

# OUTDOORS

Outdoors Editor  
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## CALENDAR

**Dec. 31:** Pheasant, ruffed grouse (northern zone), Hungarian partridge; bobcat (hunting and trapping); fisher (trapping); and frog seasons close.

**Jan. 7:** Wisconsin's late archery deer season closes.

**Jan. 7:** Spring Green Rod & Gun Club's 50-bird jackrabbit shoot. Register from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. S12314 Highway G in Spring Green. Call 608-588-7162, 608-588-2778 or 608-588-7802

**Jan. 8:** Capital City Chapter Muskies Inc. meeting. Speaker is scheduled to be muskie fisherman Steve Herbeck, owner of Andy Myers Lodge on Eagle Lake in Hayward. Doors open 6 p.m., meeting begins at 7 p.m. Park Ponderosa, 5100 Erling Ave., in McFarland. Go to [www.capitalcitymuskiesinc.org](http://www.capitalcitymuskiesinc.org) or call Craig Eversoll at 608-845-9561 or e-mail [ceversoll@tds.net](mailto:ceversoll@tds.net).

**Jan. 9:** Yahara Fishing Club monthly meeting. 7:30 p.m. Jim Kusuda will discuss ice fishing. Lakeside VFW Hall, corner of John Nolen Drive and Lakeside Street off Lake Monona. Call Jim Zegers at 608-848-6299 or Paul Marunich at 608-219-4449.

**Jan. 11 to 13:** Wisconsin State Chapter National Wildlife Turkey Federation's annual convention and sports show. Midwest custom call-making competition (Jan. 11, registration deadline 2 p.m.); trade show, fish fry, casino night (3 p.m. start) on Jan. 12; and trade show, seminars (8 a.m. start) on Jan. 13 with evening banquet. For tickets or information, contact Dean Hamilton at 608-849-9270 or e-mail to [deanhamy@tds.net](mailto:deanhamy@tds.net).

**Jan. 18:** Trout Unlimited's 10-week fly tying classes begin. Beginning, intermediate and advanced courses offered on Thursday evenings in Sun Prairie and Fitchburg. Classes are free, but advanced registration is required. Course information and registration is available at local fishing supply stores and online at [www.swtu.org](http://www.swtu.org).

**Jan. 18:** Winter crow season opens, through March 20.

**Jan. 20:** Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited's 23rd annual Icebreaker. 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Park Ponderosa Ballroom 5100 Erling Ave., McFarland. Speakers include Montana fishing guide and author Dave Ames; local writer, teacher and photographer Kevin Searock; and Madison-based fly fishing guide Craig Amacker. Raffles, door prizes. Tickets \$9 or \$10 at door. Call Jack Way at 608-222-2461 or e-mail to [www.swtu.org](http://www.swtu.org).

**Jan. 20:** Lake Mason Lions' annual fisherie on Lake Mason near Briggsville. Bad weather date Jan. 27. Prize drawings 3 p.m. at Wagon Wheel boat landing, 3 miles west of Briggsville on Highway 23. Call Randy Sus at 608-253-6567 or e-mail to [randysus@gmail.com](mailto:randysus@gmail.com).

**Jan. 20:** Yahara Fishing Club's Kids Ice Fishing Day. Shelter at Brittingham Park off Lake Monona near the corners of Park Street and West Washington Avenue. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Free for all youths age 15 and under. Includes instruction, drilling of holes and a pole and bait for the first 200 kids. Hot dogs, chips and hot chocolate available at no cost. Contact Eric Olson at 608-455-2067 or e-mail [esox4me@hotmail.com](mailto:esox4me@hotmail.com), call Rick Seeger at 608-849-3714 or go to [www.yaharafishingclub.org](http://www.yaharafishingclub.org)

**Jan. 22 to 24:** All-Canada Show. Adults \$9; seniors and children (13 to 16) \$8; and children 12 and under admitted free. Marriott Madison West Convention Center, 1313 John Q. Hammons Drive off the Bellline in Middleton. Call 1-800-325-6290 or go to [AllCanada.com](http://AllCanada.com).

Submit information (including phone number and contact person) to: Outdoors Calendar, c/o John Nolan, P.O. Box 8058, Madison, WI 53708 or send e-mail to [outdoors@madison.com](mailto:outdoors@madison.com)

## LUNAR TABLES

The following are the top fishing times for the lunar week, according to the U.S. Naval Observatory. X indicates top opportunities:

Sunday	3:55 p.m.	4:20 a.m.
Monday	4:45 p.m.	5:05 a.m.
Tuesday	5:30 p.m.	5:55 a.m.
XWednesday	6:20 p.m.	6:45 a.m.
XThursday	7:10 p.m.	7:35 a.m.
Friday	8:00 p.m.	8:30 a.m.
Saturday	8:55 p.m.	9:20 a.m.
Sunday	9:55 p.m.	10:25 a.m.

For additional information on the weekly hunting and fishing outlook in Wisconsin, a 3-minute report is available from the Department of Natural Resources by calling 608-266-2277. Call 608-244-3474 for a Madison-area fishing report.

## FEATHERED FRIENDS

**COMMON NAME:** White-breasted nuthatch.

**SPECIES:** *Sitta carolinensis*.

**DESCRIPTION:** Sparrow-sized at 5 to 6 inches. Blue-gray above with white underparts and face and a black crown. Often seen creeping down tree trunks headfirst.

**VOICE:** A nasal yank-yank. Song is a series of low whistled notes.

**HABITAT:** Deciduous and mixed forests.

**RANGE:** Common in the eastern U.S., it ranges from British Columbia, Ontario and Nova Scotia south to California, Arizona, the Gulf Coast and central Florida. Absent in much of the Great Plains.

