

The Blade

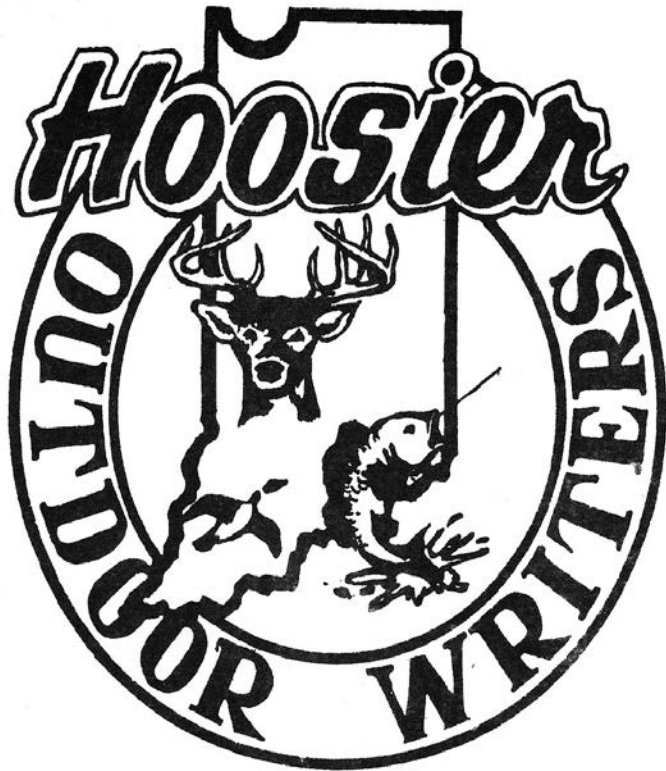
2026 Post-Conference Issue

May - June 2026

The Official Publication of the Hoosier Outdoor Writers



"Migrating Palm Warbler Visits Indiana", photo by Tom Berg



Hoosier Outdoor Writers

The Hoosier Outdoor Writers was formed in 1969 and has brought together many diverse groups and individuals with shared interests. The Hoosier Outdoor Writers, known among its members as HOW, is a group of dedicated media professionals who are keenly interested in the wise use of natural resources in the Hoosier State.

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On the cover: The handsome Palm Warbler is usually only seen in Indiana during their spring and fall migrations. They spend their winters in the warmer climates of the southeastern USA. They also head south to Central America and many of the islands in the Caribbean. Photo by Tom Berg.

President's Message

by John Maxwell

Captain Mike and Ranger Bob help HOW



As the southern tip of Lake Michigan heats up in spring, so does the coho salmon fishing -- as well as the coho fishing photography -- or at least that's what I had thought.

A bunch of heavy lake trout had different ideas and kept grabbing onto our fishing-lure spoons and coho plugs spread behind Captain Mike Schoonveld's Brother Nature Fishing Adventures boat.

During the Hoosier Outdoor Writers annual meeting in April, HOW had auctioned off a springtime Lake Michigan salmon fishing charter donated by Captain Mike. HOW member Bob Sawtelle's \$500 bid donated to HOW was tops, and Ranger Bob invited HOW members Jarret Manek and me along for an April 30th boat trip, which I envisioned as an excellent opportunity to produce some high-quality photos of spring coho salmon.

We chugged out of a frosty East Chicago Marina toward the rising sun at 5:45 a.m., and Mike soon began setting a variety of lines and trolling lures behind the boat. A buzzing reel and slam-dancing fishing pole signaled a good-sized fish attacking a trailing spoon. Jarrett fought the fish to the boat and Mike laddled the thrashing fish over the stern with a net; it was a 14-pound lake trout, but not a coho.



Left to Right: HOW members Jarrett Manek, Bob Sawtelle and John Maxwell hoist some large Lake Michigan lake trout (but no cohos!).

Soon the situation was, "hook a nice laker, boat a nice laker, it's not a coho, hook a nice laker, boat a nice laker, it's not a coho, and repeat," as we circled and pulled lures over large sand and gravel bars about 40-feet below us.

Filleted lake trout revealed stomachs full of invasive gobies and a few invasive alewives. Later in the week I reviewed the notes I gleaned from Lake Michigan Research Biologist Ben Dickinson during his Great Lakes Fishery presentation at the HOW meeting.

"In general, lake trout populations in southern Lake Michigan have been showing increased numbers of naturally reproduced fish," Dickinson said. "The overall population numbers have probably remained about stable, given that in 2017/2018 there were some stocking reductions of lake trout in the southern part of

Lake Michigan as part of a broader effort to reduce predation pressure on forage fish throughout the lake."

Dickinson further explained that the increase in the lake trout's natural reproduction is thought to be due to reduced reliance on alewives as prey, which have an enzyme that prevents thiamin uptake -- a B-vitamin crucial for salmonid reproduction. "Lake trout have also been observed spawning over large accumulations of dead invasive mussel shells, Dickinson said, which may be a good substitute for spawning gravel the fish used to have available before the mussel invasion covered it up."

The Hoosier Outdoor Writers

New Members, Past Presidents and Memorial Section

HOW Extends a Warm Welcome to our Growing Ranks of Outdoor Communicators:

Terri Gorney Lehman (Associate)
Fort Wayne, IN
Sponsor: Phil Cox

Memorial to Deceased HOW Members Those Who Have Gone Before Us:

Jack Alkire – HOW President 1979
Bill Beeman – Executive Director Emeritus
Don Bickel
Ed Blann
Charlie Brown
Gary Carden
Jim “Moose” Carden – HOW President 1982-83
George Carey
John Case
Bill Church – HOW President 1972
Gene Clifford
Jack “Big Jake” Cooper
Mark Cottingham
Larry Crecelius – HOW President 2003
Jerry Criss
John Davis – HOW President 1984-85
Gary “Dox” Doxtater
Dick Forbes
Tom Glancy – HOW President 1977
Dale Griffith
Phil Hawkins
Fred Heckman
Marty Jaranowski – HOW President 1996
Phil Junker – HOW President 1975+2002
Jack Kerins
Mike Lyle – HOW President 1981
Ralph “Cork” McHargue – HOW President 1976
Dick Mercier
Bob Nesbit
Hellen Ochs
Jack Parry
Harry Renfro
“Bayou” Bill Scifres – HOW President – 6 Terms
George Seketa
Hal Shymkus
Al Spiers
Robert “Doc” Stunkard
Butch Tackett
Bill Takacs
George Tilford
John Trout, Jr.
Joe West

Past Presidents of HOW

“Bayou” Bill Scifres	1969
“Bayou” Bill Scifres	1970
“Bayou” Bill Scifres	1971
Bill Church	1972
Rick Bramwell	1973
Jack Ennis	1974
Phil Junker	1975
Ralph “Cork” McHargue	1976
Tom Glancy	1977
Bob Rubin	1978
Jack Alkire	1979
Louie Stout	1980
Mike Lyle	1981
Jim “Moose” Carden	1982
Jim “Moose” Carden	1983
John Davis	1984
John Davis	1985
Ray Harper	1986
Ray Harper	1987
Ray Dickerson	1988
“Bayou” Bill Scifres	1989
“Bayou” Bill Scifres	1990
“Bayou” Bill Scifres	1991
Jack Spaulding	1992
Jack Spaulding	1993
John Rawlings	1994
Phil Bloom	1995
Marty Jaranowski	1996
John Martino	1997
Mike Schoonveld	1998
Jack Spaulding	1999
Jack Spaulding	2000
Sharon Wiggins	2001
Phil Junker	2002
Larry Crecelius	2003
Bryan Poynter	2004
Phil Bloom	2005
Brian Smith	2006
Brian Smith	2007
Brent Wheat	2008
Bryan Poynter	2009
John Maxwell	2010
Brandon Butler	2011
Josh Lantz	2012
Ben Shadley	2013
Bob Sawtelle	2014
Alan Garbers	2015
Ken McBroom	2016
Don Cranfill	2017
Troy McCormick	2018
Mike Schoonveld	2019
Kenny Bayless	2020
Kenny Bayless	2021
Phil Seng	2022
Jarrett Manek	2023
Bob Sawtelle	2024
Marilyn Culler	2025

Annual HOW Fun Shoot At St. Joe Valley Conservation Club

by Tom Berg

The 2026 HOW Fun Shoot held before the conference at Pokagon State Park was another fun event. Some of the shooters from the HOW membership met at the St. Joe Valley Conservation Club just outside the town of St. Joe, Indiana (northeast of Fort Wayne). We have been gathering to break some clay targets on the Friday before the Annual Meeting for many years now. Depending on what is available at the local shooting venue we choose, we shoot a few rounds of trap or skeet or we shoot a full 100-round sporting clays course.

Our Fun Shoot attendees always have a good time and we look forward to making new friends and renewing old friendships at this event. Some of our regular participants are experienced shooters while others are new to the sport and are still learning, but all skill levels are always welcome! We also encourage spouses and friends to attend and watch the action – and maybe even cheer on their favorite shooter!

For this year's HOW Fun Shoot, a very small group of HOW members and guests met at the gun club in St. Joe on Friday, April 10. The weather was a bit chilly, but at least it did not rain or snow on us this year! Even though we almost never let the weather cancel this event, it is always so much nicer to shoot when there is no precipitation in the air!



Above: HOW Fun Shoot participant Marcus Montes prepares to shoot at one of the skeet stations. Phil Seng is standing behind him as Laura Seng keeps score. Victoria Wachowski gets ready to launch the next clay target. **Below Left:** Tom Berg takes aim at a fast-moving target. Fun Shoot photos courtesy of Tom Berg.

We were happy to see that the St. Joe Valley Conservation Club has a beautiful facility. In fact, it is one of the largest shotgun shooting facilities in the Midwest. The club offers nine trap fields and 12 skeet fields, and even has four lighted fields for night shoots. The lawns are well-manicured and the buildings are immaculate!



Since the weather was cooperative, we shot four full rounds of skeet at a leisurely pace. The shooters included Phil Seng, Tom Berg and Marcus Montes. As usual, Phil Seng's wife Laura volunteered to keep score for the shooters, and Marcus' friend Victoria Wachowski operated the controls for the skeet high house/low house clay target throwers.

(HOW Fun Shoot continued on next page)

In the first round everyone started out a bit slow, but Phil Seng led the pack by breaking 16/25 clay birds. That was his lowest score of the day, too, as he steadily increased his score in the next two rounds.



In round two Berg increased his score slightly but he was still struggling, while Seng improved his score to 19/25 with one stretch where he shot 10 targets in a row without a miss.

Round three was everyone's best round. Each shooter seemed to find their groove and more clay targets were broken in this round than in any of the other four rounds. Phil Seng was the Top Gun again, breaking 21/25 targets. At one point he hit 14 targets in a row during this round, which is some pretty good shooting. Tom Berg improved his score as well, busting 11 targets in a row at one point and finishing the round with a

score of 18/25. This was Marcus Montes' first HOW Fun Shoot, and he had a respectable showing by posting a score of 14/25 on this round. We think he shot well and we hope to see him again in 2027.

