

2009 WCC AWARDS

THE WISCONSIN CONSERVATION CONGRESS

2009 Awards

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STATEWIDE CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION



The Wisconsin Conservation Congress Awards Committee has selected **The Prairie Enthusiasts** as the recipient of the **Statewide Conservation Organization of the Year** award. The organization was recognized and presented with the award at the annual Conservation Congress statewide meeting in La Crosse.

The Prairie Enthusiasts (TPE) is a private organization committed to the protection and management of native prairie and savanna of the Upper Midwest. We have an incorporated, nonprofit status and are a grass roots organization run mainly by volunteers.

This 1,000 plus member club has provided protection, enhancement and reestablishment of countless grassland projects. They work tirelessly with groups such as the Wild Turkey Federation, Trout Unlimited, and WDNR.

The Prairie Enthusiasts differ from other conservation groups in its sole dedication to the preservation of the last remaining pieces of the once vast, now endangered, prairies and savannas of the Upper Midwest through land protection and management. The Prairie Enthusiasts evolved from small prairie preservation organizations that began in the mid-1970's. They now have 11 chapters Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

LOCAL CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION

The **Willow River Rod and Gun Club** of St. Croix County was honored as the recipient of the **Local Conservation Club of the Year** award.

The Willow River Rod and Gun Club is a conservation-oriented organization located two miles west of New Richmond. Through the years the club has developed projects geared toward participation of families to make club improvements. Two trap ranges, a 200-yard rifle range, an archery range, and the parking and recreational areas were added and became available to all members, their families, and guests. A second trap range and a rim fire range were added when the usage of the club's facilities began to increase.



This 372 member club strives to offer a variety of activities to club members and their guests. The club sponsors hunter, bow hunter and trapper education classes. They provide firearm and archery shooting opportunities for youth and adults. They have stocked trout, built fish cribs, conducted pheasant and duck surveys, maintained wood duck and bluebird houses, sent youth to environmental camps, and donated to the fundraising of many other local conservation groups. In addition, their facilities have provided a location for local law enforcement and security companies to shoot and train.

WCC SPECIAL SERVICE AWARD

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress would like to officially recognize two individuals that we have all thanked with applause in the past. However, this year, during our 75th Anniversary celebration, we felt that these two special people deserved special recognition from us, the Wisconsin Conservation Congress.

Their smiling faces and sharp wit have greeted you for over 15 years as you came to pick up your name tag, ask for directions or simply share a story. They have stayed up late to make sure you didn't sneak into the hospitality room, made sure you bought more raffle tickets than you needed, and have been there early in the mornings to make sure you had a ticket for that morning's breakfast. Whether we were in Cable, Wausau, or the Dells, they have been a constant feature to let you know that you had found the right place.

For their years of dedicated service, their time and for putting up with this sometimes rough and tumble group...we officially say thank you, by way of a special service award.

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EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

The Conservation Congress Awards Committee has chosen **Dave Tupa** as the Conservation Educator of the Year. The following is adapted from a Teaching Green article written by Andrew Phillips.

"In the front of the Gibraltar High School Biology room, next to stacks of quizzes and homework assignments, sits a much larger stack of brand new recycling bins, science posters reflected in their sides. The clear plastic containers are waiting to be painted. When the project is finished, every Gibraltar High classroom will have a recycling bin, thanks to the school's new Ecology Club and its founder, teacher Dave Tupa. It is because of countless efforts like this that the Wisconsin Conservation Congress named Tupa the Conservation Educator of the Year.

According to the Conservation Congress Web site, the award "is intended to recognize Wisconsin conservationists who dedicate themselves to educating others about the wise use and conservation of Wisconsin's natural resources and environment." As his colleagues told the Congress in their nominations of him, Tupa couldn't fit that description more. In his 13 years at Gibraltar, Mr. Tupa's Environmental Science students have learned forestry conservation, wise soil and aquatic resource management, and plant and animal identification. Teenagers in his classes have assisted the DNR in salmon egg harvesting and built hundreds of bird nest boxes.

