

Changing Homes

I took this picture on the northern shore of Chaumont Bay off Lake Ontario. Could you confirm that it is a mink? She was moving five kits, I think due to the fact that higher water was invading her home.

Daniel Neave
Chaumont Bay, Jefferson County



You were lucky to get such an excellent and unusual photograph of a female mink carrying one of her young "kits." The female gently holds the kit in her mouth, without harm, as she moves the young from one location to another. Members of the weasel family, mink live throughout New York State, and are typically found in wetland habitats, including the edges of ponds or lakes. They eat a variety of animal foods, including muskrats, small rodents, birds, fish, frogs and invertebrates (e.g., crawfish). Mink breed during the winter (as late as mid-March). Females give birth to three to six kits in late April or early May. The kit in your photo is probably just a few weeks old. Mink frequently move from one den site to another, using several dens within their home range for shelter and raising their young. Most movements occur during the night, so this daytime photograph is especially interesting.

—Gordon Batcheller, DEC Wildlife Biologist

*See similar story on p.32

Have You Seen This Pin?

Can any of your readers shed some light on identifying the enclosed Fire Patrol badge? It measures 1¾ inches in diameter and I think it is of nickel and silver. On the back is the maker's name: C.G. Braxmar Co., 10 Maiden Lane, New York, NY. Any help will be appreciated.

Chester Smith
Altamont, Albany County



While I have personally never seen this badge, it dates between 1901 and 1911. In 1901, the Fisheries Game and Forest Commission was replaced by the Forest Fish and Game Commission. Then, the Forest Fish and Game Commission was replaced by the Conservation Commission in 1911, so the badge must date between 1901 and 1911. I would most likely guess that it is between 1908 and 1911 as this is when forest fire patrols intensified and the title of Patrolman was used. The title of Patrolman was replaced with that of Forest Ranger in 1912.

—Thomas Rinaldi, Dir. DEC Forest Protection & Fire Mgmt.
Editor's Note: if anyone has additional information about this badge, please let us know.

Behemoth Beaver

We received this photo of Greg Bree of Newark, NY, who recently caught this 70-pound beaver near Phelps, in the Finger Lakes Region. We wondered if it was common to find such a large beaver, so we asked one of our biologists, who said:

That's a large beaver by any standard! In New York, adult beaver range in size from about 35 to 70 lbs., so this animal is definitely at the upper end of the weight range. This beaver is likely at least four years old, the age when they typically reach their peak weight. The accurate age determination of a beaver requires an X-ray of its jaw or the analysis of its teeth to count "cementum annuli" (like counting growth rings of a tree). Beaver live throughout New York State and the recovery of their populations in the early 1900s is one of wildlife conservation's greatest success stories. Beaver enhance and improve wetland habitats by flooding marshes and meadows, but this behavior may also cause damage to roads, homes, or farms. Trapping is an essential part of New York's beaver management program and each year New York trappers take between 15,000 and 20,000 beaver.

—Gordon Batcheller, DEC Wildlife Biologist



Bear in Mind

We received this photo from a reader. The photo was captured last June by a trail camera located near Howard in Steuben County. The sow had four cubs with her—one was blonde.

Clearly, the oddity in the photograph is the blonde-colored cub. While more than 99% of New York black bears exhibit a black coat color, some bears are occasionally seen with color variations ranging from brown to cinnamon to blonde. Bears with these color variations are still black bears (*Ursus americanus*).

What strikes me about this photo, however, is that it appears

New York State Conservationist, April 2009



these bears are being fed. The intentional and unintentional feeding of bears is unwise and can be illegal, which was the case in this scenario. Bears learn by association. If someone feeds bears at their house, bears learn to associate

houses with food. If bears get birdseed, garbage or food scraps at one house, they look for that food source at other houses. This all leads to unwanted visits at other homes and camps and can result in the bear entering homes which is potentially dangerous. Please contact the nearest DEC office if you see anyone feeding bears or bears feeding close to any buildings.

—Jeremy Hurst, DEC Wildlife Biologist

Holey Fish

While fishing the East Branch of Owego Creek, I caught a brown trout with a large, red hole in its back. I wasn't sure I wanted to touch it, but the fish put up quite a fight and didn't seem bothered by it. Can you tell me what might have caused the hole? Could it have been a heron?

Bob Fairbrother
Vestal, Broome County



Based on the photos you sent, I would agree that the most likely cause of the injury was a heron looking for a meal. We sometimes see this kind of injury in fish at our hatcheries, where fish-eating birds like herons are quite common and can be a problem. Depending on the severity and location of the wound, a fish may or may not survive. In this case, the wound looks pretty serious, and the fish most likely would have eventually succumbed to the injury.

