

Follow guidelines when eating your catch

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Ice fishing is in full swing across Wisconsin's north woods and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) offers advice regarding your health when it comes to eating fish caught in area lakes.

Eating your catch can be part of a healthy, balanced diet. Fish are generally low in unhealthy saturated fats and high in protein. Fish contain vitamins and minerals and are the primary food source for healthy omega-3 fats. Studies suggest that omega-3 fats may be beneficial during fetal brain and eye development and eating modest amounts of fish containing these healthy fats may lower the risk of heart disease in adults. Health experts recommend that fish be

included as part of a healthy diet.

According to the DNR; however, fish may take in pollutants from their environment and food. Mercury and PCBs are the contaminants of greatest concern in fish, prompting recommendations that people limit or avoid eating certain species of fish from many waters throughout the nation. You can get the health benefits of eating Wisconsin's fish while also reducing potential health risks from unwanted pollutants by following Wisconsin's fish consumption guidelines. Compare the type of fish and where you caught your fish with the consumption advice. After consulting the recommendations, you may find that you do not have to change

your eating habits, you may choose to eat different types of fish or eat some species less frequently.

What pollutants build up in Wisconsin's fish and what is being done about it? Mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) are the main pollutants that build up in fish from Wisconsin's waters. In addition, contaminants like dioxin and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) require fish consumption advice at a few locations.

PCBs and mercury differ in where they come from, how they accumulate in fish and how they affect human health. PCBs are a group of man-made chemicals that were used in a variety of industries, in carbonless copy

paper and electrical transformers and in cutting oils and hydraulic fluids. PCBs remain in the environment because they are resistant to breakdown. Where PCBs were discharged, they cling to sediments and, like mercury, also build up in fish and animals and birds that eat fish. PCBs reach higher concentrations in older, longer lived, fatter species of fish, like carp and great lakes trout and salmon.

Mercury is released to the atmosphere when power plants burn coal, from some chemical manufacturing plants and incinerators and when mercury containing products are not disposed of properly. When mercury is released into the air, it can travel long distances

and be deposited on land and directly into water. Mercury is changed to a form, methylmercury, which builds up in fish and the animals and birds that eat fish. Mercury reaches higher concentrations in long-lived species and predatory types of fish that eat other fish, like walleye. While mercury is found in fish from most waters of the state, high mercury concentrations are most typically found in acidic, darkly stained lakes of northern Wisconsin.

The concentrations which build up in fish can build up in people who eat fish. You can prevent mercury from building up in your body by choosing species of fish with low mercury concentrations and spacing your fish meals out. Your body can

eliminate some mercury slowly over time. In comparison, PCBs are stored in body fat and remain there for many years. Because PCBs build up in your body over time, it's important to reduce your lifetime exposure to PCBs by avoiding fish from locations with high concentrations of PCBs.

The DNR's current fish consumption advisories are in a health guide for eating fish in Wisconsin are contained in a publication called "Choose Wisely". It can be accessed at www.dnr.gov or call the Bureau of Fisheries Management at 608-267-7498 and ask to have a copy sent to you; or e-mail the Bureau of Fisheries Management requesting a copy.

Bald eagle nests soar to a new record

Wisconsin's bald eagle population continues to reach new heights as 2018 nest surveys revealed a record number of nests statewide and Walworth County confirmed its first documented nest in at least a half century, according to results released in the 2018 Wisconsin Bald Eagle Nest Survey.

"2018 was another great year for the bald eagles' remarkable comeback in Wisconsin," says Laura Jaskiewicz, the Department of Natural Resources research scientist who coordinates the statewide aerial survey effort. "The number of nests is still increasing throughout the state and we now have them documented in 71 of 72 counties."

The 2018 surveys found a total of 1,695 bald eagle nests occupied by breeding adults, an increase of 105 nests from 2017. That's a 6.6 percent increase and more than 16 times as many nests found in the first detailed surveys in 1974, when bald eagles were listed as state and federally endangered species and only 108 nests were documented.

