

# 2014 WCC AWARDS

## 2014 Awards

[Statewide](#)

[Local](#)

[Educator](#)

[Delegate of the Year](#)

[DNR Staff](#)

[Nomination Info](#)

## THE WISCONSIN CONSERVATION CONGRESS

### STATEWIDE CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress selected **Urban Ecology Center** 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 at The Holiday Inn in Wausau. The Urban Ecology Center has three locations in the greater Milwaukee metro area and serves more than 77,000 people each year. The center raised \$2,753,405 in 2013 to help fund the numerous programs they provide and support.

The Urban Ecology Center offers unique opportunities in an urban environment in the areas of environmental education, land stewardship, citizen science, sustainable food, community programs, summer camps, and urban adventures. They even lend outdoor equipment to their members such



*2014 Statewide Organization of the Year award accepted by Ken Leinbach, Executive Director.*

as: kayaks, tents, bikes, garden tools, fishing equipment, and snowshoes.

In the realm of stewardship this organization currently manages 70 acres of urban land including land along the Milwaukee River corridor, in Washington Park, and along the Menomonee River. Efforts have been made to remove invasive species and propagate native plants on these properties.

Overall the center promotes outdoor science education for youth; protecting and promoting public natural areas; promoting community via offering resources that support learning, volunteerism, stewardship, recreation, and camaraderie; and practicing environmentally responsible behaviors.

The Conservation Congress would like to recognize Urban Ecology Center for their accomplishments, thank them for their hard work, and acknowledge their commitment to our natural resources and their lasting contributions to passing on the outdoor heritage.

## LOCAL CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION

The **Bad River Watershed Association** was honored as the recipient of the **Local Conservation Club of the Year** award. This organization strives to connect people, land, and water within the area of the Bad River watershed and was founded in 2002. Their mission is to protect the high quality of natural resources in the watershed, promote responsible management of land and water, develop a knowledge base for understanding regional ecosystems, and serve as a forum for education, coordination, and decision making affecting the watershed.

Within the watershed this organization conducts water monitoring, educates the public, fundraises and applies for grants, helps develop action plans, and works to restore the watershed.

One restoration project the Bad River Watershed Association is involved in is the Culvert Restoration Program. This program works to identify and remediate culverts that have become a hindrance to fish passage or are damaging fish habitats.

For their continuing commitment to the citizens of this state and the extensive contributions to improving the natural resources of Wisconsin, the Conservation Congress recognizes the Bad River Watershed Association as the Local Conservation Club of the Year.



*Association President Sjana Schanning accepting the 2014 Local Organization of the Year Award from WCC Chairman Rob Bohmann with Scott Pitta, who nominated the group for the award.*

## EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

The Conservation Congress has chosen **Trent Tonn** as the **Conservation Educator of the Year**. Each year the Wisconsin Conservation Congress honors a deserving individual who is dedicated to educating others about the wise use and conservation of Wisconsin's natural resources and environment.

Trent Tonn is an art teacher in the Burlington Area School District who also facilitates an Outdoor Skills Club and a Learn to Hunt Program in the Burlington School Forest. Trent was nominated by DNR Warden Michael Hirschboeck who worked with Trent to gain permission from the Burlington School Board for the Learn to Hunt Program to become a reality. Warden Hirschboeck notes he has yet to meet a participant or parent/guardian of a participant who hasn't been impressed with the program. Not only do students learn how to hunt deer, they also learn how to properly clean and process deer with each youth participant getting a share of the finished product.

With the Outdoors Skills Club Trent offers educational opportunities for students to learn about, and even participate in, trapping, archery, open water fishing, ice fishing, fly fishing and fly tying to name a few. Trent tries to cover as much as he can and is able to accomplish as much as he does because of his passion for the outdoors and the buy in he receives from mentors and chaperones.

When it comes to getting youth involved in the outdoors Trent Tonn believes, "the youth just need guidance and a mentor to provide it." This is why he goes to great lengths to find mentors for youth instead of having a friend or a parent mentor them. Recruitment of mentors is important so youth can learn how to develop relationships and interact with others, skills important to their futures.

For his continuing commitment to outdoor education and passing on the outdoor heritage the Conservation Congress recognizes Trent Tonn as the 2013 Conservation Educator of the Year.



*Trent Tonn accepting the 2014 Educator of the Year Award from WCC Chairman Rob Bohmann with Chief Warden Todd Schaller.*

# WCC DELEGATE OF THE YEAR

## Mike Rogers recognized as the Conservation Congress David A. Ladd Delegate of the Year Award Recipient

Mike Rogers is a man for all seasons – hunting trapping and fishing seasons that is. When not out in the woods following his favorite pastime he is coaching, mentoring or organizing others to do the same.

