Wisconsin Public Television

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Patty Loew:

Welcome to "In Wisconsin." I'm Patty Loew. This week the bright and brassy sound of teenage trumpeter Ansel Norris is getting national attention. See what it takes to care for injured and orphaned animals at the Northwoods Wildlife Center in Minocqua.

Man:

That one was hit by a car and brought in a couple weeks ago.

Patty Loew:

Would you like to turn your backyard into an airport café for migrating birds?

Man:

Anybody can plant their yard to make it worthwhile for wildlife.

Patty Loew:

Those reports next on "In Wisconsin."

Announcer:

Major funding for "In Wisconsin" is provided by the people of Alliant Energy who bring safe, reliable and environmentally friendly energy to keep homes, neighborhoods and life in Wisconsin running smoothly. Alliant Energy, we're on for you. And the Animal Dentistry and Oral Surgery Specialists of Milwaukee and Oshkosh, a veterinary team working with pet owners and family veterinarians throughout Wisconsin providing care for oral disease and dental problems of small companion animals. With additional funding provided by Bike Wisconsin.

Patty Loew:

We begin this week with an update on a young musician we featured before. You may remember seeing Ansel Norris more than a year ago in our coverage of the 2009 Final Forte program with the Madison Symphony Orchestra. This teenager is making quite a name for himself and as Liz Koerner reports, he's making news on a national scale from his home in Madison.

Liz Koerner:

Ansel Norris used to have time for cool cars.

Ansel Norris:

Especially Audis, those are my favorite cars. My uncle has a TT roadster.

Liz Koerner:

Now with college around the corner music is taking a front seat in Ansel's life.

Woman:

He just works super, super hard. He does stuff over and over again.

Liz Koerner:

His mother Kathy got Ansel and older brother Alex started on the violin at a young age.

Kathy Norris:

He wasn't suited to the violin. So I cancelled his lessons after a few years. And then we tried piano. Piano wasn't quite right either and he found the trumpet.

Liz Koerner:

That discovery helped him at a critical point in his life.

Ansel Norris:

I wasn't heading down the best path as a sixth or seventh grader. I was hanging out with people who I consider to be the wrong people at the time. Music helped me through that.

Liz Koerner:

It helps him in other ways as well.

Ansel Norris:

If I ever feel bad about something I go play trumpet for a little while and it's all right again.

Liz Koerner:

Since he started on trumpet he's had teachers who both challenge and inspire him. Scott Eckel at East High School in Madison is one of them.

Ansel Norris:

I asked him, what do you think I should play for solo and ensemble, this was my freshman year. He gave me the Haydn concerto, and I was like, I can’t play this, this is un-playable. And he said, no, you can play it and you will play it. He inspired me to keep going.

Liz Koerner:

Ansel also gives credit to his trumpet teacher, John Aley.

Ansel Norris:

He's totally influenced my playing. He has totally helped me get to where I am and probably where I will be.

John Aley:

When you get to that dotted quarter.

Liz Koerner:

Ansel has been winning awards in competition at both the local and national level. In 2009 he performed with the Madison Symphony Orchestra as part of the Final Forte.

John Aley:

He has aspirations to be a soloist. Which I think are remarkably realistic.

Liz Koerner:

Recently Ansel won admission to Young Arts Week in Miami, an all-expense paid competition offered by the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts. It's open to 17 and 18-year-olds in nine disciplines.

Liz Koerner:

More than 4,000 applied and only 143 got in.

John Aley:

This whole organization is not just music performance but it's visual and writing and dance and all these musicians have the opportunity to interact with each other. Learn about each other's disciplines, how they might identify themselves with the talent of the students in their disciplines. And it's fantastic.

Liz Koerner:

Young Arts Week was a whirlwind of activities, like a recital where Ansel was paired with another young artist he just met.

Ansel Norris:

I had a pianist in Priscella Chan. She was the best person to collaborate with. She was this little girl but she had so much power.

Liz Koerner:

He also got to see other teens perform.

Ansel Norris:

Right away I was stunned by the fact that nobody wasn't amazing.