As in past years, Vilas County with 172 nests and Oneida County with 154 nests had the highest totals. Bald eagles prefer to nest in tall trees along water, and these two counties have some of the highest concentrations of freshwater lakes in the world.

"It doesn't seem like we've hit any ceiling yet," Jaskiewicz says. "Eagles are still finding places to

nest, some continuing in the same nests for many years and some new ones popping up here and there."

While the aerial nest surveys were conducted in March and April by DNR conservation biologists and DNR pilots, the nest documented in Walworth County was reported by a private citizen. Sharon Fandel, a DNR district ecologist with the Natural Heritage Conservation program, went to the site and confirmed the nest.

Fandel put out a call last year for residents to

report potential bald eagle nests in southeastern Wisconsin.

"Citizen reports were a big help this past year.

There were a handful of reports that helped confirm new nests while other reports identified nests that we didn't know about previously," Fandel says.

"It's great that so many people are interested in eagles and their continued success and population expansion in the state. It would not surprise me if we learn of other new nests in southeastern Wisconsin in 2019."

Confirming the Walworth County nest means that Milwaukee County remains the lone county in the state without a known active eagle nest. Fandel said the heavily developed nature of Milwaukee County means there is relatively little bald eagle nesting habitat available (when compared to surrounding counties) and that it is less likely a nest will be documented there.

"That being said, it's certainly not impossible. In areas like the Twin Cities metro area of Minnesota, bald eagles are doing quite well and the Minnesota DNR has documented dozens of active nesting territories," says Fandel.

It's a testament, at least in part, to the spe-

cies' adaptability, she says. Depending on the individual bird(s), some appear to be more accustomed or tolerant to human activity.

"Time will tell if eagles stake their claim in Milwaukee County, but if Minnesota's "urban" eagle population is any indication, there's certainly a precedence to suggest it could be on the horizon for Milwaukee, Fandel says.

People who have seen new, small nests can report them by searching the DNR website, dnr.wi.gov, for bald eagle watching and click on the link on the right hand navigation column for "Report a plant or nongame animal."

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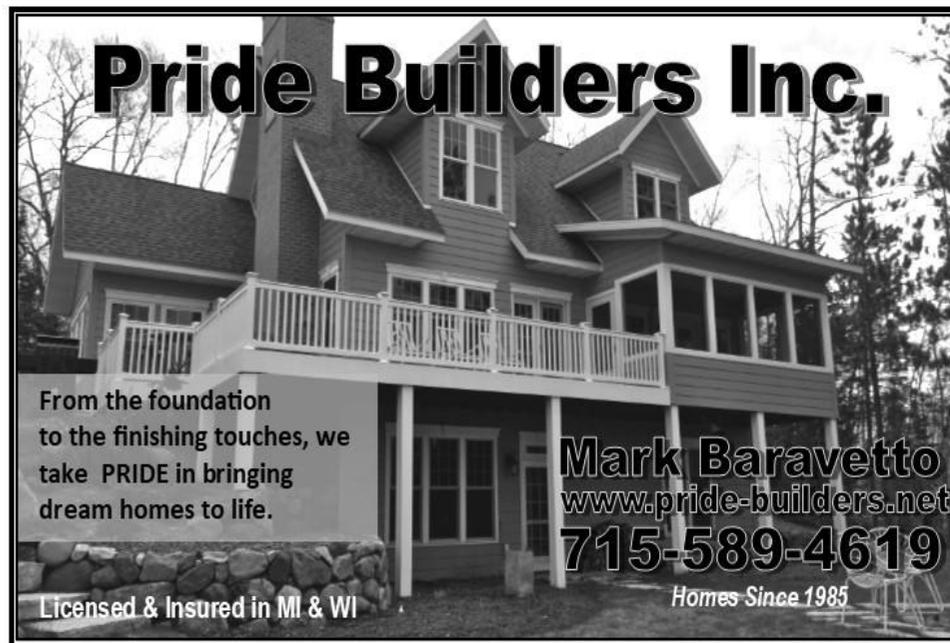
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