The fourth round was not quite as good as round three for each one of the shooters, since everyone's score dipped slightly in this last round. Dark clouds were quickly gathering as we finished, though, so we decided four rounds was enough. As we started packing up our gear, a few sprinkles of rain started coming down. We finished just in time!

As usual, everyone at the HOW Fun Shoot had a good time. We would like to thank Mike Lasley from the St. Joe Valley Conservation Club for allowing us to shoot



at their fine facility and for giving us the grand tour of the property. He also told us about the history of the club and gave us some of the info about their leagues and shooting events that happen throughout the year. Thank you again, Mike!

If you did not make it to the HOW Fun Shoot this year, make sure you attend next year. It is always a lot of fun and everyone is welcome!



Top Left: Phil Seng prepares to shoot a target that just left the skeet "high house". **Middle Right:** Marcus Montes aims at a clay target that is whizzing by from right to left. **Bottom Left:** One of the buildings on Skeet Field 1 that house the clay target throwers at the St. Joe Valley club. Fun Shoot photos by Tom Berg.

2026 HOW Conference Returns to Pokagon State Park

The 56th meeting of the Hoosier Outdoor Writers took place on the weekend of April 10-12, 2026 (Friday through Sunday) at Pokagon State Park in extreme northeastern Indiana. Surprisingly, it has already been eleven years since we had our conference at Pokagon. In 2015 some of us can remember a few snowflakes that were coming down during the Friday evening BBQ – but this year was much better. No snow!

As usual, the first activity of the conference was the annual HOW Fun Shoot on Friday, April 10. A small group of HOW members met at the St. Joe Valley Conservation Club located northeast of Fort Wayne to shoot a few rounds of skeet. If you didn't make it this year, check out pages 5-6 for the whole story and some photos. If you have never attended a HOW Fun Shoot – or if it's been a while – you should join us next year. The weather this year was good; no rain, snow or high winds. Hopefully next year it will be warm and sunny!

After the Fun Shoot the shooters joined the other HOW members who were already gathering for the Friday evening barbecue at the Group Camp on the west side of the state park. The building for the Group Camp was a great location for our event since it had kitchen facilities and a nice dining area, complete with a wood-burning fireplace that was providing extra heat.

The barbecue started at 6:00pm. Special thanks go to **Steuben County Tourism** for sponsoring this year's barbecue, and to Janet Hartsuff from the tourism bureau for coming to speak to our group and welcome the HOW membership to Pokagon. Thank you also to Ted Bohman, the property manager at Pokagon State Park for reserving the shelter for us. John Maxwell worked with Bohman and the local caterer, **Jed's Barbecue & Brew of Angola**, to organize a great dinner. There was more than enough barbecued chicken wings for everyone, with three different delicious BBQ sauces. One of the favorites was the blackberry BBQ sauce, which was excellent. There was also plenty of side dishes, so no one left hungry! The barbecue was the perfect time to meet up with old friends and make some new ones as the food was being served.

ANNUAL MEETING AT THE POTAWATOMI INN – SATURDAY, APRIL 11

This year's annual meeting began at 8:00am on Saturday morning, and the attending HOW members and guests assembled in the Lake James Ballroom inside the Potawatomi Inn. As usual, the first hour of the meeting was set aside for registration, coffee, a light continental breakfast, and some social time for the membership.

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A springtime view of the front of the Potawatomi Inn inside Pokagon State Park, with a variety of April flowers bringing some color to the scene. Photo by Tom Berg.

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HOW President Marilyn Culler called the meeting to order at 9:00am and provided opening remarks, then briefed those present on the day's schedule. She informed the membership about a change to the speaker lineup for today's meeting since our second scheduled speaker, Brandon Butler, would not be able to make it to our event. Luckily, HOW member Brent Wheat volunteered on short notice to provide an additional presentation! President Culler then talked briefly about our conference sponsors and thanked each one of them (please see page 17 for a complete list of this year's sponsors).



Culler then introduced our first seminar speaker of the day: DNR Lake Michigan Fisheries Biologist **Ben Dickinson**. His presentation was titled "Overview of the Lake Michigan Fishery".

Dickinson provided an in-depth and interesting discussion about the excellent fishery right here in our own Great Lake – Lake Michigan. He gave a brief history of the salmon and trout stocking program, beginning with the state of Michigan's original coho salmon stocking in 1966 to help control the invasive alewife population.

He then talked about today's management challenges including the lake's predatory-prey dynamics, how they evaluate the stocking programs for the different salmon and trout species, and other invaders like zebra mussels, quagga mussels and round gobies. One interesting point that he made was the fact that zebra mussels had originally disrupted natural lake trout spawning areas by covering-up the gravel used by the trout for spawning, but now those mussels have all died and their empty shells have become a "gravel substitute". Some lake trout are now using the dead mussel beds as an alternative spawning surface, which just proves how dynamic the lake's ecosystem really is.

Dickinson also discussed the yellow perch population in the lake, and went into detail about the winter perch fishery which has become very popular in recent years. During the winter, large schools of perch can be found in Indiana's offshore waters, often in 50-60 feet of water. One of the problems with targeting perch at that depth is the risk of barotrauma. If the fish are released after being brought to the surface from that depth, they often do not survive.

Luckily (depending on how you look at it), the bulk of the perch being caught at those depths during the winter are large, adult fish that anglers usually keep rather than release them. Many anglers and fisheries biologists are concerned about overharvest at this time of year, and this is a topic that is still being examined.



Top: President Marilyn Culler calls the meeting to order and addresses the HOW membership. She also discussed the meeting schedule for the day.

Above: Fisheries Biologist Ben Dickinson talks about the diverse Lake Michigan fishery, including trout, salmon, yellow perch and other species. He also talked about stocking issues, fish survival and more. Photos by Tom Berg.

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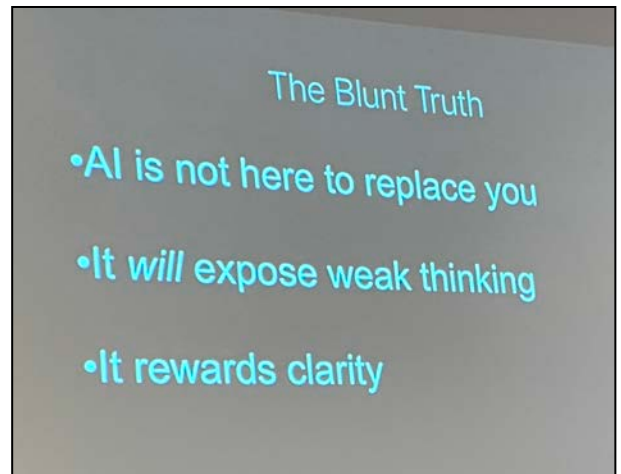
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After a short break, Marilyn Culler introduced the second seminar speaker of the day: longtime HOW member **Brent Wheat**. Wheat provided a condensed overview of Artificial Intelligence, or AI, in his presentation, “AI: Writer Friend or Foe?” In recent years there has been much discussion about AI, and Wheat described many of the ways that AI can be helpful, and just as many ways that AI can actually be bad.



One recurring concern these days is whether AI will replace writers and content producers. Although that scenario might seem plausible to some people, Wheat expressed his belief that this is not the case. In fact, one of his slides (see below) states quite clearly, “AI is not here to replace you.”

He went on to explain that lazy writers might be tempted to let AI write some or all of the text for an upcoming assignment by using AI, but this would be very unwise. AI uses information that it gleans from the vastness of the worldwide web, and, of course, not all information on the web is



factual or even based on reality! So anything that AI generates must be checked and double-checked to make sure it is correct.

However, AI can benefit writers and content creators in many ways. Mundane tasks can be accomplished with the aid of AI, which might free-up valuable time for you to do other things.

AI can generate ideas, create outlines, help polish the wording of a troublesome sentence, and much more. Just be careful to fact-check AI, and always use your own voice.



Above: Seminar speaker Brent Wheat led an interesting and enlightening presentation on artificial intelligence (AI) at this year’s conference.
Right: Conference attendees listen to one of the speakers at the Potawatomi Inn inside Pokagon State Park.

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Before breaking for lunch, President Culler called the HOW Business Meeting to order. HOW Nominating Chairman John Martino presented the proposed slate of new officers for the coming year and the annual elections commenced. John Maxwell was elected our new President, Brent Wheat was elected Vice-President and Marilyn Culler will become the Board Chairman. Our new Board members (terms expiring in 2028) include: Louie Stout, Teena Ligman, Phil Bloom, Rich Creason and Dave Hoffman. Thank you to all of our new volunteers!

After the elections and business meeting were concluded, an excellent buffet lunch was served by the Potawatomi Inn catering staff. Everyone relaxed and socialized for an hour before the afternoon activities



began. A big thank-you goes out to our friends at the **National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF)** for sponsoring the lunch again this year at the HOW conference.

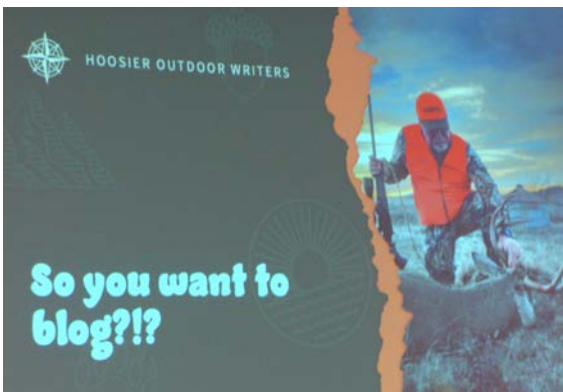
After lunch, newly-elected HOW President John Maxwell introduced the next seminar speaker, which was again **Brent Wheat**. This presentation was titled “Craft Improvement: So NOW You Want to Publish?”

Wheat talked about how and why HOW members might want to start their own blog (or their own website), and he laid out a step-by-step plan for getting it done.

There are plenty of online sites out

Above: The buffet luncheon provided by the kitchen staff at the Potawatomi Inn was enjoyed by all. **At Right:** Brent Wheat discusses the finer points of setting up your own blog and making it look professional. One of the nice things about having your own blog is that you can write about whatever you like!

there which will facilitate you starting your own blog, but Wheat recommended using Substack over all of the other platforms. He



admitted that simply using social media like Facebook is easy and reaches a large audience, but outdoor creators (especially for hunting and shooting) should avoid it because of “shadow banning” and “community guidelines” violations.



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After the discussion about creating your own blog, it was time to present the awards for the **TIP (Turn-In-a-Poacher/Polluter) Writing Contest**. Once again the TIP Citizen's Advisory Board sponsored a special writing contest for HOW members, asking our writers to promote the TIP mission, the TIP hotline and support the TIP Advisory Board.