Liz Koerner:

During the week, arts professionals gave master classes. Ansel went to one by Michael Tilson Thomas, the music director of the San Francisco Symphony, and artistic director of Miami’s New World Symphony.

Ansel Norris:

It was amazing. He has this level of thought. The critiques he was giving me, they made sense.

Liz Koerner:

Young Arts Week also included a competition. Ansel won top honors on his trumpet and a check for $10,000. John Aley says it's an impressive credential that will help with college auditions.

John Aley:

If I were auditioning him, I didn’t know him, and I saw this on his resume, I would go, “Ooh.”

Liz Koerner:

With high school almost behind him and college straight ahead, Ansel is well on his way to a future filled with music.

Ansel Norris:

On the days where I have a really good performance I couldn't find any quibbles with, I'm the happiest person in the world.

Patty Loew:

In addition to the $10,000 cash prize, Ansel Norris won a one week arts residency in New York sponsored by the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts and that's where he is this week. Norris is also eligible for a presidential scholarship to be announced in May. Wisconsin beers have won numerous awards and the state enjoys a great beer making tradition thanks in no small part to the many German immigrants. But Germans aren't the only ethnic group with a story to tell. The nation's first African-American-owned brewery was here in Wisconsin. Reporter Andy Soth has the story of People’s Brewery in Oshkosh.

Andy Soth:

He's known as the Real Beer Man. Or at least that's the name of his column. Devoted exclusively to beer and brewing.

Jim Lundstrom:

Yes, beer is a common element running through my life. I can't help that.

Andy Soth:

His name is Jim Lundstrom and he is also the editor of the Scene newspaper, an alternative monthly in central and northeast Wisconsin. It's run out of a Menasha storefront, though Lundstrom will tell you his real office is a few doors down. The Club Tavern seemed like the perfect place to sit down and hear one of his favorite beer stories.

Jim Lundstrom:

Bigger than beer but certainly beer led me to it.

Andy Soth:

It's a story of changing times. And of a city that wasn't quite ready.

Jim Lundstrom:

It was largely a forgotten part of local history,

Andy Soth:

It’s the story of People’s Brewery in Oshkosh.

Jim Lundstrom:

What could be a better name for the first black-owned brewery in the country, People’s Brewery?

Andy Soth:

They didn't come up with the name. People’s Brewery had been operating since 1911 but a group of African-American entrepreneurs from Milwaukee, led by Ted Mack, did buy Peoples in 1970 making it the nation's first black-owned brewery. Peoples was popular in Oshkosh, but the new owners thought they could find new markets.

Jim Lundstrom:

Ted Mack came in and thought well, I want to keep that core base but I want to expand to Milwaukee with the black population there, Gary, Indiana and the US military.

Andy Soth:

Mack thought he could sell Peoples on US military bases with a government contract for minority-owned businesses. But as he tried to develop that market, the core Oshkosh customer base wasn't taking well to the ownership change.

Stephen Kercher:

With a product that is held with such reverence here, beer, which comes from this German-American tradition, the idea of black owners struck many as anathema.

Andy Soth:

Stephen Kercher created this exhibit on the UW-Oshkosh campus. It helps paint a picture of what Oshkosh was like around the time Peoples Brewery changed hands. It's about Black Thursday, a day in 1968 when African-American students, tired of discrimination on campus and in the community, took over the university president's office.

Stephen Kercher:

1968, like many other communities throughout the United States, Oshkosh was beginning to resist the massive social changes that were taking place in the United States.

Andy Soth:

That year segregationist presidential candidate George Wallace drew large crowds at Oshkosh. It was only two years later that Ted Mack bought Peoples Brewery and be moved to down.

Jim Lundstrom:

A black man from Milwaukee coming to live in their lily white community with his kids, sending them to the local school and trying the make a difference and trying to make a business work as the first black-owned brewery in the nation.

Andy Soth:

The resistance was immediate.

Jim Lundstrom:

Public perception, that was, the 21 workers were going to lose their jobs and the revolution was coming to downtown Oshkosh. And look out.