**FAST FACT:** These familiar visitors to bird feeders are often found in pairs, even in winter.

**HOTLINE:** Spot a rare or uncommon bird? Call the Madison Audubon Society to include it on its recorded weekly report at 608-255-2476.

**SCOPE IT OUT:** Like what you see? There's more, including a blog, at [www.birddigscaping.com](http://www.birddigscaping.com).

National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds (Eastern Region), Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.



JERRY DAVIS for the State Journal  
**A white-breasted nuthatch hangs on a black oak tree after eating suet from a feeder in a Blue Mounds couple's backyard.**

# Rural couple enjoys bird-feeding haven

**B**LUE MOUNDS — Janet and Richard moved here from Madison 40 years ago, having built a log home deep in an oak woods.

They prefer to remain private, so as not to attract too much attention to their bird sanctuary in the country and scare away what they have worked to create. Therefore, they asked not to reveal their exact location and family name.

"When we moved out here, there didn't seem to be a single bird out here," Richard said.

"The first bird that showed up was a blue jay and I think it sort of spread the word to other birds that we were putting out feed," Janet said from her kitchen table where she can view a dozen feeders and a water bath.

Janet learned about birds

but Janet believes there could be even more birds to count and photograph if Richard planted some shrubbery near their deck.

"We have a Cooper's hawk in the area and it keeps some of the birds away. I took a picture of a white-breasted nuthatch the other day, looking up at the hawk. The nuthatch had dropped the safflower seed it had picked up from a feeder when it saw the hawk," she said.

Janet has discovered digital cameras are a perfect way to record her findings and share them with friends and birders.

A list of winter birds Janet can photograph from her kitchen commonly numbers 20 on an ordinary winter day. Even bigger birds, such as turkeys, pheasants and an occasional ruffed grouse, show up.

Most of their land is wooded,



JERRY DAVIS

when she and her husband lived near the University of Wisconsin Arboretum.

"I went on field trips, hikes and even took a course offered at the Arboretum," she said.

"Now I use books and the computer if I have a question."

Janet, with Richard's help, is 76 years of living proof that by hard work birds can be attracted to feeders year round, even where natural food and shelter are abundant.

# Wisconsin's SAK lauded

The oft-maligned deer-census method gets a thumbs-up from top scientists.



PAT DURKIN

**T**he Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' deer-census methods couldn't have received a stronger endorsement than the one released Nov. 29 by the six-person panel that evaluated the state's oft-scorned "sex-age-kill" formula that steers its deer-management program.

True, the panel of top North American scientists found shortcomings in the SAK model, which has been used nearly 50 years, but here's their bottom line: It's the best overall herd-estimation system in North America. In fact, of the 21 whitetail-rich states the panel reviewed, Wisconsin has the most data-rich, cost-effective, comprehensive and publicly shared method for estimating deer populations.

That's saying a lot. Most of the 20 states measured against Wisconsin are whitetail mainstays: Ohio, Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Minnesota, New York, Pennsylvania, Kansas, Texas, Georgia, Alabama, Virginia, Arkansas, Indiana, Massachusetts, Maine, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee and West Virginia.

If Wisconsin is using a flawed model, it's not alone. Seven of those states also use a SAK system and seven others use similar "herd reconstruction" models to estimate deer numbers.

Meanwhile, Texas uses spotlight surveys and the other five states — Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana, Tennessee and Virginia — don't bother with statewide estimates. Why? Sound deer management doesn't always require them. As the panel reported: "Some states estimated deer numbers for political or media purposes, but population estimates were not used for making management decisions."

After comparing how these 21 states compile and use deer data, the panel wrote: "In Wisconsin, data collection and analysis is objective and open to citizen review. The deer management program is clearly defined, well-documented and available to the public. Wisconsin exceeds all states surveyed in the amount of information about the deer-management process that is available to their citizens and the transparent manner in which deer management decisions are made."

For those who sniff a conspiracy, please note four of the six panelists work in states included in the review: Josh Millsbaugh and Lonnie Hansen are from Missouri, Duane Dieffenbach is from Pennsylvania

and Kent Kammermeyer is from Georgia. The other two, Mark Boyce and John Skalski, are from Alberta and Washington, respectively.

In reading the panel's report, one is also reminded of the adage, "An expert is someone with a briefcase who lives more than 50 miles away."

The fact is, nearly every weakness the panel noted in Wisconsin's SAK model was previously mentioned publicly by DNR biologists. If you didn't hear those shortcomings, you could have read them in the DNR's 2001 publication, "Management Workbook for White-tailed Deer." And if not there, you could have read them in the "Herd Size Study Group" report written by citizens during the \$1.01 million Deer 2000 initiative six years ago.

In fact, one hears so many echoes in the Deer 2000 report, the 2001 DNR workbook and the 2006 panel report that it's fair to wonder if we'll assign — and ignore — yet another SAK audit before 2010.

Granted, it's good to have independent verification of the system's strengths, but now the test begins. Will we ensure the audit's \$80,000 cost — which came from hunting-license revenues — pays long-term dividends?

To start, let's demand accountability from the Wisconsin Conservation Congress, which instigated this audit. Make them swallow the panel's No. 1 recommendation: "Aggregate" the state's 135 deer management units.

After all, the DNR's major fault the past 45 years was allowing Congress know-littles to make mincemeat out of Wisconsin's original 77 DMUs. It's time to enlarge DMUs to scientifically viable sizes first established in 1962, roughly 400 square miles of deer range.

We should also insist the DNR take the panel's advice and discuss herd estimates in terms of total deer in each DMU. Estimates of local deer densities and the statewide herd cause perception problems that forever confuse the masses.

The list goes on — and every suggestion belongs under the Congress's Christmas tree. Legislators, the DNR and Natural Resources Board must make them honor the findings they carelessly wished for.

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