

Tree stand safety

The department partnered with the Marshfield Clinic Research Foundation and the UW Hospital and Clinics in 2014 to learn more about deer stand accidents and how to prevent. A thorough review of medical reports found some common themes, the most important of which is that deer hunters often overestimate their ability to avoid accidents.

"Thinking that 'I am careful' or 'I built that stand myself' do not safeguard you from the fact that accidents can happen to anyone," advises Chief Warden Todd Schaller.

Wood can rot, tree steps snap, railings fail and climbers slip. None of hunters that wound up in

trauma center in our study considered these possibilities when they began their climbs.

Surveys tell us that one-quarter of our bow hunters have experienced a fall or near fall from an elevated stand in the past. Less than half of Wisconsin deer hunters use a safety harness every time they climb. Published research indicates that risky climbing behavior can catch up with you the longer you hunt.

Make using a fall-restraint device part of your routine every time you hunt above the ground regardless of whether you hunt with a ladder stand, a tower stand or hang-on stand.

Wear your full-body harness

Hunters must wear their harnesses for them to work. A 2003 survey of Wisconsin gun deer hunters showed that two-thirds of hunters who hunted from tree stands owned a harness but less than one-third of them reported actually using the harness. Another third did not own a full-body harness. Find out which models meet revised national standards.

Take a free online tree stand safety course

A 15-minute investment of your time in taking an online safety course could save your life. The Tree Stand Manufacturers Association provides a free, interac-

Basic rules of tree stand safety

- No matter what type of tree stand you use, the basic rules apply to all of them:
- Always wear a full-body harness also known as a fall-arrest system. Connect to your tether line and keep your tether line short. The tether is designed to keep you in the seat, not to catch you after you fall.
- Always have three points of contact while climbing into and out of the tree stand: This means two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand at all times.
- Always use a haul line to raise and lower your unloaded firearm or bow into and out of the stand. You can also use the haul for other things like a heavy backpack.
- Use a lifeline when climbing up and down, this keeps you connected from the time you leave the ground to the time you get back down.
- Take these other steps to stay safe
- Be aware of suspension trauma: Suspension trauma can happen in less than 20 minutes and can be fatal. Attaching an additional foot strap to the body harness will take pressure off your upper legs should you fall.
- Select a tree that is substantial enough to support your weight.
- Read, understand and follow all of the manufacturer's recommended procedures.
- Do not alter your equipment.
- Use a short tether between you and the tree when seated in the tree stand.
- Let people know where you'll be hunting, where you'll be parking your vehicle and when you intend to return.
- Carry a cell phone with you so you can call for help if you are injured after a fall.

Birds love Wisconsin

Wisconsin is a bird-er's paradise, with more than 400 bird species recorded here. Our avian abundance traces to our location along a major migration pathway and at the crossroads of the hardwood forests of the eastern U.S., the evergreen forests of the north, and the grasslands of the south and west. The Mississippi River, Lake Michigan, and Lake Superior add to bird diversity as well.

Wisconsin loves birds

Fully 1 in 3 Wisconsin adults report watching and identifying birds at home and away - the second highest rate in the nation. Beyond the pleasure watching them gives us, birds are a vital part of the natural world and agriculture, helping control insect pests. And birds are biological indicators -- bellwethers of changes in habitats and ecosystems - our "canaries in the coal mine."

How are our birds doing?

Healthy bird populations depend on healthy habitat. In North America and Wisconsin, many wetland birds are showing strong gains and grassland bird populations are improving. Anecdotal information and smaller surveys, however, suggest many species need serious attention. Habitat loss and degradation, invasive species, environmental pollutants and environmental

stressors are main factors affecting bird survival.

About one-third of Wisconsin's birds have low and/or declining populations, including 11 formally listed as endangered and 13 as threatened species.

Wood warblers

What do birders love most about these diminutive birds? Their bright colors? Melodic songs? Marathon migrations?.

There are 56 species of warblers in the United States and Canada. Their distinctive songs and color patterns help tell them apart, but it's still easy to confuse them.

Other identifying characteristics are the bright breeding plumage of the males, which changes seasonally. Females are less showy, their plumage more camouflaged to blend in with their nests.

Warblers nest in the U.S. and Canada and fly in the fall to their wintering grounds in Central America, the West Indies and South America.

What's on these songbirds' menu? Insects. These birds have narrow, straight bills - the better to catch their flying prey - and not the more conical

nutcrackers and crossbills sported by the seedeaters.

Warblers are tiny: 3 to 4 inches long. A big warbler weighs in at well under an ounce.

Many warblers nest on the ground. Some of

ture backpack trackers found the warblers flew nonstop over the Atlantic Ocean in 3 days, more than 1,700 miles. It was one of the longest such recorded flights for a songbird.

several weeks before heading to the North woods to nest. They are found mostly in woodlands.

Because the quality of their winter habitat in Central America and South America is just as important as nesting habitat here, DNR and other Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative partners focus efforts in both places. Stopover places are critical to help the tired and hungry birds rest up and refuel.

The yellow-rumped warbler is one warbler that winters in the southern U.S. It is the earliest to arrive and the most common in Wisconsin.

The Kirtland's warbler is the most rare in Wisconsin. State and federal partners are working together to help boost Kirtland's populations in Wisconsin, hoping to backstop the main Michigan nesting population so the species isn't wiped out if disease or a catastrophic weather event strikes in Michigan.

Wisconsin has more than 30 species of native warblers. They start arriving in late April to early May, and stop over in southern Wisconsin for

A Kirtland's warbler hatched in Wisconsin in 2014 created a stir in April 2015 when it was sighted in the Bahamas. The sighting itself was rare; it also meant that the young bird survived a 1,500-mile flight.

Wisconsin also plays an important role for the golden-winged warbler. About a quarter of the global population calls Wisconsin home during breeding season and populations have been declining for various reasons, including loss of habitat and expanding populations of its southern counterpart, the blue-winged warbler. Wisconsin, as part of the Golden-winged Warbler Working Group, is involved in efforts to stem the declines.

The Internet's made it much easier to identify birds and learn more about their biology, habitat, and life cycles, as well as to watch video of them and hear their calls and songs. Try these:

All About Birds. The Cornell University Lab of Ornithology's online guide to birds and birding

Wisconsin's Rare Birds. DNR's list of Threatened and Endangered Bird Species with links to factsheets on each of these unique resources.

Merlin Bird ID App. Download this free app from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology for instant bird identification help.



Wisconsin has more than 30 warbler species nesting in northern Wisconsin in the summer. Most of them migrate to central and South America in the winter. The yellow-rumped warbler, however, winters in the southern U.S. It is the earliest to arrive and the most common migrant in Wisconsin.

them lay colored eggs while most other birds lay white eggs. Warblers are champion fliers. A recently reported study of blackpoll warblers outfitted with minia-

ture backpack trackers found the warblers flew nonstop over the Atlantic Ocean in 3 days, more than 1,700 miles. It was one of the longest such recorded flights for a songbird.

Photo by Ryan Brady for DNR