TIP Board President Phil Seng and Lt. Brent Bohbrink from the IDNR Law Enforcement Division discussed the TIP program and the TIP mission, and thanked the HOW membership for participating in this year's TIP writing contest. They stressed the importance of educating the public and enlisting the public's help in the fight against poachers and polluters. They also announced this year's TIP writing contest winners and presented the winners with checks and certificates. Please see page 26 for details of the winners and photos of the TIP awards presentation.

After the TIP awards were distributed, HOW President Marilyn Culler stated that it was time to announce the results of the **2025 HOW Awards-In-Craft** contests.

Cash prizes and certificates were awarded to the best of the best in the annual Writing Contest, the Photography Contest, the Book Contest and the Broadcast Contest. Please see pages 19-25 for details and results of the annual HOW AIC contests. Participation by the membership was similar to last year in the writing and broadcast divisions, but we received more entries than usual in the photography section. We had many entries in the Best Book contest, too. We typically only hold a book contest once every five or six years since it takes a lot longer to write a book than a magazine article. We are hoping for even more participation in 2027!



HOW Awards-in-Craft winners for 2026 are shown after receiving their accolades at the conference, courtesy of **Quad 4 Plastics**. **From left to right:** Tom Berg, John Maxwell, Ken Keffer, John Martino, Mike Lunsford, Marilyn Culler, Phil Bloom and Brent Wheat. Not present: Alan Garbers, Richard Hines, Troy McCormick, Nate Mullendore, Mike Schoonveld and Louie Stout.

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Our sincere thanks go out to Brian Smith and **Quad 4 Plastics** for sponsoring this year's AIC contests and for recognizing the creative achievements of our members once again.

The final presentation of the day was titled "HOW Membership Criteria Discussion" and was led by **Brent Wheat, Don Cranfill** and **Trent Marsh** from the Membership Criteria Committee. They discussed the proposed changes to the HOW membership standards which were emailed to the entire HOW membership back in March, 2026.

All agree that HOW must remain a professional organization, but we also need to attract new, younger members to help grow our ranks. For the past several months, this committee has been reviewing our membership criteria to determine whether it still reflects the realities of today's outdoor communications landscape. The proposed changes are just that – proposed changes.

The committee members talked about the fact that the criteria for active membership in HOW might not need to be based primarily on income as it is now. Instead, the committee has proposed that HOW shift its focus to evaluating **Professional Practice** – meaning sustained, public-facing outdoor communication work demonstrating seriousness of intent and contribution to the field.



HOW Membership Criteria Committee members (left to right): Brent Wheat, Don Cranfill and Trent Marsh as they talk about the proposed changes to our membership.

At this time, no final determination has been made, and the final details will be printed in the July/August issue of *The Blade*. Our shared goal is simple: to ensure that the Hoosier Outdoor Writers organization continues to represent practicing outdoor communicators with credibility and purpose – both now and in the years ahead.

HOW OUTDOOR WRITERS RAFFLE

The favorite part of the meeting for many of our members is the annual HOW Raffle. Veteran HOW conference attendees know that this is the final activity of the day – and it is always a lot of fun. This year's raffle was another great one. Raffle Chairman Tom Berg organized an excellent event this year, easily filling several banquet tables with outstanding outdoor products from our loyal HOW Supporting Members (and many new Supporting Members, too). This year he and his helpers secured donations from a **total of 80** companies, organizations and individuals. This was just about the same as the 2025 raffle, and we will be trying even harder for next year's 2027 conference, too.

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As usual, we had a great assortment of raffle items again this year. Berg would like to thank John Galambos and Marilyn Culler for their help in securing a number of the items again this year. Thank you!

As is usual for the HOW raffle, some companies donated major products and others contributed smaller items, but all were much-appreciated. A big thank you also goes to the many HOW members who helped unpack and display the raffle items, catalogs, press releases and banners on the tables that morning.

The moment the raffle tickets went on sale, a line formed behind the ticket sales table. Just like last year, however, sales went a lot quicker since we had groups of 50 tickets pre-stripped and ready to sell. Regular raffle tickets were \$2.00 each and tickets for the firearms raffle were \$10.00 each. A big thank you goes to long-time HOW member Brent Wheat for handling the raffle ticket sales again and calling out the numbers for the prizes. Thanks also to Terri Trowbridge and Marilyn Culler for assisting with ticket sales.

As HOW members have come to expect, this year's raffle featured quality as well as quantity when it came to the items to be raffled-off. Firearms enthusiasts were happy with this year's raffle prizes again, as we had a beautiful **CVA** Wolf .50 caliber muzzleloader; an excellent **Mossberg** Patriot rifle/Vortex scope combo (caliber: .308 WIN); and a great **Ruger** American Rifle Generation II (caliber: 7mm-08 Rem). We even had a Red Ryder Air Rifle from **Daisy Outdoor Products!**

There was also a Boat US membership, premium sunglasses, fishing rods and reels, fishing tackle, fishing lures, fishing line, landing nets, premium rodholders, fishing scents, terminal tackle, trail camera, an MEC reloading press, an RCBS Supreme Master Reloading kit, premium optics, books, coolers, shirts, hats, boots, jackets, coffee mugs, turkey calls, tackle boxes, soft-sided tackle packs, electronics, knives, ammunition, dove decoys, gun cleaning products, portable gun safes/lockboxes, lights, trolling gear, a premium Nesco stainless steel dehydrator, an HHA archery sight, complete rain suits, camping gear and much more.

Above: John Martino checks out a new reel from the raffle.
Right: Member Rick Bramwell purchases raffle tickets from Terri Trowbridge.
Far Right: Brent Wheat was the Ticket Master and called out all of the winning raffle tickets. All HOW conference photos taken by Tom Berg.



Besides all the great products mentioned on the previous page, we also had many gift certificates for products and services from our generous Supporting Members. One of those items was a Lake Michigan salmon & trout fishing charter donated by long-time HOW member Captain Mike Schoonveld. This was an auction item and there were several HOW members bidding on it. When the gavel finally fell, Bob Sawtelle was the winner of the auction with a bid of \$500. HOW President John Maxwell accompanied Bob on the fishing charter at the end of April, so check out John's report on page 3 for details.

Overall, the 2026 HOW Raffle was another great success! Of course, without the support and generosity of our Supporting Members the raffle would not happen at all. For a complete listing of this year's raffle donors, check page 18. Please support them in your work whenever possible. Also, be sure to send them a thank-you note when you get a chance.

Don't forget to mail or email article tearsheets or online links for your photos, articles, podcasts or radio shows to our corporate members when you feature their products in your work, too. It is important to let them know of your efforts!

The HOW Fishing Outing Was Great!



YES! We had the HOW Fishing Outing on Sunday, April 12 following the conference! Some of us remember that we were forced to cancel the fishing outing last year on the Ohio River due to flooding. And in 2024 we did not schedule a fishing outing since the conference was in February. So the last time we actually had a HOW Fishing Outing was in 2023 after the conference at McCormick's Creek State Park. It seems like so long ago!

In any case, three HOW members met their boat captains on Sunday morning at nearby waters and spent an enjoyable morning of fishing. Check out the next two pages for info and photos from this year's outing.

Our thanks go out to local anglers Bill LaVigne, Gary LaRue and Ted Bohman for volunteering their boats and their time to take us fishing. It was very much appreciated!

Left: Local fishing expert Bill LaVigne unhooks a smallmouth bass that he caught on a fluorescent chartreuse stickbait on Crooked Lake. **Below:** A view of Crooked Lake on April 12, 2026. This lake is located only minutes from Pokagon. Tom Berg photos.



2026 HOW Fishing Outing Walleyes, Bass and More!

by Tom Berg

The 2026 HOW fishing outing was held on Sunday, April 12 after the conference at Pokagon State Park. It was great to get back out on the water again after the HOW conference since the fishing outing was canceled last year after the Clifty Falls conference (Ohio River was at flood stage) and we didn't schedule a fishing outing in 2024 since the conference was held in February.

We had a small group of anglers for the fishing outing this year: Tom Berg, Mike Berg and John Maxwell. Tom's long-time friend Bill LaVigne – one of the local fishing experts – recruited his fishing buddy Gary LaRue to help with our fishing outing. Both men trailered their boats to nearby Crooked Lake and that's where Tom and Mike met them. They planned to target walleyes, but hoped their baits would also attract some of the resident bass as well.

John Maxwell met with Ted Bohman, the property manager at Pokagon State Park and their plan was to catch a mess of panfish. They fished 780-acre Marble Lake just over the state line in Coldwater, Michigan. The fishing for crappies was good and Maxwell reported that they caught about 40 nice crappies by casting small jigs under boat docks and around last-year's spatterdock growth. The most popular bait rig for the day, at least for hungry crappies, was a yellow PowerBait jig fished below a slender bobber, which tipped up when a crappie grabbed it. Unfortunately, John forgot to take any photos (I know – the DNR photographer forgot to take photos)!

The weather was great and the fish cooperated for the Berg brothers and their guides on Crooked Lake, too. Tom Berg and Bill LaVigne each caught a couple of walleyes (up to 16 inches) and several bass,



Left: Tom Berg lifts his first walleye of the year just prior to releasing it. It inhaled a lively nightcrawler.
Above: Bill LaVigne holds one of the smallmouth bass he caught from Crooked Lake during the HOW outing.

(HOW Fishing Outing reports and photos continued on the next page)

HOW Fishing Outing (continued)

both largemouth and smallmouth bass. Tom landed the largest bass of the day, a 15-inch largemouth. Mike and Gary were both successful in landing a walleye each, and Mike caught a spunky smallmouth bass, too.

Tom and Bill used live nightcrawlers on modified Carolina rigs for most of the morning, but later switched to casting artificial lures. The smallmouth bass were eager to chase the lures, and Tom's best bait was a perch-colored Rapala Shadraps. Shadraps are hard to beat! In fact, near the end of the trip Tom and Bill each hooked a smallmouth bass at the same time, and both fish were netted together – an exciting double-header! See below.

All fish caught from Crooked Lake on our two boats were released to fight another day.

Here are some additional photos from the fishing outing:



Top Right: Tom Berg holds up his biggest largemouth bass of the day for a quick photo before releasing it. **Above Right:** Here is a feisty smallmouth bass caught by Mike Berg. **Above Left:** In the landing net - two smallmouth bass hit the net at the same time when Tom Berg and Bill LaVigne hooked this pair simultaneously over a sandy bottom late in the morning. **Middle Left:** Mike Berg puts his walleye on the measuring board prior to its release.

2026 HOW Conference

The Hoosier Outdoor Writers would like to thank the following conference sponsors:



HOW Raffle Donors - 2026

A big thank-you goes to this year's raffle donors. Please support them in your media work whenever possible.

