

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association



**2ND ANNUAL CLASS INDUCTION CEREMONY
JANUARY 27, 2018**

The History of WWA

By Jerry Solsrud, Founder of WWA, and reprinted from *Wisconsin Waterfowl* magazine.

I think it all pretty much began with an Aug. 21, 1983 article by the late Jay Reed in the then *Milwaukee Journal*, titled “State Regulations Are Gunning Down Waterfowl Hunting”, wherein Jay lamented on the fact that Wisconsin was losing waterfowl hunter numbers due in part, he believed, to excessive regulations of the waterfowl hunter. This article drew a response from the late John Keener, published on Sept. 25, 1983, titled “Duck Call gets Recall”. Keener, then the director of the Bureau of Wildlife Management, stated that the Wisconsin waterfowler basically never had it so good.

All this business got me going and I wrote to Jay Reed, suggesting that maybe it was high time for the waterfowl hunters of this state to get organized and present themselves as a unified voice to the DNR with the proper amount of political clout and lobbying efforts, as some research I conducted proved some other states, such as Minnesota and California, had done with good success. Jay published the third article in this miniseries on Oct. 23, 1983, putting forth my idea to his readership and saying that maybe it was a good idea and that, “The Wisconsin Conservation Congress already speaks on behalf of waterfowl hunters. But the voice is not the same as that which would come from a group of people interested only in waterfowl hunting...”

“Ducks Unlimited is the best known organization of people interested in waterfowl, but it is not designed to lobby for specific hunting causes...”

“So, it’s true. The Wisconsin duck and goose hunter never has had a full-time organization behind him, to go to bat for him, to fight for his best interests...”

“...it is through organization that a lot of things get done...”

Jay then asked that if anyone was interested in forming such an association, they should contact me. And contact me they did. People like Rob Kieckhefer (V.P.) who was in on the idea even before I wrote to Jay Reed; and Jim Weix (newsletter), Randy Krenn, Jim Bolton (Treasurer), Dennis Fruehauf and so forth. To begin with we were called the Wisconsin Waterfowlers Association and Jay Reed, bless his soul, continued to refer to us that way until the day he died. We were officially incorporated in the state of Wisconsin as a non-profit corporation under our original name at the end of 1983. However, the Association really started to get organized in 1984 with all the proper non-profit filings with the IRS, US Postal Service and so on. Later on the board of directors felt that a name change to the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association, Inc., would better reflect the habitat arm of our Association to include the non-hunter in these efforts.

There’s been many, many people and many, many changes which have occurred with and within WWA over the past two-plus decades. In the beginning, I personally devoted over 10 years of my life to WWA as its first president and then first chairman of the board when Rob Kieckhefer took over as president. It turned out to be a second full-time job.

We were an entirely unpaid volunteer bunch of devotees in the beginning. In addition to the above men, other early-on volunteers that come to mind, and to whom we all owe a debt of gratitude, would include Dave Cornwell, Bob and Penny Kuehl, Les Didier, Bill Koelpin and Bill Maund.

When we first started out I told Rob that I would help get WWA started, but then I wanted out – say, in one year max, to get back to my own life, as I knew in advance that it was going to be one heck of a lot of work.

So how come he got me to stick around for 10 long years? Some kind of salesman that Kieckhefer is!

Jerry Solsrud is the founder of WWA and was inducted into WWA’s Inaugural Hall of Fame class in 2017.

WWA Hall of Fame

The History...

In 2016, WWA's Board of Directors wished to honor those that have gone above and beyond to create, enhance and/or further the mission of our Association. Later that year a motion was made, and unanimously passed, by the Board to create the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association Hall of Fame.

The Hall of Fame is dedicated to the recognition of the outstanding WWA Members, Sponsors, Board of Directors and/or Staff who, through their exceptional service, educational and legislative input, high personal standards, dedicated principles and contributions, have thereby enriched the general welfare of WWA.

Please join us in welcoming the 2nd Annual Class of the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association Hall of Fame.