But Tupa won the Educator of the Year award not just because he has the right ideas, but because he has the right attitude. Like any other high school teacher, Mr. Tupa can hope that his students share his enthusiasm. He can hope that students follow through not just on the homework he assigns them, but on the activities he encourages them to participate in. It wasn't until recently that Tupa realized just how much that hope became a reality.



Dave Tupa speaks upon receiving the 2009 Educator of the Year Award.

"I got an email from Karen Newbern [of the Ridges Sanctuary] with the results of the December bird count," he said. "It wasn't until then that I realized that a majority of the participants were my students."

Similarly, the Conservation Congress had 46 Gibraltar students in attendance at its most recent spring hearing, where attendees can voice their opinions and vote on the DNR's recommended regulation changes.

Despite the obvious and lasting impact he has had on his students, Tupa, with his characteristic humility, was "a little bit surprised and shocked at first" upon hearing that he had won the Educator of the Year award. Because of all the hard work he continues to put into Door County's natural resources, Tupa may have been the only one surprised.

On behalf of the 1,000's of delegates you have greeted and helped over the past 15 plus years, we present these special service awards to two members of our Congress family, **Susan Meyer** and **Sheree Vande Brink**.

Please join me in thanking these two exceptional ladies.

— *Ed Harvey, WCC Chair*



Susan Meyer



Sheree Vande Brink

WCC HEAVY LIFTER OF THE YEAR

Lee Fahrney recognized as the 2009 Conservation Congress Heavy Lifter Award Recipient

As you know, each year the Congress looks externally to honor those outside of our organization who exhibit leadership, initiative and dedication in the name of conservation. Beginning last year, the Executive Committee of the Congress also began to look within our organization and reward those who have shown exceptional leadership and have gone above and beyond the call for service to our organization. I don't need to tell you that this entire organization is made up of volunteers who within their local communities and within the Congress give unselfishly of their time and knowledge for conservation. This year when we looked back at the last year there were many deserving individuals, but again, one name continued to come to the forefront. Regardless of what was asked of him, he never turned down a request.

To select our winner, we always measure an individual's effort against one of the Congress' all time heavy lifters. A delegate who always said "yes" when approached with a special task by a congress chairman, who approached every assignment no matter how large with the all the initiative and energy necessary to get the job done right.

Lee Fahrney has been a delegate for less than five years, but you wouldn't know that from his effort and involvement. He has served on the Outdoor Heritage Committee and when asked to take on a vice-chair role this past year, of course, he said yes.

He has become a regular fixture next to the Congress'

revamped *Wall of Fame*. He has served as wagon master, hauling the Wall to any number of events. He negotiated the Congress into Wisconsin's first ever *National Pheasant Fest* this past spring in Madison, and was there at the beginning to set up the wall and was there again at the end to help take it down. He is also the Congress' representative on the Outdoor Alliance's Youth Outdoor Expo Steering Committee. This past year he spearheaded the effort to establish the policies and procedures for applying for transportation grants so schools can afford to get to the Outdoor Expo in Beaver Dam, and this year also issued the first grant to the Grand Avenue Elementary in Prairie du Sac so those kids, our future stewards, can take in all that the great outdoors have to offer. This past year, he was also the driving force and creator and contributor to the Congress' new biannual newsletter, the *Conservation Chronicle*.

Lee is a resident of Hollandale, owns 160 acres of woodland in Iowa County. He is an avid deer and upland game hunter. He is a retired school counselor and now works as a freelance writer. He is active in Pheasants Forever, the National Wild Turkey Federation, Whitetails Unlimited, Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association, Wisconsin Outdoor Communicators Association, as well as a variety of other organizations, and most importantly, for us, is a member of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress.

Please join me in honoring Lee Fahrney, Iowa County, for His Exceptional Commitment and Dedication to the Wisconsin Conservation Congress, the recipient of our 2009 Conservation Congress Award for Exceptional Service.

- *Ed Harvey, WCC Chair*

OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

The Conservation Congress Awards Committee elected to award three local conservation organizations for their outstanding achievements in 2009.