—Ed Woltmann, DEC Fisheries Biologist

New York State Conservationist, April 2009



Creative Catch

I took this picture of a sharp-shinned hawk that has been stalking my feeder. One day I noticed that the birds seemed to be hitting my window a lot, and I couldn't understand why. One really hit the window hard, so I decided to go and see if it was okay. To my surprise, this is what I found, and it all made sense to me why the birds were hitting my window. Since that day, I've seen the hawk swoop in at least once a day to try to catch a meal, and it succeeded at least three more times. I know they have to eat, but he kind of cheats. When he swoops, he scares the birds, which then fly into my window. Then he's right there on top of them. Just thought I'd share this story with you.

Brenda MB. Todd
Bath, Steuben County

Thanks for sharing your great photo and story of the opportunistic hawk. The sharp-shinned hawk seems to have found an ample food source in your yard. Both sharp-shinned and the similar, larger Cooper's hawk are accipiters, a group of hawks with short wings and long tails. They can easily maneuver in yards and woodlands and are well adapted to catching smaller birds. The downy woodpecker in your photo gives a ready size reference to help identify this hawk as a sharp-shinned.

Birds often fly into windows, and sometimes are injured or killed by the collision. Some methods to prevent that are to make the window more visible to the bird (see Ask the Biologist). As you noted, the hawk needs to eat too. We put out feeders with seeds for the smaller birds, and attract them to our yards. In turn, the presence of the birds attracts the hawks. Such is the way of nature.

—Scott Stoner, DEC Research Scientist

✉ LETTERS

No Trespassing!

I thought you and your readers might enjoy this photo. As I was hiking to Cliff and Redfield near Mt. Marcy, I stopped to rest at the Flowed Lands lean-to and encountered this little fellow. I guess he wasn't too happy I was taking such a long break on his turf!

Barbara Northrup
Albany County



Write to us

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📖 REVIEW by Craig Thompson

Another Day, Another Dollar: The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Catskills

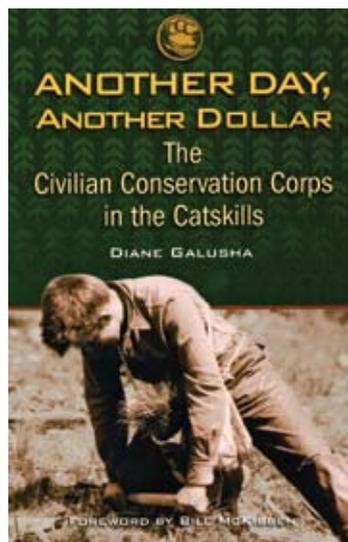
by Diane Galusha

224 pages, \$16.95

Black Dome Press; Hensonville; 2008

www.blackdomepress.com; (518) 734-6357

History, said the wag, is a trumped-up fable about something that never happened, told by someone who wasn't even there. Sad to say, when it comes to the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), there are fewer and fewer among us who were indeed there (1933-42). But thankfully Diane Galusha has found several, and has faithfully preserved their vivid remembrances in *Another Day, Another Dollar: The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Catskills*. And, as Galusha's treatment ultimately brings home, their story is indeed the stuff of fables.



In painstakingly sifting through arcane archival sources, Galusha deftly teases out many fascinating stories about 11 selected Catskill region CCC camps, weaving in delicious first-hand accounts from the enrollees themselves, all richly embellished with excellent photo documentation. And though her milieu is the CCC program in the Catskills, Galusha carefully highlights camps that represent almost every type of CCC work in New York—the bug control camps at Boiceville and Deposit, the soil conservation camp

at Gallupville, reforestation camps at Masonville and Ten Mile River, to name just a few—thus providing by extension a fairly accurate picture of CCC operations throughout the entire state.

When camping and tramping throughout the Catskill region, it is virtually impossible not to bump up against CCC work projects, which were built to endure and are still operative today. But the camps themselves were mere stick shacks not intended for long-term occupation. Thanks to Galusha's tireless bird-dogging, actual locations of these camps are pinpointed, and many extant original structures identified, so those of us who weren't there can at least go there.

It is difficult, considering the absolutely astonishing accomplishments which Galusha tallies, to overstate or exaggerate just how significant the CCC program was. Not only did it advance the conservation of New York's precious natural resources, but it also promoted the physical, emotional and intellectual development of New York's 250,000 enrollees, and the socio-economic welfare of the many families and communities touched by this heroic initiative. Considering the plethora of primary material scattered about in public (and, ostensibly, private) collections, it is truly unfortunate that, save for a solitary roadside marker here or a spartan monument there, there is no grand communal locale or definitive tome commemorating New York State's considerable CCC presence. But until then, Galusha's contribution does nicely indeed. Published during the 75th anniversary of the CCC program, *Another Day, Another Dollar* is a compelling read and a fitting and most worthy tribute.

Craig D. Thompson is Director of DEC's Five Rivers Environmental Education Center in Delmar, site of a former CCC Camp (S-72) from 1933-36.