

Exhibit explores duck hunting history on Lake Koshkonong

By JIM LEUTE

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Photo by [Al Hoch](#)

Rick Persson who live on Lake Koshkonong brings in his late grandfather Stan Persson's pre 1900's 'Dan Kidney' duck hunting boat that he used for over forty years after he joined the Carcajou Club in 1938. The Hoard Museum is displaying the Legacy of Duck Hunting on Lake Koshkonong.



Photo by [Al Hoch](#)

A variety of duck mounts including these canvasbacks will decorate the Legacy of Duck Hunting on Lake Koshkonong display at the Hoard Museum in Fort Atkinson.



Photo by [Al Hoch](#)

An old wood duck decoy from the Carcajou Club on Lake Koshkonong will be part of the Legacy of Duck Hunting on Lake Koshkonong display at the Hoard Museum.

FORT ATKINSON — Well before Lake Koshkonong became a haven for pontoon boats and other forms of personal watercraft, it was a lush wetland with vast beds of wild celery that attracted ducks from states and provinces hundreds of miles away.

That history will be front and center starting Sunday with the opening of “The Legacy of Duck Hunting on Lake Koshkonong” at The Hoard Historical Museum in Fort Atkinson.

“So many people don’t know the history of the lake; there are no signs of it anywhere,” said Dick Wanie, an outdoor enthusiast, newspaper columnist and retired teacher who came up with the idea for the 16-day show.

“The people who know the history of the lake are dying, and when they’re gone so is the an important part of the lake’s history.”

Now a 10,500-acre body of water, Lake Koshkonong was once a fertile wetland with the Rock River running through its center. With the 1851 construction of a dam at Indianford, the wetland became a shallow lake with thriving beds of wild celery.

Hundreds of thousands of waterfowl, including the coveted canvasback duck, zeroed in on the habitat on their spring and fall migrations.

For that reason, Koshkonong was known as one of the finest duck hunting lakes in the Midwest, Wanie said. Prosperous hunt clubs dotted the lake’s shores.

Market hunting—the killing of thousands upon thousands of canvasbacks—provided a living for many, and boxcars full of prized waterfowl were sent to the finest restaurants from Chicago to New York.

Six historic hunting boats, including two Koshkonong Monitors, a Whitney float and a Kidney strip skiff will be on display. Exhibits also feature historic hunting clubs, decoys, market hunting, duck stamps, motors, guns, mounted waterfowl and duck calls.

Wanie, who was raised on the famed Horicon Marsh, came up with the idea for the show about a year ago and assembled a dedicated committee to help make it happen.

Wanie, the son of a conservation warden, said duck hunting is his life. He believed he could pull his like-minded friends together and put on the show at the beautifully renovated Hoard museum.

“People visit this area and they wonder about Lake Koshkonong,” he said. “What is its heritage?”

“It’s not a history of jet skies and motor boating.”

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