

Watching Wildlife | Tracking Turkeys | Record Trees

NEW YORK STATE

# Conservationist

APRIL 2011

## Fish for the Future

**A.E. Tait**  
Adirondack Portraiture

**Conservationist for Kids!**  
New issue inside





Dear Reader,

I am honored that Governor Cuomo has chosen me to lead the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). As a lifelong conservationist, I look forward to serving you, the public, as we work to preserve and protect New York's precious natural resources.

At a time when New York faces significant economic challenges, it is important to remember that outdoor recreation contributes a great deal to the state's economy. More than half-a-million non-resident tourists recreate in the Empire State, spending more than \$3.5 billion annually. Visitors to DEC properties, including campgrounds, state forests and wildlife management areas, sustain local economies by purchasing hunting and fishing gear, eating at local restaurants, staying at inns and visiting shops and markets. By protecting and conserving the State's natural resources, DEC can ensure that New York remains a top outdoor recreation destination.

I intend to partner with local governments and other state agencies to encourage New York families and visitors from other states to experience New York's unique natural areas. Whether you are a hiker or hunter, birder or camper, boater or skier, *Conservationist* offers stories that will help you find new places and new ways to explore New York's great outdoors.

As a special feature, the enclosed issue of *Conservationist for Kids* highlights the Empire State Development Corporation's "Green Tourism" campaign which encourages visitors to patronize hotels, inns and restaurants across the state that are committed to sustainable business practices.

Whether you prefer fishing in a mountain stream, strolling along a beach at low tide or listening to a loon near your lakeside campground, New York's wondrous natural world will reward you many times over.

Enjoy!

Commissioner Joe Martens

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Michael Bopp, *Acting Director of Communications*  
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David H. Nelson, *Editor*  
Eileen C. Stegemann, *Assistant Editor*  
Megan Ciotti, *Business Manager*  
Jenna Kerwin, *Staff Writer*  
Jennifer Peyser, *Art Director/Designer*

DIVISION OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS & EDUCATION  
Frank Herec, *Artist/Designer*  
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Bernadette LaManna, *Contributing Editor*  
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Elaine Bloom, *Contributing Editor*  
Elizabeth Borysewicz, *Staff Assistant*  
Matt Forsyth, *Artist*

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The *Conservationist* (ISSN0010-650X), © 2011 by NYSDEC, is an official publication of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation published bimonthly at 625 Broadway, 2nd Floor, Albany, NY 12233-4502. Telephone: (518) 402-8047

Manuscripts, photographs and artwork will be accepted if accompanied by SASE. Please write to the above address with an author's query or to request a Contributor's Guide. The publisher assumes no responsibility for loss or damage of unsolicited materials.

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\$18 per year, \$24 for two years, \$30 for three years. Outside the U.S., add \$27 per year with a check drawn on a U.S. bank. All orders must be prepaid.

Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for new subscriptions or changes of address. Periodical postage paid at Albany, NY, and additional mailing offices.

Send check or money order payable to:

*Conservationist*  
NYSDEC  
625 Broadway  
Albany, NY 12233-4502

or call: **1-800-678-6399**  
Visit the Department's website at:  
**www.dec.ny.gov**

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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:

*Conservationist*  
NYSDEC  
625 Broadway  
Albany, NY 12233-4502

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Mike Drahms, Jamestown Audubon

April 2011 Volume 65, Number 5

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See pg. 16



Ray Minnick



# Labor of Love

## Fish stocking in New York.

By Eileen Stegemann

I remember the first time I helped stock fish. It was a bright, sunny day, unseasonably warm for late March in northern New York, and we had just driven to a lake in the middle of nowhere only to be greeted by a relatively large group of enthusiastic helpers and on-lookers. As expected, many of them were anglers, but quite a few were not. It turns out that fish stocking is cause for celebration, something many in the crowd had been anticipating for weeks.

An angler myself, I was excited to assist in adding fish to the local fish population. But I was fresh out of college and brand new to DEC, so when I spotted the crowd I felt a bit intimidated by the fact that most of the people here knew a lot more than I did about what we were going to do. In fact, a number of them had been helping DEC with stocking for nearly 20 years, making me all the more self-conscious of my “newbie” status as a fish and wildlife technician. But that didn’t matter. There was a great sense of camaraderie and excitement, and I was instantly put at ease.

As I carried buckets of fish down to the water’s edge—the stocking truck couldn’t get close enough for the hose to reach the water and so fish had to be hand-carried—I struck up conversations with my fellow stocking buddies. Some had been fishing the lake for many years and filled me in

on the status of the local fish populations, while others regaled me with stories of fish caught and fish lost. Still others simply said how much they enjoyed being part of putting fish in the lake. What struck me most was the knowledge and dedication shared by everyone I spoke with.

James Clayton



Sometimes fish have to be hand-carried from the stocking truck and then carefully poured into a stream or lake.



Susan L. Shafer

Stocking fish can be hard work—especially when you’re carrying pails full of fish and water down a somewhat steep embankment. At 23 years old, I was amazed at the stamina of some of the more “mature” helpers, and even more impressed by the people who did this for a living. The phrase I heard over and over again was, “it’s a labor of love.”