Robert "Bob" Kuehl – Board Member

Bob Kuehl grew up loving nature. He was a dedicated wildfowl hunter, wetland conservationist and serious fisherman. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point, with a major in Sociology/ Geography and a minor in Conservation. He taught at Clintonville Junior High School and was a recipient of an Experienced Teacher Fellowship at Utah State University, graduating with a Master's Degree in Sociology/ Anthropology. He taught for 24 years at Waukesha County Technical College. A major influence in his teaching was *A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold. It was his second bible and led him to be the conservationist that he was. Bob was a founding member of Wisconsin Waterfowl Association, serving on the Board of Directors and as President. WWA was a perfect fit for Bob as they had the same core value: Conservation.

Lee Graves – Volunteer & Board Member

Lee Graves worked in the environmental field as a Wastewater Technician since 1977. Lee founded the Fond du Lac Chapter of Wisconsin Waterfowl Association in 1984 and served on the Board of Directors as President from 1989 until 1991. Lee sponsored a youth duck hunt on his private property since the beginning of the FWS hunt. Additionally, Lee organized chapter activities on the Horicon Marsh from 1988 until 1993.

Dave Bente – Volunteer Member

Dave Bente was invited to his first WWA banquet in 2000 by a friend of his that he duck hunted with. He had never heard of the Organization, but was impressed with the banquet and what the proceeds were used for. After that banquet his friend asked if he would be interested in helping get a new chapter going for WWA in his area, Jefferson. Dave agreed to help him and the Twin Rivers/Jefferson County Chapter had their first banquet in the spring of 2001 with roughly 90 attendees. Dave's friend joined the naval reserve that year and asked if Dave would be interested in taking over as chairman of the newly formed Twin Rivers Chapter, and keep it going in his absence. Dave readily agreed and his future with the WWA was set in motion. With the help of a strong committee and family Dave remained as chairman of the Twin Rivers Chapter for 15 years. During that time, through the hard work and commitment of the volunteers of the Twin River Chapter, they were able to continue the growth of the chapter to the current attendance of 200+ yearly at their banquet. Dave has always enjoyed seeing the hard work of the committee pay off over the past years as Twin Rivers Chapter continues to hold a very solid event every year. Dave's highlight of being chairman was when they reached the goal of giving back over \$185,000, all told, to the state for a cause they all believe in.

Stephanie Grenzer/Cabela's Richfield – Sponsor

Stephanie Grenzer, Retail Marketing Manager at the Richfield Cabela's store has worked in partnership with WWA since the sponsorship and hosting of the 2008 WWA State Duck and Goose Calling Championship. Every year Richfield Cabela's has sponsored the event by providing the winner in each category a Cabela's gift card, tent on the side of the building, brat fry benefit (proceeds donated to WWA), raffle prizes and more. The *estimated* sponsorship since 2008 for the Calling Contest is \$46,500! Richfield Cabela's partnership with WWA continues into 2018. Cabela's will be hosting the 2018 WWA State Duck and Goose Calling Championship on August 12th and *new this year*, the WWA 2nd Annual Decoy Carving Contest & Exhibition on August 10th & 11th will be held at Cabela's! Since 2012, Richfield Cabela's has supported WWA annually by donating merchandise that is used as a "Cabela's Raffle Package" at every banquet throughout the state. For the 2018 banquet season, Richfield Cabela's was able to donate Cabela's Polar Cap® Equalizer Coolers; retail value \$7500. The *estimated* retail value of the "Cabela's Raffle Package" sponsorship since 2012 is \$36,700! Since 2017, Cabela's has been a sponsor in the annual WWA Conservation Calendar by donating merchandise toward the monthly drawings. Merchandise included Cabela's Northern Flight™ Duck Calls, Goose Calls, Full-Body Duck Decoy Bags and Cabela's hats. The *estimated* retail value of the WWA conservation calendar sponsorship since 2017 is \$1,680! Since 2008, Cabela's is dedicated to preserving your way of life not because it is our business, but it is our way of life as well. Like Cabela's, Wisconsin Waterfowl Association is dedicated to conserving the game and wild places that are our heritage. Cabela's is proud to be associated with a great conservation organization like Wisconsin Waterfowl Association and look forward to our continued partnership.

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