Andy Soth:

Allen Repp grew up in his father's bar and runs it today. He remembers when Peoples just stopped selling.

Allen Repp:

I think we were the third largest distributor of the tap beer but after so long you had to take it off. Like anything else that doesn't move, you have to take it off.

Andy Soth:

Nasty rumors spread that the Peoples’ beer was being watered down or tampered with. The new owners went to great lengths to demonstrate the beer didn't change.

Allen Repp:

Independent taste tests even out of town, even out of state, won as far as taste, eye appeal, there was nothing wrong with the product.

Andy Soth:

Sales were declining in Oshkosh. There were distribution problems in Milwaukee and Gary, Indiana and the hope for military contracts weren't working out. Even without all these problems the deck was stacked against them.

Jim Lundstrom:

It was a time when the big breweries were merging and buying up other places and consolidating. All of that killed the regionals. In the 1970s, the worst time ever. They were gone. Hardly any left now.

Andy Soth:

In 1972 Peoples Brewery ceased operations and so did two other Wisconsin breweries, Potosi and Lithia. Something was lost when each stopped making beer but Peoples had also made history and that's a story worth remembering.

Jim Lundstrom:

The history of beer, what could be better? I don't know.

Patty Loew:

If you'd like to know more about the Black Thursday protests at UW-Oshkosh you can see images and hear the voices of those involved by going to our website at wpt.org and then scroll down and click on "In Wisconsin." In our next report, we revisit a place Wisconsin Public Television first reported on in the mid 1980s. At the time the Northwoods Wildlife Center was only six years old and fighting to survive, treating and releasing injured wildlife. "In Wisconsin" reporter Art Hackett shows you how the center transformed into a tourist attraction while serving injured and orphaned animals in Minocqua.

Art Hackett:

Minocqua has numerous attractions for visitors, lakes and shops come to mind. But people come to the northwoods for nature. So it's understandable that a place called the Northwoods Wildlife Center would draw tourists.

Woman:

We'll see a snowy owl next.

Art Hackett:

Every half hour a guide walks visitors through displays of animals which are residents at the center.

Beth Burns:

The permanent resident birds are those that have been injured badly enough that they'll not be able to be released into the wild. They get to stay here and be part of our education program. Phoenix here is imprinted on humans, which means that she's too familiar with people. She was confiscated in Alaska and in that situation she had been put into a small cage and taken out of her nest. She never developed her wing muscles fully so she can't fly strongly and she can't pick up food and fly off with it.

Art Hackett:

Beth Burns is the center's executive director.

Beth Burns:

My father started working here in 1988 so after school I would come and sit with some of the animals while he was finishing up work. In 1989 I started giving tours.

Art Hackett:

But educating and hopefully entertaining visitors is only part of the center's mission. The center was founded to care for injured wildlife and, if possible, return the critters to their natural habitat. The center was started in 1979 by a veterinarian, Dr. Rory Foster.

Beth Burns:

Rory Foster was a veterinarian and he had a veterinary clinic right next to where this building is. He kept getting wild animals in so he recognized that there was a need for that.

Art Hackett:

Foster died in 1987.

Beth Burns:

There are still some veterinarians that get wild animals and they call us now. Rory decided to start this place and start caring for the wild animals.

Art Hackett:

Mark Naniot is the center's wildlife rehabilitator.

Mark Naniot:

That one was hit by a car and brought in a couple of weeks ago. Didn't have major injuries, just bruising, a little swelling on one foot so his recovery was pretty short here and he was only here for 2 ½ weeks. That was a nice easy one. What he's going to do is sit and get his bearings for a little while and decide where he wants to be. Whether he has a family some place that he wants to get back to.

