

Wisconsin Buck & Bear Club History

Wisconsin is Number 1 in the record books, thanks to the Club's efforts. It wasn't always that way.

By Glenn Helgeland

In 1984, Glenn Helgeland interviewed Peter Haupt for a magazine article that was published later that year. We thought updating Haupt's comments for this article would be a fitting way to recognize him, once again, for his efforts in creating and guiding the Wisconsin Buck & Bear Club in its early years. He wasn't alone in these efforts, but he was the initiating force.

The Wisconsin Buck & Bear Club gives the late Warren Page, in the 1960s a nationally-known gun writer, indirect credit for the club's beginning and the recognition Wisconsin receives today for the quantity and quality of trophy whitetail bucks and black bears grown and tagged in the state. Page made a statement in an outdoor magazine article purportedly analyzing whitetail country that Wisconsin was a good place to get a deer, but it would be small.

"That was kind of a kick in the shins to us, because several of us knew better," said Pete Haupt, who lived in Hayward in 1984. But no one knew how much better.

Haupt was certain the dearth of Wisconsin entries in the Boone & Crockett Club record book was due to a lack of a measuring program in Wisconsin, not to the absence of trophy-caliber deer. Page checked the record book, but that information was misleading.

In the late 1950s, many states created trophy measuring programs. Haupt noted that Ohio, Missouri, Arkansas and Pennsylvania had good programs and all four states were well represented in the record book.

"I checked with the Department of Natural Resources," Haupt said. "They said they had no funds to sponsor a measuring program. All funds went back into game management. That seemed a good reason, so I started wondering why a group of private citizens couldn't get a measuring program going.

"A group of us met every week the winter of 1965-66 and by spring we had a measuring program put together," Haupt said.

"When we first started searching for trophy bucks, we found them all over the state. There were the recent ones, plus the big ones which had been shot since the white man came to Wisconsin.

"At first, we were measuring hundreds of heads per year. Wisconsin had only five deer in the Boone & Crockett Club record book when we started. Our goal was to get



Roger Haske [son], right, Peter Haupt, center, Goldie Haske [wife], left.

as many deer in the record book as other leading states had," Haupt said.

"We used Otis Bersing's old records to begin. In the late 1930s, University of Wisconsin students had done quite a bit of fieldwork, measuring only beams and counting the point totals of the biggest deer they could locate. They measured heads taken in the 1930s, 1920s, even one taken in the 'teens.

"We went looking for those same heads ... and we found them. It was amazing how they stayed around, especially in the small towns. Chuck Loberg, a Marquette University student at the time, drove all over the state. Every time he found a big buck, he'd give me a map to the place and I'd follow up and measure it," Haupt said.

"We sometimes found the people who shot the bucks. One guy said he had been waiting 20 years for someone to come score his trophy. Trophy bucks were hanging in bars, in barns, on garage and shed walls, on house walls and on cabin walls all over the state."

Haupt noted that roughly 60 percent of the reported trophy bucks turned out to be wild goose chases. But

Club hunt done in the 1970's. The WBBC was asked by the state to help control the population of deer on Madeline Island, one of the Apostle Island's near Bayfield.



that also meant that 40 percent produced. He noted that a couple of seasons in the late 1960s seemed, for whatever reason, to produce an unusual number of trophy-class bucks.

At the same time as the intense antler search was being conducted, the Club conducted an intense publicity campaign to make more Wisconsin hunters more aware of the Club, the Club's trophy-tracking efforts, and of deer antler and bear skull trophy measuring in general. Dave Bathke had created a list of Wisconsin newspapers and newspaper outdoor writers. Publicity/information material began landing in writers' and editors' in-boxes, and news items began appearing in newspapers throughout the state.

In the mid-1970s, Tom Bloomingdale, an early Club member and avid bowhunter, contacted the Wisconsin Bowhunters Association, asking them to let him make a presentation to WBH members at their annual convention. They agreed. The presentation was made, a considerable amount of trophy measuring information was handed out, and "we received many inquiries and questions," Bloomingdale said. "During those years, Pope & Young entries far outnumbered Boone & Crockett entries in our record book," he noted.

Things were falling in place. A ton of hard work by enthusiastic, dedicated trophy measurers was beginning to pay off.

When the next B&C record book was published, Wisconsin had more entries than any other state. Only the province of Saskatchewan had more.

In 1979, the Club gained more visibility and recognition with the publishing of an article and photographs by charter member Arnie Krueger in the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources magazine.

By 1985, Haupt and other Buck and Bear Club members felt they still had located only 50 percent of the trophy heads hanging on Wisconsin walls.