Archery Trade Association
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Toyota North America
Traveler's Guide to the Firearm Laws
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Vortex Optics
Whitetails Unlimited
W.R. Case

The HOW 2026 Awards-In-Craft Contests

The results are in! The winners of the 2026 Awards-In-Craft contest were announced at this year's annual conference at Pokagon State Park in April, and we had many outstanding entries. As usual, the writing portion of the contest drew the most interest, as HOW members submitted a total of 63 entries from 9 different HOW members. This was almost the same number of entries from 2025 when we had 65 entries, but it's still pretty good. Let's see if we can do better next year and have even more entries in 2027! You can't win if you don't play, and there is no cost to participate. The photography contest participation was actually much better than last year, as this year we had 39 entries from 11 HOW members. Last year we had 27 photo entries from only six HOW members. It's good, but we can do better, since four years ago we had 49 photo entries from 11 members! The broadcast contest was about the same as last year as we had a total of five entries from two members. Next year our radio broadcasters, podcasters, TV and video professionals need to submit more entries! This year we also had a book contest, and five different HOW members submitted a total of nine entries. It was a close contest!

Considering the large amount of contest entries, the AIC judges did a great job and most of the competitions were extremely close. In the Writing Contest, only one or two points often separated a first place entry from a second place entry, etc. Many articles landed in 4th place by a mere point or two, also. Since each article could receive up to 200 points this year (100 from each of two judges), those were some close races! We had a total of 13 different winners in the contests in 2026, and each took home prize money. Make sure you get in on the fun next year!

The Awards-In-Craft contests were again sponsored by **Quad 4 Plastics** this year, so the winners were awarded checks along with certificates to commemorate their big achievements. We would like to thank Brian Smith, Director of Sales and Marketing at **Quad 4 Plastics** in Elkhart, Indiana for their very generous sponsorship in 2026.



All HOW members are encouraged to go visit the Quad 4 Plastics website

(www.quad4plastics.com) to find out more about their precision injection molding and thermoforming and vacuum forming capabilities. If it's made of plastic, Quad 4 Plastics can make it!



A special thank-you also goes to our contest coordinators who donated their time and energy to secure judges and get each of the entries reviewed and scored in time for the conference at Pokagon. Dealing with a large number of submissions which are typically sent right before the deadline always makes coordinating the entries/judges difficult, but the electronic entries really helped. The official 2026 Awards-In-Craft coordinators were: **Marilyn Culler** (Writing), **John Martino** (Photography) and **Tom Berg** (Broadcast and Books).

For a complete list of the winners (along with the number of entries for each contest) see the details on the following pages. Please take a look and congratulate your fellow HOW members on their successes.



HOW WRITING CONTEST

(2026: 63 entries from 9 different HOW members)

(2025: 65 entries from 11 different HOW members)

(2024: 66 entries from 12 different HOW members)

Hunting/Trapping (Less Than 1000 Words)

- 1st: Brent Wheat, "The Great Deer Butchery Debacle" - **TIE** -
1st: Brent Wheat, "Fact or Fiction: Gun Myths that Refuse to Die" - **TIE** -
2nd: John Martino, "There's Magic in Opening Day of Deer Hunting"
3rd: Tom Berg, "Prepping for the Dove Hunting Opener"

Hunting/Trapping (More Than 1000 Words)

- 1st: Brent Wheat, "Hunt Across the Pond"
2nd: Brent Wheat, "Grandpa's Gun Cabinet was Cooler than Yours"
3rd: Mike Schoonveld, "Doubling Your Fun on the Line"

Fishing (Less Than 1000 Words)

- 1st: Mike Schoonveld, "Game Fish Spearing Expanded - Hooray!"
2nd: Tom Berg, "Two More Hardwater Fishing Spots in Indiana"
3rd: John Martino, "Nothing Screams Spring Like Crappie"

Fishing (More Than 1000 Words)

- 1st: Louie Stout, "The Pioneers of Big-Water Bass"
2nd: Mike Schoonveld, "Fishing the Dark Side of Midnight"
3rd: Mike Schoonveld, "WAY-N-ELL Steel"

Conservation (Less Than 1000 Words)

- 1st: Mike Lunsford, "Tulip Tree 'Graces the Indiana Landscape'"
2nd: Mike Lunsford, "New State Flower Takes Bloom"
3rd: Brent Wheat, "Unsung Hero of Firearms: The PLCAA"

Conservation (More Than 1000 Words)

- 1st: Mike Lunsford, "Mussels 'Holding Their Own' in Indiana"
2nd: Mike Lunsford, "Sanders Hopes to See a 'Reweaving of the Web of Life'"
3rd: Brent Wheat, "The Lead 'Crisis' and Regulatory Squeeze"

General Outdoors (Less Than 1000 Words)

- 1st: Mike Lunsford, "An Extraordinary Ordinary Day"
2nd: Mike Lunsford, "The 'Good Hours' of Winter"
3rd: John Martino, "Boots That Keep Your Tootsies Toasty"

General Outdoors (More Than 1000 Words)

- 1st: Brent Wheat, "The Things I've Learned"
2nd: John Martino, "Adventure and Friendship in America's Last Frontier"
3rd: Alan Garbers, "The S&W Performance Center 2000 Schofield"



HOW PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

(2026: 39 entries from 11 different HOW members)

(2025: 27 entries from 6 different HOW members)

(2024: 33 entries from 8 different HOW members)

Hunting/Trapping

1st: Richard Hines, "Squirrel Hunting"

2nd: Nathan Mullendore, "2025 WIA Atlas Cover"

3rd: John Maxwell, "Family Deer Hunt at Goose Pond"

Fishing

1st: Richard Hines, "Gamekeepers Flyfishing Trammel Creek"

2nd: Tom Berg, "Smallmouth Bass at the Boat"

3rd: Tom Berg, "A Boy and His Catfish"

Outdoor Scenic

1st: Tom Berg, "Colorful Sentinel"

2nd: John Maxwell, "Sandhill Cranes Over Whitewater Memorial State Park"

3rd: Mike Lunsford, "Was it Something that I said"

Outdoor Recreation

1st: John Maxwell, "Winter Fog Dogwalk at Fort Harrison"

2nd: Mike Lunsford, "On the Trail"

3rd: Tom Berg, "Birdwatching"

HOW BROADCAST CONTEST

(2026: 5 entries from 2 different HOW members)

(2025: 6 entries from 2 different HOW members)

(2024: No entries)

Best Radio Broadcast

1st: Brent Wheat, "GunsPodcast.US – Slingshots to Blowguns: The Worst Self-Defense Ideas Debunked"

2nd: Brent Wheat, "GunsPodcast.US – Best Christmas Guns: Should You Go Big or Small?"

3rd: -- No Entry --

Best TV Broadcast

1st: Troy McCormick, "BrushPile Fishing: Chickamauga Lake, TN"

2nd: Troy McCormick, "BrushPile Fishing: Melvern Lake, KS"

3rd: -- No Entry --

Best Video

1st: Troy McCormick, "The Great Gold Rush Shootout"

2nd: -- No Entry --

3rd: -- No Entry --

HOW BOOK CONTEST

(2026: 9 entries from 5 different HOW members)

1st: Phil Bloom, "Hiking Indiana"

2nd: Ken Keffer, "Knowing the Trees"

3rd: Mike Lunsford, "This Old World"



NOTE: See the following four pages for images of the winning photos in this year's Photography Contest.

WINNING IMAGES FROM THIS YEAR

Hunting /Trapping



"Squirrel Hunting"

First Place - Richard Hines



"2025 WIA Atlas Cover"

Second Place - Nathan Mullendore



"Family Deer Hunt at Goose Pond"

Third Place - John Maxwell

WINNING IMAGES FROM THIS YEAR

Fishing



"Gamekeepers Flyfishing Trammel Creek"

First Place - Richard Hines



"Smallmouth Bass at the Boat"

Second Place - Tom Berg



"A Boy and His Catfish"

Third Place - Tom Berg

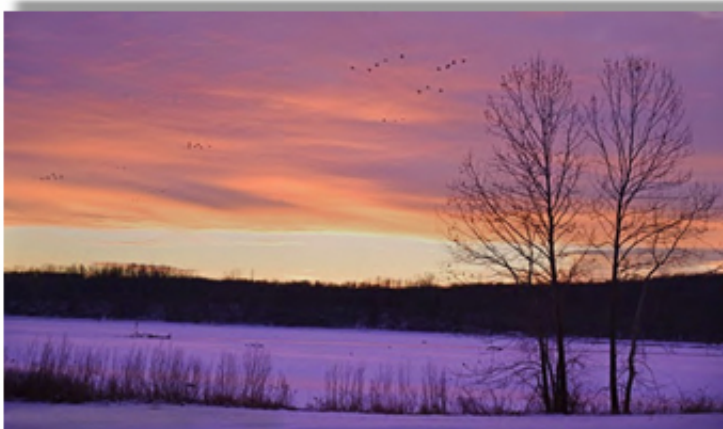
WINNING IMAGES FROM THIS YEAR

Outdoor Scenic

First Place – Tom Berg



"Colorful Sentinel"



"Sandhill Cranes over Whitewater Memorial State Park"

Second Place – John Maxwell

Third Place – Mike Lunsford



"Was it Something that I Said"

WINNING IMAGES FROM THIS YEAR

Outdoor Recreation

First Place – John Maxwell



"Winter-fog dogwalk at Fort Harrison"



"On the Trail"

Second Place - Mike Lunsford

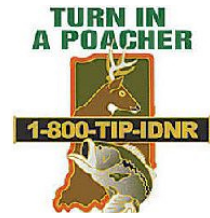


"Birdwatching"

Third Place - Tom Berg



The 2026 TIP – Hoosier Outdoor Writers Turn in a Poacher/Polluter Writing Contest



The Indiana Turn in a Poacher (TIP) Citizen’s Advisory Board sponsored a writing contest in 2025 to encourage HOW members to promote the TIP mission, the TIP hotline and support of the TIP Advisory Board. The results were announced at the 2026 conference. The contest will be running again in 2026, so start writing those TIP stories right away. There is no limit to the number of entries a person can submit.

A complete list of the 2026 winners is printed below, along with info on their winning articles. This year the prizes were \$500 for first place; \$300 for second place; \$200 for third place. Please take a look at the results below and congratulate your fellow HOW members on their successes.

Here is the list of the 2026 TIP Contest award winners:

First Place: Jarrett Manek, for his article: **“You Can’t Fool Smokey!”**
Published in the *Corydon Democrat*, December, 2025

Second Place: Mike Schoonveld, for his article: **“Behind the Scenes at 800-TIP-IDNR”**
Published in *Midwest Outdoors*, September/October, 2025

Third Place: Marilyn Culler, for her article: **“Hunting Laws are for Everyone”**
Published in the *Greencastle Banner-Graphic*, November 21, 2025

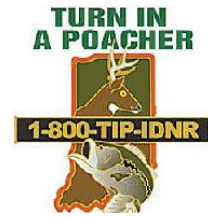


Above Left: Jarrett Manek receives his 1st Place award from Lt. Brent Bohbrink (L). **Above Right:** Marilyn Culler receives her 3rd Place award from officer Bohbrink. TIP Board President Phil Seng (R) congratulates both winners. **Not shown:** Mike Schoonveld won 2nd place but was not present.