Art Hackett:

We visited the center once before in 1984. The center has been spruced up and expanded since then. And the center itself has been adopted by people who live in the area. Much of the meat and fish fed to the birds is donated by sportsmen and -women. When people come to the center, they mainly see birds. Some animals are not on display to the public because rehabilitationists don't want them getting too used to being around humans because they'll soon be released back into the wild. There are bears. Mark Naniot takes in the food and leaves before the bears are released into the feeding area. There have been lots of bears at the center this year. They were brought in by volunteers after they were found by the public or by DNR wardens. But animal rehabilitationist Mark Naniot said some of the deer and birds are brought in unnecessarily.

Mark Naniot:

Especially in our area where we have a large tourist base in this particular area, people come up for the beauty of the lakes and the natural areas but they might be from the city so they don't realize that, for example, fawns are left alone for a large part of the time when they're very young by their mothers so they see this fawn laying there by itself. Don't see a mother around so they assume, we have to take this fawn and bring it to the Northwoods Wildlife Center because it's abandoned. Not realizing the mother is staying away from the fawns to not draw attention to it.

Art Hackett:

Some of the fawns you have out there...

Mark Naniot:

Are probably kidnap victims, yes. Sometimes people are very understanding and other times they think they know what's best and they think you're telling them the wrong thing and they're just going to bring it in anyway.

Art Hackett:

Wildlife belongs to the state and the department of natural resources forbids people from holding it captive. In 2004 administrative rules allowed places such as the Northwoods Wildlife Center to obtain licenses.

Mark Naniot:

We're trying to make it a profession. Get people out there better trained, understand what they need to do with animals, and be more aware of diseases, educate the public and do what's right for the animal.

Patty Loew:

The Northwoods Wildlife Center is a non-profit organization and takes donations for tours. Much of its money comes from people who sponsor the animals. Spring is a busy time for wildlife centers treating orphaned animals. It is also migration time when millions of neotropical song birds make their way north. They're hungry, very hungry and their next dinner reservation may be in your backyard. "In Wisconsin" reporter Jo Garrett shows you how to prepare a feast for your feathered friends in La Crosse.

Jo Garrett:

So much depends on dinner. This is the city of La Crosse, along the Mississippi River. It has long been a way station for travelers, Native Americans passed by these cliffs followed by French fur traders and Mississippi riverboats. And every year, forever, these guys have made their way up the river. This is a black and white warbler, a songbird, also called a neotropical migrant or neotrop. One of hundreds of bird species that breed here in North America and winter back in Central and South America. Twice a year they migrate by the millions through this Mississippi River corridor and along the way, they need dinner.

Craig Thompson:

We're actually in the heart of La Crosse, about four blocks from the university and this is my backyard.

Jo Garrett:

This is Craig Thompson. Thompson works for the Wisconsin department of natural resources. He and his wife, Mary, have on their own traveled the world leading bird watching trips to avian wonder spots like Panama.

Craig Thompson:

It's really the thrill of the chase and seeing the stuff.

Jo Garrett:

Thompson is dedicated to the conservation of these birds, some of which are in terrible decline. And outside of his home in La Crosse in a somewhat small yard, he's planted a bit of a solution. He's planted a way station.

Craig Thompson:

This yard is less than 2/10 acre and we have it crammed wall-to-wall with flowers and flowering shrubs and trees but what we're trying to do is make it a little bit of a wild place in the midst of a really tamed, sterilized, overmanicured area, residential La Crosse.

Jo Garrett:

In the midst of La Crosse this little wild space has served as a roadside cafeteria to a vast array of winged travelers.

Craig Thompson:

We've seen Baltimore orioles, brown thrashers, warblers, tennessee warblers, yellow warblers, common yellow throats. They're stopping here to refuel ever so briefly and then they're off.

Jo Garrett:

They need to refuel. Migrating neotrops like this one have already traveled thousands of miles with perhaps hundreds more to go. They need to touch down and grab a blue plate special. An avian energy bar. Something like this chokecherry packed with fruit.

Craig Thompson:

You can see it's an early spring flowering shrub that will get nice clusters of berries on the end that the birds will like a lot. What I try to do is actually plant shrubs and trees and flowers that provide benefits for both wildlife and then insects as well.

Jo Garrett:

Because to feed these birds you must feed the insects. Which in turn feeds the birds.