He decided to seek election as a delegate to the Wisconsin Conservation Congress in 1990 because he wasn't sure that all points of view were being taken into consideration. In the years since, Mike has not only opened up the process to full debate, he has casually and consistently gained consensus on natural resource management issues among a broad range of diverse interests.

From the very beginning of his tenure on the Congress Mike has demonstrated what hard work and dedication can accomplish at the grass roots level, both within the congress and in his local community. Mike proved himself ready for increased responsibility, leading to his election as one of two delegates representing the 9th district on the Congress' executive council. Through the years, Mike has served on several advisory committees including serving for 10 years as chair of the Turkey Committee and currently as chair of the Bear Committee.

His efforts at the local level are well-known among his friends and colleagues in the Sauk County area. He currently serves as Vice President of the Glacier Valley Gobblers chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation. He also has membership in the Sauk County Sportsman's Alliance and the La Valle Sportsman's Club.

At the state level, Mike is an active member of the National Rifle Association, Wisconsin Trappers Association and the Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association whom he represents on the prestigious Wisconsin Sporting Heritage Council. The Sporting Heritage Council was formed to seek ways to improve recruitment and retention of hunters, trappers, and anglers. Particularly relevant to Mike's commitment to the outdoors, and an important role of the Council's mission, is encouraging youth to participate in outdoor recreational activities. To that end, Mike has championed the importance of getting financial and other resources down to the local level where it will do the most good.

For the past 17 years Mike has engaged in Learn to Hunt activities, bringing youth and novice hunters into the outdoors. In addition to hosting Learn to Hunt events, he has been instrumental in recruiting and inspiring a cadre of local sportsmen to support the program as well.

Mike has also been instrumental in the success of the Hunting for Sustainability program offered through Madison College in coordination with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. According to the program's mandate hunting is critical to conservation and wildlife management. No one is more aware than Mike Rogers of the obligation to foster an interest in the outdoors through hunting pursuits. Mike's direct involvement in the program by mentoring students in the program demonstrates his commitment to recruitment and retention of new sportsmen and women to outdoor activities.

As a sportsman, Mike Rogers does it all. He has hunted and/or trapped virtually every legal species of game in Wisconsin including bear, turkey, deer, coyote, raccoon, beaver, muskrat, and otter. As a lifelong advocate for outdoor pursuits and a champion of natural resource protection, Mike Roger is the winner of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress David A. Ladd Delegate of the Year Award. Congratulations Mike.



*Mike Rogers accepting the WCC David A. Ladd Delegate of the Year Award from Chairman Rob Bohmann .*

## WCC RECOGNIZES DEPARTMENT STAFF

At its Annual Convention in May 2014 the Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC) recognized several DNR employees for their ongoing, outstanding work on behalf of the people and natural resources of the state.

### John Olson recognized as WCC Wildlife Biologist of the Year

John Olson is the Furbearer Specialist for the DNR out of the Ashland Office and has been active in Wisconsin's wildlife management effort for the better part of 40 years. During his tenure John has not only worked with furbearers but has also worked with bald eagles, ospreys, loons, black bears, and wild rice.

As a Furbearer Specialist John has been involved with the Wolf Recovery Team and Wolf Science Team. A big part of his work has been trapper education and humane trap research. John's work in these areas has led to his involvement in national and international groups. One group John is a part of is the U.S. Furbearer Conservation Technical Working Group of which he was the Chair the past three years. This Technical Working Group has toiled hard on developing best management practices for trapping 21 furbearer species and their recommendations for wolves was just released this year.



*John Olson accepting the Wildlife Management Award*

### WCC Fisheries Management Award goes to Benjamin Heussner

Benjamin Heussner is a Senior Fisheries Biologist in Waukesha County. He was nominated for this award by Mark Krmptich, a WCC Delegate from Waukesha County, and this is what Mark had to say about Benjamin:

Benjamin is doing an exceptional job of reaching out and communicating with all of the fishing organizations in the area. He is getting public input, both positive and negative, and handles it well. I often do not agree with Ben but he listens and analyzes and our goals are often the same. He is fearless when presenting ideas to groups that are not happy with the DNR and often changes their attitudes to a positive position. Ben goes the extra mile to promote the DNR and interesting ideas and he takes the time to listen to sportsmen and women. Ben is a strong and valuable asset to the WI DNR and should be recognized as exceptional!



*Benjamin Heussner accepting the Fisheries Management Award*

Within the DNR Benjamin is a member of the Walleye, Northern Pike, and Catfish Management Teams and outside the DNR he has worked with local groups including the Pewaukee Walleyes for Tomorrow organization. Ben worked with this group on a "fish sticks" project and helped them with permits and technical know-how to start a walleye fry hatchery.

