**FAVORITE WISCONSIN WILD THING!**

**MAGIC TRICK**

**OBJECT**
Reveal the secret identity of your friend’s favorite plant or animal.

**WILDCARDS**
21 different native Wisconsin plants and animals

**DO THE TRICK**
Lay out three columns of face up cards, each containing seven cards. See diagram. While you look away, your friend chooses a card, but doesn’t reveal the identity of the card to you. Your friend could show it to others, then return it to its location.

Ask your friend which column the card is in. You pick up the columns of cards - top to bottom. Be sure to pick up the column containing the “favorite” card second so it is in the middle of the deck.

Now lay the cards down by row — placing three cards in each row. Starting at the top, you will end up with seven rows of cards.

Ask your friend which column the card is in now. Pick up the cards by column as before, being sure to pick up the column with the “favorite” card second.

Once again, lay the cards out by rows. Once again, ask which column the card is in. Reveal the “favorite” card by silently counting down four cards in the chosen column. Read the back of the card to discover why the plant or animal is a favorite!
**Great Blue Heron**

*Ardetta herodias*

**Basic ID:** A 4-foot tall bird of wetlands. It has long wading legs, long neck & dagger-like bill. Its body is blue-gray & its neck is sausage-shaped. In flight, its neck is doubled back, with head reeling against shoulders & long legs trailing straight behind.

**Habits:** Often found wading in shallow water where it waits patiently to snap up a small fish, frog, water snake, crayfish or even a mouse or large insect near shore. They have elaborate courtship displays with bill-snapping & side-to-side tossing of each other's bill tips. They nest in colonies. Males & females share duties of incubating eggs & feeding young.

**Habitat:** Great Blue Herons depend on wetlands from coastal marshes & backwater swamps to ponds & lakes. They build large nests of sticks in tall trees near water.

**Wild!** These large herons have wingspans of 7 feet & can fly 20-30 miles per hour. They live long lives, some living to be 17 years old?

[For more info, visit WDFW’s Wildlife Notebook: http://dfw.wa.gov/wildlife/wildlifeinfo/notebook.htm]

*Photo: Frank Lassig*

*Printed on Recycled Paper*

**Common Loon**

*Gavia immer*

**Identification:** The common loon measures nearly 3 feet and has a 5-foot wingspan. It is grey and white until four years of age, when it grows the elegant black and white breeding plumage for which it is famous.

**Vocalization:** Loons have four calls.

**Habits:** Loons are expert divers, feeding on fish and aquatic invertebrates. They nest along the water’s edge near one or two cliffs each summer.

**Conservation:** Protect natural shorelines, essential for suitable nesting habitat, and use lead-free fishing tackle like bumper sinkers to reduce fatal lead poisoning.

For information, visit LoonWatch: [http://www.nwr.feralhornng.org/soil/loonwatch.asp]

[For more info, visit WDFW’s Wildlife Notebook: http://dfw.wa.gov/wildlife/wildlifeinfo/notebook.htm]

*Photo: Rob Logan & Dan Carden*

*Printed on Recycled Paper*

**Red-tailed Hawk**

*Buteo jamaicensis*

**Basic ID:** Wisconsin’s largest & most widely-distributed hawk. Adults sport a brown back, cream-white breast and undersides. Adults have a brick-red tail. Their feet are large and powerful with sharp talons (boinae).

**Habits:** These hawks hunt a wide variety of small & medium-sized animals—from meadow voles to cottontails—while sitting on an exposed, elevated perch, or while soaring and scanning the ground from a considerable height.

**Habitat:** Powerful & adaptable, the “redtail” has always been a familiar resident of Wisconsin. They usually live in open savannas & forest edge habitats. When forest edges are fragmented or cleared for pasture, redtails quickly move in and establish territories. Due to people’s breaking up of forests, there are likely more redtails in Wisconsin than ever before!

**Wild!** Take a roadside raptor survey! Red-tailed Hawks are easily spotted alongside highways & backroads, especially after leaves drop in autumn. Look for the “kettles” of their white breast against the distant forest & woodlot edges.

