

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association



5TH ANNUAL CLASS

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.



Photo: WWA's 1st Annual Hall of Fame Class inducted January, 2016.

Please join us in welcoming
the 5th Annual Class
of the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
Hall of Fame.

Meet the Inductees

Erich Pitz – Member (Posthumous)

“And don’t forget to have Peter call me!” This was his regular “sign off” every time I spoke with Erich, which was often, during my time as an employee of WWA. Erich was a long-time member of the chapter committee for the Lakeshore team, one of the longest serving chapters in the whole organization, when I was first introduced to him, back in 2009. From the moment we met, I could tell that Erich was a different sort of person, and I came to greatly appreciate his personal drive to get things done, and his deep appreciation for the conservation ethic.



During our time working together, Erich WAS the WWA wood duck nesting structure program. At times, I assisted, providing some legwork or an extra set of hands, but it was his energy that made the program happen, placing more than 2500 assembled wood duck houses, and wood duck house “kits” (not yet assembled) out into the landscape of our state’s wild lands. Erich worked at this project on so many different levels: he’d use his contacts in the construction industry to source our raw materials (mostly pine, but also cedar on occasion and for special orders), then he’d make arrangements with job-training centers; to have the materials prepared into houses and house-kits, all the while moving the raw materials and finished goods on his company’s trucks & trailers, then he’d keep most of them “high and dry” for me, in one of his outbuildings at his project farm outside Two Rivers. All at his own expense and effort. He even gave me permission to bring my trailer and make pick-ups of the product from his place, whenever I needed, to go distribute more houses and kits around the state.

Additionally, he would share all of his business connections – we had a regular cycle of “arm-twisting” as he’d call it; where he’d have me send letters requesting specific sums to help support the purchase of another batch of raw materials to support the program from his business associates and contacts.

We had a regular two-year cycle: as stocks ran down in late winter, we’d send out another batch of letters requesting financial assistance for the program, Erich would make a request of his lumber contacts to “watch for a deal” on the lumber we needed for “a batch (usually a mix of 500 houses and kits)”, and then he’d put in a schedule request with the Blackwell Job Corps Center in Laona, to secure time from that team to transform the lumber into houses and kits, during the fall, in preparation for the next winter.

At each point in the cycle, Erich was there to do whatever was needed, to fill in whatever gap was found, to make it happen. Eventually, the quality of these structures became known well enough that we even began filling special orders for other conservation organizations, working in concert with WWA. Some of the houses were sold at cost-recovery prices to help build another “batch”, but most were given away to enterprises like Scout groups, Becoming An Outdoors Women classes, various WWA project sites that Peter would work, or even placed at one of the many Adopt A Wildlife Area projects on public lands throughout the state.

In addition to his work on the wood duck nesting structure program, Erich was immensely proud of the WWA wetland project he and Peter Ziegler completed on his farm. He was constantly interested in improving it, creating

a spot not for hunting, (*a high challenge one would think, for such an avid waterfowl hunter like Erich*) but to attract waterfowl to rest during their migrations. It was shortly after the completion of this project that Erich also became a Wetland Life Member of WWA, providing critical additional funding to the organization at a time when it was needed most, and setting a strong example for others to follow. I could share stories of his osprey-nest structures, or his series of miniature wood duck houses, made into donation boxes & placed at sporting goods stores around NE Wisconsin, and more, but it would still only scratch the surface of the many ideas that Erich brought to life.

It is easy to understand why Erich has become a member of WWA's Hall of Fame. It is only hard to count all of the ways that he worked to improve the world around him, to improve the waterfowl resources that he loved so much, and to leave things a little better than he found them.

Written by Don Kirby, WWA Executive Director WWA: 2009-2018. Erich lost his battle with brain cancer on October 14, 2020.

Eric Urben – Board Member

Eric Urben grew up an outdoorsman, mentored closely under the tutelage of his father, current President of WWA's Board of Directors, Bruce Urben. Eric graduated from the University Wisconsin - Green Bay, was a four year member of the UWGB Men's Soccer Team, with a major in Psychology/Human Development. He has enjoyed a successful sales career for years and currently works as OEM Sales Manager for Alwin Manufacturing.



Eric's time with WWA started in 2001 when then Green Bay (GB) Chapter Chair, Randy Abitz, invited Eric to volunteer at the GB Chapter Banquet. What started 19 years ago as a favor for a friend morphed into two decades of dedication to WWA and its core tenants. 2004 saw a transition as Eric took over the GB Chapter's Chair responsibilities, where he pulled together a dedicated GB Chapter Team who together raised over \$500,000 for WWA over 19 years of service, consistently hitting over \$25,000 banquet net per year. During his 19-year tenure as Chair, Eric continued as President of the GB Chapter, while holding a WWA State Board of Director seat, as well as a two-year seat as Vice President on the State Board of Directors.

He was involved in the annual Learn to Hunt development as a mentor, development of the GB Chapter Summer shoot, as well as the continued development of the WWA Abrams property. Eric's highlight of each year was the culmination of volunteer efforts with the night of the banquet, where he currently serves as Master of Ceremonies for the GB banquet.

Finally, Eric would like to send a sincere thank you to the many hours his ex-wife, Deborah, and son, Gavin, sacrificed, allowing him time to spend countless hours planning and organizing each event. This honor would not be possible without his dedicated board of volunteers, which include his brother, Bryan, father, Bruce, many friends and relatives throughout the years, and of course his mother, Diane, for her steadfast accounting of finances/registration each year!

Sherper's - Sponsor

Sam Scherper* started the Sherper's business as Adam's Hat and Shirt Company in October of 1935, a men's haberdashery selling formal menswear. The first location was at 4th and Wisconsin Avenue in downtown Milwaukee. Sherper's, now a fourth-generation family owned and operated business located in Southeast Wisconsin, has morphed into an outdoors sporting goods store, selling "Everything for the Great Outdoors & More...".



With a transformation away from the haberdashery during WWII, Sherper's locations and original business model have morphed into the outdoor retail chain it is today, servicing Hales Corners, Oconomowoc, Port Washington and online.

In 2008, Rob Scherper came into the business, followed by Sarah (Rob's wife) in 2011. It is during that time frame that Sherper's began supporting WWA as a statewide sponsor.

Over the last decade, Sherper's, through Rob's support, has helped to donate merchandise, gift certificates, youth raffle prizes and time to many WWA events in SE WI. In addition, over the last five years, Sherper's has annually helped to sell from 50 to 100 calendars at their Oconomowoc and Hales Corners store.

For those that have worked with Rob and the Sherper's team, it is without doubt an honor to add Sherper's to the WWA Hall of Fame. The relationship and generosity Sherper's has provided the WWA is crucial in supporting our mission now and into the future.

*Fun trivia fact: Wondering why the Scherpers' last name is not spelled the same as their store Sherper's? In the early 1940's the store re-incorporated as Sherper's Inc. when the original owner, Sam, went to go buy a sign for the store. Sam only had enough money in the bank for the size of sign that could fit eight letters, so he dropped the "C" from the name so that he could afford the sign.

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