A special thank-you goes to TIP Board president and TIP contest coordinator, Phil Seng. Phil donated his time and energy to gather the entries, forward them on to the TIP Board, and coordinate between HOW and the TIP Board for this contest. Photos by Tom Berg.



Hoosier Outdoor Writers Turn in a Poacher/Polluter Writing Contest Official 2026 Contest Guidelines



Once again, the Indiana Turn in a Poacher (TIP) Citizen's Advisory Board is sponsoring a writing contest to encourage HOW members to promote the TIP mission and the hotline. For 2026 the prizes are again **\$500 for first place; \$300 for second place; \$200 for third place.** Be sure to write your TIP article right away!

Requirements are simple and entering is easy! Article must be at least 400 words in length and must include:

1. Brief description of TIP (see below—does not have to be verbatim)
2. TIP Hotline (1-800-TIP-IDNR)

Although it is not required, preference will be given to stories that:

- Feature a compelling story that demonstrates how TIP can help conserve or protect fish and wildlife for the people of Indiana.
- Are published in paid publications.

To enter, submit an electronic copy of an article published between **January 1, 2026** and **December 31, 2026**. The TIP Citizen's Advisory Board will review all entries and will select the entries that best promote the mission of TIP and encourage citizens to get involved.

Entries should be marked as "TIP" entries and sent to Contest Coordinator Phil Seng (phil@djcase.com). They must be emailed by March 1, 2027.

What is TIP?

Turn in a Poacher and Polluter, Inc. (TIP) is a non-profit conservation organization that works hand-in-hand with Indiana DNR Law Enforcement to protect our fish and wildlife resources by increasing public support and involvement in bringing violators to justice.

A poacher is a thief who illegally steals wildlife that belongs to each Indiana citizen. Poachers rob licensed, ethical hunters and anglers from recreational opportunities they bought through license fees. Pollution kills Indiana's valuable fish and wildlife resources and harms habitat.

Citizens can help stop poachers and polluters in two ways. If you see, hear or learn about a poacher or pollution that results in the death of fish and wildlife, or any other fish and wildlife violation:

- Call 1-800-TIP-IDNR
- Submit a TIP online at www.tip.IN.gov

If your TIP leads to an arrest, you may receive as much as a \$500 reward, and you can remain anonymous. More information is available at <https://www.in.gov/dnr/lawenfor/2745.htm>

Indiana Department of Natural Resources
402 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204

For immediate release: May 21, 2026

Make Water Safety a Priority

With Memorial Day weekend nearly here, Indiana Conservation Officers remind Hoosiers to make water safety a priority throughout the summer. “Water is unpredictable, and a few smart choices can go a long way toward keeping everyone safe,” said Capt. Jet Quillen.

Here are some basic water safety tips:

- Discuss the dangers of water with your family and loved ones before going out.
- Tell someone where you are going and when you will return.
- Go with a buddy.
- Stay away from flooded or fast-moving waterways.
- Wear a life jacket.
- Keep a watchful eye on children.
- Avoid alcohol.



When you go boating, boat safely by assessing water levels before going out and monitor your speed. Reduce speed in unfamiliar areas and be aware of unusual water conditions, especially compared to the size and type of your boat. These boating guidelines not only can keep you safe, they also can also help prevent beach erosion.

Designate a sober boat operator. Alcohol consumption causes impaired balance, blurred vision, poor coordination, impaired judgment, and slower reaction time. Wave action, sun exposure, and wind can magnify these effects. It is illegal to operate a motorboat or personal watercraft in Indiana while intoxicated due to alcohol or drugs. Indiana law defines alcohol intoxication as having a blood alcohol level of 0.08% or greater.

Each life jacket should be United States Coast Guard approved, in good working condition, and an appropriate size for the wearer. Today’s inflatable life jackets allow mobility and flexibility for activities like boating, fishing or paddling, and can be much cooler in warmer weather than older-style life jackets. To learn more about boating education and safety, see on.IN.gov/boatered.

Media contact:

Captain Jet Quillen, DNR Law Enforcement, 317-903-1671, jquillen@dnr.IN.gov.

HOW Member News

Troy McCormick Inducted into the PTH Hall of Fame

Most HOW members know that our very own Troy McCormick is serious about metal detectors and treasure hunting. In fact, Troy's metal detecting skills have been featured on primetime TV's Discovery Channel more than once. So it is no surprise that he was recently recognized for those skills. See below.

"I am extremely honored to have been inducted into the Professional Treasure Hunters Hall of Fame this past Saturday," said McCormick. "The Hall of Fame for metal detectorists and treasure hunters is managed by the Professional Treasure Hunters Historical Society, which was formed in 1992. Their annual event is called the Best Of the North East (B.O.N.E.) and offers five days of natural metal detecting in Vermont and New Hampshire."

"I would like to thank George Streeter for all of his years of leadership with B.O.N.E. and for getting me involved in the Professional Treasure Hunters Historical Society."

Congratulations, Troy!



Brent Wheat Learns About Photo Drones

"So, it's a beautiful evening in May and I'm out in the front yard playing, er, 'training' with my inexpensive photo drone," remembered current HOW Vice President Brent Wheat. "I bought a relatively cheap model to learn with before plunking down serious money on a top-quality video drone."

"I can fly mine fairly well, but I've been pushing myself to learn all its capabilities. As the drone happily buzzed overhead, I glanced at the printed flight checklist and noticed the 'Emergency Stop' procedure highlighted in red: In case of emergency, hold the auto-takeoff/auto-land button for two seconds."

"Naturally, I assumed this meant the drone would stop all motion and hover in place. After all, that's how other drones operate. Imagine my surprise when I held the button for two seconds and the drone instantly shut off, falling from the sky like Icarus. Unfortunately, unlike Icarus, it landed on a concrete driveway. Fortunately, it was only about 10 to 15 feet off the ground, so there was no major damage. The few broken pieces went back together nicely with Super Glue and optimism."



"The moral of the story? This is why everyone recommends buying a less-expensive drone before taking the plunge on something fancy. It's also why potentially dangerous maneuvers should probably be attempted a few feet above grass instead of directly over concrete."

Pennsylvania on the Fly

Story and photos by Marilyn Culler

I didn't expect to go to the Heartland Fly Fishing Festival in Lebanon, Indiana, and end up at an Altar Fly Fishing retreat, but Pennsylvania called!

Conversations with George Daniel (Penn State) and Josh Miller (guide, instructor, tier, coach) – google them! – led me to Steve Ebling and an invitation to an Altar Fly Fishing retreat in Pennsylvania. Altar Fly Fishing invites ministry leaders and pastors into a retreat space for reflection and renewal, away from the rush of everyday responsibilities.

Retreat. Fly fishing. Renewal. How could I say “no” to such a beautiful invitation from Steve and Josh? Now I'm reading the waters around me with renewed vision, thanks to the Altar Fly Fishing community. Google Altar Fly Fishing too!

This particular retreat, “Reading the Waters,” was held at Brownie's Mill Trout Club in Woodbury, PA. Each day began and ended with guided conversation and reflection time. Delicious meals were shared. Fly tying vises appeared. Laughter, conversation, quiet time, answers to questions – whatever participants needed was found in the community that organically formed when everyone arrived.

Each participant was paired up with a guide as we fished different sections of Yellow Creek. When I stepped into Yellow Creek on the first day of the retreat, I was immediately filled with idyllic childhood joy. I caught



Above: Marilyn Culler displays a beautifully-marked PA brown trout she caught “on the fly”.
Below Left: Culler with another very nice trout, but this one is a gorgeous rainbow trout.



trout in, from what I was told, a challenging section of Yellow Creek. Day two began with catching a small wild brown trout. As we ended the day, my guide and I were told we had “30 seconds to catch a trout.” Not wanting to disappoint my host, I caught a 20-inch rainbow trout as we left the creek!

Day three began with stocking trout at Brownie's Mill. At day's end, on the last few casts, I caught two nice trout. Euro-nymphing for trout in Pennsylvania was almost more joy than I could handle in that moment!

Stepping out of my busy life and into a community of kind human beings willing to share their time, their souls, their gifts and expertise was transformational. Now I'm back to work and responsibilities, ready to write the next new chapter for my life. New knowledge and focused intentions from time in a Pennsylvania trout stream is a gift I didn't see coming, and one I will treasure.

A Bird Unlike Any Other: Zunzuncito Sightings in Cuba

Story by Mona Clayton (photos by Mona Clayton and Debbie Smith)

A faint buzzing cut through the still air – more like an insect than a bird. Then it stopped, hovering just a few feet away. What I was looking at barely seemed real: a Bee Hummingbird, or the Zunzuncito, the smallest bird on Earth.

I was excited about an upcoming birding trip to Cuba and, while researching in late 2025, I learned about the Zunzuncito, otherwise known as the bee hummingbird. The species is just over two inches long and is often compared to a large bee in both movement and scale.

The bee hummingbird burns energy like an Indy 500 racer and weighs less than a dime – about 1.7 to 2.1 grams, with a length of roughly 2 to 2.25 inches. Its wings beat up to 80 times per second. The species is endemic to Cuba and is currently listed as Near Threatened.

Traveling to Cuba

My friend Debbie Smith and I didn't share many of the concerns others raised before the trip, although family and friends were quick to pass along headlines about travel advisories, fuel and electricity shortages, and the ongoing U.S. embargo in Cuba. I even received a few cautionary texts while on the jetway boarding our flight to Havana, some from people who don't carry passports themselves! We had an itinerary spanning more than 2,000 kilometers, and many Cubans and their families had been expecting our arrival for months. Having traveled to more than 60 countries and lived abroad twice, I've learned that conditions on the ground often differ from perceptions at home. With some Spanish proficiency, a sense of adventure and extra flexibility, along with a trusted traveling companion, I felt well prepared.

Shortly after our arrival, those concerns quickly dissipated as we explored Old Havana and delivered supplies intended for a United Methodist congregation in the countryside – an experience which added a meaningful, personal dimension to the trip.

Even after returning, several friends were surprised to learn that U.S. citizens can legally travel to Cuba. Yes, a visa is required, and the process for that is straightforward.

Finding the Zunzuncito

Where does one see a Zunzuncito in Cuba? The Bay of Pigs region, near Playa Larga, is one of the best-known locations.

We arrived at a private home, one of a few in the area known for hosting bee hummingbird viewing. The yard included flowering shrubs and plants, along with several hummingbird feeders. Many species of birds, including another hummingbird, the Cuban Emerald, were present during our visit, making the diminutive scale of the Zunzuncito even more striking.

There were informational materials, signage, and a small snack stand at the rear of the home. A covered porch with tables and chairs allowed visitors to sit or stand and enjoy an up-close experience with these remarkable birds. An adjacent neighbor



The bee hummingbird is extremely small. To give some scale to this photo, the white plastic flower on the feeder is about the diameter of a US quarter.

(continued on the next page)

maintained similar habitat, with signage welcoming visitors.

