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October, the Best Month of the Year for Outdoors People

This past weekend was a great time to be in the Wisconsin outdoors. Both Saturday and Sunday had warm temperatures, a little breeze, and a magnificent blue sky. I know that many people were at or watching the Wisconsin and Green Bay football games for part of the day. But, this is not the time to put away your boat or stay inside because some of the year's best fishing will soon be here as the state's waters cool down and the days shorten. Plus, October and November are months when most of the hunting seasons are open. If you have any vacation time coming or make your own working hours then this is the time to take advantage of all the outdoor activities that are available in Wisconsin.

I was on both Lake Wisconsin and the Wisconsin River over the weekend and there were many people out on both bodies of water fishing, canoeing, kayaking, or pleasure boating. Many people on Lake Wisconsin were up to their summer homes and cottages enjoying summer's end and the beginning of fall. Soon Lake Wisconsin will quiet down, the water will cool, and the fishing will be

some of the best of the year.

If you've been driving around the state, you'll see that trees are changing colors early this year and currently northern Wisconsin is at its peak color of the fall. Even in southern Wisconsin, maples, hickories, and aspen are changing and giving us some magnificent colors. You don't have to be a hunter or fisher to enjoy the fall. It's a great time to go for drives or take a couple of days to enjoy autumn's colors in most if not all parts of the state. Birds are migrating and beginning to pass through the state. Some ducks (blue-winged teal) and waterfowl are already down in Arkansas, Alabama, and Mississippi and have been there for over a week. The next month, thousands and thousands of birds will be passing thru Wisconsin on their way south. If you're a bird-watcher or photographer this is a prime time to be outdoors with your camera and binoculars. It also is a good time to be out hiking and fall camping is getting more popular every year. You don't have to travel for days and hundreds of miles to enjoy the outdoors. There is something for everyone in Wisconsin!

I've always found the fall to be my favorite time of the year to fish for most game species. Fish are in the process of having their internal mechanisms tell them that winter and the hard water season is not that far away. The days are getting shorter and the water is cooling down which are the two main factors which get fish to being more aggressive and start feeding heavily. The warm weather recently has kept the water temperature in the 60's, but it soon will be falling which will trigger the great fall fishing that will be available to

all. No matter what species of fish you fish for there will be some excellent fishing for muskies, walleyes, bass, catfish, and all panfish. Fish should be moving into shallower water from their summer haunts looking for baitfish and forage to help get them thru the winter. Good locations to fish are near and in any green weeds and just outside the weed lines. Trolling crankbaits outside the weeds, over the weed tops, and on shallow flats can also produce good catches in the fall. Artificial baits like Gulp still work well, but once the water temperature gets into the 50's F. I like to switch over to live bait which is mostly minnows. Another good thing about fall angling is that you don't have to be on the water before light. Often, the best bite can be in the middle of the day.

There is good open water fishing well into November some years depending on the weather. Always be sure to drain your lower unit as we get into the cooler fall weather and the key is to have good clothing to wear once it gets chilly. Good layered clothing can make late fall fishing enjoyable and even comfortable!

October is also a great month for the hunter with many seasons opening. The dove, woodcock, and fall turkey seasons have been open for over a week and will continue to be open into November. The pheasant season opens in a couple of weeks and this year the DNR will be stocking another 75,000 birds for the hunter on public grounds. Quail, Hungarian partridge, and ruffed grouse will open in October in southern Wisconsin. The grouse season is already open in the northern zone. Squirrel season is open and the rabbit season

will open the middle of the month. The duck season opens later this week while the goose season is open. Despite the warm weather this weekend, there were goose hunters out in the late afternoon on the Wisconsin River. There still are a few days left in the bear season and the wolf season opens on October 15th statewide.

The leaves will soon begin falling and farmers will be harvesting their crops which will greatly improve visibility for bow hunters. I haven't seen too many turkey, dove, squirrel, or deer hunters out, but that will soon change as the leaves fall and the visibility improves in the woods.

I've tried to give you a brief synopsis of all the activities that the month of October brings to anglers and hunters. Most of us who live in Wisconsin do not have to go far to take part in all the seasons that are open or will be opening soon. We are lucky to have a state that truly cares about those who love to hunt and fish. We are blessed with good fish numbers and numerous game animals and birds for the hunter. There aren't many other states or locations where you can hunt and fish the same day for so many different fish and game animals. Take advantage of the great hunting and fishing that is available at our fingertips without any extensive traveling. October is the month to be outdoors in Wisconsin. Be grateful for the great natural resources that we all have in Wisconsin. Be safe and follow all rules and regulations.

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