In 2008, the 245-member strong **Stanley Sportsman's Club** of Chippewa County sponsored Hunter Education and ATV safety classes. They also sponsored a learn the hunt turkey program. They helped purchase a lake weed harvesting machine, helped with a lake aeration project, took part in a pheasant release program, held a fishing contest and worked with the local food pantry.

Outdoors Forever of Juneau County, with a membership of 300 members, has sponsored hunter education, ATV, snowmobile and trapper education classes and hosted a learn to hunt program. They have stocked trout, planted food plots, took part in a pheasant release program, provided scholarships, and assisted the Department in collecting samples for CWD testing.

The **Jackson County Wildlife Fund** of Jackson County, which has a membership of 325 members, has sponsored hunter education and archery in the schools programs, stocked trout, built fish cribs, took part in a pheasant release program, held an ice fishing contest and provided scholarships.

WCC RECOGNIZES DEPARTMENT STAFF

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC), at its 2009 Annual Convention in La Crosse, recognized several DNR employees for their ongoing, outstanding work on behalf of the natural resources of the state.

Randal Jurewicz & Sumner Matteson Recognized for their Dedication & Commitment to Wildlife Recovery Efforts

Two award winners were honored for their work with the osprey and trumpeter swan. Due in large part to the efforts of these two individuals, both the osprey and trumpeter swan were delisted from the state's threatened and endangered species list earlier this year.



Randy Jurewicz with his family after accepting the 2009 Wildlife Management Award

Randy Jurewicz, DNR Conservation Biologist, began work at the DNR as an LTE in 1977 and began a permanent position in the Office of Endangered and Nongame Species in 1979 under Jim Hale and Buzz Besadny. This program became known as the Bureau of Endangered Resources in 1981. He took on duties as the non-game section chief in 1983 and served in that role until 1996. As chief, Randy was instrumental in the management and recovery programs for notable species such as the peregrine falcon and bald eagle. Since 1996, he has served as the Bureau's Administrative Rules coordinator, Grant Officer, Endangered Species Coordinator, and liaison to the Conservation Congress Endangered Resources and Law Enforcement Committee.

His co-honoree, **Sumner Matteson**, DNR Avian Ecologist, has worked for the Department of Natural Resources since 1984, beginning as an LTE and then becoming the Nongame Bird Management Project Director in 1987. He started his current position as Avian Ecologist in 1991. He works statewide on a variety of bird species including terns and piping plovers.

The Department wrote a recovery plan for the Trumpeter Swan in 1986 establishing a recovery goal of at least 20 breeding and migratory pairs by the year 2000. From 1989 through 1997, together Randy and Sumner collected a

WCC RECOGNIZES DEPARTMENT STAFF

total of 385 Trumpeter Swan eggs from wild nests in Alaska. These were transported back to Milwaukee and were hatched out in incubators at the Milwaukee County Zoo. Cygnets were placed in two rearing programs. A total of 355 swans were released using these two techniques. In 2007, 113 breeding pairs of trumpeter swans occurred in 19 counties. As a result, the trumpeter swan was delisted this year.

Ospreys were one of the raptor species whose populations were decimated by DDT. In the early 1970s the state's nesting population numbered fewer than 100 pairs. Ospreys were state listed as Endangered in 1972. In 1986, a comprehensive Osprey Recovery Plan was developed by the Department. The goal was to maintain a self-sustaining osprey population in suitable habitat throughout Wisconsin.

The ban on DDT removed that threat to ospreys, but numbers were still low. A second problem dealt with nesting sites. Ospreys choose dead tree "snags" to build their nests on. Because these snags are no longer present in sufficient numbers in Wisconsin to support the birds, an ambitious DNR project was begun in 1972 to provide artificial nesting platforms. In 1989 the nesting population reached 300 pairs and the species was down listed to Threatened. They held at a plateau of just under 400 pairs from 1993 to 2002 and have been above 400 pairs since 2003. As a result of further population increases, osprey will also be delisted this year.