An Unforgettable Encounter

With several feeders slightly above our heads, it didn't take long before bee hummingbirds were buzzing near us, flitting in and out of flowering shrubs and darting around the feeders.

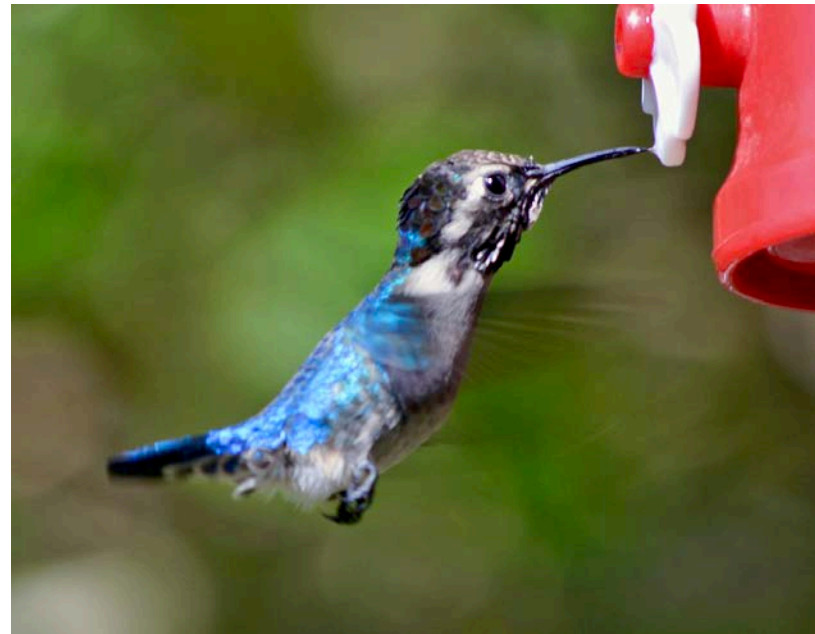
Then, there it was, hovering just a few feet away. I captured footage in slow motion to better glimpse its rapid movements. At that distance, its size was almost hard to process – no larger



Above: The Zonzuncito, or bee hummingbird, is a beautiful blue color, which is unforgettable. **Left:** Another Zonzuncito visits a hummingbird feeder in our host's yard, its wings a blur as it hovers in midair.

than my thumb. The rapid wingbeats created a soft hum in the air.

This was my top target species of the trip (although we saw many amazing things, not



just birds), and seeing it brought an unexpected rush of emotion – I found myself shedding a few tears of joy, and relief. Up close, it was easy to understand why it's often compared to a bee, yet there was no mistaking we were watching the smallest bird on Earth. I could have spent the entire afternoon simply taking in the setting.

Final Reflections

Getting to Cuba is not as complicated as the media often portrays. There are many direct flights from Florida with multiple airlines. At least one carrier offers day trips. We were comfortable using a local provider and were well taken care of. We always felt safe. Was it luxury? No, but we didn't expect luxury. Was it a great adventure traveling with Cubans who shared their on-the-ground insights? Absolutely!

Visiting Cuba, connecting with its resilient people, and experiencing the Zonzuncito were truly memorable, bucket-list moments. For those with a spirit of adventure, Cuba and its people offer an experience well worth the journey.

Right: The Cuban emerald hummingbird is emerald-green, of course! It is twice the size of the Zonzuncito, often measuring 4.5" long.





Mike Lunsford Earns Writing, Photography Awards

HOW member Mike Lunsford from Parke County was honored for the 6th time this spring with a 2026 Reader's Choice "Best Columnist" Award for his

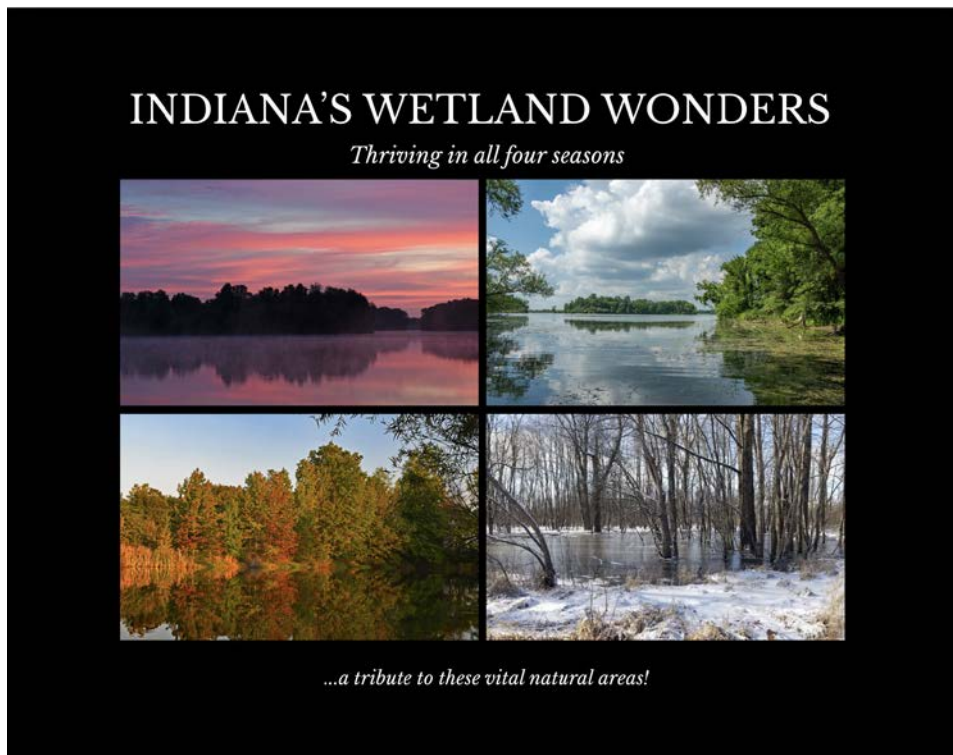
work with the *Terre Haute Tribune-Star* and *Terre Haute Living* magazine. Mike writes for *Indiana Connection* magazine as well.

Lunsford also took home a first place award in the annual Covered Bridge Art Association's Open Spring Show in Rockville. Lunsford's "Mending" photo was awarded a blue ribbon, and his "Abel Mitchell Bridge" image was given a second place prize. He is shown in the photo with the show's jurist, artist Christel Gutelius.



Lunsford Also Contributes Photography Skills to New Indiana Wetlands Book

INDIANA'S WETLAND WONDERS RELEASED: A new book about Indiana's wetlands has been recently released by the Hoosier Environmental Council (HEC). Featuring over 450 photographs by 26 native photographers, *Indiana's Wetland Wonders: Thriving in all four seasons*, hopes to raise awareness of the importance and beauty of wetlands throughout the state. Indiana has lost over 90% of its wetlands and recent legislation leaves many that remain more vulnerable.



HOW member Mike Lunsford has 15 photographs, including one on the back cover, featured in the book. Copies will be available for purchase soon through HEC on its website at <https://www.hecweb.org/> and on its Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/hecweb>.

"It was a great honor to have my photos featured alongside those from so many great photographers," Lunsford said. "We need to treasure these wonderful wetland spaces before they are gone."

HEC envisions an Indiana in which all residents have abundant access to clean water, natural lands, pure air and affordable clean energy.

Manek Family (and Friends) Have Another Great Turkey Season

HOW Past President Jarrett Manek and his family had another good spring hunting season in the turkey woods this year. That means he, his daughter and his son were all successful in tagging a turkey. Congrats to them!

“The 2026 turkey season started and ended quickly for my daughter Abby and her boyfriend Brody,” reported Jarrett. “They doubled-up on two longbeards, and I’m excited to say that I was able to call the birds in for them. Abby shot her bird with the 20ga Mossberg shotgun that I won at a HOW raffle, and it has proven to be a great firearm.”

“My season ended over the first weekend when I harvested an old veteran Tom with some long limb-hanging spurs. My son Wyatt helped to keep that turkey interested and occupied with some intense yelping and cackling while I got positioned for the shot.”

“Although there were multiple close calls, Wyatt finally got his bird during the second week. Then he finished the season on the last day by calling in his girlfriend’s first turkey. And better yet, that bird was a three year old, double-beard turkey.”

“This season provided a lot of good table fare, but more importantly, we all spent quality time together in the woods.”



THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE US

Dr. John James Davis – Age 89

October 13, 1936 ~ February 11, 2026

Dr. John James Davis passed away on Wednesday, February 11, 2026, in the care of Grace Village Health Care in Winona Lake, Indiana at the age of 89. He was a beloved former professor and past president of Grace College & Seminary in Winona Lake.

He was born on October 13, 1936, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Catherine (Nicholls) Davis and John J. Davis. John married Carolyn A. Clark on June 28, 1958, and they were blessed to share 67 years before John passed away. Together they enjoyed worshipping alongside their church family at Winona Lake Grace Church and also Dutchtown Bible Church of Warsaw.



Dr. Davis received a B.A. from Trinity College (Florida), M.Div. (with honors), Th.M., and Th.D. degrees from Grace Theological Seminary and earned his D.D. from Trinity College. He also had done his graduate studies at the Near East School of Archaeology in Jerusalem and post-doctoral study at the University of Edinburgh (Scotland) under the auspices of Indiana University.

He served as professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Grace Theological Seminary for 39 years. During those years he also held the position of Executive Vice President for 6 years and President for 7 years of both Grace College and Grace Theological Seminary. Throughout his career he was able to teach as well as preach in 45 different countries. Twice he had been invited as a Staley Distinguished Christian Scholar Lecturer on college campuses and his Bible conference ministry took him to various parts of the U.S. each year. John also pastored churches in Tampa, Florida and South Whitley, Indiana and had spoken at many church sponsored wild game dinners around the country.

He participated in 13 archaeological expeditions to Jordan and Israel as a senior staff member. John had also participated in field excavations in Indiana and Illinois, in addition to survey work on temple mound sites in San Salvador, Central America. John served as a translator for the New International Version of the Bible and was a contributor to the study edition of that Bible. He also contributed to the study edition of the New American Standard Bible and the Christian Life Edition of the New King James Version of the Bible. Throughout his lifetime he authored 18 books and recorded 15 music CD's. He was a talented musician who played the guitar, plectrum banjo and baritone ukulele.

For seven years he was a play-by-play radio announcer for high school and college sports in addition to doing numerous telecasts. For approximately ten years, John was the color-commentator for the Fort Wayne Komets. He had a weekly column "Outdoor Scene" that appeared in the Warsaw Times Union in Warsaw, Indiana for 31 years. John had also written for regional outdoor magazines. He held memberships in a number of theological, archaeological and outdoor writing societies, including the Hoosier Outdoor Writers.

(continued on next page)

John was a long-time member of the Hoosier Outdoor Writers, and he served two terms as president of HOW (1984-1985). He and Carolyn enjoyed attending the annual HOW conferences for many years.

