to gift-wrap them for my six grandchildren.

For over 20 years I have been trying to get the DNR to sell the Conservation Patron license before Christmas. I always hear the same excuse — "We are not set up to sell the license before Christmas." I know that, but having worked information technology for the Air Force I know it is not a difficult undertaking. Hey guys — this is a marketing tool!

Harold Clement  
Chief Master Sergeant  
U.S. Air Force Retired  
Prescott

#### WANDERING WAXWINGS

I just read your informative article about waxwings ("Wandering waxwings," February 2006). Thank you for all the fascinating information. Waxwings have been my favorite bird ever since I saw a flock of them in a tree growing along the Chicago River in 1993. They look more like an artist's watercolor of a bird than an actual living thing. Yesterday, I was surprised to see a flock of about 18 waxwings in a Siberian elm growing on the bank of the Yahara River behind my house in Madison. I couldn't believe that they were here in February! But you say in your article that some flocks do winter in Madison and Milwaukee. So I suppose my sighting wasn't as unique as I had thought.

Barbara Bejna  
Madison



#### A TRUE ALBINO

My wife and I enjoy sitting on our deck watching the birds and squirrels. One morning in April we saw this albino squirrel in our backyard. We've seen it once or twice a week since April. This is the first albino squirrel we have seen. How rare are they?

Roger and Kathie Demmon  
West Bend

*Sources say the rate of albinism in gray squirrels is one in 100,000. Some white squirrels are actually leucistic and may have patches of gray fur and black eyes. Yours is truly albino, as evidenced by its red eyes.*

#### INVASIVE CRAYFISH

We always read about invasive species coming into our state. Well, back in 1960 my uncle Howard "Johnny" Topel of Pensaukee was contacted by our old Wisconsin Conservation Department to trap 500 crawfish (crabs) to send to Sweden. I wonder what the results were and how they turned out. They may have turned out to be invasive there like the rusty crabs are here. Might make an interesting article in your magazine.

Ellis Mercier  
Oconto

*[Editor's Note: Mr. Mercier sent us photocopies of correspondence among his uncle Johnny, C. W. Threinen of the Wisconsin Conservation Department and Dr. Gunnar Svardson of the Institute of Freshwater Research in Drottningholm, Sweden. The letters detailed the arrangements whereby Johnny Topel was permitted by the WCD to live trap up to 500 crabs during the closed season in the Green Bay area. The Swedish government instructed him to ship 100-150 specimens, preferably pregnant females, by air from the Green Bay airport to Bromma, Sweden.*

*"We have already got another American Crayfish species from California," wrote Dr. Svardson, "and this [method of] transport gave a quite insignificant mortality. They were packed, as fish eggs, with ample space, and some ice melting from the top of the container, giving moist and low temperature."*

*Johnny Topel was compensated for his efforts by the Swedish government in the amount of \$10.*

*We were unsuccessful in our attempt to contact someone at the Swedish research institute to see if they could answer Mr. Mercier's question. An online search, however, produced this possible explanation.*

*In the early 1900s, a water mold known as crayfish plague severely depleted native crayfish in Sweden and spread throughout Europe. Attempting to find other species of crayfish to replace the native species, noble crayfish, Swedish officials in 1960 imported North American species to reestablish commercial crayfish fisheries. Notably, the signal crayfish from California and the Pacific Northwest did very well and quickly invaded waters from Sweden to England, Italy and across Europe. It was not known until the signal crayfish was well established across Europe, that it was also a carrier of the crayfish plague.]*



**HOOF FUNGUS**

I photographed the following images of a fallen birch tree on an island in the Chippewa flowage. I was wondering if you could identify the object attached to the tree for me?

*Deb Petrusha  
Milwaukee*

*This appears to be a fungus called Fomes fomentarius, a species that most typically grows on hardwoods; in northern areas, it is most common on birch. Its common names include tinder conk and hoof fungus.*

**CARP SHOULD BE EATEN**

Today I received my copy of the August 2014 *Wisconsin Natural Resources* magazine. I read the story on the inside page of the cover, the report on Wisconsin DNR seining Lake Winnebago to fish out the European carp that for some years were killed off as rough fish. DNR [once shipped] them to big cities like New York, Chicago, St. Louis and others where ethnic populations live who traditionally like to eat carp. Now I hope that the DNR in many states will look at the Asian carp in many of their lakes and rivers as food. The people in China eat Asian carp and many American/ Chinese restaurants in the U.S. cook and eat them too.

*Richard G. Kortsch  
Milwaukee*



**TRUMPETER TERRITORIAL DISPUTE**

Here is a sample of a series of photos documenting trumpeter swans involved in a territorial dispute. I was lucky enough to get the swan flying across the lake, landing, fighting, displaying and ultimately chasing away a rival. This happened on Sauntrys Pocket Lake in Wascott (Douglas County).

*Judy Hilgers  
Middleton*



**TOADSTOOL**

I am sending the attached to share with your readers if you deem them appropriate. Just documenting the recent plethora of mushrooms in the Kenosha County area.

*Sharon Schoen  
Union Grove*



**AN ENTERPRISING ROBIN**

I sent a follow-up photo to one that was published in your August 2016 issue (Readers Write), of our robins' nest built in a set of antlers on our garage. Here is a photo of the same nest being used this year. Four nestlings!

*Cathy Zimmerman  
Cornucopia*

**BEE TREE HUNTING**

The August issue had the article by Staber Reese "Wild about honey" in which he detailed how he and two other Conservation Department employees found and cut down a bee tree to obtain the wild honey back in the 1940s. I was disappointed the editors did not include a disclaimer warning readers today to not do that, which destroys the hive. Considering the importance of honeybees and all the problems they have — colony collapse, mites and others — they need our help and support.

*Ron Winter  
Boulder Junction*

*We appreciate your feedback, Ron, and you are right about the need to protect honeybees today. Like all subjects chosen for the "Back in the day" column, it was meant as a reflection on how things were in the past, not as a promotion for readers to go out and do them now. We believe there is still merit in knowing — and teaching our children — concepts like triangulation and how to use a compass.*

**JACK AND POPPA**

Loved reading Jessie Stevens' article titled "Kid fishing" (June 2016). The descriptions not only took me back to when our kids went on their first fishing expeditions (tangled lines, dropped poles, hooked fingers and dumped worm buckets) but it brought back memories of my first fishing adventures!



And, now, we are grandparents who had the pleasure of taking our grandson, Jack, out for his first line-wetting experience. At just over 1 1/2 years of age, he might seem a bit young, but he sure was interested, and even insisted on being the one who got to toss the small fish back in the water! Here's a picture of Jack's first official catch; a nice-sized perch. Just wanted to share the new memories! Always enjoy reading your magazine!

*Jim Ultwelling  
Eau Claire*

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