Bob Hults, Hartford, a past president of the Buck and Bear Club and a storehouse of Club information, noted that Wisconsin deer hunters had a bit of a blase' attitude about trophy whitetails at that time.

"At one deer show, I talked with a guy who had been all over the country attending deer shows," Hults said. "The guy noted that, elsewhere in the country except for the Upper Midwest states of Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota, when people see a huge trophy displayed, they stop as if they've hit a brick wall, go get friends, then come back to stare at it in awe.

"Here in Wisconsin at that time, the attitude usually was, 'That's a nice buck alright, but my Uncle Charlie's got one just like it in his living room.'"

Hults also noted that while he was president he frequently received score sheets that had been distributed 20 years earlier by Pete Haupt and others.

Today, the Club has more than 220 members and five chapters throughout the state. Membership is fairly evenly divided, although most members are in the southeastern part of the state where the club began. Fortunately, there is a good balance of young and older members.

What is a typical member? “Anyone fascinated by deer and/or bear hunting,” Hults said in a recent interview. “We all enjoy the search for trophy heads, almost as much as we enjoy hunting for them ourselves.”

The search for trophy deer antlers and trophy bear skulls is much different today – easier and faster thanks to the internet, cell phones that are more camera than phone, and other forms of social media. One wonders whether Club members sometimes hear it the instant a trophy is tagged.

The greater awareness of and interest in trophy bucks and bears among the general hunting public is much higher today than it was ‘back then’. That shortens the process from trophy location/identification to measuring.

Several years ago, the Club also created training sessions on measuring/scoring sequence for whitetail bucks and black bears. Such sessions were held for taxidermy groups, sportsmen clubs, bowhunting clubs...basically, anyone interested in learning more about scoring Wisconsin trophies.

Deer expos have been an important factor in creating awareness and spreading the word since 1984, when the first Wisconsin Deer Classic was held. There were 256 trophies entered – 226 gun kills and 30 bow kills. Of these, 10 typical heads and 10 non-typical heads made the Boone & Crockett Club record book.

The Club has operated the trophy deer and bear contest at all succeeding events, now titled the Outdoor Life-Field & Stream Deer & Turkey Expo, held annually in Madison. Over the years, contest entries rose to the mid-300s and one year nearly reached 400, with a closer balance between firearms kills and bow kills. The Madison expo has been the primary revenue source for the Club in the nearly 30 years since then. The Club now participates in more than 20 measuring events annually in the continual search to find, measure and record tagged trophy animals.

Entry totals have declined to around 200 the past few years, along with whitetail populations. Fewer bucks taken...fewer trophies taken...fewer entries. At the time of this writing, 31 states are losing their whitetail population. It is not a Midwestern phenomenon, and it

Patches, stickers and buttons from the clubs past showing pride and support are a big part of the WBBC's history.



is an issue of concern – or should be - to every whitetail hunter. Fortunately, management steps are being taken to stop the deer population slide.

The Club's activities and influence grew with participation – often the initiating participation – in national big game trophy recognition events.

- 1980 – Pope & Young Club biennial awards program in Milwaukee – 170 trophy heads from all over North America on display. Club members took an active part in set-up, security and takedown. Three members slept (lightly, and in turns) in the trophy display area to help with security. The event created quite a stir when one of the local TV sportscasters misread the total and announced there were 17,000 trophy heads displayed.
- 1992 – Boone & Crockett Club's 21st Big Game Awards Benefit and Dinner, Milwaukee -- their first time in the Midwest.

The printed program lists Bob Hults as Committee Chairman, with Pat Barwick, Dave Bathke, Brian Tessman and Tom Bloomingdale as Committee Members. A note at the top of the page containing these and other listings states, "The Boone and Crockett Club thanks all members of the Wisconsin Buck and Bear Club for their strong support of this evening's activities (benefit auction). The Club's raffle is conducted under the sanction of this Club."

Hults, president of the Club at the time, recalls it took three years of persuasive talking to Boone & Crockett Club administrative personnel to get the event to Wisconsin.

The Milwaukee Public Museum, where the trophy heads were displayed, at one point wanted to cancel their agreement with Boone & Crockett, Arnie Krueger pointed out. "So Bob Hults lined up some TV interviews, said the necessary and right things, and suddenly the Museum was interested again."

During the big game awards part of the event, a photographer took photos of measurers holding trophies of various species. A year later, a visitor to Hults' home saw the photo and exclaimed, "Your camp was really lucky that year!" Bob replied, "Yes' it was a good year. We have a lot of big game in the Winter (WI) area."

"What else could I say," Bob said with a chuckle. "We had sheep, caribou, elk, a couple species of deer, and other animals in the photo. I didn't point that out. If he was that impressed, I was happy to let him be that impressed."