By honoring Randy and Sumner here tonight, we are also honoring the countless partners, volunteers, contributors, and wildlife managers across the state. We can all collectively look back at these successes as proud conservation stories in Wisconsin.



Ron Bruch accepts the Fisheries Management award from Ed Harvey

WCC Fisheries Management Award goes to Ronald Bruch for his Commitment to the Study & Management of Wisconsin's Lake Sturgeon

The winner of this year's WCC special recognition for fisheries goes to a lifelong boy scout. He is a Wisconsin native (born in Milwaukee). In his 32 years with the DNR he has provided outstanding service to the sportsmen and women of Wisconsin and to the Wisconsin Conservation Congress, and expanded the world's knowledge and understanding of the Lake Sturgeon.

For the last 23 years, Ron Bruch has worked in Oshkosh, and during the past 19 years has been known as the sturgeon biologist for the Lake Winnebago System. Currently, he is the Fisheries Team Supervisor out of Oshkosh. During his tenure he has formed citizen advisory committees including five chapters of *Sturgeons for Tomorrow*.

As his nominator stated, "Ron relates well to the public and regularly gets the public involved in decision making. In fact, the citizen groups have initiated 22 rule changes in the past 15 years to protect the sturgeon from overharvest."

Ron is a member of the World Sturgeon Conservation Society, Chair of the Executive Committee of the North American Chapter of the World Sturgeon Conservation Society, and is a member of numerous professional fisheries organizations. And if you ever pick up a book on sturgeon, Ron will be mentioned more than once in the bibliography as he has authored numerous studies and papers.

In 2008, our winner received a PhD in Biological Sciences from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee for his work in modeling the population dynamics and sustainability of Lake Sturgeon in the Lake Winnebago System.

THE WISCONSIN CONSERVATION CONGRESS

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*"Let us work to together
to properly manage
and wisely use our
natural resources..."*
- Prolog of the Congress Creed

We're on the web!
Visit dnr.wi.gov and
search for
"Conservation Congress"



WCC Delegates volunteering
their time at the WCC display

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Theodore Dremel, Jr., Awarded Law Enforcement Officer of the Year

The winner of this year's WCC special recognition for law enforcement goes to a conservation warden whose colleagues and supervisors applaud for his thorough and outstanding investigative skills. These skills have served him especially well over the past few years as he has been pivotal in bringing to justice those involved in a number of highly publicized thrill kill cases.



WCC Vice Chair Rob Bohmann with Ted Dremel, the 2009 WCC Law Enforcement Officer of the Year

Amongst his peers, Ted Dremel is described as trustworthy, courteous, dedicated, professional, personable and honorable. His interview skills have allowed him to close some pretty tough and very complex cases, and his evidence detection and collection skills are first rate. These skills all came in handy as he had to deal with the appalling case of five deer being run down and killed by unscrupulous individuals on snowmobiles this past winter. The final result of Ted's abilities was the arrest of three persons which all occurred in less than one week. Due to his keen skills, his interviews also led to a confession during the deer thrill kill investigation of a person later convicted of illegally taking a deer, illegal baiting, and illegal transport.

Our sportsmen and women are well served knowing that a bright and talented enforcement officer is on the case whether it involves a fish and game violation, deer farm inspections, boating enforcement, environmental enforcement or public relations. Our honoree is also an avid trapper, waterfowler and is active in learn-to-hunt events.



Congress chooses Nick Nice, Taylor County, as the Conservation Waterfowl Officer of the Year

Waterfowl Officer of the Year, Nick Nice with Dick Koerner, Chair of the WCC Migratory Committee

DO YOU KNOW AN ORGANIZATION OR INDIVIDUAL THAT SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED?

Each year the Conservation Congress seeks nominations for Statewide Conservation Organization of the Year, Local Conservation Organization of the Year and Educator of the Year.

If you know of a statewide or local conservation organization or individual dedicated to educating others on conservation matters, please consider nominating them for one of the Conservation Congress's annual awards.

Visit the WCC website at dnr.wi.gov for application and nomination forms.