[For more info, visit WDFW’s Wildlife Notebook: http://dfw.wa.gov/wildlife/wildlifeinfo/notebook.htm]

*Photo: Rob Logan & Dan Carden*

*Printed on Recycled Paper*

**Lake Sturgeon**

*Acipenser fulvescens*

**Identification:** This ancient fish with bony plates and barbels (whiskers) shared the twochs with dinosaurs. It can live for over 100 years and females do not spawn until at least 25.

**Habitat:** The Lake Winnebago system hosts the world’s largest population of lake sturgeon. They’re also found in the Chippewa-Rainbow system and the Menominee, Mississippi, and Wisconsin rivers. In the 1800s, sturgeon were considered a nuisance. They tangled and tore commercial fishing nets, so were tasted against to death. Cannery and overfishing further reduced their numbers.

**Tackle Tips:** Sturgeon are caught during a short winter spawning season on Lake Winnebago. A record-setting 82-year-old, 180-pounder was caught there in 1953. It had a limited hook and line season in some rivers. Watch them spawn along the banks of the Wolf River in New London and Shiocton.

**Common Catch Size:** 3-5, 10-20 lb.

[Check regulations for legal catch size and seasons.]

For more information, visit: [dnr.wi.gov]

*Published: Virgil Beck*

*Recycled paper*

**Muskellunge**

*Esox masquinongy*

**Wisconsin’s State Fish!**

**Identification:** The musky is the largest predator fish in the state. Look for wide, vertical markings to distinguish musky from northern pike. They do not have scales on the lower part of the gill cover like the northern pike does.

**Habitat:** Musky are found statewide and inhabit a wide range of waters from rivers to the Great Lakes. They live alone, searching weed beds and tangled old logs for prey.

**Tackle Tips:** Bring along some big baits and a steel leader for these ferocious fighters! Jerk baits, spoons, and cutbaits are popular lures used to chase the musky.

**Common Catch Size:** 34-80 lb., usually less than 15 lb.

[Check regulations for legal catch size and season.]

For more information, visit: [dnr.wi.gov]

*Published: Virgil Beck*

*Recycled paper*

**Blanding’s Turtle**

*Emydura blandingii*

**Threatened**

**Basic ID:** The 6-10 inch shell is black with yellow flecks, elongated and domed. The bottom is hinged. The chin is bright yellow.

**Habits:** Their diet includes invertebrates, tadpoles, fish and berries. They prefer marshy areas with dense vegetation, but can live in many aquatic habitats. They can also live on land. Habitat loss and competition are major causes affecting populations.

**Fun Fact:** Blanding’s turtles must live 17-20 years before they can breed. This fact limits population recovery following habitat loss.

For information: [www.dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er]

*Published: A. B. Shelden*

*Recycled paper*

**Eastern Hog-Nosed Snake**

*Heterodon platirhinos*

**Habitat:** Plowed fields, open fields, and wooded areas.

**Behavior:** This is a non-venomous, harmless snake. It is not a snake to be feared. It is a beneficial snake as it consumes insects, which helps control insect populations.

**Fun Facts:** This snake has a very long tongue, which it uses to capture small prey. It also has a very loud “snapping” sound, which it uses to startle its prey. This snake is nocturnal and is often found hunting for food during the night.

For information: [www.dnr.wi.gov]

*Published: A. B. Shelden*

*Recycled paper*

**Giant Silkmoth Caterpillar**

*Eacles sp.*

**Habits:** These caterpillars are known for their huge size and bright colors, which help to deter predators. They are primarily nocturnal and are often found feeding on leaves during the daytime.

**Fun Facts:** The Giant Silkmoth Caterpillar is known for its impressive size and bold coloration. The caterpillar is covered in a protective layer of silk, which it uses to wrap around itself when it is threatened. It is also known for its ability to move over long distances, using its strong legs and powerful muscles.

For more information: [Contact your local DNR Service Center or State Park Naturalist]

*Published: A. B. Shelden*

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**DWARF LAKE IRIS**

*Iris laevis*

**STATUS** Listed as threatened by both Wisconsin and the federal government.

**BASIC ID** This early spring bloomer has an eye-catching blossom, about two inches wide. Its bluish-purple petals are marked with yellow crests. Its sword-shaped leaves grow up to six inches long and are arranged in fans.

