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June 2025

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Wausau, WI
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Coming Full Circle

Thank you, Greg.

Thank you, Joel.

Thank you, Bruce.

My life wouldn't be the same without you.

After building a successful professional life in advertising, I was caught in a dilemma. Advertising was working well as a career path, but I was preoccupied with another path. I had always wanted to write, but I kept putting that effort off for one reason or another. Promotions, raises, lofty titles, and new business wins kept the bigger dream at bay.

Until I couldn't ignore the call any longer. I walked away from a great position on a Friday afternoon in April. On Monday morning, I poured coffee and declared, "Today, I am a freelance writer."

An active runner, cyclist, hiker, and camper, I leaned into those experiences to introduce myself to editors. I cold-called Gregg Marr, founder of *Silent Sports*, and expecting voicemail, I sputtered a bit when he answered the phone. I hurried through one pitch after another explaining my intentions to start a new career. Greg listened patiently, paused momentarily, and gave me my first assignment. A week later, I turned in an 800-word profile of the Gandy Dancer bike trail in Danbury, WI.

"Good work", he said. Those two words were like rocket fuel for a new writer.

The first assignment led to another and another. Using the published *Silent Sports* articles as proof of my abilities, I pitched other editors. That first set of articles got me in the door with other publications and editors. Over the next few years, I moved to regional and national magazine assignments. Relatively quickly, the idea of writing full-time became a reality.

Over the years, I worked with Joel Patenaude, the editor who succeeded Greg Marr, submitting articles on a quirky set of topics: gear reviews, profiles of people influential in silent sports pursuits, and personal essays about training for

and competing in triathlons like Ironman Wisconsin. Other assignments prevented me from regular submissions, but *Silent Sports* stayed close to my heart.

Fast-forward to March 2025. Passing the time between my son's swim meet events, I scrolled through my phone and read Bruce's *Silent Sports* retirement announcement. I fired off a note of congratulations, thanking him for championing the magazine. My note ended with a "if they are still looking for someone" reference.

Twenty-four hours later, Bruce and I spent almost two hours on the phone talking about Gregg, the magazine's history, Bruce's work, and the opportunities for the next editor. Several more conversations, and here I am. I'm honored and grateful to take on this role.

It's time to turn the conversation around from me to you.

I cringe a little at calling "silent sports" a lifestyle. From my experience, Midwesterners don't think of their athletic pursuits that way. Running, cycling, paddling, skinny skiing, and all the other endorphin-generating workouts are woven into a life of work, family, and other responsibilities. Some run at dawn, some ski at dusk. More than a few strap on a headlamp and head out after dark, seeking adventure.

That commitment to fitness shows up in subtle ways. We track every mile on a watch or app, watching a long list of performance numbers improve, keeping streaks going without bragging too much about them, and documenting achievements like personal best race times and the number of miles covered in a week, month, year, and, for some, decades. Rather than calling silent sports activities a lifestyle, it's better to call spending time outside an important element of who we are as individuals.

In the issues ahead, I want to tell stories that educate, inspire, motivate, and



entertain. There's no shortage of stories out there to meet those four goals. Bruce Steinberg left me with a network of talented writers that I will lean on to build story lists. I will open my email inbox every morning, ready to read a pitch.

Feel free to tell me what you think, good, bad or in-between. The editorial presented in each issue will reflect the feedback I receive from you. Some readers might want more personal essays describing trials and triumphs. Others may plead for training tips and straightforward how-to guides. Every silent sports enthusiast is a bit of a gear junkie, so there's always a cry for what's the latest and greatest piece of equipment.

By Bruce's standards, there are 12 issues each year, 16 stories per issue. Let's round that off to 200 opportunities every year to tell stories about the topics that celebrate a commitment to silent sports.

Twenty-five years ago, Greg Marr gave me my first freelance assignment. Today, as the latest editor of *Silent Sports*, I'm committed to earning another "good work" accolade.

It's time to get started. Bike ride first, then to work.



Riders congregate following a ride at the Munising Bike Park. The small city (pop 2000) has a lot going on year-around with the Munising Bay Trail Network Club leading the charge.

PHOTO CREDIT ANGELA MILLER



SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL MTB CLUB

The Upper Midwest is a Mountain Biker's Paradise

Nestled between the Great Lakes and beautiful northern forests, the Upper Peninsula (U.P.) of Michigan and Northern Wisconsin offer stunning natural beauty and some of the most vibrant mountain biking communities this side of the Mississippi. With a wealth of trails winding through dense forests, rugged terrain, and serene waterfronts, this area is a haven for bikers of all skill levels. But let's be real—none of this magic happens by itself. Thanks to the hardworking, trail-loving, dirt-moving mountain bike clubs that make sure your favorite trails stay rideable.

U.P. Bike Clubs

Munising Bay Trail Network (MBTN)- Munising, home of Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, offers jaw-dropping scenery with views of Munising Bay and Grand Island. "We've got a lot going on with the wonderful trails in the area," MBTN President Rhonda Lassila described. You can feel the energy when talking to Lassila. "The effort to develop mountain bike trails began decades ago, but dedicated trail building took off in 2012. Initially, all trails were hand-built, but over time, MBTN partnered with



This year's InSayner will be held
June 14.

PHOTO CREDIT LAURIE SMITH

professional builders, including Flowtracks Mountain Bike Trails LLC, Landowski Trailworx LLC, Ormson Earthworks LLC, Double Schotz Trailcraft LLC, and Far North Trail Co,” Lassila told Silent Sports. “Over the past decade, MBTN has received funding from the City of Munising, Munising Visitors Bureau, Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant, and the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians/CDC Grant program. These contributions were instrumental in establishing the Munising Bay Mountain Bike Park and expanding non-motorized trails within the city,” she described. Lassila is well known for her advocacy in the non-motorized community, combining a deep personal connection to the area with a forward-thinking vision for its future.

There are several trail offerings in the area. The Munising Mountain Bike Park has multiple access points as the system surrounds the town to the south. The primary access is at the west side of Munising on Hwy 28. The trailhead features a bike repair station, picnic area, trail kiosk, and bathroom. The Park includes a range of attractions such as the jump trail, Superior Air! the rock armored Rock On! and a skills park named Da Play Zone. Zach's Zip, a hand-built technical line, was reworked and expanded into a progressive drop line in the fall of 2024. The Munising Bay Loop is a flow trail that encompasses the outer section of the bike park. Many of the trails are multi-use. My wife Karen and I enjoyed backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, and hiking from Mountain Goat to Flow & Steady.

For those seeking smooth singletrack terrain, with 27 miles to choose from, the Valley Spur Recreation MTB trails are an excellent option. Situated 6 miles from Munising on M94, this area offers well-maintained singletrack that traverses the Valley Spur cross-country ski trails. The trails are smooth and flowy with berms and rollers, making them ideal for family-friendly riding. The 8-mile Pine Line trail connects Wetmore (Munising Township's McQuisten Recreation Area) to Valley Spur. Additionally, the Club has recently begun grooming the 3-mile Wyman Pines Loop at Valley Spur for snow biking. These multi-use trails welcome various activities, so feel free to bring your pet, snowshoes, skis, and family members.

Bruno's Run is a terrific 13-mile loop in Hiawatha National Forest. It offers numerous lake views and a beautiful section following the Indian River. Tundra swans can be seen year-round.

Munising Bay Trail Network (MBTN) Events

Hiawatha's Revenge is a self-supported gravel group ride held on Saturday, June 7 at Valley Spur. Distances are 50k, 100k and 100 miles all within the Hiawatha National Forest. The 50th annual Pictured Rocks Road race offers a half-marathon and a 10k run/walk on June 29 at Bayshore Park. The Mountain Goat Mash MTB race will take place on September 27 at Valley Spur, featuring 15-mile and 30-mile distances as well as a half-marathon run. Additionally, MBTN organizes MTB group rides on Thursday nights in partnership with North Wind Sports.

**Group ride at Brunos Run deep in
Hiawatha National Forest.**

PHOTO CREDIT JOHN MILLER



LAMBO operates in the Minocqua, Eagle River and Woodruff area, maintaining notable trails such as the Raven Trail, Musky Mountain, Zip Trails, Sucker Springs, among others. LAMBO's activities extend beyond mountain biking trails with its members displaying a strong passion for all things silent sports. The Musky Mountain Bike Trail System comprises 5 miles of machine-built, flow-oriented trails designed for accessibility and enjoyment. This trail caters to riders of all skill levels, offering smooth lines and some faster sections, providing an enjoyable experience for most cyclists. For advanced riders seeking additional challenges, the trail features optional jumps, tall berms, and selectively hand-built technical sections, presenting opportunities to sharpen skills and test limits.

Lakeland Area Mountain Biking Organization (LAMBO)

Lambo President Perry Smith commented on recent events. "In the past couple of years, we have further expanded our trail network, with all new constructions funded by the club. Experienced trail builder, Bellman Home and Trail, has been working on numerous recent and upcoming projects, including the development of Musky Mountain, Sucker Springs and the Zip Trails. Three new additional miles will be built at Sucker Springs this year." Currently, no funding has been received from Oneida or Vilas counties, but Smith is quick to credit Wisconsin DNR, Town of Minocqua and Vilas County for land use agreements. Lambo also

has a very active Bike Patrol Chapter which is part of the National Ski Patrol

Smith talked about what Lambo brings to the community. "If you enjoy riding our trails, we encourage you to join us. Our flow trails are relatively smooth and well-maintained. Additionally, we take pride in maintaining our trails and fostering camaraderie among members. We also organize trips to Copper Harbor and other areas for our members." Founding member Bryon Black designs the wild graphics that Lambo uses on their website and merch. Check out the InSayner Race logo- A giant mosquito lifting a biker into the wilds.

The InSayner Mtn Bike race is held Sat June 14 and features a 25, 12 and No-see-um fun ride. Check out LAMBO here <https://lambo-riders.org/>

Join a Bike Club

Local mountain bike clubs play a crucial role in building and maintaining trails and fostering a culture of adventure, camaraderie, and community. Supporting these organizations can be achieved through volunteering, becoming a member, or simply spreading awareness. Every contribution is valuable in sustaining their efforts. Almost all these organizations are 501c3, which means your donations are tax-deductible.

This is part one of a two-part story on bike clubs and cool MTB destinations. Read more about these great Clubs in the July issue of Silent Sports. 🦋

BWCA Permits Will Not Be Available at Some Ranger Stations

The Trump administration budget and staffing cuts will significantly impact visitors to the BWCA this paddling season. Traditionally, the Gunflint Ranger Station in Grand Marais, MN and the Kawishiwi Ranger Station in Ely, MN are the most frequently used locations to pick up required permits.

In 2024, the two locations accounted for an estimated 4,300 issued permits. This year, alternatives such as businesses and outfitters in each city. Since these small businesses are not accustomed to potentially long lines of paddlers, plan ahead accordingly. To confirm, the quota system for BWCA permits runs from May 1 to September 30. No overnight travel is permitted without a permit.



Duluth Pack Sold

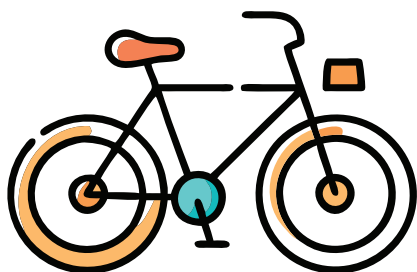
Minnesota manufacturer Duluth Pack, known for traditional canvas canoe packs, has been purchased by a Minnesota businessman and partner. Kevin Hall, the new owner, vowed to uphold the 140-year old company's core values. The acquisition was completed in February 2025. The previous owner, Tom Segal, served as CEO since 2007.



Bicycling Participation Hits Record High in 2024

The 2024 U.S. Bicycling Participation Study, released by PeopleForBikes, reports that 112 million Americans aged 3 and older—35 percent of the population—rode a bicycle at least once in 2024, marking the highest participation rate since the study's inception in 2014.

Youth participation (ages 3 to 17) increased from 49 percent to 56 percent, reversing a decline observed since 2018. However, safety concerns persist, with 53 percent of riders expressing worry about vehicle collisions, highlighting the need for continued investment in safe cycling infrastructure. The study also found that 50 percent of riders are familiar with local bike lanes, paths, and trails. Additionally, traveling to social or recreational activities has become the primary reason for transportation cycling, surpassing errands and shopping.



Outdoor Participation Trend Report Cites Record Numbers

For over 15 years, the Outdoor Participation Trends Report has studied how Americans spend their time outside. The insights help outdoor brands, nonprofit organizations and government agencies understand where people are going and what activities they pursue outside. The Outdoor Foundation, under the auspices of the Outdoor Industry Association, funds the annual research project.

In 2023, the most current information available, outdoor participation grew 4.1% to a record 175.8 million participants: 57.3% of all Americans aged six and older.

The number of participants increased across demographics and activities as new, casual participants started hiking, biking, camping, running and fishing. Of interest to outdoor brands, specialty retailers and park managers, 7.7 million Americans tried one or more outdoor recreation activities for the first time in 2023.

For the first time ever, more than half of American women are participating in outdoor recreation: The female participation rate reached 51.9% in 2023, up from 50% in 2022. Visit [outdoorindustry.org](https://www.outdoorindustry.org) for more information.