Craig Thompson:

Here is a little bee on the tip of this chokecherry right now. Something will come along and probably snap it up and eat it.

Jo Garrett:

Something will snap up the bee and something is going to go for the second course, the bee larvae.

Craig Thompson:

Flies and bees will come in, and butterflies, and lay eggs on the things. The larva will be out there. Great food for birds. This is all native plants, basically native plants. Species called Culvers root, bergamot, New England astor and a host of other things to benefit bugs. When this is blossoming and at its peak, this place is a nectar factory.

Jo Garrett:

It’s a food factory underfoot, too. Check out the lawn.

Craig Thompson:

What I want to point out here is that this is just filled with weeds and so we've got clover and we've got chickweed and we've got plantain and dandelions. I don't make an effort to get rid of any of them. The reason I don't is because monotypic dense turf grass is a biological desert. It doesn’t provide a lot of habitat for anything. You want to provide plants that bugs feed on and those in turn feed birds. That's what we're trying to accomplish here.

Jo Garrett:

Even the dreaded dandelion is on the dinner menu. Thompson may yank some, but he always leaves a few.

Craig Thompson:

It's amazing. The gold finches come in and eat the dandelion heads. Anybody can plant their yard to make it worthwhile for wildlife. It is really easy and fun. It takes a little time to see it come to maturity but it’s incredibly satisfying. And to see the birds respond, jackpot, mission accomplished.

Jo Garrett:

As if on cue, minutes later we hit the jackpot while Thompson was describing this native plant, the Virginia blue bell.

Craig Thompson:

Hard for a bee to get in here. Hummingbirds can access it with the longer bill and tongue and it provides an instant source of high energy food for them. They need to have it. In fact, I just heard the hummer chip back here. It won't be coming into these. We're too close. There it is. It comes into the humming bird feeder. This is so cool. Here is a bird that spent the winter in Central America. Somehow in a miraculous flight made it across the Gulf of Mexico. This is a bird that weighs less than a dime, flew non-stop across the Gulf of Mexico and somehow flew all the way through every hazard to get to our backyard. It's feeding and nesting here because we've created a backyard that's good for it.

Jo Garrett:

It is a four-star avian diner.

Jo Garrett:

Restaurant Thompson.

Craig Thompson:

That's very fancy. Do you have reservations? Chez Thompson.

Craig Thompson:

You're always welcome. Come on over.

Patty Loew:

If you'd like to see what to plant in your backyard to help migrating birds go to our website at wpt.org and scroll down and click on "In Wisconsin." We also wanted to mention a documentary project in the works called "Our Birds" with reports on Wisconsin's migratory birds in Panama and Costa Rica. Watch for that in the spring of 2011. A threat to the UW arboretum. An earthworm problem up north and the elusive Rhinelander hodag. Those are just some of the reports on the next edition of "In Wisconsin."

Liz Koerner:

The UW arboretum in Madison is fighting a downhill battle because it's at the bottom of this urban watershed and polluted storm water flows freely across its borders.

Man:

This one might be sort of the ultimate storm water plant potentially and we'll find out from the research.

Liz Koerner:

I'm Liz Koerner. I'll show you how they hope to clean up the water using native plants.

Jo Garrett:

Wisconsin is under attack. This is Jo Garrett. Find out how earthworms could be changing Wisconsin's northwoods, literally right under our feet.

Art Hackett:

We have what we think may be a hodag sighting.

Man:

Oh my goodness, wonderful.

Art Hackett:

It's an actual photograph.

Art Hackett:

I'm Art Hackett in Rhinelander and I have the real story behind the hodag.

Art Hackett:

Hodag or not a hodag?

Man:

That's a hodag, definitely.

Patty Loew:

Definitely a hodag. Next Thursday at 7:00, the full report on our statewide news magazine program “In Wisconsin," right here on Wisconsin Public Television. Finally this week the beautiful Rush Creek. Owned by the DNR, it was designated a state natural area in 1981. Enjoy the view and have a great week "In Wisconsin."

Announcer:

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