**LIFE HISTORY** Thrives in thin, moist, sandy or rocky soils in sun-dappled openings under white cedar and birch. It grows in colonies and spreads primarily by horizontal stems.

**RANGE** In Wisconsin, it grows near the northern shores of Lake Michigan in Brown and Door counties.

**WILD!** “Laevis” means “of lakes,” reflecting where this plant grows.

If you think you have this plant on your property, contact the Bureau of Endangered Resources at 608-266-7012.

[www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/er/factsheets](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/er/factsheets)

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**WILD LUPINE**

*Lupinus perennis*

**BASIC ID** This sun-loving perennial grows best in open sunspaces or prairies. In Wisconsin, it germinates in mid-April. Its spikes of blue flowers bloom in late May, and its seed pods mature on brown or black before bursting in late June or early July.

**IMPORTANCE** The caperbush of the federally endangered Karner blue butterfly relies exclusively on lupine leaves for food.

**SEED PLANTING**
- Collect mature seed pods before they burst
- Dry pods under a screen to extract seeds
- Plant seeds in late fall before snow cover for best growth
- Select sunny, weed-free areas with sandy, well-drained soil

**FOR INFORMATION**
[www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/er/invertbrates/karner.htm](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/er/invertbrates/karner.htm)

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**PADDLEFISH**

*Polyodon spathula*

**IDENTIFICATION** You’ll have no problem telling this fish apart from any other! Their long, flat, paddle-like snout and shark-like, forked tail fin make them easy to identify. They can grow to be 63 pounds in Wisconsin. Many anglers know them as “spoonbill catfish.”

**HABITAT** Paddlefish move about on mucky bottoms of the Mississippi and Wisconsin river systems, especially where the rivers widen. These fish usually stay in deep water, but will come to the surface in the summer. Dams on large rivers have eliminated paddlefish spawning habitat and severely reduced their population.

**TACKLE TIP** The paddlefish is listed as a threatened species in Wisconsin, so don’t even try to catch one! They merely bite on a hook and would rather eat plankton than bait.

**COMMON CATCH SIZE** Don’t catch one!

For more information, visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov).

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**BLUE-WINGED TEAL**

*Anas discorsa*

**BASIC ID:** The bluewing is a small duck (14-16 inches long, less than a pound) that breeds in Wisconsin. A spring drake is gray-brown, with a large white rump patch & black tail. A dashing white crescent moon graces his face. His forewings sport a large, pale blue patch. Hens have blue wing patches, too, but they are mostly a mottled tan-brown.

**HABITS:** In mid-April, teals begin to migrate to and through Wisconsin. During the breeding season, drakes display to hens with ritualized foaming & “chin-lifting.” Hens build grassy nests in meadows or grasslands, laying one egg a day, until a clutch of 9-11 dull blue eggs is complete. After about 24 days of incubation, fuzzy ducklings hatch & soon follow the hen to dense cover.

**HABITAT:** The teal’s favorite nesting cover is long prairie grasses, wet meadows or alfalfa fields. Hens need prairie “pocket” ponds greater than two acres to raise their broods. These ducks rely on clean wetlands during migration.

**WILD!** The loss of grasslands for nesting cover near wetlands is the greatest threat to the conservation of blue-winged teal.

For more info, visit [WNRFA Wildlife Notebook](http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/public/wildlifenotebook.htm).

Photo: Norman Balleman
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**CANADA LYNX**

*Felis lynx*

**BASIC ID:** The lynx weighs from 15 to 30 pounds; has long ear tufts, huge, snowshoe-like feet; and a short, black-tipped tail (compare with bobcat’s tail).

**HABITS:** Lynx are rare visitors to our state from Canada. They prefer diverse forests with shrubby openings; lynx hunt well in deep snow and eat snow-shoe hares.

**HISTORY:** Old fur trade company records indicate that lynx follow a distinct population cycle. When hare populations crash, lynx numbers follow suit and crash one or two years later. Lynx are a federally threatened species and protected by Wisconsin law.

**WILD!** Scientists think that Wisconsin’s lynx population originated from two different migrations of the Asian lynx 20,000 years ago!


Photo: J. Pautler, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

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