2023 Top Five Outdoor Recreation Activities by Participation Rate

Bicycling (road/mountain/bmx)	17.2%
Camping	17.7%
Running/Trail Running/Jogging	17.9%
Fishing	18.2%
Hiking	20.0%

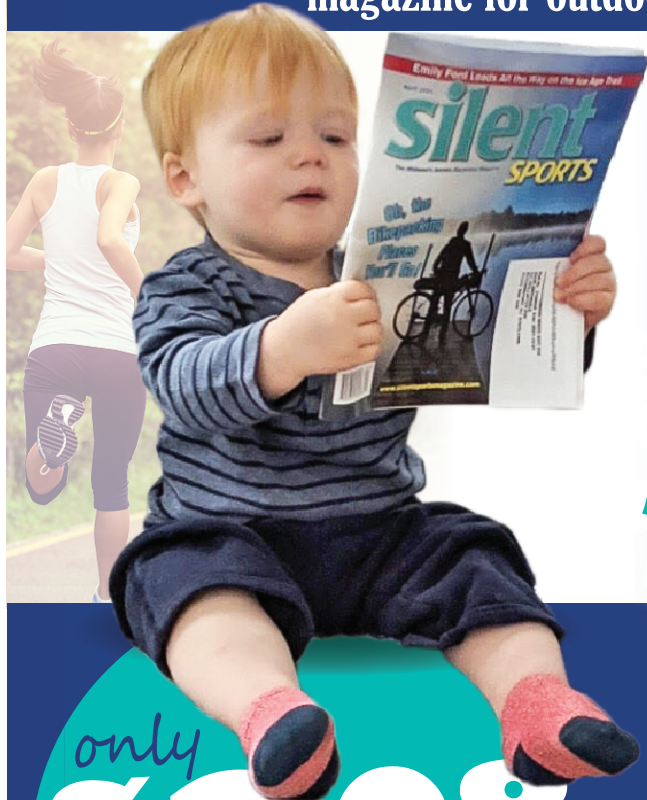
Tariffs Scramble Outdoor Industry

Uncertainty about the impact of the Trump Administration's tariffs have led outdoor industry brands to potentially increase prices. According to the Outdoor Industry Association, outdoor recreation generates \$1.2 trillion in consumer spending and supports over 5 million American jobs.

Eighty-four percent of OIA members surveyed said their companies will be impacted by new tariffs, resulting in potentially millions of dollars in financial losses and affecting hundreds of outdoor products. Familiar outdoor brands like Black Diamond and Hydro Flask have announced price increases of 10-25 percent due to surcharges on aluminum and steel products. Since many outdoor brands operate with global supply chains, tariffs may increase pricing across a wide range of products used by campers, hikers, paddlers, cyclists, climbers and other outdoor pursuits.



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Nancy Ford, founder of the Repair Lair, is the 'go-to resource' for gear repairs.

PHOTO CREDIT NANCY FORD

The Rise of Repair

Megan Kress

In recent years, a quiet revolution has occurred among outdoor enthusiasts. Rather than constantly upgrading their gear or discarding worn-out clothing, more and more adventurers are turning to repairs. Whether it's patching a ripped jacket, re-waterproofing a rain shell, or mending a shredded backpack, the outdoor community is rediscovering the value—and satisfaction—of keeping gear in play for as long as possible.

At the heart of this movement is a growing awareness of environmental impact.

Outdoor gear, by its nature, often involves synthetic materials and resource-intensive manufacturing. With the outdoor lifestyle so closely tied to the health of the natural world, many outdoor brands and enthusiasts are beginning to see sustainability as a selling point and a corporate responsibility.

Repairing gear isn't new—backcountry enthusiasts and long-distance hikers have always known the value of a good patch or a field fix. What is new is the cultural shift from repair as a last resort to repair as a badge of honor. Scuffed boots and patched jackets now signal experience, environmental consciousness, and

a rejection of throwaway culture.

Leading brands like Patagonia, Arc'teryx, and Recreational Equipment Inc. (REI) have repair programs, offering services to extend the life of their products. Patagonia's Worn Wear program, for example, repairs gear and resells used items, encouraging a circular economy. Social media has played a role, too. Platforms like Instagram and YouTube are full of how-to videos and proud posts showing off visible mends and custom fixes. #GearRepair and #VisibleMending are growing hashtags, turning utility into art and self-expression. Brands like Gear-Aid and NoSo patches have made gear repair tape an accessory

as important as stickers on your Nalgene.

Access to tools, tutorials, and community knowledge has also helped fuel the trend. Online forums and repair communities offer advice on everything from sewing Gore-Tex to replacing zippers, while mobile repair kits are becoming a staple in many hikers' packs. For those not ready to DIY, cottage industry repair shops—often run by former gear designers or avid outdoors people—there are repair services that have been around for years and now, many are popping up in towns near popular adventure hubs.

Nancy Ford started Repair Lair in 2014 after doing repairs at Thrifty Outfitters, housed in the former Midwest Mountaineering business in Minneapolis. "Repair has been around for a long time;

people just don't know where to go. Rugs, furniture, lamps, upholstery work. Someone knows someone or knows where to go to find help. Local Hardware stores traditionally have a wealth of information for fixing things in our everyday world. The same is true for gear and apparel; we've always been here, but sometimes you have to ask around."

Nancy has trained many employees in the art of repair over the years, many of whom have gone on to offer their services, spawning a growing ecosystem of repair professionals—many of whom are passionate outdoors people themselves. In adventure towns and small cities, workshops and independent repair shops are popping up, taking in jackets, tents, and sleeping bags that might otherwise end

Repairing as a profession is a labor of love.

PHOTO CREDIT AMY TRIMBO



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adventureUS.com



Madden Reed is the owner of Mayhem Sewing & Repair.

up in landfills.

Ford says, "Repair has been around for a long time, people just don't know where to go. Rugs, furniture, lamps, upholstery work. Someone knows someone or knows where to go to find help. Local Hardware stores traditionally have a wealth of information for fixing things in our everyday world. The same is true for gear and apparel, we've always been here but sometimes you have to ask around.

Nils Anderson in Duluth, Minnesota, started The Zipper Fixer repair business because he knew there was a demand in the community. This business dovetailed with his outdoor gear and clothing consignment business, Duluth Gear Exchange.

"I originally developed an interest in repairing gear because I was teaching Environmental Education and kayak guiding, relying heavily on my gear and lacking the resources to buy new things when something broke," explained Anderson. "I call myself the 'Zipper Fixer', so zipper

repair is my bread and butter; I also offer stitched patches on tents, shock cord replacement in tent poles, and the occasional buckle replacement."

Many outdoor brands rely on a specific zipper brand, YKK. YKK (which stands for Yoshida Kōgyō Kabushikigaisha) is the largest zipper manufacturer in the world. They're known for their reliability, which is why many manufacturers of clothing brands and gear companies use them. A familiar brand allows repair operations like Repair Lair and Zipper Fixer to have an intimate knowledge of types of zippers, how they function in a garment or a pack, and, more importantly, how they wear.

Zippers are designed so that the slider wears out before the zipper teeth and that a slider is much easier to replace than a full zipper.

Madden Reed started Madden Sewing & Repair in Ely, MN, in June 2022. Traveling to Ely for vacations and camping, Reed thought Ely could benefit from a repair shop because of the sheer volume of

outfitters in towns that rely on renting canoe camping equipment. Since opening, Madden has had a lot of support from the outfitters and summer camps, but also from the community.

"I'm always thinking about the cost of repair versus the cost of the item. Time and skills are worth something, and the value of the service is often more than the cost of replacing the item. There's a human element to sewing, and the consumer is making an informed decision beyond the dollar sign to pay for that service and the ultimate cost of throwing something away and replacing it with a new item," says Reed.

In a culture that often celebrates the new, the rise of repair culture stands as a bold counterpoint. It says: This gear has seen things. It's still got miles in it. So do I. Whether it's a seasoned climber resoling climbing shoes, a multi-sport adventurer fixing their zipper on a well-loved jacket that has been on every trip, or a first-time camper learning to patch a tent, the repair movement is redefining what it means to be an outdoors person.

After all, every patch tells a story—and the best gear is the gear that lasts and gets you outdoors.

"I didn't set out with expectations to have a repair side of my business, but the demand was there. It's trendy now with younger generations—things like visible mends and the idea that "Scars tell stories". But there is the older generation that comes to us because they value the ethos of repairs and making things last a long time," says Amy Trimbo, AdventureUS.

There are challenges to overcome with repair services, primarily cost-effectiveness. Anderson offers, "From a day-to-day perspective, most of the repairs I do are \$15-20, so it would be tough to keep the lights on with repairs alone. There's no way to predict how many repairs will come in the door on any given day, so it can sometimes be feast or famine. It requires a lot of communication, and I don't charge people for the amount of time I spend answering questions via email, phone calls, or face-to-face."

Despite over 24 years of repair experience, Ford says she can't fix everything. However, she is committed to finding solutions for folks who walk in the door with projects beyond her scope. "If I can't do a repair, I try hard to help that person find someone who can or even do it themselves," says Ford.

Most days, there's a long list of questions and queries that don't translate into revenue. When asked, "Then why do you do it? Ford replied, "Because that's what you do when you believe in something." ❧



Nils Anderson is the Zipper Fixer at Duluth Gear Exchange.

PHOTO CREDIT NILS ANDERSON

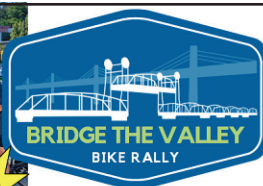


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Strategies for Better Judgment and Decision-Making Outdoors

Steve Smith

A pair of families - two fathers, two mothers, and three kids ranging from 13-15 - are at camp on the last morning of their five-day long canoe trip in the Boundary Waters. The wind has picked up and there are whitecaps on the lake, with a fierce headwind for them to make it to the takeout where their car is waiting for them. The kids need to be in school and the parents all need to be at work the next day. The pressure to paddle despite the conditions is overwhelming, and the group is having tremendous conflict and tension about what to do. One father begins to angrily throw camping equipment into a boat and tells his kids to get ready to paddle, and the group goes along with the decision despite being very scared of the cold, stormy conditions.

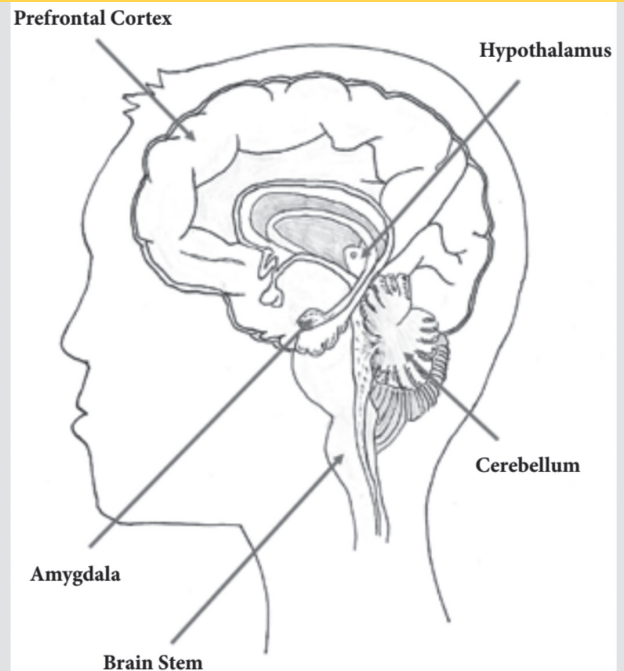
We've all been there - feeling overwhelmed by pressures and situations that impel us to not be our best selves, to say and do things without thinking, and to take risks that (in hindsight) don't really make sense. This article will look at how our brains themselves can be our own worst enemy, and strategies to use our brains more effectively for decision-making in risky situations (outdoors or otherwise). We'll start by looking at the decision-making center of our bodies, the brain, and how physiology can play a role.

Brain Anatomy and Decision-Making

Let's start with some background we all share. Human brains have evolved as we have evolved as a species. Deep within the

BRAIN PHYSIOLOGY:

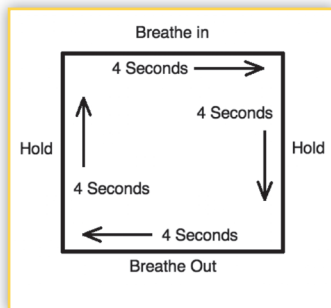
a baseline for understanding human judgement and decision making



(IMAGE FROM BENEFICIAL RISKS P. 121)

core of our brain is a very ancient, primitive part called the **limbic system** (consisting of the amygdala and hypothalamus shown below). These parts react to threats, causing aggression or fear, and this creates a *fight, flight, freeze, or faint* reaction to threats. Later in our evolution as a species came the **prefrontal cortex** (PFC) which serves as the center for strategic thinking such as planning and conscious decision making, helping a person strike a balance between short-term rewards and long-term gain. Which part of your brain would you rather engage in the scenario outlined at the start of this article?

