



James Clayton/Jeff

New ECOs

On September 26, 23 new Environmental Conservation Officers (ECOs) graduated to join DEC's police force. The graduation ceremony was held at the DEC Training Academy in Oswego County. This year's class completed DEC's Division of Law Enforcement's 18th basic training school where they underwent a six-month, in-residence training program. ECOs receive nearly the same training as state police, but they also receive specialized training. ECOs' focus lies in enforcing state environmental laws and regulations, and detecting and investigating suspected violations.

Hellbenders Found

Like its name suggests, the hellbender's monstrous stature makes it New York State's largest salamander. It is found in only two watersheds and may be declining in both. New York lists it



Jeff Humphries

as a species of special concern and it is a candidate for federal listing by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. To help combat the population decline, the state granted the project, "Factors Affecting the Status and Distribution of the Eastern Hellbender," carried out by SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. The project has already had significant success in documenting occurrences of this large salamander. Last summer, project members found hellbenders at two new sites in central New York—one where past records show a population of hellbenders once lived, and the other a site where hellbenders were previously unknown.

TB Found In Deer

Routine testing in October of a captive deer herd has raised some concern. The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets found tuberculosis (TB) in one deer. It tested positive to a TB screening test and was euthanized; the autopsy confirmed the TB diagnosis. Since then, other tests have been administered to identify the specific strand of TB and the affected herd was quarantined to protect wild deer and nearby domestic animals from the danger of contamination. The

risk of any wild deer being exposed to TB is slight, but DEC is testing some wild deer in the surrounding area to make sure. Though this case doesn't show any evidence of spreading TB to humans, DEC and the Department of Health continue to monitor the situation. Hunters and those who handle deer should take basic precautions to reduce the risk of exposure. For instance, wear gloves when field-dressing deer and minimize your contact with blood and other body fluids. If you have questions about your livestock, contact New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets at (518) 457-3502.

Northern Snakehead Removal

Last summer, DEC piloted a massive effort to remove all northern snakehead fish from the upper Ridgebury Lake/Caitlin Creek watershed in Orange County. Northern snakeheads are an invasive species native to Asia, and are capable of causing serious damage to resident aquatic species. The Caitlin Creek watershed eventually leads to the Hudson River, so if left, northern snakehead could invade much of the United States via the canal systems and the Great Lakes. DEC's Bureau of Fisheries decided to rid the lake of the invasive fish by a rotenone application. Before the treatment, DEC Region 3 fisheries staff removed live fish of other species and kept them in five, 4,000-gallon holding tanks. They were kept to restock the lake and become the brood stock after the northern snakeheads were removed. After the treatment, dead fish were removed and transported to a Department of Transportation composting facility.



Laurie Mercer

Homage to Local Hero

In addition to native son Francis Bellamy, the man who wrote the Pledge of Allegiance, children in Mount Morris have a new hometown hero to celebrate. Residents unveiled a new blue-and-yellow historic marker on June 13, 2008 for John Wesley Powell, best known for being the first explorer to navigate the length of the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon. He was born in Mount Morris on September 23, 1834 and was a soldier, explorer, author, teacher and scientist. He was Director of the Bureau of American Ethnology at the Smithsonian Institution and for a time, served as director of the United States Geological Survey.

Powell lived on both sides of nearby Letchworth Gorge, commonly known as the Grand Canyon of the East. He died in 1902 at age 68. The new marker stands in front of Powell's family home at 43 Chapel Street.

(Pictured above are Town Historian Nick Loverde, County Historian Amie Alden, Powell's sister's descendants Maria Lombardo, Sue Benzoni and Lombardo's daughters.)

—Laurie Mercer, Monroe County

New Access to Catskill Lands

In October, New York State and New York City officials completed an agreement to open 13,000 acres of city-owned property in the Catskills. Hiking, hunting, fishing and trapping on city-owned property near state Forest Preserve land in the Catskills no longer require a city permit. Now only DEC hunting, fishing and trapping licenses will be required. DEC Commissioner Pete Grannis said the new agreement is a "significant accomplishment that will boost recreational opportunities in the Catskills and is a sign of the rejuvenated partnership among state, city and local officials." DEC will patrol the new access areas, enforce regulations and further assist in land management. This agreement is the latest of many recreational improvements for the Catskills, including a new permit that grants DEC permission to manage Mount Hayden, and a Land Master Plan for the Catskill Forest Preserve, which will eventually create a northern Catskill bike corridor. A committee is also developing a work plan for a recreational boating "pilot" program at Cannonsville Reservoir.

Ask the Biologist

Q: Why don't I ever see any raccoons during the winter months?

A: While they aren't true hibernators, raccoons become inactive during cold or snowy weather. They stay holed up in their dens for most of our cold northern winters, so you are less likely to see them. In November or early December, they retreat to a rock crevice, a hollow tree, an underground burrow dug by some other animal, or an abandoned building and remain there until the weather improves. Like bears, their heartbeat and breathing slow down, but they are alert and will awaken quickly if disturbed. True hibernators, like woodchucks and some bats, go into a coma-like state and do not awaken immediately if disturbed; they must first warm their bodies before arousing.

Warm snaps in late winter and early spring will bring raccoons from their slumber out to forage before returning for another extended sleep period.

In warmer climates, raccoons may stay active all year.

—Dave Nelson



Susan L. Shafer