- 1993 – Pope & Young Club Biennial Awards Program & Banquet, Bloomington, MN

The main organization was the Northwest Chapter of the WBBC; Steve Ashley was the banquet chair. The WBBC was assisted by the Minnesota State Archery Association and Minnesota Bowhunters Inc.

- 2003 – Pope & Young Club's Biennial Awards Program and Banquet, Madison

The Wisconsin Buck & Bear Club was the official host organization. The effort was chaired by Arnie Crum and co-chaired by Steve Ashley. One of the largest and most attractive trophy displays ever put together for a P&Y awards program highlighted the event; co-chairs of this event were Eli Randall and Pat Barwick.

- 2010 – Wisconsin's Whitetail Classic magazine, first published from 1989 to 1995, was purchased by the Club and reintroduced to the public in 2011 and has been published every year since then. Eli Randall, Marlin Laidlaw and Bucky Ihlenfeldt led the effort to get the magazine and its continued publication.

- Measurer training workshops

Bob Hults said it also took three years to get a Boone & Crockett Measurers Training Workshop in Wisconsin. "We kept at them, because we – individually and as a club – wanted and needed more certified measurers in Wisconsin," Hults said. There were only three certified B&C measurers in the state at that time. "We finally told them 'You set the date and we'll work with that.' That got things rolling."

Boone & Crockett wanted 15 trainees, with seven or eight of them from the DNR. The class opened with 18 trainees, 16 of whom were Buck & Bear Club members. Two were from the DNR.

B&C asked us to bring some extra trophy heads for practice. "We brought almost as many heads as B&C provided," Hults noted.

The class was held in Wisconsin Dells and was the first time for B&C to have room, board and classroom in one place.

"Jack Reneau said it was the best workshop he had ever held," Hults said.

Today, there are 48 certified Boone & Crockett measurers and 61 certified Pope & Young measurers in the WBBC. The complete lists are printed elsewhere in this publication.



Charter members

- Peter Haupt
- Arnie Krueger
- Jerry Younk
- Dave Loucks
- Joe Rampolla
- John Yelle
- Charles Loberg

State Presidents/Chairmen

- Peter Haupt 1965 – 1973
- Arnie Krueger 1973 – 1977
- Dave Bathke 1977 - 1979
- Bob Hults 1979 - 1987
- Tom Bloomingdale 1987 - 1989
- Brian Tessman 1989 – 1991
- John Romans 1991 – 1993
- Tom Bloomingdale 1993 - 1995
- Ron Tacke 1995 – 1997
- Pat Barwick 1997 – 2001
- Jeff Fechner 2001 – 2002
- Craig Cousins 2002 – 2004
- Stan Zirbel 2004 – 2005
- Eli Randall 2005 - 2013
- Bucky Ihlenfeldt 2013 – Present

List compiled by Eli Randall with input from Arnie Krueger, Dave Bathke, Brian Tessman, John Romans, Jerry Wegner and past WBBC newsletters.

Club Chapters Today

- Southwest
- Chequamegon/North
- Northeast
- Northwest
- Kettle Moraine/Southeast

Milestones

- Helping get the Jordan buck identified and back to Wisconsin. For decades it had been displayed in Minnesota and identified as the Sandstone Buck.
- Articles of Incorporation – The Wisconsin Buck & Bear Club was incorporated June 26, 1987, under Chapter 181 – the Wisconsin Non-Stock Corporation Law.
- Adoption of Club motto – Let'em Go, Let'em Grow – in 1990. “LET ‘EM GO – LET ‘EM GROW” was registered as a trademark in 2005.
- 501c(7) status. This was a big step forward, gaining this legal standing in 1992. It gave the club solidarity and definition. Attorney Doug Lenacheck worked with the Board of Directors to get the Articles of Incorporation written, and then stayed hard on task until the status was achieved. Pat Barwick, Club treasurer at the time, spearheaded the club member effort to gain this tax status.
- Reaching a high enough credibility level to be able to host or help host Boone & Crockett Club and Pope & Young Club award banquets.
- Joint resolution passed by the Wisconsin State Senate and Assembly in 1995, recognizing the Wisconsin Buck & Bear Club as the principal record keeper of the taking of trophy deer and bear in this state.
- Publication of record lists/books.
- Publication of Wisconsin Whitetail Classic magazine, beginning in 2011.
- Website – The WBBC was the first organization to be able to look up measurers online, as well as being the first to be able to look up records online. Arnie Crum, webmaster, was the architect behind this success.
- Wolf and elk categories were added to the Club's program in 2013. The WBBC is the first record-keeping group in North America to measure and record wolves.
- Boone & Crockett and Pope & Young panel judges - Seventeen Club members have served as panel judges for B&C and P&Y recording periods, another sign of growing recognition.