The problem is that the more stressful the situation, the more likely we are to engage (and be driven by) our primitive brain, the part that is the least equipped to make strategic decisions. In order to shift from our limbic system to the prefrontal cortex, several simple strategies can help:



- **Box Breathing** has been shown to help people regulate their emotions and engage their PFC. Box breathing is achieved when we inhale for 4 seconds, hold it for seconds, exhale for 4 seconds, and hold that for 4 seconds, and repeat for several cycles until your heart rate and anxiety slows down.
- **Co-regulation:** When others around us are anxious or in a fight-or-flight mode, we can also use box breathing to help co-regulate those emotions, all taking deep breaths together. People tend to mirror the emotions of those around them so we can have a positive, calming effect on people if they're willing to engage in this way.
- **Actively engaging the PFC:** Engaging in intellectual activities such as naming the peaks one can see in the distance, or identifying what direction the wind is coming from, or using a topo map to determine how far it is to the next campsite, etc. are all things that one can't do using the limbic system alone. By pursuing these kinds of activities, one can force a shift from the limbic system into the prefrontal cortex.
- **Beware of Physiological Traps:** Trying to make a critical decision moments after you've just hiked to the top of a steep peak or paddled a challenging section of river means that you're making the decision when your heart rate is very high. You're likely feeling (and thinking) in a fight or flight kind of mode. Taking the time to eat some food, drink some water, and get your heart rate back to normal will help you shift into your strategic thinking brain. This is why first responders in backcountry environments like to slip the common expression around by saying "Don't just do something ... sit there!" to remind themselves to take stock of the situation and proceed calmly rather than simply springing into action.
- **PFC is Not Autopilot:** Engaging the PFC doesn't automatically mean that you'll make a different or better decision, but it does mean that you're looking at the situation through a different lens and giving yourself a better chance of making a more risk-aware decision.

What about Adolescent Brain Physiology?

As if the human tendency to let stress pressure us into using our limbic system as the primary mode of decision making isn't bad enough, it actually gets much worse if you're under 25 years old. The reason for this is that in adolescents, the limbic system is fully-formed and operational at a very young age, while the PFC doesn't fully form until they are about 25 years old. This means that the tug-of-war between the limbic system and PFC is an unfair contest, leaving adolescents to be strongly influenced by their impulses, which are amplified by their strong need to be accepted by their peers. This can lead them to take chances, make hasty decisions, and take risks without thinking. Interestingly, it's not that they don't understand the risks - it's just that their limbic system leads them to over-estimate the rewards they get by taking these risks (popularity, pushing boundaries, freedom, etc.) Studies in a variety of settings show that the presence of peers amplifies the likelihood of risky behavior, and the presence of adult supervision decreases the likelihood.

Another strategy that can be effective here is to **involve adolescents** in creating their own rules and process for policing themselves, which increases the likelihood that they will follow their own rules.

Applying these strategies to your own decision-making:

- Before entering into a stressful situation, share these concepts with your travel partners and agree in advance about the value of making decisions with the best parts of your brain
- Discuss with your group what specific strategies you can all agree to use when situations get stressful (box breathing, etc.)
- If your decision-making involves adolescents, remember to set them up for success simply by having the presence of adults when the decisions are being discussed and made, and involve them in the process of creating rules and boundaries to stay within

The parents step away from the group, take a few breaths and reassess. They agree the current wind and wave conditions likely exceed the paddling skills of the group. Let's wait a few hours and see if the weather changes. The group arrives at their car several hours behind schedule, safe and sound. Leaving at the original time may have had serious consequences. ☹

Steve Smith is a risk management consultant at **Experiential Consulting**, providing risk management and safety strategies for outdoor and experiential education programs. He is the primary author of *Beneficial Risks: The*



Evolution of Risk Management for Outdoor and Experiential Education Programs (2021). Based on his many years of trip leading and personal adventures in wild and remote places, he understands that good judgment comes from experience, but that experience often arises from bad judgment.



The Hoofers Outing Club serves 550 active members.

PHOTO CREDITS HOOFERS OUTING CLUB

The Hoofers Outing Club

Offering a Path to a different kind of educational experience

Emily Dzierzak

A college student's schedule is crammed with lectures, classes, and labs. Expectations for academic achievement from parents, professors, and the student's own intentions run high. Well-organized students create detailed color-coded spreadsheets outlining assignment due dates, project deadlines, and every other responsibility from the first day of the semester until the last. But even the most dedicated student needs time away from academia to refresh, recharge, and restore their commitment to college life. For many, Mother Nature provides that escape.



The Hoofers Outing Club at the University of Wisconsin-Madison operates under an umbrella organization with six clubs: sailing, horseback riding, scuba diving, ski and snowboarding, mountaineering, and outing. The Outing Club is the largest, offering ten different activities: backpacking, canoeing, sea kayaking,

whitewater kayaking, fly fishing, conservation, trail running, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and mountain biking.

"Hoofers is something that I know I can always rely on for an exciting and enjoyable break from school work," said member Lucy Manzetti. "It is a perfect outlet to reconnect with others who share your passions, especially for the outdoors."

Founded by a group of students in 1931, the club continued to grow. Over the decades, additional club branches have been created and flourished.

Hoofers' mission is to make the outdoors accessible to everyone at the University and the larger local Madison community. The group's activities focus on educating



Hoofers president teaches members how to properly fit a backpack before departing on a trip.

members about outdoor skills and experiences, encouraging active involvement in recreation through leadership and instruction, and offering programs that address environmental issues and community concerns.

An executive board handles much of the behind-the-scenes administrative work that keeps the club running professionally. The board includes the president, vice president, land and water safety chairs, treasurer, tech chair, and social chair.

Each outing club activity is represented by a leadership member on the activity board, which meets bi-weekly to stay aligned on goals and planning. Collectively, these leaders ensure the club runs smoothly.

"Being President of the Outing Club has been an absolute privilege," said Jace Addy. "There are few other college experiences that give you the chance to learn so much and hold an extreme amount of responsibility. When I look

back at the experience, the most fulfilling aspect was the opportunity to have a positive influence on everyone around me. Enthusiasm trickles down."

Each club under the Hoofers umbrella has its specific mission, but all share a common goal: to inspire people to try and learn new outdoor skills. Based in the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Memorial Union, Hoofers members spend most of their time outside. Weekend trips explore the Midwest, while spring break and summer trips often crisscross the lower 48 states.

"Hoofers provides a great opportunity for me to be in nature and get active, which is a great break from studying and campus life," says member Kate Clark. "The club has allowed me to go on so many trips and explore places I never would have been able to without the club!"

While students make up most of Hoofers' membership, community members play a valuable role in shaping the club's culture.

Many bring years of outdoor experience, specialized knowledge, and a deep passion for recreation and conservation. Their involvement adds depth to our activities and offers mentorship opportunities for students just starting in the outdoors.

Dennis Mossholde, a long-time community member, said, "One of the wonderful things about this club is that you're getting people started right away, in college, doing activities that they can do for their entire lives. It's very healthy, getting to know your environment."

Hoofers is a space for students and the broader Madison community to connect over shared hobbies. Some members come to learn, others come to teach, but everyone is here to make friends and go on epic adventures," said Addy. "My favorite part of Hoofers is the resources we provide to folks new to the outdoors. As someone who joined the club with little outdoor prowess, I have personally experienced the advanced level of inclusivity and



Outing members prepare to take off before our annual canoe races.

education provided to anyone seeking it."

Hoofers is actively working to expand community member engagement even further. By creating more inclusive programming, increasing outreach, and building partnerships with local organizations, the club hopes to strengthen the bridge between campus and community. The club isn't just a student organization but a space where people of all ages and skill levels come together to share in the joy of outdoor adventure.

Over this academic year, Hoofers has hosted 50 social events, 12 backpacking trips, 16 mountain biking trips, 28 quiet water trips, 20 whitewater trips, 28 sea kayaking trips, 22 trail runs, and 16-day hikes. Members share a belief that whether it's a big expedition far from campus or a quick

outing nearby, the energy and enthusiasm in this club are truly inspiring.

"My favorite part is we're all a bunch of Hoofers. Regardless of how old you are and what you're doing, you're a Hooper. Everybody's welcome," said Mossholde.

The club offers a wide range of activities beyond trips. Social events include trip planning, arts and crafts, gear maintenance, and collaborations with other clubs. Various social events are held throughout the year to keep members engaged.

We also regularly welcome guest speakers who provide insights into specific activities and help spark interest in trying something new. Recently, members from Trout Unlimited visited to teach members how to tie flies for fly fishing. The

instructors brought the necessary materials and guided members through the process. The workshop was an excellent opportunity for members who might not have otherwise tried fly fishing to explore a new activity and develop a new interest.

The club also hosts orientation sessions, especially for water-based activities. These often include paddling practice, T-rescues, and more, either on the lake or in the pool during the winter months. As for trips, there's something for everyone. Hoofers offer day and weekend trips, which are the most common, but there are also week-long adventures during spring break and longer trips over the summer. No matter the activity, there's always excitement and a strong sense of involvement.

"My favorite part of Hoofers is definitely the people," said Manzetti. "The community that is created through this club is so inclusive, supportive, and fun to be around... Every week at the meetings makes you feel like you truly belong and that you have an amazing network of people to connect with."

Of course, with all this adventure comes a strong emphasis on safety. To ensure safety within the club, Hoofers uses a standardized rating system to measure the level of risk participants encounter. Ratings are based on several factors, including distance from medical services, distance from campus, expected weather conditions, and the experience level of the trip leader. This system also applies to water-based activities and mountain biking.

Over spring break, six Hoofers trips went out, each offering unique and memorable experiences. One group headed to Florida for a sea kayaking trip, where participants earned their American Canoe Association paddling skills certifications; the trip included three leaders and 4 participants.

Another group went mountain biking in Sedona, Arizona, with 6 participants and two leaders. For the first time, Hoofers organized a road trip that visited all five national parks in Utah with 5 participants and 2 leaders. There was also a canoeing trip to the Buffalo River in Arkansas, with 10 participants and 2 leaders. Two backpacking trips went out: one to the Gila Wilderness in New Mexico and another to Capitol Reef National Park.

Addy said, "My favorite trip with the club was the Gila Wilderness spring break backpacking trip in March. It gave me a greater appreciation for the diverse scenery of the Southwest. Never in my life would I have thought that I would have the opportunity to be taught how to paddle a whitewater and mountain bike."

A student's life can be a constant financial juggle. Hoofers is known for being an affordable way to get involved in outdoor activities. Several membership options accommodate different needs and schedules: an annual membership for \$65, an academic year membership for \$45, and

semester memberships for \$35. These fees grant members access to a wide range of high-quality gear and equipment, making it easier to try new activities without a significant upfront investment. In addition to the membership fee, most trips include a small additional cost to cover essentials like food and gas.

Hoofers are not slowing down anytime soon. There's a long list of trips planned for the summer and fall. Throughout the summer, paddling leaders have an opportunity to train in all the club's paddling types: whitewater canoeing and kayaking, flat-water canoeing, and sea kayaking.

"Hoofers is something that I know I can always rely on for an exciting and enjoyable break from school work, and it is a perfect outlet to reconnect with others who share the same passions as you, especially for the outdoors. Hoofers Outing is the best club I've ever been involved in, and I'm so glad I get to be a part of it," says Manzetti. ☺



Explore More — Hayward, WI



photo credit: CAMBA

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A Solitary Man's Mission

Visiting Every Portage in the BWCA. Barefoot



Louis Dzierzak

Mark Zimmer is a soft-spoken man who answers an interviewer's questions carefully, often downplaying the significance of his achievements. Behind this reticence is a fierce conviction to fulfill his mission to document the Boundary Waters Canoe Area.

Zimmer goes by the "Barefoot Paddler" moniker; more about that story later. From 2021 to 2023, Zimmer visited and walked over every maintained canoe portage. Sounds like a worthy project.

Think about these numbers. According to most sources, there are 1.1 million acres within the BWCA's borders. He paddled to approximately 1,100 officially recognized United States Forest Service portages.

For outdoor enthusiasts, Mount Everest explorer George Mallory's answer to the question, "Why?" was "Because it is there," which fits many weekend fitness enthusiasts' rationale for a race.

A Man with a Mission

Zimmer has a more noble goal in mind. "Some trails didn't show up exactly where they should be on some maps and

resources. I thought if I made that information more accurate, that would help people and ultimately make portages easier for people to find," he said. "I knew it was going to be a big project. The BWCA is a big, beautiful area. My mission gives me the opportunity to see the entire thing, which not many people have the opportunity to do."

Documenting the portages required Zimmer to spend months paddling around the BWCA. A meticulous planner, Zimmer creates a route plan and packs everything he needs for three-week stints in

Experienced BWCA paddlers can't wait for paddling trips to begin. Permit reservation numbers rise quickly in June. For Zimmer, his paddling season starts in April. Impatiently waiting for ice out, he explores small rivers to get acclimated to being outside all day in a range of temperatures. "I go in the day after the ice is out and stay out until mid-October," said Zimmer.

Through trial and error, detailed notes, and day-to-day experience, Zimmer has overcome a long list of challenges, both minor and major. He's no longer frustrated by a piece of gear overlooked or left at home. If he doesn't need it, he

After spending so much time in the BWCA, Zimmer built an intimate relationship with the landscape. Earlier in his mission, he would end his trips a lot lighter than when he started. He started paying close attention to the trees, plants, and shrubs that covered the landscape.