He contributed articles to various books, dictionaries and journals, including: Harper's Bible Dictionary, The Higley Sunday School Commentary, The Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia, The Evangelical Commentary, The New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology, Homan Bible Dictionary, Dictionary of Daily Life in Biblical & Post Biblical Antiquity, Holman Bible Dictionary, Dictionary of Daily Life in Biblical & Post Biblical Antiquity, Hermeneutics, Inerrancy The Bible, The Bulletin of the Near East Archaeology Society, The Grace Journal and several festschrifts.

He will be lovingly remembered by his wife, Carolyn Davis (Winona Lake, IN); daughter, Deborah (John) Barr (Ecuador), two nephews, Brian W. (Amy) Davis (Ft. Wayne, IN); Kevin Alan (Melissa) Davis (Winter Garden, FL); four grand nephews and two grand nieces. He also leaves behind his brother, Robert P. Davis (Winona Lake, IN); sister-in-law, Laura Davis (Warsaw, IN); as well as cousins, Carol Nicholls (NJ) and Jane (Larry) Shaw (Fl). He was preceded in death by his parents, and his brother Arthur W. Davis.

John will be deeply missed by all who knew him.

William Takacs – Age 80

December 29, 1945 ~ May 1, 2026

William (Bill) Takacs, age 80, passed away peacefully on Friday, May 1, 2026. He is survived by his children Harmony Krafttakacs (Bryan Kraft) and Cody (Johanne Lorrimer), and three grandchildren, Fox and Ora Jean Krafttakacs and Ahava Takacs. He was preceded in death by his parents William, Sr. and Katherine Ann Takacs.

Bill was born in Hammond, Indiana on December 29, 1945, and was a 1964 graduate of Hammond High School. He worked as an accountant and in retail, but decided to focus on his passion for fishing and writing. Bill was a freelance writer and product tester of outdoor equipment for several major sporting manufacturers. He published numerous articles in several state, regional and national publications, including *Midwest Outdoors* and *In-Fisherman*, as well as others.

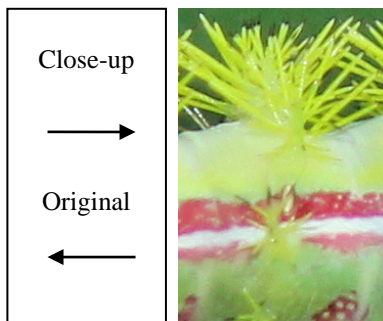


Bill was also a long-time member of the Hoosier Outdoor Writers, and he enjoyed attending the annual HOW conferences when he could. He was also an award-winning writer and won several HOW Awards-in-Craft writing honors over the years.

Bill will be greatly missed by his family and friends.

Unusual Nature Photos from the Hoosier Outdoors Sponsored by Spartan Precision Equipment

The IO Moth Caterpillar is Protected by Stinging Spines



The “What is it?” photo from the previous issue was a bit tough, but it was still identified by eight (8) HOW members. Scott Weaver, Mike Schoonveld, Troy McCormick, John Maxwell, Richard Hines, Gary Redmon, Phil Seng and Alan Garbers were all

able to identify it. When we drew a name at random for the **Dardevle** lure kits and swag, Troy McCormick was the lucky winner. Congrats, Troy! We will send the prize to you.

As can be seen in the photo above, the mystery creature for this issue was an IO Moth Caterpillar (*Automeris io*). IO moth caterpillars are very distinctive-looking. They are bright green and are covered with greenish-yellow spikes, spines and fine hairs. They also have red and white stripes on each side of their bodies. The spines and hairs are called setae, and they are very sharp and can break off from the caterpillar and cause painful stings or irritation to the skin if you touch them. Some people are more allergic to the venom from these spines than others, so it is wise to avoid touching them.

For most people who handle an IO moth caterpillar and get stung, seeking medical help is not necessary. The sting can be painful, though, and is often compared to a bee sting. Simply remove any hairs or spines that are stuck to the skin and wash the area with mild soap and water. Swelling and itching can be minimized by applying hydrocortisone cream. If you do have a severe allergic reaction, however, call your doctor.



SPARTAN
PRECISION EQUIPMENT

For this issue, our friends at **Spartan Precision Equipment** have donated a very nice prize for the HOW member who guesses the right answer to this issue’s “What Is It?” question. This time the prize will be an SPE Springbok Tripod. See below for more info on the prize and this issue’s nature question.

Berg Poses Another Nature Photo “What Is It?” Question

Tom Berg has posed another Nature Photo mystery. The photo shown at right is part of a close-up photo of a creature that can be found throughout the state of Indiana. It’s a common creature, but you probably won’t see it in your own backyard. Have you ever seen something like this when spending time outdoors?



This creature may be easy for some people to identify, and harder for others. But we’ll see. Do you know of any creatures that look like this? This time you don’t have to identify the exact species. If you think it’s a bird, for example, go ahead and guess “sparrow” (hint: it’s not a sparrow). If you think you know the answer, send it in an email to thomas.berg@comcast.net. If you’re right, you’ll be entered in this issue’s prize drawing!



As mentioned above, **Spartan Precision Equipment** (www.javelinbipod.com) has donated the award-winning Springbok Tripod (SP03-045-R) for the HOW member who guesses the right answer to this issue’s “What Is It?” nature question. The ultra lightweight design of this tripod makes it perfect for demanding hunting environments. It would be great for going on safari in Africa or hunting whitetail deer here in Indiana. The prize has a retail price of \$350, so start thinking! If multiple people guess correctly, we’ll draw a winner at random from the correct entries. All nature photos on this page by Tom Berg.

HOW Supporting Member News

These pages are devoted to the loyal supporting members of the Hoosier Outdoor Writers. Brief descriptions of new products, award-winning products and press releases are listed here. HOW members interested in reading more can visit the supporting member websites or call or email the media contact for more information.

OutCast Lures Introduces Outcast Builder Kits

Holliston, MA (May 1, 2026) — The brain child of the custom lure builders at OutCast Lures, the all new **Outcast Kits** company brings to the market a whole new level of excellence in products for the home lure builder. No plastic bodies. No imported paints. No messing around.

The first product in the line from Outcast Builder Kits (OBK) is the “Hobby Starter Kit”. This comprehensive set includes a packable yet sturdy easel, for hands free painting and finishing. The easel has multiple mounting holes so builders can work on several bodies at one time.

The kit comes with two hand-turned wooden lure blanks which are pre-drilled for mounting hooks and leader ties (also included with safety bonnets).

USA-sourced acrylic paints and sealers give the builder an endless range of colors to design their lure to their hearts content.



The leader in quality made in the USA art kits for young and old.

Retail Kits Include:

- Custom Turned Wooden Lure Bodies
- Easel / Display Stand
- Paints & Brushes
- Rigging Hardware
- Hooks w/ Covers
- Instructions
- and MORE !



Live Event Facilitation

Our staff will manage participants and assist in the process of painting, coating and rigging finished lures so guests can leave with a lure ready to fish that day. We can also supply materials for self-hosted events.



Everyone from novice to experienced lure builders will appreciate the high quality and the lasting value their creation will hold, whether as a working lure, or as a very special gift for their favorite fishing buddy.

Pick up a kit today, and build your personal best.

Media Contact:

Jeff Adams

Outcast Kits Inc.

Email: j.adams@obkits.com

Website: www.outcastkits.com

HOW Supporting Member News

RCBS Introduces 1776 Edition Products

Oroville, CA (Jun. 9, 2026) — To commemorate America's 250th birthday, RCBS is proud to introduce two limited-edition products built to honor American independence, craftsmanship and precision.

The **Rock Chucker Supreme 1776 Edition** brings the legendary strength and reliability of the classic Rock Chucker Supreme into one of the most exclusive presses RCBS has ever produced. Featuring a special red, white and blue finish with custom engraving, this commemorative press is proudly made in the USA and limited to only 250 units.

The Rock Chucker Supreme Single Stage Reloading Press is the Gold Standard other single-stage presses are measured against. For decades it has provided unparalleled versatility and strength to make it the top choice for both discerning novices and experienced alike. It doesn't matter if you are looking for your first press or 10th you need a Rock Chucker on your bench.

The Rock Chucker Supreme combines easy operation, ambidextrous handle, outstanding strength, and versatility to earn that coveted spot on your reloading bench. Featuring a spacious 4.25" loading window that is perfectly suited for loading longer magnum and a central pivot design that provides outstanding leverage to size the toughest cases. The Rock Chucker Supreme also has large mounting points, a long handle to ensure you can size your cases with ease and without fear of pulling your press off your bench.

We are also introducing the **RCBS 1776 Edition Die Sets**, a limited-run collection designed for both serious reloaders and collectors. Each die set is machined in the USA to RCBS's exacting standards and packaged in a custom wooden presentation box with RCBS heritage graphics. Available cartridge options include 223 Remington, 308 Winchester, 30-06 Springfield, 45-70 Government, 45 Auto and 9mm Luger.

Whether displayed as part of a collection or put to work at the bench, these limited-edition products are built to celebrate America's 250th and last well beyond it.

About RCBS

RCBS has dedicated itself to the craft of reloading ammunition since our founding in 1943. Starting with one simple bullet swaging die, the company has grown into the industry's leading reloading equipment manufacturer, with RCBS tools a mainstay on the bench of every handloader. RCBS's state-of-the-art products are backed by the company's leading reputation, longstanding quality and customer service guarantee. A brand of Hodgdon Powder Company, RCBS manufactures premium reloading tools in Oroville, California. For more information, be sure to visit www.rcbs.com.

PR Contact:

605 Oro Dam Blvd E, Oroville, CA 95965

Email: pr@rcbs.com



HOW Supporting Member News

Steelhead Outdoors Introduces Secure Under Bed Safes

Shakopee, MN — [Steelhead Outdoors](#) rolls out an under bed gun safe featuring a Simplex lock. This is another American-made Steelhead gun safe solution keeping firearms safely secured, accessible and out of sight. The [Simplex Undercover 48X](#) features a fast access, Genuine Simplex mechanical lock offering quick access without relying on electronics, batteries, or keys. This lock is available with over 2,000 possible combinations. Simplex locks are also vehicle-friendly because they aren't affected by temperature, like cold weather. The safe body and door are built with full 12-gauge American steel with a textured, durable black powdercoat finish. The anti-pry drawer door is recessed to protect the lock dial and improve pry resistance. The locking mechanism includes a proprietary gear-driven, 7-point locking mechanism and slip clutch protection for enhanced security against pry and smash attacks.

All Undercover 48 safes are designed to slide discreetly under most beds, measuring 48" wide x 6" tall x 16" deep. Inside, a spacious drawer provides secure storage for rifles, handguns, and other valuables, with interior dimensions of 46" wide x 4" tall x 13" deep. A 3/8" padded foam base keeps items protected from scratches and damage. The safe includes cable slots on both the left and right sides, allowing single or dual cable use. The unit also features four matching anchor holes on both the top and bottom, giving options for



top-mount, bottom-mount, or stacked installation. While perfect for under-bed storage, the Undercover 48 can also be placed in other locations, such as closets, mudrooms, under benches, inside cabinetry, or even secured in vehicles. Its rugged steel construction and enhanced security features make it a reliable fast-access supplement to a full-size gun safe, or a standalone storage solution for a couple of rifles, shotguns, or pistols.