Record Books

- 1984 – 1st Edition, Wisconsin Deer & Bear Record Book, by Mark LaBarbera, 5-1/2” x 8-1/2”, hardcover
- 1989 – 2nd Edition, Wisconsin Deer & Bear Record Book, by Mark LaBarbera, 5-1/2” x 8-1/2”, hardcover

Record Lists

The increasing entry totals are interesting, from a state production standpoint and from a Buck & Bear Club activities/thoroughness standpoint. Note the better balance between firearms and bow entries in the more-recent years. Bowhunting has, indeed, become a significant deer management tool and the source of a huge number of hours of outdoor recreation.

Volume #	Size	Pages
• Vol. 1 (1983)	8-1/2"x 11"	10 Typ 5 Non-Typ
• Vol. 2 (1988)	5-1/2" x 8-1/2"	39
• Vol. 3 (1989)	8-1/2" x 11"	54
• Vol. 4 (1990)	8-1/2"x 11"	56
• Vol. 5 (1994)	8-1/2" x 11"	140
• Vol. 6 (1995)	8-1/2" x 11"	184
• Vol. 7 (2000)	8-1/2" x 11"	351
• Vol. 8 (2005)	8-1/2" x 11"	463
• Vol. 9 (2008)	8-1/2" x 11"	500
• Vol. 10 (2013)	8-1/2" x 11"	500+

Volume 10 has 17,944 deer entries and 1,614 bear entries.

Peter Haupt Memorial Scholarships

Each year, the Club donates two scholarships, in memory of the late Peter Haupt, to students enrolled in Natural Resources at UW-Stevens Point. Each scholarship is for \$500. (As of 2014, annual tuition, room and board for a fulltime UW-SP student is more than \$14,000.)

The program was begun in 1991. It has remained unchanged from the start. Since then, the Club has awarded \$23,000 in scholarships to 46 students. From that total, five have received PhD's and there have been numerous master's degrees attained. Employment after school has been with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, various Departments of Natural Resources, and other natural resource agencies. Twenty-five of the scholarship recipients are employed in Wisconsin.

The Club's scholarship mission statement reads: "This scholarship is made possible by the Wisconsin Buck and Bear club, and memorializes the late Peter "Pete" Haupt, founder of the Club. His purpose in creating the club was to locate, score and record in national records books the trophy deer and bear from Wisconsin. The efforts of his concept have made Wisconsin a leader in recording trophy deer. Pete had many interests, hobbies and causes. Wisconsin's resources were entwined throughout his life's goals.

"Preparing young people to work with and preserve the resources lead to the Wisconsin Buck and Bear Club's scholarship program. Adding Pete's name to the scholarship completes the ideas and views he stood for. He passed away from cancer in the spring of 1994." Joel Glazer, who has been the administrator of this program since its inception, says, "I feel the most important things our club does are to keep accurate, up-to-date records of big game from WI, to reflect our past and to invest in our future with our scholarship program."

Let'em Go, Let'em Grow!

Our Club motto—Let 'em Go, Let 'em Grow —was adopted in 1990 to highlight a deer harvest and trophy harvest principle.

Since the early 1970s, Club members had looked into various factors relating to annual deer harvests and annual trophy animal harvests in Wisconsin. One of the factors was the deer harvest total versus deer hunting licenses sold. Another was the number of trophy class animals being taken during the same time frame.

As the deer population grew, quite understandably so did the opportunity to harvest a whitetail. For instance, in Wisconsin in 1971, there were 77,357 deer taken by 609,653 licensed deer hunters, for a respectable success rate of 12.68%. By 1990 the success rate had gone up to an unbelievable 43.71%.

However, during this timeframe, trophy class animals harvested were not showing a similar percentage increase. This harvest total had, in fact, leveled off.

Club members knew that shouldn't be, because Wisconsin's whitetail herd has, arguably, the best gene pool in the world, and habitat is second to none. This left only the age class of bucks as the negative factor. It was estimated that as few as 12% of yearling bucks were making it through their first season.

To highlight the issue and reduce or stop the exploitation of yearling bucks, Club members created and adopted the motto – Let'm Go, Let'em Grow.

The Future of WBBC

The Wisconsin Buck & Bear Club has always been a club of hardworking, dedicated members who appreciate one another's efforts and enjoy the camaraderie while working together to keep Wisconsin #1 in the record books.

Moving forward, we need to continue to promote our Club by investing time and money in education, conservation projects and youth involvement. By getting more youth involved in the outdoors, they will become the next generation of leaders, hunters, conservationists and Wisconsin Buck & Bear Club members.