Zimmer's experience with edible berries led him to write a pamphlet on the subject

He's happy to see other paddlers paying attention to their surroundings. "I ran into people in the woods who were talking about the berries, and then they said they had this brochure, and it ended up being my brochure that they showed me," he said.

Zimmer's goal is to create a detailed description of every portage in the BWCA managed by USFS staff. The date and time the portage was mapped, the length of time to hike the portage, and the elevation. All these data points are compiled in downloadable digital files. The files are organized to reflect the Superior National Forest district where the portages are located. Offered in GPX or KML formats, the data is compatible with apps like Gaia, OnX, Google Earth and others. Once downloaded, the data is available when a paddler is outside of cell service areas.

Zimmer gathers detailed information but, with the portage database, refrains from specific ratings. "I don't want to rate the portages themselves, because it diverts people from going to places they





might want to go to. I want people to click on a file and follow their own judgment on elements like elevation. "They can decide if this one's harder or this one's easier," he said.

Barefoot, explained

In the second paragraph, Zimmer is identified by his moniker, "The Barefoot Paddler." In journalistic jargon, not providing more detail is called "burying the lede." Zimmer's story has so many routes to explore. His dedication to barefoot travel deserves attention.

The first question was what motivated Zimmer to set out on his mission. The second question, equally important, is why barefoot.

"There's two reasons. The first is in recognition of my grandpa; he was a barefooter. He'd go to parish festivals and into town barefoot," he explained.

The second reason is to create a stronger connection between his body and the landscape. "I just go in the woods barefoot. Using my toe muscles is a huge advantage. I honestly feel like if I had been wearing shoes this entire time, I probably

would have hurt myself by now, but because I can use my toe muscles and feel with my feet, I just feel like it's safer for me at this point, he said.

Zimmer continued, "Because I can feel with my feet, I can make adjustments easier, too. If my foot is at a slight angle, I just turn my leg a bit. So it's easy for me to adjust."

At the end of the day, after setting up camp for the night, Zimmer dons a pair of shoes occasionally. "I put shoes on at the end of the day to keep moisture in my feet. Otherwise, they dry out and crack," he said.

The Next Adventure.

Barefoot, again.

With the portage database project completed and available on the Barefoot Paddler website, Zimmer turned his attention to a second mission. Documenting over 2,000 officially designated campsites in the BWCA. How many tent pads are available? Can you hang a hammock?

"I'm going from campsite to campsite, and I'm getting all the current data on the campsites' locations. I'm offering my own personal rating to try to keep it consistent throughout the entire woods," explained Zimmer. "When I'm finished with this, this resource should be extremely detailed."

The campsite database will include historical landmarks, waterfalls, lookout points, outfitters, and resorts. Everything a paddler needs to know to plan a successful adventure in the BWCA. Zimmer intends to include photos of the campsite and the view of lakes visible from the campsite.

He takes on the next mission with serious intentions. "Eventually, all this information will be available with just a click of a button. This is a collaboration of everything I've learned over the last 13-14 years. It's going to be a collection of my life, essentially," said Zimmer, "I love being out there. I don't have anything to leave this world. I guess the way I look at it is, if I can create these resources this way, I'm leaving my mark," he said.

Zimmer sums up, "I'm going through the entire Boundary Waters again to do the campsite reports. I hope to have traveled the Boundary Waters twice in the last five years. Wow. Well, yeah, kind of cool, right?"

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Pining for Immortality: Celebrating 60 Years of Wild Rivers in Wisconsin



The Popple River today looks like it did 60 years ago.

PHOTO CREDITS TIMOTHY BAUER



*“Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.”*

– T.S. Eliot

Timothy Bauer

LOOKING FORWARD

What makes a river “wild”? Must it possess rapids fed by snow-melt tumbling over boulders in some impenetrable gorge? Must it flow freely, unfettered by dams? Or are all rivers intrinsically wild by their unruly nature?

What makes a landscape *wild*? Is it a presence defined by its absence – a place without power lines and cell towers, buildings and bridges? Are all places outside of a sterile interior wild? For what is wilder than a crocus poking above the snow, daffodils splashing color on the dull dun of spring? What is wilder than the weed that breaks concrete in sidewalk cracks?

In 1965, lawmakers in Wisconsin did something provocative and unprecedented (not to mention inconceivable by today’s standards): unanimously pass a bipartisan bill that recognized stretches of three individual rivers as “wild” – the Pine, Popple, and Pike. In doing so, dozens of stunning miles were preserved for paddling, hiking, fishing, camping – and for nothing more than merely letting a space be without much human management.

The intent of the legislation was clear enough. “In order to afford the people of this state an opportunity to enjoy natural streams, to attract out-of-state visitors and assure the well-being of our tourist industry, it is in the interest of this state to preserve some rivers in a free-flowing condition and to protect them from development; and for this purpose a system of wild rivers is established.”

Hardly a credo of radical environmentalism – organizations like Greenpeace and Earth Justice had not been founded yet – the Wild Rivers Act in Wisconsin was visionary and bold, nonetheless. It barred stream alteration and created a 150’ corridor along both banks of the rivers free from vegetative control. It also meant no boat ramps, modern accesses, or amenities. By yoking stewardship with tourism, the Act was tactically practical and struck a germane compromise between lawmakers, private landowners, timber interests, municipal governments, and of course recreationists.

But perhaps the greatest legacy of the Wild Rivers Act extends far beyond its borders: it provided the framework for federal recognition of certain rivers established in the National Wild & Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, which likewise protected select stretches of rivers like the Rogue and Rio Grande, but also the Namekagon and St. Croix Rivers in Wisconsin.

To paddle these wild rivers today is not so very different than half a century ago – and that’s the whole point. Even though rivers change every hour of every day – in this case, from when the last glaciers left the state to last night to the end of this sentence and beyond – the cumulative experience is much the same. To be sure, the overall feel will be influenced by water levels, time of year, and segment of river being paddled. But these metrics are mere semantics compared to the seismic transformations in human society since the act’s passing.



Spires of spruce line the Pine River.



Contemplative calm on the Popple River.

Sixty years ago, only veterans had tattoos, only earlobes were pierced, and computers were giant machines in huge rooms tabulating punch-cards, not a way of life that fits in your pocket. In 1965, Julie Andrews first twirled on a verdant hillside to *The Sound of Music*, but no one had yet heard of Jim Morrison or the Grateful Dead or Pink Floyd. (Presciently, however, The Who would release “My Generation.”) Title IX would not be enacted until 1972, so neither Mia Hamm nor Caitlin Clark would have been household names or role models for young girls.

On a Sunday afternoon in March 1965, peaceful marchers in Selma, AL, trying to cross a bridge, were brutally beaten by local police for defending the right to vote for African-Americans. At the same time, water from the Pine River crashed down Class IV LaSalle Falls, as it has for thousands of years. About 14 miles downstream, the Pine feeds the Menominee River, which then flows into Lake Michigan about 90 miles later. From there, water eventually enters Lakes Huron and Erie, then plummets over Niagara Falls, deposits into Lake Ontario, and finally drains out by way of the St. Lawrence River en route to the Atlantic Ocean via its own paddle-to-the-sea journey. Coincidentally, it takes approximately 60 years for Lake Michigan

to replenish itself. So when the Voting Rights Act was signed into law five months after Selma, the original water from the Pine River would have worked its way into Lake Michigan, but probably still lingered in Green Bay – just in time to celebrate the Packers winning the very first Super Bowl a year and a half later.

A gallon of water that fell over LaSalle Falls 60 years ago is just now working its way through the salty reefs and cold fog of low tide in between Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. Quite the homecoming! But a lot has changed in both the natural and cultural history.

LOOKING BACK

In Woody Allen’s film *Midnight in Paris* the protagonist, a moody novelist love-struck with the city circa the 1920s, fantasizes going back in time to hobnob with the likes of Hemingway and Fitzgerald, Dali and Picasso. In one scene he strikes up a conversation with Degas and Gauguin – giants of the previous generation – who in turn wax nostalgic for the Renaissance. The rough epiphany is everyone always thinks it was better back then, no matter who or when.

But the film is as much a love letter to Paris itself as it is a parable about not escaping one’s present by romanticizing the past. The author of the Wild Rivers Act,

Assemblyman Dave Martin, a Republican, felt called to action thanks to seminal experiences on the Pine River that infused his passion for environmental legislation. One such trip bivouacked at Wildcat Rapids on the river’s South Branch was transformative and unforgettable for Martin, then in his 30s. Like one’s first kiss or falling in love for the first time, it was a rite of passage, a connection to the past that he felt duty-bound to preserve for the future. It was an intimately primitive experience then, and paddlers can still tap into that today.

“Nostalgia” comes from Greek and literally means homesickness. It is a gut-feeling stirring our soul, not a mental (or sentimental) abstraction. Nostalgia is why we reenact traditions and pass them down to future generations. Whether it’s a prayer or a parade, a fasting or a festivity, we connect past, present, and future through ritual. Experiencing a wild river is much the same: it is the exception to a rule surrounded by the normal and mundane. We come home through the ritual of feeling the wild...for awhile.

Nothing is ever given freely, not least wildness for wanderlust souls. By the turn of the 20th Century, the northwoods of Wisconsin was a denuded landscape of stumpy rubble called “the Cutover,” a diminutive dominion from the lumberjack



Contemplative calm on the Popple River.

era – when the white pine was king (to borrow from author Jerry Apps). The land was poor for farming, so it sat delinquent until the Civilian Conservation Corps began reforestation projects in the 1930s. Now and again, paddlers might encounter a stray log washed ashore or lodged in a jam that bears the company name stamped on its ends. Paul Bunyan and Babe might have left long ago, but the timber industry still thrives. Today, the Pike River is threatened by the county board considering termination of its license with the Department of Natural Resources. At the very least, this would infringe on the rule barring vegetative control within 150' of the river's banks.

Similarly, a 43'-tall hydroelectric dam on the Pine River plumb in the broken heart of otherwise near-wilderness still exists. Built in 1922, it was grandfathered-in when the Wild Rivers Act was passed. The owner and operator of the dam, WE Energies, had agreed to remove it this year, in what would have been a perfect circle anniversary. But they didn't. As of now, the dam is slated to be dismantled in 2038 – though, "Power concedes nothing without a demand," as Frederick Douglas said.

The dam is two miles below LaSalle Falls. Before the effect of the flowage is felt, paddlers are rewarded with several

Class II-III ledges through a gorge lined by igneous and metamorphic rock formations estimated to be 2 billion years old. Beneath the dam is Breakwater Falls, Wisconsin's sixth tallest waterfall. In this space alone, the Pine plummets 135' in 2.5 miles. The River Alliance of Wisconsin describes this section of the Pine as "the single most dramatic stretch of river topography in the entire Midwest." It will be even wilder once the dam is gone; but we must be vigilant that gone it goes.

Ironically, it was a different dam that provided the impetus behind the Wild Rivers legislation. In the late 1950s, land speculators in nearby Langlade County dreamt up plans to dam the Wolf River in order to sell residential lots along a fake lake. Opponents to this plan, having been shut out by local authorities, appealed to none other than Assemblyman Dave Martin, who represented Neenah-Menasha, near the confluence of the Wolf and Fox Rivers. Before his stint in state politics, Martin had served in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and knew a thing or two about dams and their ecological damage. He drafted a bill that protected the river and doomed the dam. The success of that legislation led to the Wild Rivers Act in 1965, which in turn inspired the national Wild & Scenic Rivers Act three years later. By a stroke

of poetic justice, the Wolf River that flows through Reservation lands in Menominee County was among the first eight streams federally designated as such.

LOOKING NOW

For Martin, for all of us, the Wild Rivers provided a space to feel a kinship with wildness in the present. It was a connection to the past, but not a mythic glorification of it. And it was an act of paying forward: conserving a place for the future. Said Gaylord Nelson, the Republican governor who signed the Wild Rivers Act into law (and later U.S. senator who inaugurated Earth Day), "The ultimate test of man's conscience may be his willingness to sacrifice something today for future generations whose words of thanks will not be heard." It's an act of faith.

Dave Martin passed away in January at the age of 93. But his legacy is passed down to us today and provides a lodestar that can never be extinguished. It is up to the rest of us to continue to fight for what's wild – now more than ever. Since 1965, fragmented segments of only two other rivers have been added to the state's wild rivers. Of Wisconsin's 84,000 miles of streams, the Wild Rivers comprise one-tenth of one percent. We can do better. We must. For tomorrow, now, and yesterday. ♡

NOTICING MOTHER NATURE



River jewelwing damselflies stick close to shore.

PHOTO CREDITS EMILY STONE

Emily Stone

June is the perfect month for a float down a river near you. I tend to paddle the Namekagon River, which is part of the Saint Croix River National Scenic Riverway in Northwest, Wisconsin, but just about any river will do. Even though the current pulls my canoe or kayak along at the speed of a brisk walk, a cast of characters along the shore are fun to identify by using all of my senses[. Grab your paddle and let's explore together!