Another underbed option is the [Undercover 48E](#) featuring a biometric Securam Scanlogic Lock with fingerprint and combination access. This UL-listed high security lock is paired with dual hardplate protection.

“The Simplex Undercover offers fast access to a Made-In-USA underbed safe. This is a great option for someone who doesn't want to think about batteries and keys,” explained Steelhead Outdoors Co-Founder Corey Meyer. “When time counts, Simplex Undercover owners can quickly access the firearms stowed under their bed.”

Steelhead Outdoors proudly makes its Made-in-USA modular gun safes, gun and ammo cabinets, lockboxes and oversized pistol lockers in Shakopee, MN. Steelhead Outdoors offers modular gun safes and vault doors for residential use using the latest technology and construction methods for durability and security.

To explore the full line of Steelhead Outdoors storage solutions, visit [SteelheadOutdoors.com](https://www.steelheadoutdoors.com) and follow Steelhead Outdoor on [Instagram.com/SteelheadOutdoors](https://www.instagram.com/SteelheadOutdoors), [Facebook.Com/SteelheadOutdoors](https://www.facebook.com/SteelheadOutdoors), and [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/SteelheadOutdoors) for updates, how-to videos, and more.

Media Contact: Kim Emery, [Firefly Publicity](https://www.fireflypublicity.com), email: kim@fireflypublicity.com



HOW's Supporting Member Websites

Archery Trade Association - www.archerytrade.org
B'n'M Pole Company - www.bnmpoles.com
Black River Tools - www.blackrivertools.com
BoatUS - www.boatus.com
BPI Outdoors - www.BPIguns.com
Church Tackle Company - www.churchtackle.com
Cocoons Eyewear - www.cocoons.com
Daisy Outdoor Products - www.daisy.com
Dardevle by Eppinger - www.dardevle.com
DEX FingerLight - www.fingerlight.com
Ducks Unlimited - www.ducks.org
Egret Baits - www.egretbaits.com
Fight'N Flies - www.facebook.com (search)
Finn Tackle Company - www.finnspoons.com
Flying Fisherman - www.flyingfisherman.com
G Pucci & Sons - www.p-line.com
Gapen Company - www.gapen.com
Gaylord Area CTB - www.gaylordmichigan.net
Gill Fishing - www.gillfishing.com
Grundens USA - www.grundens.com
Habit Apparel - www.habitoutdoors.com
Hawke Sport Optics - www.hawkeoptics.com
HHA Sports - www.HHASports.com
Hi Mountain Seasonings - www.himtnjerky.com
Hobie Eyewear - www.hobieeyewear.com
Hornady Manufacturing - www.hornady.com
Indiana Destination Development Corporation - www.visitindiana.com
Kehrer Fish Co - www.kehrerfishcompany.com
Lawrence County Tourism - www.limestonecountry.com
Li'L Tuffy Swimbait - www.ramblingangler.com
MEC Outdoors - www.mecoutdoors.com
Mepps by Sheldon's, Inc - www.mepps.com
Mercer Sport - www.mercersport.com
Mister Twister - www.mistertwister.com
MOJO Outdoors - www.mojooutdoors.com
Moving Water Outfitters - www.mwoutfitters.com
Mustad - www.mustad-fishing.com
Nat'l Shooting Sports Foundation - www.nssf.org
National Wild Turkey Federation - www.nwtf.org
Nesco Vacuum Sealers - www.nesco.com
Norsemen Outdoors - www.norsemenoutdoors.com
Nothead Tackle - www.notheadtackle.com
O.F. Mossberg & Sons, Inc. - www.mossberg.com
Old Salt Angling - www.oldsaltangling.com
OnX Maps - www.onxmaps.com
Otis Technology - www.otistec.com
OutCast Lures - www.outcastlures.com
Owner Hooks - www.ownerhooks.com
Pheasants Forever - www.pheasantsforever.org
Plano Molding - www.planooutdoors.com
Pro-Cure Bait Scents - www.pro-cure.com
Pure Fishing - www.purefishing.com
Quad 4 Plastics - www.quad4plastics.com
Rapala VMC - www.rapala.com
RCBS - www.rcbs.com
Realtree - www.realtree.com
Renfro Productions - www.renfroproductions.com
Riton Optics - www.ritonoptics.com
Roberts Camera - www.robertscamera.com
Safari Club International - www.safariclub.org
Seaguar Fishing Lines - www.seaguar.com
Shooter's Choice - www.shooters-choice.com
Sierra Bullets - www.sierrabullets.com
Spartan Precision Equipment – www.javelinbipod.com
Speedhook Specialists - www.speedhook.com
Sporting Classics - www.sportingclassics.com
Spypoint Trail Cameras - www.spypoint.com
St. Croix Rods - www.stcroixrods.com
Steuben County Tourism – www.visitsteubencounty.com
Steelhead Outdoors - www.steelheadoutdoors.com
Sturm, Ruger & Co. - www.ruger.com
Swab-Its - www.swab-its.com
Sweet Owen CVB - www.sweetowencvb.org
Target Communications Outdoor Books - www.targetcommbooks.com
Toyota Motor Sales - www.toyotanewsroom.com
Traveler's Guide to Firearms Laws of 50 States - www.bookvalueusa.com
TTI-Blakemore Fishing - www.ttiblakemore.com
Vicious Fishing - www.getvicious.com
Vortex Optics - www.vortexoptics.com
Whitetails Unlimited - www.whitetailsunlimited.com
W.R. Case - www.wrcase.com

HOW members are encouraged to check these websites for general info and answers to product and service questions.

Hoosier Outdoor Writers

Application For New Membership

(Check Desired Classification below)

- \$30 _____ Active
- \$25 _____ Associate
- \$50 _____ Supporting
- \$15 _____ Active Student
- \$10 _____ Associate Student

Personal Information:

Name: _____
Company (Supporting members only): _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____
Email: _____

Professional Information:

Employer (if outdoor-related): _____ Position: _____
Business Address: _____
Business Phone: _____

1. Describe your work in the outdoor field: Full Time _____ Part Time _____

2. Check your field(s) of outdoor work:

_____ Newspapers	_____ Magazine	_____ Radio	_____ Artist
_____ Books	_____ Photography	_____ Lectures	
_____ Television	_____ Teaching	_____ Trade Journals	
_____ Blog/Online Work	_____ Public relations	_____ Government Info - Ed	
_____ Other (Specify): _____			

3. Are you paid for your outdoor work? Yes _____ No _____

4. Your work is published or disseminated: Daily ____; Weekly ____; Monthly ____; ____ times a year

Attach samples or other proof of your work in the outdoor field: newspaper clips, letters from station managers attesting to frequency of radio or TV broadcasts, lecture schedule or publicity clips, photo clips or artistic prints, title of latest book, masthead of trade journal showing your position, etc.

Send completed application and article copies to: **Tom Berg, 2142 Nondorf Street, Dyer, IN 46311.**

I have read the principles and membership requirements of the Hoosier Outdoor Writers and would like to enroll in the classification checked above.

Signature: _____

Sponsor: _____

Who We Are

The Hoosier Outdoor Writers was formed in 1969 and has brought together many diverse groups and individuals with shared interests. The Hoosier Outdoor Writers, known among its members as HOW, is a group of dedicated media professionals who are keenly interested in the wise use of natural resources in the Hoosier State.

What We Do

These are the purposes of HOW:

1. To improve ourselves in the art, skill and effectiveness of our craft, and to increase knowledge and understanding of the whole state.
2. To help ensure the wisest and best conservation of Indiana's resources, and the most wide-spread fair use of Indiana's recreational potential.
3. To provide a vehicle for bringing together and joining in common cause all Hoosiers who by profession, hobby or interest are devoted to the outdoors.
4. Conduct an annual Awards-In-Craft Contest among its members. The award winners are announced each year at HOW's annual conference.

What We Stand For

These are what we strive to accomplish:

1. To give the profession of outdoor writing/reporting greater recognition and understanding, even higher standards and enlarged scope.
2. To encourage and enforce high standards of professional ethics.
3. To strive always for the truth, accuracy, clarity and completeness in the dissemination of outdoor information.
4. To help friends and fight the foes of wisely conserved Indiana resources.

Membership Requirements

Membership is open to anyone who meets one of the following:

1. Active

Members are those regularly engaged in the paid dissemination of outdoor-oriented information via newspapers, radio, television, internet/online, magazines, trade journals, books, photographs, art, lectures, or other fitting media. (Basic guidelines of "regularity" of dissemination are: 20 newspaper articles, photos or broadcasts a year; 20 online



articles, blogs, vlogs or podcasts a year; two national or four regional magazines or specialty journal articles a year, or one book, 10 lectures, or 20 bona fide outdoor news releases a year). The legal advisor for the association shall be an active member without meeting the basic guidelines.

2. Associate

Members are those who have a strong direct interest in the outdoors, either professional or personal, such as conservationists of all kinds; nature lovers; sportsmen; outdoorsmen; public employees in outdoor fields; educators teaching related subjects; fishing guides and tournament anglers, and retail-level dealers in outdoor goods, equipment or facilities.

3. Supporting

Members are those engaged in major commercial efforts directly related to the outdoors, such as manufacturers, distributors, service providers, manufacturers' representatives, or advertising agencies serving any of these.

4. Active Student

Members are those between the ages of 18 and 24 years who are bona fide college students with a major in journalism, communications, or natural resources sciences.

5. Associate Student

Members are those who are students who have an active interest in the outdoors in the areas of fishing, hunting, boating, hiking, nature, ecology, or in preserving the environment in general.

Calendar of Events

ICAST Show 2026:

(www.ICASTfishing.org)

Orlando, FL

July 14-17, 2026

OWAA 2026 Annual Conference:

(www.owaa.org/2026-conference/)

Madison, WI

August 22-24, 2026

Indianapolis Fall Boat & Travel Show:

(www.IndySportShow.com)

Indianapolis, IN

September 25-27, 2026

AGLOW 2026 Conference:

(www.aglowinfo.org)

Lewiston, NY

October 11-15, 2026

SHOT Show 2027:

(<http://shotshow.org>)

Las Vegas, NV

January 19-22, 2027

Ford Indianapolis Boat, Sport & Travel Show:

(www.IndySportShow.com)

Indianapolis, IN

February 19-21 & 24-28, 2027

Indiana Deer, Turkey & Waterfowl Expo:

(www.IndySportShow.com)

Indianapolis, IN

February 19-21 & 26-28, 2027

HOW members may submit upcoming events, along with dates, locations and other details to the newsletter editor at: director@hoosieroutdoorwriters.org for possible inclusion in a future issue of *The Blade*.