



Outdoors

A long, unique era comes to an end

OF COURSE it couldn't last forever, an editorial partnership that started 36 years ago, but a unique era ends this week as Editor Gary Ridderbusch slides into a well-deserved retirement.

We became partners on the news scene in April 1985, when the scribbler hired Ridderbusch as assistant editor to form the team that would dictate the scope, quality and volume of news coverage for decades to come.

It began as the Satran brothers, Dan and Bob, ended their reign as co-owners and co-publishers after 32 years. They sold the paper to a small newspaper group out of Ohio, the Delphos Herald, and that year they moved longtime newspaper publisher Byron McNutt to Eagle River. I went from news editor to editor, and Ridderbusch, a recent college graduate, moved from Abbotsford to Eagle River.

So basically two reporters with roots in central Wisconsin farm country, who played high school sports and grew up hunting and

fishing on family adventures to the North Woods, put together a string of award-winning journal-

In the Outdoors
By Kurt Krueger



ism that readers of the Vilas County News-Review and The Three Lakes News hadn't seen before.

That run climaxed the past decade but more so in the last four years with three General Excellence honors from the National Newspaper Association in competition with large weekly newspapers in all 50 states. And on top of that, the newspaper's first-ever Weekly Newspaper of the Year honor from the Wisconsin Newspaper Association in 2020.

Ridderbusch ends a storied career in community journalism at the top of the heap, an honor he deserves for a work ethic that's second to none.

This job can't be done right without a ton of sacrifices involving personal scheduling, lost family time and missed vacations. If you're in newspapering and doing it right, the job pretty much dictates what you can or can't do on any given night or weekend.

Whatever changes our readers might see will be shored up, over time, with the passing of the editorial baton to a new editor. It's a little more personal for me, as I've been greeted by the same friendly face for almost 36 years. We've not only worked together, but we've been on the same page so to speak. No arguments. Positive attitudes. No hurdles that couldn't be conquered.

And we've spent thousands of lunch hours together, cruising the

Sundstein Road or some other familiar territory looking for deer, grouse, turkeys and other wildlife, often with cameras in hand. We've caught more fish on lunch breaks (yes, usually more than an hour) than most anglers catch in a year's time, with walleyes, perch and crappies being the main targets.

We've hunted pheasants, grouse and deer together. We've gone on some fishing adventures to St. Germain, Boulder Junction, Land O' Lakes and northward into the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, chasing everything from northern pike to walleyes and lake trout.

The editor's job was so demanding and Ridderbusch did it so well that for the past 11 years, it has cut into our personal adventures. So the good news is that this bittersweet end to our full-time professional work may lead to more hunting and fishing together. I'm all in on that one.

Busch, as his friends like to call him, can catch fish with the best of them. He's a master with the jig and minnow for walleyes but can just as easily revamp his boat and gear to be trolling for lake trout and salmon off some port town on Lake Superior when the wind and weather is right.

The fact that he's quick enough to knock down the mighty ruffed grouse, Wisconsin's fastest and most challenging upland game bird, is a statement on his shooting ability. So knocking pheasants out of the air, which are like flying buses compared to grouse, is no problem. And he shoots wild turkey, which of course, is more like hunting deer.

The retiring editor is finally going to have more time to do all those fun things without having to think about the next special event that needs coverage or newspaper deadline that's hanging over his head. And for somebody who loves the great outdoors, that's



The now-retired Gary Ridderbusch is not only a great reporter and editor, but an avid sportsman who loves the outdoors. —Photo By The Author



Here Ridderbusch hoists a 14-inch crappie taken through the ice.

got to bring a big smile to his face.

One of the biggest adjustments for me will be trying to get through a work day without being able to pop into Busch's office to strategize about the next hunting or fishing on the docket. We've always talked a lot about the weather forecast and the right timing for a future outing, always attempting to clear the work schedule when conditions are best.

Our wives have had to put up with that sort of thing for decades — dodging in and out of family plans and other obligations in line with maximizing outdoor time

that coincides with ideal weather. They don't really understand it or even like that our priorities are messed up just a bit, especially during certain times of the year, yet their support for our outdoor addiction is strong.

And that's truly a blessing. I think Busch would agree that we can't thank them enough for that.

They say every time one door closes, another opens. And so it is with this chapter in our friendship. Time for a little adjustment.

But fair warning to the fish and game of Wisconsin. Busch is on the loose. And he's coming for you!

Deadline is this Friday to apply for spring turkey

BY GARY RIDDERBUSCH
NEWS-REVIEW EDITOR

Spring turkey hunters have until this Friday, Dec. 10, to apply for more than 245,000 available permits for the 2022 hunting season, according to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The 2022 spring turkey season will begin April 16-17 with the annual spring youth turkey hunt. The regular turkey season will begin the following Wednesday, April 20, and will consist of six seven-day time periods, with the final period closing May 31.

Starting with the 2017 spring turkey season, opening day now takes place on the third Wednesday in April (previously, the spring season opened on the Wednesday nearest April 13).

DNR turkey experts remind turkey hunters to verify season dates before submitting their \$3 application and planning the spring hunt.

In Zone 7 in this area, 3,900 spring turkey hunter authorizations will be issued for the spring hunt. Zone 7 includes all of Vilas and Iron counties, and parts of Oneida, Forest, Florence, Ashland and Price counties.

In 2021, there were 4,400 permits available in Zone 7, with 4,268 issued through the annual drawing and an additional 128 sold over the counter. Zone 7 hunters registered 511 birds with a success rate of 11.6%.

A permit drawing will take place in late December or



Wisconsin turkey hunters have until this Friday, Dec. 10, to apply for a spring turkey hunting permits. About 3,900 permits are available for Zone 7 here. —Staff Photo By KURT KRUEGER

early January. Successful permit applicants will receive a postcard by late January 2022. Applicants also may check their drawing status

online through gowild.wi.gov beginning in late January. When sales for the 2022 license year begin in March, permit winners may purchase

their required 2022 spring turkey license (\$15 for Wisconsin residents and \$60 for

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Fishing with the Guides

By George Langley



Need more cold to improve lake ice

There's not a lot to write about this week in the ice fishing world, as the ice is still thin and we had another snowstorm over the weekend.

This second early winter snowstorm is not what we as ice anglers hoped for. It looks like it could be another slush season, as the ice we do have is cracked due to the weight of the snow and letting water through.

The insulating snow is also bad news for snowmobile trails, especially where the trails cross lakes or swamps. That extra snow is preventing the ice from developing property. What a winter already.

We have seen only a few ice anglers out on the lakes so far, and none of them are going out to deep water. The first anglers are usually the walleye anglers because they can fish along the weed beds in shallow water. Walleyes make a daily run to the weeds in the late afternoon and evening to feed on minnows.

With this last 8-inch snowfall, it is going to take longer for anglers to reach the crappie holes. Any lakes that still had some open water is in much better shape as they have yet to freeze. It is going to be a while before guys test the deep areas on any lake.

So far, the only happy people are cross-country skiers, provided they ski on groomed trails. Things are setting up early and trails should be in great shape once they are groomed. Snowshoe fans are also looking at this snow with satisfaction, preparing for an active winter.

Other than that, my friends, there is not a lot to talk about until we get some really cold weather and some more ice. Make sure you spud your way onto the ice.

Good luck and good fishin'.



Ice fishermen like early ice for setting tip-ups for walleyes, but caution is urged. —STAFF PHOTO

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