Belted kingfishers are a staple of any paddle on a lake or river. Their loud, rattling cry is distinctive. So is the way they spread their powdery blue-gray wings to swoop off a branch and rattle out of sight around the riverbend. If I'm lucky, a kingfisher will not notice me as he peers down at a fish. Diving suddenly, his third set of clear

eyelids, called nictitating membranes, will close like goggles as his conical beak parts the water with minimal impact. If he's successful, he'll bring the fish up to a perch, whack them dead across the branch, and then swallow them whole.

Common yellowthroats don't spook into flight, they dive deeper into the tangle of bankside brush. The males of these tiny, energetic songbirds belt out a syncopated *witchety-witchety-witchety* at a rate of up to 300 songs per hour to attract a mate. But while their black mask and lemon-yellow throat seem like they shouldn't blend in, it's almost impossible to see more than a flicker of movement from these little guys. Instead of trying spot one, I focus on counting how many different males. I can hear defending their territories as I float past. To spot the drab, quiet females, I listen for their chuck call when they mistake me for a predator.

Marsh marigolds are the same shade as the common yellowthroat's chest, and much easier to see. Their scientific name, *Caltha palustris*, means "goblet of the marsh." This is a pretty apt description of the cup-shaped flowers that emerge above vivid green leaves in consistently damp soil. It's rarely a good idea to pick wildflowers. Like all members of the buttercup family, these can cause irritation and blistering of the skin if handled. Swallowing any part of the plant can cause intense burning of the mouth and digestive tract, followed by nausea and convulsions. The same chemicals that might deter you also ward off pests and may even kill insects who feed on the plant.

Highbush cranberry flowers are much taller and less toxic than marsh marigolds. These tall shrubs bloom with round clusters of brilliant white flowers. From the river, I mostly see the showy, one-inch-wide petals of sterile flowers. They are attractive to both me and the insects, but it's up to the small flowers in the center of the cluster to produce shiny fruits in early fall. They may be tart and red like cranberries, but this plant is related to honeysuckles, not true cranberries.

Alder flycatchers often perch on a dead branch extending above the tops of highbush cranberries and other shrubs. With grayish-olive backs and whitish underparts, these incredibly drab birds are much easier to see than the common yellowthroat. Like the kingfishers, they swoop out from their perch, but once they catch the insect they were aiming for, they return to the same spot. This describes both the general appearance and behavior of a whole group of related flycatchers. Their songs are the most distinctive things about them. Flycatchers' songs are innate, not learned, and are standard within each species. This gent's call sounded like "Free beer!" which confirmed his identity.

Green frogs also catch bugs and have a plain song. Their banjo-like plunks rise at relaxed intervals from marshy backwaters. Their eggs hatch in only three to seven days, but their tadpoles can take up to 22 months to become adults. This means they must hibernate overwinter in mud where they won't freeze before completing their metamorphosis.

Bur-reed flowers become visible if you go looking for frogs. From afar, the stiff



The stiff leaves of the giant bur-reed look like short cattails.

leaves of giant bur-reed look like short cattails. Up close, white pom-pom like flowers on a zig-zag stem look like something out of a Dr. Suess book. Later in the summer, those flowers turn into spikey, mace-like balls of seeds once pollinated by the wind. Those seeds are food for ducks.

River jewelwing damselflies are weak fliers and stick close to the shore, but their fluttering flight is easy to see if you float up next to the vegetation. Their iridescent blue-green bodies shine in the dappled shadows. They flit out from a twig to catch tiny gnats, and then rest demurely with their delicate, black-tipped wings upright and closed. While perched, they sometimes open and close their wings quickly as a notice to other damselflies – whether competition or love interest – that they are present.

River jewelwings, like all damselflies and dragonflies, spend their childhoods underwater looking like swamp monsters. To find one, I simply pick up a rock from a riffle and turn it over. Mossy brown damselfly nymphs will feed in the water for several months before climbing up a blade of grass, splitting their exoskeletons down their backs, and flying away as shimmering adults. This process leaves their empty exoskeleton—called *exuviae*—behind, still clinging to the vegetation.

Chestnut-sided warblers, while audible throughout a river trip, provide a nice farewell at the end. Pleased, pleased, pleased to meetcha! they shout from the tops of small trees, over and over, like a Minnesota goodbye. With a yellow cap, black mask, white cheeks, and rusty flanks on a white belly, they are quite handsome. When they migrate to Central America for the winter, they often hang out in shade-grown coffee plantations. I wonder if that's why they sound so caffeinated? Maybe not, but they are one reason I choose my coffee carefully.

Chicken of the Woods mushrooms start glowing from the shadowy depths of the forest as early as June, but I've found them all the way through November. These beautiful shelf fungi grow in layers of thick, vibrant orange fans from dying trees or downed logs, and are bright enough to spot while floating by. When fresh, their rounded margins and silky



The scientific name for Marsh Marigolds means "goblet of the marsh".

undersides are lemon yellow. If, and only if, you can confidently identify both the mushroom and the species of tree they are growing on, these are choice edibles. The second ID may actually be the more difficult and more important challenge. Chickens growing on conifers are more likely to give you a stomach ache. Finding them on hardwoods is important. If you do break off chunks into a paper bag and take

them home, another key is to cook them all the way through and let the Maillard reaction create a delicious, crispy brown crust just like you would on non-fungal grilled chicken.

Rain often chases me off the river in June, as unpredictable thunderstorms or patchy showers blow through. I don't mind getting wet, as long as I can inhale a big dose of petrichor—that sharp, pleasant, green scent of rain on dry earth. The word petrichor comes from the Greek word for rock (petra), and their word for the fluid that flows in the veins of the gods in Greek mythology (ichor). It is the blood of the gods sprayed up from the rocks. Actually, the scent comes from oils that plants released during the dry spell to make sure their seeds didn't germinate at a bad time. Raindrops fling those oils into the air—and up my nose.

Nature surrounds us on the river, and it doesn't take fancy binoculars or a degree in ornithology or botany to enjoy it. Sometimes I use the Merlin app to identify a confusing bird song, or iNaturalist to find the name of a plant. Sometimes I just lean back and float down a stream of beauty.

Emily M. Stone is a naturalist by birth, training, profession, and passion. She explores the Northwoods with an eye toward using science to make stories come alive. ☞



Take time to embrace your surroundings

Celebrating Canadian Canoe Culture

Sharing knowledge across generations

Pamela Christensen

The Wilderness Canoe Association has been promoting Canadian canoe culture since 1973. This valuable resource provides a wealth of information for whitewater and flatwater canoeists. With a membership of 500, this organization is committed to improving the sport of canoeing for novice, experienced and expert canoeists through education, events, information sharing, an extensive collection of maps, routes, trip reports and logs and multi-media. While the primary focus of the organization and online materials is Canada, other popular canoe destinations are included.

Originally started as a way to share knowledge about historical Canadian canoe routes, the organization has expanded in size and scope worldwide. Members are predominately from Canada—representing eight provinces and two territories but also includes members from Europe, Cayman Islands and New Zealand. Members from the U.S. are residents of 30 states. The love of canoeing knows no formal boundaries!

Gary Ataman lives near Toronto and is a long-time member and membership chair of the WCA from 2018-2025. His mission is to increase membership and expand its social media platform through additional publicity. “Many of our members from the U.S. visit Canada to canoe. We are a canoeing destination,” says Ataman.

One of the organization’s core values is the sharing of knowledge and canoe experiences. An extensive listing of planned canoe day trips, multi-day canoe and camping trips and wilderness expeditions are all listed in the Outings section of the website wildernesscanoe.ca. These events are organized by members for other members and are arranged by general topics—whitewater canoeing, flatwater canoeing, sea kayaking, hiking, winter activities, educational workshops, social events and other events. Each event is listed with pertinent information such as size of trip, where the trip will take place, number of days, how many can be accommodated, special notes, contact information and any other specifics that would help a canoeist looking to share an experience with others. The site is a valuable one-stop



shop for outdoor enthusiasts.

Ataman recently organized a group of fellow canoeists for a guided kayaking trip in the Baja region of Mexico. Fellow travelers were paddling friends found through the WCA. This trip is documented on the WCA YouTube channel and the trip reports of an affiliated website. Sharing information—the good, bad and ugly can all be included. Some of the reports also help planners to select the right time of the year to embark on travel. Information such as river conditions, rest or camping areas, water levels, shuttle services, downed trees and snags. These reports serve as points of reference for others contemplating taking the same trip, looking for new ideas or destinations. The site also hosts a forum where questions can be answered by other members too.

“One of the benefits of the WCA is the opportunity to meet other canoeists, kayakers, campers and hikers who share your interests. New members learn from veteran members. Our membership ranges from youth to people in their 70’s and 80’s. I have found paddling partners and friends for life through the WCA”, says Ataman.

Experience levels on the excursion might vary between participants, but this is an excellent way to meet new people, share knowledge and develop skills and experience.

Launched by Richard Munn in 1995, Canadian Canoe Routes, myCCR.com, is a free publicly accessible website owned and operated by WCA personnel. It is one of the largest single repositories of information related to canoe tripping in Canada. **At the beginning**, people would



contact Munn about routes, and he would manually post answers on the site. A busy day during that period was 20-25 visitors. Today the site sees thousands of visitors per day.

As the site got to be more than one man could handle, Munn sold it to the WCA in 2006. The site has exploded in size to almost 10,000 registered users. It also includes 1,000 routes and 350,000 posts to various forums. The site also hosts a huge collection of recipes, access to the WCA’s quarterly Nastawgan journal up to 2017 and route information collected by Allan Jacobs.

Membership also provides a quarterly issue of the Nastawgan journal as well as access to the website. Members can use the site to list outings, find others to share a canoe, kayak or hiking excursion, create spreadsheets to organize trip gear and meals. You can also view the information

from other groups to see what worked and what did not work for them.

Membership is \$45 for one person or \$60 for a family. Single membership includes email communications about club activities to one email address. They can post and participate in forum discussions with access to the members-only section of the website. Members can organize or participate in club outings and activities—members receive preference over non-members if space is limited. Membership also allows for one guest on two outings per year. Members are granted access to the WCA map library and the ability to sign out maps. Those members who organize trips are provided insurance coverage under the club’s liability insurance.

“Many of our members tell us that trip planning information, contacts with other members and the ability to borrow maps, pays for their membership after one trip”, says Ataman.

The Family membership includes the single membership benefits. In addition, they can add up to ten family names and emails for WCA announcements. Another benefit is the ability to bring a spouse and any children, 21 years or younger (living in the same residence) on club outings and activities in which a family member is participating.

Membership runs from March 31 to March 31 of each year. A membership application and payment can be made online

Membership also includes a print copy of the quarterly Nastawgan by mail. Subtitled The Journal of the Wilderness Canoe Association, this beautifully produced, glossy, full-color magazine has been





selected for inclusion in the Government of Canada: Library and Archives Canada (LAC) because of its national significance to Canada. The LCA concentrates on publications that "help Canadians gain a better understanding of who they are". The LAC is the "guardian of Canada's distant past and recent history" collecting items that will help Canadians know the story of Canada over time. library-archives.canada.ca/eng

All Nastawgan Issues are included on the WCA website for members. Non-members can only access previous editions to 2019 electronically. Recent topics include *Paddling for Caribou in Wabakimi*, *The Land of the Electric Mountain-Canoeing the Yukon's Snake River* and *Four Tips to Carry Heavy Canoe Pack Loads Lightly*. Past issues of the magazine also include recipes, gear reviews, how-tos and minimal canoe-related advertising.

As if all of these membership benefits are not enough, the association also supports the annual Wilderness & Canoe Symposium in Toronto for a weekend each February. This event attracts between 500-700 people. There is also an annual Fall Gathering held in September or October and a Wine and Cheese Social held in November. These events are both social and educational.

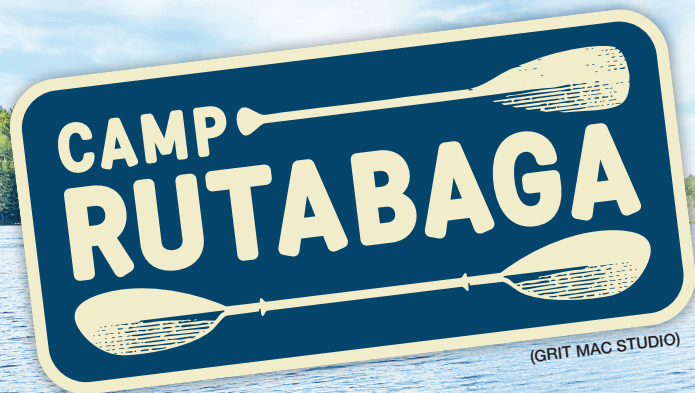
The Wilderness Canoe Association is another option for increasing your knowledge and skills. Who knows, you might also find some new adventures and outdoor friends. ☺



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Introducing Camp Rutabaga

A new canoe and kayak community event

Frank Lake is one of the many lakes and rivers paddlers will tour.

PHOTO CREDIT DARREN BUSH

Lou Dzierzak

After hosting the Door County Sea Kayak Symposium for 20 years, Rutabaga Paddlesports is launching a new paddling event in September 2025. When Rowley's Bay Resort, Ellison, WI, was destroyed by a major fire in September 2023, uncertainty over the site's future forced the cancellation of the 2024 event.