Ben takes the time to present information and talk to local groups. A few of the groups he has presented to include the City of Delafield, the Milwaukee Chapter of Muskies Inc., Silver Lake Management District, and the City of Waukesha. Working with a diversity of people and interests has been the key of his success.

## WCC RECOGNIZES DEPARTMENT STAFF

### Conservation Warden Robert Stroess, Awarded Law Enforcement Officer of the Year

For all of the hard work Robert does to achieve an excellent balance of enforcement, education, and community involvement the Conservation Congress, at its annual convention, recognized Robert Stroess for his exemplary service to the people and natural resources of Wisconsin.

Robert was nominated by Larry Bonde, a resident of Manitowoc County where Robert serves as a Conservation Warden. In Manitowoc County Warden Stroess has investigated numerous cases including cases concerning illegal baiting and feeding, borrowing licenses, thrill killing, and dealing fur without a license. Robert is also the Northeast Region's Internet Investigator and spends countless hours searching social media and other internet sites for information for investigating cases.

Warden Stroess is very involved in the communities he serves and has been involved with the First Shots Program, Learn to Hunt events, organizing fishing clinics for Cub Scouts, attending WTA District 8 meetings, archery shoots at the Hmong Festival in Manitowoc, and even had an "Ask the Game Warden" column in a local newspaper, to name a few.

Within the DNR Robert is recognized as an outstanding warden and has been called on to help train new wardens as a Field Training Officer, Academy Instructor, and Defense & Arrest Tactics Instructor. He has also been formally recognized for his hard work as the Haskell Noyes Warden of the Year in 2013, WTA Warden of the Year Award in 2011, Northeast Region Enforcement and Science Employee of the Year in 2007, and in 2007 received a Special Achievement Award from the Manitowoc County Conservation Hall of Fame.



*Robert Stroess, the WCC Law Enforcement Officer of the Year*

### Conservation Congress chooses Mike Stahl, Oconto County, as the Conservation Waterfowl Officer of the Year

Warden Mike Stahl is a field warden stationed in Oconto County and his passion is with waterfowl education and enforcement. Mike has a strong commitment to attending youth hunting educational classes and is a regular at the Green



*Waterfowl Officer of the Year, Mike Stahl with Dick Koerner and Al Shook, Chair of the WCC Migratory Committee.*

Bay Duck Hunters Association Youth Waterfowl Day. He spends a lot of time working with youth on proper identification, hunting ethics, and safety. Warden Stahl also works with numerous sportsmen's clubs in the Lena and Gillett areas.

Within the DNR Mike is a field training officer who spends a great deal of time and effort on waterfowl identification and waterfowl enforcement issues with new recruits. He also spends a significant amount of time investigating numerous citizen complaints and violations in the area of waterfowl enforcement. Above and beyond the call of duty, he works to protect wetlands by teaming up with the local watershed management specialist to investigate wetland violations.

Warden Stahl is a respected member of his community and was asked this past December to play the part of Santa for a local charity to deliver food and presents to families in need of assistance.

## 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](http://dnr.wi.gov) and  
search for  
“Conservation Congress”



WCC Delegates volunteering  
their time at the WCC display

## WCC RECOGNIZES DEPARTMENT STAFF

### Warden Tom Van Haren Recognized For Years of Service

When it comes to knowing hunting, fishing, and trapping regulations, Thomas Van Haren has no equal. As the Natural Resources Policy Officer for the DNR's Bureau of Law Enforcement, knowing the rules has been Tom's job since July of 2001. In this role Warden Van Haren has been an excellent asset to the WCC's Legislative and Rules & Resolutions committees as a DNR Liaison and is a great person to work with. Tom is scheduled to retire this July and truly will be missed.

Warden Tom Van Haren started his career 35 years ago as a Ranger/Patrol Officer at Devil's Lake State Park as a summer job while attending UW - Stevens Point. For 4 summers Tom fulfilled that role before becoming a Deputy Conservation Warden in the fall of 1982, in Sauk County. From '82-'83 Tom switched gears and worked for the Menomonie Police Department before returning to the DNR as a Conservation Warden for Rock County in January 1985. Warden Van Haren climbed the ranks in July of 1991 taking on the role of Warden Supervisor in the Dodgeville Office. In July 2001 Tom moved into his current position as the Natural Resources Policy Officer.



Warden Tom Van Haren with NRB  
Chair Jonathan Ela in June of 2010.

On May 9, 2014, the Wisconsin Conservation Congress at their annual convention recognized and thanked Tom Van Haren for his 35 years of exceptional leadership, commitment to working cooperatively with the citizens of this state, and his service to the protection of Wisconsin's natural resources. The Wisconsin Conservation Congress would also like to thank Tom for his friendship and service to the Congress as a committee liaison and wish him a wonderful retirement.

## 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](http://dnr.wi.gov) for application and nomination forms.