Looking for a new location, Rutabaga owner Darren Bush created a list of non-negotiable needs: a location that encouraged community-building, access to nearby lakes and rivers, and enough space to present an instructional and safety-oriented schedule.

On vacation near Boulder Junction, WI, Bush ran along the four-mile path on the east shore of Trout Lake. His attention shifted from running to the waters in

front of him. "Most people are interested in learning new skills on relatively smooth waters. Why don't we do something here," recalled Bush. "Plus, Trout Lake is almost 5 miles long. There's plenty of exposure to wind and waves."

Called Camp Rutabaga, the new three-day event will include water and dryland training opportunities for canoes, sea kayaks and recreational kayaks. Held at Camp Manitowish YMCA in Boulder Junction, WI, the camp's schedule focuses on instruction, safety, and expanding paddling culture.

Over the 20-year run of the Door County Sea Kayak Symposium, the primary mission served one set of paddling enthusiasts: sea kayakers. During the initial conversations about Camp Rutabaga, the question was asked, "Well, wait a second, why don't we invite recreational kayakers? They deserve a community too. And why

not canoeists too?," said Bush. "Why don't we do a course that's canoeing for kayakers and another for kayaking for canoes? Why don't we just let them come and let us make this event a paddling community rather than a sea kayak community? I was like, "Okay, this is cool.""

Bringing both kinds of paddlers together fits the objective of bringing people together to celebrate time on the water and to learn how to become a more proficient paddler. "There's the cross-pollination with canoeists actually seeing a sea kayak and saying, 'Hey, that kayak can do things I can't in a canoe; and vice versa. We will have sea kayakers saying, "You know, that guy's having a lot of fun in his canoe, and he doesn't have a spray skirt and a dry suit and all this other stuff. He just goes out for a paddle," noted Bush.

No question that access to appropriate paddling areas is a key ingredient in the



Darren Bush, owner and chief paddling evangelist, Rutabaga Paddlesports.

PHOTO CREDIT MICHAEL HODGSON

new location, Bush clearly places connecting people at the top of his goals for Camp Rutabaga. "Building communities is one of the things that I'm best at. Just the idea of 150 or so people, maybe more, sitting around round tables, having meals and enjoying slideshows, listening to a clinic, all these things just open people's eyes to the possibilities of being on the water," said Bush.

The 300-acre camp is within 30 minutes of hundreds of local lakes and rivers. Lodging isn't included in the registration fee, but lodging options are available at the camp, local hotels, and campgrounds. Participants can rent canoes and kayaks if needed.

With the where, when, and who decisions were made, planners had to decide what to call the new blended endeavor. Returning to the symposium moniker didn't seem to fit. Bush wondered why call it a symposium. Camp Rutabaga quickly rose to the top of the considered names.

"In this setting, I chafe at the word symposium. That's an academic term co-opted to make a gathering seem more academic when it's just a bunch of paddlers getting together."

"So what is this thing we are making? We discussed it with the staff, and one of our

managers, Ethan, said, 'This is a paddling camp for grownups. Camp Rutabaga.' So that's what we're calling it. It's a camp, not a symposium. It's not any of that. It's not hoity toity, my wife Stephanie would say. It's a gathering."

Over three days, the schedule includes ten sea kayak classes, twelve canoe classes, eight recreational kayak classes, a list of dryland clinics, and more than a dozen

When: September 12-14, 2025

Where: Camp Manito-Wish YMCA, Boulder Junction, WI

Fees: \$470 three days. Includes dinners Fridays and Saturday, Sunday lunch. Breakfast and lunch options available for purchase upon registration.

Canoes and kayaks available for rent.

Lodging is not included. Camping and lodging are available nearby.

Registration <https://www.rutabaga.com/camprutabaga>

on-the-water tours in nearby lakes and rivers. "We're adding more courses as people ask if we can add a course on a desired topic. One gentleman asked if we could do something on canoe poling, so we added that. We'll keep adding courses as people request them. This is the participant's gathering; we just facilitate it."

"There are five sessions, and on Friday, there are two sessions. Saturday, two sessions. Sunday, one session in the morning. "We tell people, if you're brand new, don't try and drink from a fire hose. Take a session in the morning. Do a tour in the afternoon. Take another session in the morning and do a tour in the afternoon so you're not exhausted. Just go slow. We're going to keep doing this event. You'll keep learning and get to choose what you do," said Bush. ☼

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The City of Portage

A Walk Through the Newest Ice Age Trail Community

Brad Conrad

Editor's Note: The great Ice Age Trail is well known for its history, beauty, adventure, and FKT efforts. But did you know that communities can earn Ice Age Trail Community status? The result is an extension of the IAT into a full community experience, where the meaning and offerings of the IAT are expanded into a family-friendly adventure. Contributor Brad Conrad enjoys the great outdoors where he resides in Portage, Wisconsin, with his wife, Jennifer, and son, Chase.

With the snip of scissors through a ribbon to celebrate the occasion, the City of Portage officially became the 19th Ice Age Trail Community in Wisconsin in June 2023. One important criterion of such a designation is that the trail runs right through the community. The Ice Age Trail Alliance promotes trail communities as a destination and hikers are encouraged to support their businesses by taking a shopping break, grabbing a bite to eat, enjoying a cold beverage, and exploring what makes the community unique.

"Commitment to this program represents an agreement to build healthy and vibrant communities," said Amy Lord, Outreach and Education Manager for the Ice Age Trail Alliance. "It's a partnership to cross-promote one another and support the community and Ice Age Trail users."

Starting the Portage IAT Community Experience

To experience the pet-friendly and accessible Portage Canal Segment of the National Ice Age Trail through Portage,

your journey can begin on the west side of town at Pauquette Park, profiled in *Welcome to Portage's Pauquette*, by George! in the August 2022 issue of *Silent Sports Magazine*. Flower beds and lush greenery, meticulously cared for by Kiwanis Club members and master gardeners, come alive in summer all around this treasured city park. Named for Pierre Pauquette, the famous frontier fur trader who operated a trading post and ferry on the Wisconsin River in the early part of the 1800s, Pauquette Park has rightly served as the backdrop for generations of weddings, graduations, reunions, and more. At the center of Pauquette Park lies Bridal Pond, with three small pedestrian bridges crisscrossing over the fingers of the pond. If you walk over all of the bridges, pausing on each one to look down, you'll see schools of fish darting around below.

Beasley Pavilion stands on the south bank of the pond. It's the perfect place to attend an outdoor concert in the summer. A rainbow forms through the plume of water shooting skyward from the Bridal Pond Fountain.

Crossing Cook Street to head east along W. Edgewater Street, you'll pass by what is now the home of the Women's Civic League of Portage (506 W. Edgewater Street). Located on the north bank of the Wisconsin River, this elegant home is painted white and has two imposing columns in front. After the successful publication of her first novel in 1906, the noted author Zona Gale built this home for her parents. Gale later went on to win the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1921 for *Miss Lulu Bett*, becoming the first woman in history to win that award. The home is available for tours by appointment.

Next up on Edgewater Street is the Portage Public Library (253 W. Edgewater



Street). Everyone is welcome to drop in for chair yoga, meditation, Zumba, and other daily programming at the library. Continuing your Ice Age Trail stroll, taking a right at the library onto Lock Street brings you to the refurbished Portage Canal Lock. The Army Corps of Engineers finished building the canal in 1876, connecting the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers, a great aid in commerce and recreational travel until the late 1940s. Following decades of neglect, the lock and this portion of the canal section were renovated in 2007, although the lock was remade for show and inoperable.

With a short walk east along the trail, you'll arrive in downtown Portage. If you have the time, a visit to Neil's Wine House & Bourbon House (235 W. Pleasant Street) is in order. The food is excellent and enhanced when paired with one of their wine selections. Another place worth stopping at is R. Condon Gallery and Custom Framery (136 W. Cook Street) where you'll experience fine art paintings and creations within a welcoming space.

Be sure to stop for a tasty treat at Craig's Popcorn Corner (206 W. Wisconsin Street) right along the path. This popular spot features refreshing Chocolate Shoppe Ice Cream and delicious popcorn.

Downtown Murals

Feel free to mill about downtown, checking out a couple of Canoes on Parade and murals before hopping back on the trail. Across the street from Craig's Popcorn Corner at the downtown's newest rest area, complete with table, benches, and lighting, an eye-catching mural was recently added near the intersection of W. Wisconsin Street and W. Edgewater Street.

Many popular outdoor recreational activities in Portage are depicted within the letters spelling out "PORTAGE" on this vibrant mural. The Portage Park and Recreation Department partnered with the Portage Chamber of Commerce to bring this mural to life. The mural was designed by Alonna Wilkinson of Heller Creative, with the supporting framework and installation provided by Two Rivers Signs & Designs of Portage.

In addition, the Portage Chamber assisted the City of Portage in securing a grant from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) for the creation of a pocket park, which includes



the mural, to enhance the beauty of this parcel of land. There also are a pair of stunning murals painted by artist Kelly Meredith; her mural on the south wall of the NAPA Auto Parts building (125 E. Edgewater Street) features three distinct eras of automobiles and gas stations. Just around the corner, the early people of Portage are brought to life on the east wall of Wilz Hometown Pharmacy (140 E. Cook Street). Stop by, snap a photo, and

share your visit. Don't forget to tag using [#PortageWI](#) or [#PortageChamberWI](#) — they'd love to see your pictures!

Canoes on Parade

Canoes on Parade is a public art installation of 15 fiberglass canoes painted with various themes by local artists. You can stand in front of the upright canoes, creating a close resemblance to portaging a canoe, and pose for pictures, then share the images on social media. There are three

canoes located downtown — Commerce Plaza, Market Square, and one right on the trail — among the 12 others scattered around town. Maps are available online (portagewi.com/canoes-on-parade) and at the Portage Chamber office (104 W. Cook Street).

After touring the trail of canoes, you can get back on the trail, picking it back up where you left off at the intersection of DeWitt and Wisconsin Streets. Here, long-time landmarks such as the Sunnyside Feed Mill, B & H Lumber Company, and the Portage Woolen Mills no longer exist. In their place, the grand Columbia County Administration Building and Columbia County Aging & Disability Resource Center appear on both sides of the canal. A walkway spanning over the canal links the two buildings.

Just beyond the Columbia County Administration building parking lots, you'll reach Adams Street where the Portage Center for the Arts is only one block north (310 E. Cook Street). The Drury Gallery inside offers engaging, rotating monthly art exhibits from local artists. Also within, the Zona Gale Theatre plays host to high-quality programming and live performances in an intimate setting.

Coincidentally, this Adams Street junction marks the western edge of the latest phase of the Canal Restoration Project, including the creation of this portion of the trail segment itself. It's also the spot where a ribbon cutting was held on June 3, 2023, to celebrate Portage becoming an official Ice Age Trail Community. Exploring this eastern side of the trail through Portage, you'll reach the Columbia County Fairgrounds, a true testament to the enduring spirit of the City of Portage community.

With the 174th anniversary of the Columbia County Fair approaching in July 2025, efforts are ongoing to refurbish the iconic Art Deco grandstand, a cherished landmark that holds a special place in the hearts of locals. Save the Grandstand Inc. is a local non-profit group seeking to restore the grandstand, concessions, and restrooms. The group has been holding many fundraisers around town to help bring the old grandstand back to life.

The fairgrounds have seen new softball diamonds and soccer fields added in recent years with an

ambitious effort to transform this property into the future. Pets are welcome, too. Our journey ended near the Fritz Port Dog Park (800 Morgan Street) located on the north end of the fairgrounds. This is a delightful, fenced-in retreat complete with fire hydrants, small trees, and plenty of opportunities for playful encounters with other furry friends and their owners.

Venture a tad farther north from the Columbia County Fairgrounds and visit the Historic Indian Agency House, profiled in *Historic Agency House* in the October 2022 issue of *Silent Sports Magazine*, and the Fort Winnebago Surgeons Quarters, profiled in *Surgeons' Quarters Magical History Tour* in the May 2023 issue of *Silent Sports Magazine*. Both historical sites are open for hour-long guided tours from mid-May to mid-October each year.

Last year, an accessible canoe/kayak launch was installed at the wayside across from the Surgeons Quarters along State Highway 33, making it easier for everyone to enjoy paddling the Fox River.

Take the Mammoth Challenge!

Each October, you are encouraged to "hike, walk, run, backpack, or saunter" a designated distance on the Ice Age National Scenic Trail and visit three Ice Age Trail Communities, such as Portage. You'll earn the Mammoth Hike Challenge patch and receive a certificate marking your accomplishment. Visit iceagetrail.org/mammoth-hike-challenge for more information.

Stay overnight to fully enjoy all this Ice Age Trail Community has to offer: Weekly summer Wednesday night concerts, canoe/kayak rentals on Silver Lake, paddling the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers, guided history tours at Fort Winnebago Surgeons Quarters and Historic Indian Agency House. And when winter returns, you can enjoy skiing, tubing, and snowboarding at nearby Cascade Mountain.

Expand your Ice Age Trail hiking experience horizons by taking an IAT community-designated trail. The City of Portage and other IAT communities have earned this designation by catering to you and your family. Experience the trail of community, within the community, and experience how welcome you will feel. For more information, please visit portagewi.com.



This canoe, located at Commerce Plaza in downtown Portage, is one of 15 Canoes on Parade. The canoes, painted in various themes by local artists, are on display mid-May through mid-October all around the city.

PHOTO CREDIT PORTAGE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



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HEALING IN MOTION

A DECADE OF THE MINI DONUT HALF MARATHON & 5K HONOR WALK/RUN



Leonardo Silva

On a crisp September morning in western Wisconsin, the Great River State trail from Onalaska to Trempealeau will come alive—not just with the rhythmic sound of running shoes, but with stories of remembrance, hope, and healing. What started as a tribute to a beloved local has grown into a powerful expression of support for those touched by suicide, a celebration of life, and a fundraiser for suicide prevention and mental health education. The Mini Donut Half Marathon & 5K Honor Walk/Run is more than a race—it's a movement. And in 2025, this cherished community event celebrates its 10th anniversary.

A Legacy of Love and Loss

The story of the Mini Donut race begins with Mike “Oly” Olson, a joyful presence in the Coulee Region known for his humor, generosity, and his popular mini donut

stand. After Oly died by suicide in 2015 at age 59, his family and friends faced unimaginable grief. In that sadness however, they also found purpose. They wanted to honor Oly's spirit in a way that would bring people together, raise awareness about mental health, and support others navigating similar loss. The result was the Mini Donut Half Marathon—a race infused with sweetness, spirit, and a mission rooted in healing. Held annually on the second Saturday in September, the event brings together runners, walkers, families, and volunteers for a day that is equal parts uplifting and reflective.

From Grief to Movement

In its first year, the race welcomed a few hundred participants. Today, it draws more than a thousand runners and supporters from across the Midwest. The half marathon course follows the scenic Great River State Trail, winding through natural beauty, Black River wetlands and

picturesque abandoned rail bridges before finishing at the Historic Trempealeau Hotel. The 5K Honor Walk/Run offers a shorter, accessible route that begins and ends at the same historic site, offering views of the Mississippi River and Perrot State Park.

But the significance of the race goes far beyond the miles. It offers a sacred space for those mourning a loved one lost to suicide, and it fosters public conversations around mental health—conversations that are too often avoided out of stigma or discomfort.

A Mission with Momentum

At the heart of the race is the Mini Donut Foundation, a 501-3 (c) nonprofit formed to direct proceeds from the event to suicide prevention and mental health initiatives. Over the past decade, the foundation has donated thousands of dollars to organizations that provide school-based

THE 10TH ANNUAL MINI DONUT RACES

Half Marathon / 5k Honor Walk/Run

September 13, 2025

Onalaska, WI

www.minidonutfoundation.com

If you or someone you know is struggling with thoughts of suicide, please reach out. In the U.S., the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is available 24/7 at 988. Your life matters. You are not alone.



Mini Donut
Foundation

Suicide Awareness & Prevention

www.minidonutfoundation.com



mental health education, suicide awareness training, and direct support services to those in crisis. The foundation also looks for opportunities to collaborate with local mental health advocates, educators, and counselors to host workshops and sponsor community events. Their goal is to create a more supportive environment for those struggling with depression, anxiety, or thoughts of suicide.

As one race participant said: "We can't bring back the people we've lost. But we can fight to make sure fewer families go through what we've experienced. That's the promise behind every mile run and every dollar raised."

Powered by Community

The success of the Mini Donut race is a testament to what's possible when a community comes together. Local volunteers and sponsors come together each year to ensure the event's success.

The Trempealeau Hotel, a longtime partner and finish line host, creates the perfect backdrop with live music, refreshments, and a celebration after the race—where stories are shared, memories are honored, and, of course, mini donuts are served. Runners frequently remark on the warmth and spirit of the event. "You can tell this race is built on love," one participant shared. "It's unlike any other race I've done. There's a sense of meaning that stays with you."

Looking Ahead: A Future of Awareness and Support

As the Mini Donut Half Marathon celebrates its 10th anniversary, the organizers remain committed to their mission of raising awareness and fostering education around suicide prevention. With each step taken by participants, the event continues to honor the memories of those lost, support those affected, and

promote a message of hope and resilience. The foundation also hopes to engage more youth and first-time participants, continuing to normalize conversations about mental wellness and resilience across all generations.

Whether you're an experienced runner, a casual walker, or someone looking to support a friend or family member, the Mini Donut Half Marathon & 5K Honor Walk/Run welcomes you. Your participation—whether on the course, in volunteer efforts, or through donations—helps build a stronger, more connected community that refuses to let stigma win.

Because every step taken in this race is a step toward healing. Every donut enjoyed is a sweet reminder of a life that mattered. And every story shared brings us closer to understanding, compassion, and hope.

For registration, volunteering, or to donate, visit www.minidonutfoundation.com. \$

MANAGING WRIST PAIN

Kierstin Kloeckner

Over the past year, I've covered some of cyclists' major pains and issues in their bodies, including ankle mobility, upper back problems, and neck pain. Working piece by piece through the body, we now land on the concerns with hands and wrists.

What is this pain I'm feeling?

Paulie Glatt, physical therapist and professional bike fitter with GoPhysio in Minneapolis, MN, said, "The most common problems he sees are numbness and tingling in the pinky and ring fingers. In the worst of cases, riders have lost motor function of these fingers for several weeks. Most often, this occurs due to compression of the ulnar nerve as it passes through the hand at the Guyon's Canal."

I also see tendinitis, often called tennis elbow or golfer's elbow. Left untreated or ignored, these can lead to long-term nerve damage and pain—something no cyclist wants.

Solutions through different gear and bike fitting

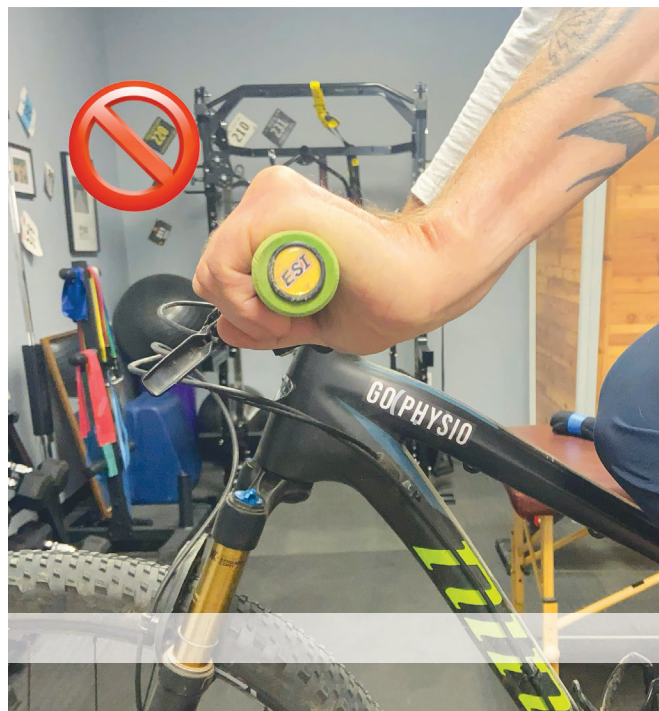
When I asked Glatt about some of the easiest ways to combat, or better yet, prevent, these issues, he provided a wonderful list of answers.

- The first step in resolving the issue is to ensure a proper bike fit, which includes adequately distributing pressure between the three contact points: pedals, saddle, and handlebars, as well as making sure the handlebar width is correct, and the bike is the proper frame size for the rider.
- The next step is educating the rider on basic hand anatomy, specifically where nerves pass through the hand and become vulnerable to compression.
- Lastly, I demonstrate proper hand/wrist positioning by encouraging a neutral wrist. This is best described as maintaining a "handshake" position in which the wrist is just

slightly extended. Additionally, I encourage hand pressure to be primarily distributed at the thenar eminence, the prominent bulge on the thumb side of your palm.

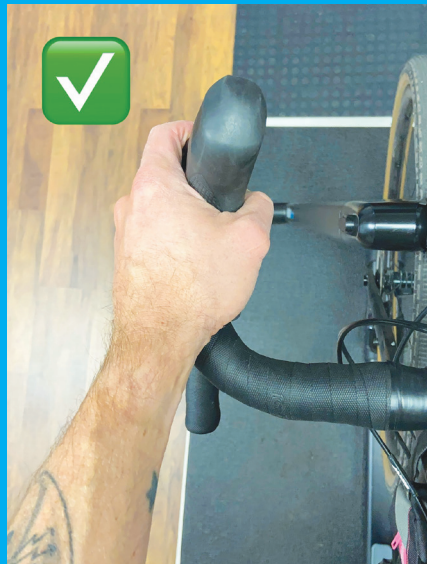
- Another pro tip is to have the rider move their hands between positions on longer rides. Utilize the hoods, tops, and drops of the handlebars to avoid prolonged pressure of any one spot on the hand.

What about padding in gloves and handlebars? Wouldn't more help alleviate or prevent pain? Glatt was quick to point out that "the proper amount of padding comes down to personal preference. Riders should remember that more padding also means a larger bar circumference, which can create a different kind of discomfort and "disconnect" from the bike."





The most common problems are numbness and tingling in the pinky and ring fingers. In the worst of cases, riders have lost motor function of these fingers for several weeks. Most often, this occurs due to compression of the ulnar nerve as it passes through the hand at the Guyon's Canal.



On a similar note, regarding ergonomically shaped flat bar grips, incorrectly positioned/rotated grips can encourage excessive wrist extension and create increased pressure on the ulnar nerve as it passes through the hand. On several occasions, I have successfully fixed hand issues by simply swapping out ergo grips for standard cylindrical grips. This isn't always the answer, but "ergo" grips should be installed with proper wrist position in mind.

One final thing to consider is carpal tunnel syndrome. Often, with people who have jobs that require repetitive motions (those who work on computers, on assembly lines, or in construction), pressure will build up around the median nerve in the wrist. A telltale sign of this is tingling and weakness in the thumb and index finger vs. the pinky and ring finger with the ulnar nerve. Sometimes, people also experience a numbness traveling up their arm and the need to shake the arm out to regain feeling.

A brief recap

Both Glatt and I agree that proper bike fit is key to helping prevent or alleviate hand and wrist pain. Once a bike is fit for you, perform a body scan to ensure proper alignment and core activation. Lastly, get comfortable moving your hands to different places on the bar (flats, hoods, and drops) and rotate through different positions on rides.

Hand and wrist pain, however frequently experienced, should not be something you should put up with. Not only are there often simple solutions, but you can cause long-term injuries by foregoing changes. Seeking a skilled bike fitter and a physical therapist specializing in sports medicine or a personal trainer with a cycling background can make a world of difference on your next ride!

How a body scan, core strength, and body position can add to comfort:

When I train clients and they come to me with any injury or pain on the bike, I ask them to do a body scan. This may seem more complicated to some, but practice makes perfect, and it's a tool that can be used in many ways. If you are experiencing hand or wrist pain, start from the head and work down. Here are the questions I like to ask myself:

- Is my neck long and in alignment? Pain in the hands can come from an impinged nerve in the neck. Looking up with the head vs. the eyes places a lot of force on the cervical spine. Practice looking out into the horizon and lift your gaze, not your chin, to look down the road or trail.
- Are my shoulders settled down and away from my ears? Tight traps (that pesky shrugging muscle) don't properly stabilize the shoulder girdle, leading to a strained arm/hand position on the bars. My mantra is "mimic a giraffe vs. a turtle" by sliding the shoulder blades down.
- Are my elbows locked? If so, the reach may be too long or you are raising your shoulders. Both can place much higher pressure on the wrists and hands.
- Am I using a death grip? For both mountain bike and road bike bars, your grip should be light, but strong enough to keep control.
- Are my wrists in alignment? If there is excessive bend in your wrists, there is also excessive pressure on the ulnar or median nerve.
- Is my core active? If a core is weak, we often fall into a slouch and use our arm strength to hold us up. Plank work and core conditioning is a cyclist's friend!
- Are my hips rocking? This is a sign of an improper bike fit or bike size. Adjustments in seat height, seat fore/aft, or stem length should be made and can allow the shoulders, neck, and arms to relax.
- Is the power coming from my hips and legs when I climb or through pulling on the bars? We all need to use pulling once in a while on a steep climb or in mountain biking, but it should be limited. Legs and glutes are far stronger than arms and shoulders.
- Is my lower back tight today? Lumbar spine tightness can lead to a shift in position on your bike making the reach too long or too low. If this happens, your shoulders will most likely creep up, and your head position will change, placing more stress on the cervical spine (neck). 🦄

► Distractions



If Silent Sports followers were surveyed about the activities they enjoy outside of their athletic pursuits, it's a good bet reading is high on that list. Tales of adventure, personal memoirs, nature guides, and how-to manuals fill bookshelves.

The first place to look for outdoor-related book titles is the National Outdoor Book Awards. The annual awards recognize outstanding writing in ten categories, including History, Literature, Children, Nature, Natural History, Journeys, Adventure Guides, Nature Guides, Design, and Outdoor Classics. Pick your favorite category and check out the winner's list for 2024 and the previous year's winners.

The National Outdoor Book Awards Foundation, Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education, and Idaho State University sponsor the awards. The winner of the 2024 Outdoor Literature category follows.

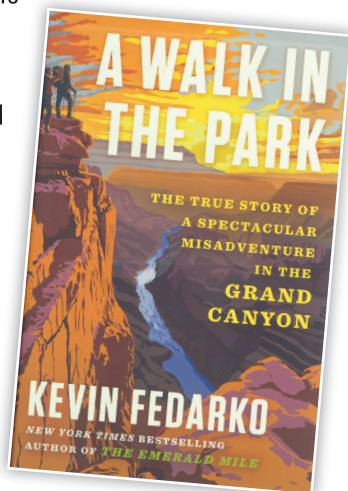
A Walk in the Park: The True Story of a Spectacular Misadventure in the Grand Canyon

Pondering a bucket list challenge, Kevin Fedarko and photographer Pete McBride imagined hiking the length of the Grand Canyon. To complicate the challenge, the pair agreed the hike needed to stay under the canyon's rim from start to finish.

Embarking enthusiastically, they crawled out of the canyon less than a week later exhausted and humbled by the daunting landscape. Realizing the complexity of their mission, they spent time interviewing experts, planning logistics, and pouring over maps for another attempt to complete the hike.

It's a grand tale of overcoming obstacles with persistence, humor and more than a bit of luck.

Written by Kevin Fedarko.
Scribner, New York.



Pushing the River

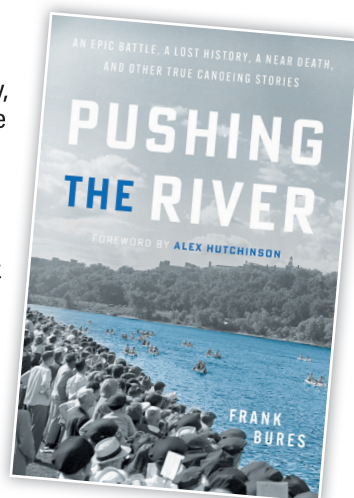
An Epic Battle, a Lost History, a Near Death, and Other True Canoeing Stories

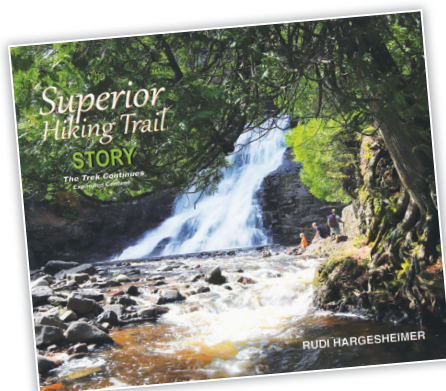
If you aren't on the water paddling across a lake to visit a remote campsite for the first time, you want to sit by a campfire reading about other canoers' adventures.

Minneapolis writer Frank Bures offers a collection of true stories that will hold your attention until the campfire is nothing but red embers. One of the most engaging tales is the lost history of the Paul Bunyan Canoe Derby, an annual 450-mile race run on the Upper Mississippi in the 1940s and 1950s that gave canoe-racing legend Gene Jensen his start—and which changed the course of modern canoeing.

Other stories describe kayakers escaping from the 2011 Pagami Creek Fire and two young campers who claim a supernatural scare in Canada's Quetico Provincial Park.

Written by Frank Bures, Minnesota Historical Society Press, April 2025, www.mnhs.org/mnhspress





The Superior Hiking Trail Story, The Trek Continues

Rudi Hargesheimer's recent book, *The Superior Hiking Trail Story, The Trek Continues* has been called a quintessential "coffee table" book, with its 350 color photos captured in the 200-page hardcover book, filled from interviews, personal experiences, and a wealth of knowledge about the beginnings and the evolution of the 300-mile trail that follows the high ridgelines above the Minnesota North

Shore of Lake Superior. Short quotes dubbed "Sentiments from the heart," taken from trail register log books add an emotional feel. Hikers have jotted thousands of thoughts about the trail in those notebooks, and the book presents the best of the best to compliment the incredible photos.

In 2024, over 400 volunteers donated over 9,000 hours to trail maintenance efforts. The book praises these volunteers extensively. A chapter explores the motives of people who love hiking or backpacking on the trail, including the few who choose to run-hike it.

Hargesheimer was a twelve-year board member of the volunteer-based Superior Hiking Trail Association, serving six of those as president during the early years of trail development.

The Superior Hiking Trail Story, The Trek Continues, can be found at regional bookstores and directly at www.northshorephotoart.com

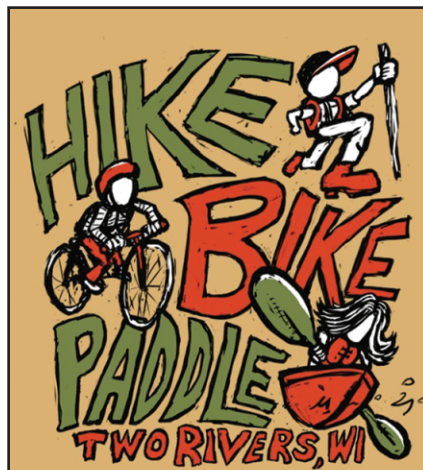
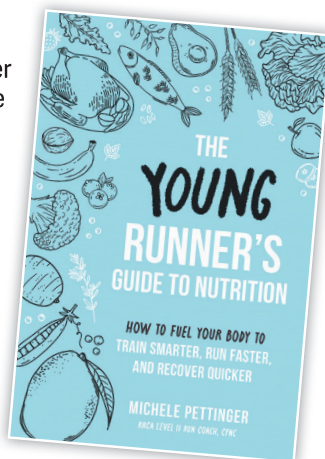
A Young Runner's Guide to Nutrition

Certified running and nutrition coach Michele Pettinger delivers a practical resource for young athletes and the communities that support them.

The guide offers actionable strategies to enhance performance, optimize recovery, and build lasting, healthy habits.

Filled with actionable tips and strategies the book provides resources for coaches and families to integrate nutrition education into their training programs. More than 50 recipes help turn healthy eating into habits.

Written by Michelle Pettinger, VeloPress, an imprint of Ulysses Press; March 2025



ExploreTwoRivers.com

458495

▶ Distractions



Podcasts

Water bottles, sunglasses, running shoes, and smart watches are required elements when heading out the door for a workout. Now, some form of earbuds is part of that must-have gear list. Creating a music playlist is just a few clicks away.

If your preference is listening to podcasts, the challenge is finding the next one to listen to. There are so many hosts, topics, and episodes that it's easy to fall down a rabbit hole searching for the "next best thing."

Since spending time outside is better than surfing the web, here's a selection of outdoor-related podcasts worth adding to your list.

Deep Woods Survival Podcast

Straightforward discussions of survival and bushcraft skills that are appropriate for weekend explorers.

Rescued: An Outdoor Podcast for Hikers and Adventurers

Presenting the perspectives of rescuers and the rescued, the hosts offer lessons learned to help manage risks and prepare for the unexpected.

Threshold

Conversations about climate change, soundscapes, journalism. Interview format with a different focus each season.

Good Fire

Indigenous approaches to fire ecology and land management.

Ologies

Biological, ecological, and anthropological focus on studies of all sorts of creatures and aspects of humanity.

The Dirtbag Diaries

It's a good mix of adventure stories from multiple perspectives. Environmental topics are addressed throughout the conversations.

The Adventure Journal

Thoughtful insights that explore the outdoor industry mixed with personal essays about epic adventures.

Meat Eater (Family of podcasts)

Hours of banter meandering over topics like trivia, public land, hunting, conservation, cooking, fishing, and community.

The Wide Open

Examination of public land and endangered species debates.

The Boundary Waters Podcast

Paddlers can't get enough stories about the BWCA. Listen to interviews and news about changing policies, conservation, and mining debates.

Paddle and Portage Podcast

Another excellent BWCA resource with timely news and information.

Outside/In

Psychological perspectives on the outside world and environmentalism.

Rock Fight

Exploring outdoor industry trends and profiles outdoor recreation brands.

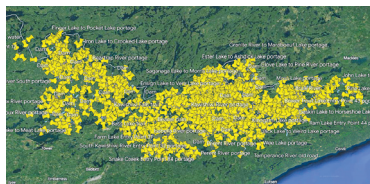
Tech Tools

What's the latest, greatest tech tool for finding your way around the natural world? Baby boomers who boast about old school map and compass schools admit that new digital mapping technologies offer finger tip access to incredible detail. If you are hunting for a hidden portage in the BWCA or debating with friends about which lake to cast a fishing lure, these apps are worth exploring.

Tech Tools

BWCA Portage Data

Mark Zimmer, the Barefoot Paddler (see his story on page 22) has visited every official portage in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. He compiled detailed files on 1,100 portages describing the date and time the portage was mapped, the distance covered, the time needed to traverse the portage end-to-end and elevations. The downloadable files are available in GPX and KML formats and work with popular apps like Gaia, OnX, Google Earth and more. Visit www.barefootpaddler.com for more information.



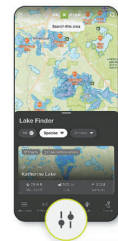
Barefoot Paddler offers detailed information about every portage in the BWCA.

PHOTO CREDIT MARK ZIMMER

Fish Finder

In April 2025, onX introduced Fish Midwest, an app tailored to meet angler needs in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. The app's Lake Finder feature helps anglers find a new fishing spot by filtering thousands of lakes for different species, trophy or keeper potential, and populations based on scientific data acquired from each state's fish and wildlife agencies. In addition to fish species details, the app allows users to filter lakes based on lake size, and locate important amenities like parking, toilets, and boat ramps.

The app is currently available in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan, and can be downloaded on the onX Fish website or at the Apple App Store. Annual membership pricing is \$34.99. For more information on onX Fish, visit <https://www.onxmaps.com/fish/app>



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Magazine!**



Behind the Endurance: A PT's Journey with Silent Sports

I am one of the lucky few in health care who loves my job. It has taken almost 20 years to get to this point, but I'm here. What is it that I love so much? I have the opportunity every day to use my expertise to help individuals pursue their passion for sports and achieve their goals.

Let me talk about my patients and then a little more about what it means to me to be a physical therapist in this setting. A large percentage of my patients are silent sports athletes. Silent sports athletes are special creatures. Their sport is an integral part of life. It creates a platform for goals, purpose, fun, adventure, challenges, friendships, fitness, fresh air, stress management, and much more. An injury significantly disrupts their ecosystem, motivating them to improve. This is a key to success in dealing with an injury.

My patients are goal-oriented and highly motivated, perhaps at times to an extreme level. They expect a lot of themselves and, to my delight, expect a lot of me. For example, just last week, I received an email from a patient stating, "I am in a bit of a pickle. I am running a 100-mile race this coming Friday, and for the last week, I have been suffering from some severe tendonitis of my tibial ligament. I ruled out anything too severe at the doctor yesterday. I know this is very short notice, but are you available this coming week?"

Beneath those words is a quiet panic—a mix of fear, hope, and sheer determination. This isn't just about race; it's about identity. Silent sports athletes pour months of effort into a single event. To feel that slipping away just days before the starting line is heartbreaking. He wasn't just asking for a last-minute appointment—he was reaching out in desperation, clinging to the possibility that maybe, just maybe, he could still show up at that starting line.

Do I need to explain why this is a challenge both for the athlete and the provider? It is a challenge that this athlete is clearly invested in and willing to take. As the provider, I am willing to take his challenge on with him. My role as a provider is to always protect the patient. To think on their whole health and to guide them to the right decision for them, with awareness of the risks involved. He left my office with Kinesio tape and some stretches, and he also left with the knowledge to assess the risks of competing in this race with the desire to continue to participate and train for races to follow.

As much as I am driven by patients and helping them pursue their goals, my success is also in my love of and deep desire to



Patient doing physical therapy.

STOCK PHOTO

be at the cutting edge of physical therapy. With a preference for live, in-person learning, I recently traveled to a sports medicine symposium in NY to learn about state-of-the-art care for athletes from experts across the country. I am energized by the knowledge I gained.

I love the science behind movement, the complexity of anatomy, and the reality that injuries never present, as shown in a textbook. They, too, are a puzzle that one must complete piece by piece. Understanding them requires a deep understanding of anatomy and biomechanics, critical thinking, and a willingness to think outside the box. Treating an athlete takes creativity, positivity, honest conversations, and a lot of motivation. One of the most meaningful parts of my job is education—helping people understand why they're doing a certain exercise. Because, let's be honest, without some context, being told to exercise your big toe or squeeze your glutes just sounds ridiculous.

I know I have a skill, and with that comes a deep sense of responsibility. If I can help someone heal, I feel obligated to do so—that's part of what gives this work purpose for me. I get to be a part of someone's journey, helping them believe in themselves again or reach goals they once thought was out of reach. I often think of a patient who fell in a cycling race. She came in, unsure she'd ever ride again. We worked through it together. The ups, the setbacks, the wins—until one day, she climbed back into the saddle. Being that steady hand through someone's recovery is one of the most rewarding roles I can imagine. 🌱

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