The following fall I went to the then newly built Salmon River Hatchery to take photos. My assignment was to document and familiarize myself with the hatchery operation, especially the spawning process. The adjacent river and hatchery raceway were literally choked with huge salmon all making their way upstream in a spawning run. I’d never seen such huge fish up close (many were more than two feet long), and it was fascinating to watch hatchery staff handle the large fish with apparent ease. They

*New York State Conservationist, April 2011*

collected eggs, mixed them with milt (fish sperm), and then kept them for what would be a future crop of fish.

When my work took me to Rome Hatchery, I got a closer look at the fish-raising process. As I toured the facility, I gained a greater appreciation for the scope and precision of the work. There were many troughs containing screened baskets full of trout eggs. Staff explained that these were incubators where



Susan L. Shafer

Hatchery staff collect and mix together eggs (left) and milt, or sperm (right), from adult fish to produce what will be a future crop of fish.



Susan L. Shafer



Look for this symbol to learn how you can support NY's economy.

By choosing to recreate in New York State, you support local businesses, and the Empire State's economy as a whole!

## New York's Fish Hatcheries

DEC operates 12 fish hatcheries across the state. All are open to the public from spring through fall, and several are open year-round.

Each hatchery specializes in raising one or more species of fish, including brook trout, brown trout, rainbow trout, lake trout, steelhead, chinook salmon, coho salmon, landlocked salmon, walleye, muskellunge, tiger muskellunge, lake sturgeon, paddlefish and round whitefish.

Together, DEC's hatcheries annually produce more than 200 million fish, weighing nearly 1,000,000 pounds.

Most fish are taken to stocking sites on specially equipped trucks. DEC stocking trucks annually log more than half a million miles. Some remote waters are stocked by airplane or helicopter.

To ensure the best survival of stocked fish, various life stages are stocked at different times of the year: fingerlings (young fish three to five inches long) are generally stocked in the fall; yearlings (older fish six to nine inches long) are stocked in the spring.

Check out DEC's website at [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7742.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7742.html) to see hatchery locations, available visiting times, and fish species present. For a list of stocked waters, check out [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7739.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7739.html).

Huge salmon and trout make their way upstream and into the Salmon River Hatchery during their annual spawning runs.



fertilized eggs were kept aerated and carefully monitored as they developed and hatched. Workers used siphon hoses to remove any dead eggs. Outside there were young fish in cement raceways; many congregated near the end where an automatic feeder released fish food pellets. It reminded me of my fish tank at home, but on a much larger scale.

## There's a lot to see and experience at a fish hatchery...

As I toured the facility, I also felt a connection to the history involved. Scanning some old photos displayed on the wall, hatchery staff proudly explained that the state has been raising and stocking fish since the early 1870s (Rome Hatchery itself was built in 1932). I marveled at the old images of horse-drawn wagons carrying large metal milk jugs filled with fish, and DEC staff with these same milk jugs strapped to their backs on their way into a pond. Now *there* was a dedicated bunch, I thought.

Looking back, I recall how much I enjoyed that day. There's a lot to see and experience at a fish hatchery, from ponds loaded with small or large fish, to large aquariums full of local fish.

DEC photo



In the early days, hardy personnel would carry fish in large containers strapped to their backs for stocking remote waters.

DEC operates 12 fish hatcheries across the state (see map below), so there's bound to be one near you. Several have impressive visitors' centers, and all make an excellent destination as a class trip or family outing.

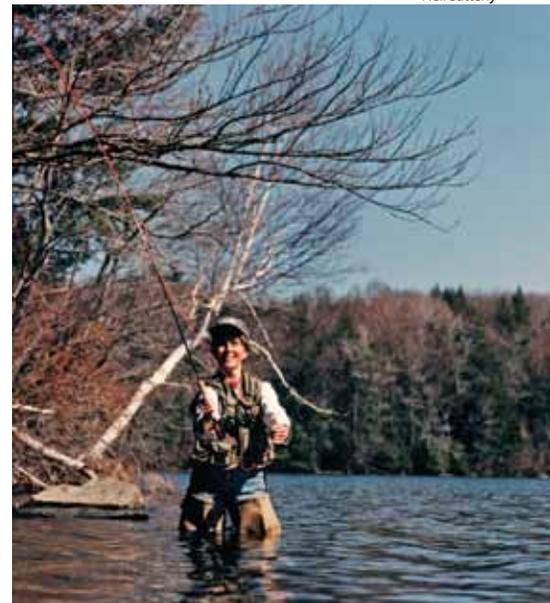
I would encourage everyone to visit a fish hatchery and witness the operation for themselves. It's a wonderful experience and the great memories you make

stay with you. For me, it's been nearly 30 years since that first day I went stocking, but I still fondly remember it like it was last week.

Assistant editor for *Conservationist*, **Eileen Stegemann** counts fishing as one of her favorite leisure activities.



Neil Satterly



# Discover New York's Wild Side

*DEC's Watchable Wildlife Program brings people and nature together.*

By Ellen Bidell

Some people plan their vacation around an amusement park or a great beach. My family plans our trips based on the wildlife that can be seen. We travel throughout the country and world to view wildlife in its natural habitat. Despite all the amazing places we have been, we've found that some of the best wildlife viewing opportunities are right here in New York State. Whether it's following bobcat tracks in the swamp near our home, or catching a fleeting glimpse of a moose near our camp in the Adirondacks, the resident wildlife never disappoints us.

To fill out our "lifetime list" of wildlife species, several years ago we visited a campground in Old Forge known to have a healthy bear population. We weren't disappointed (although we did have to wait until we were leaving to see our first bear). Now, what started out as



bobcat

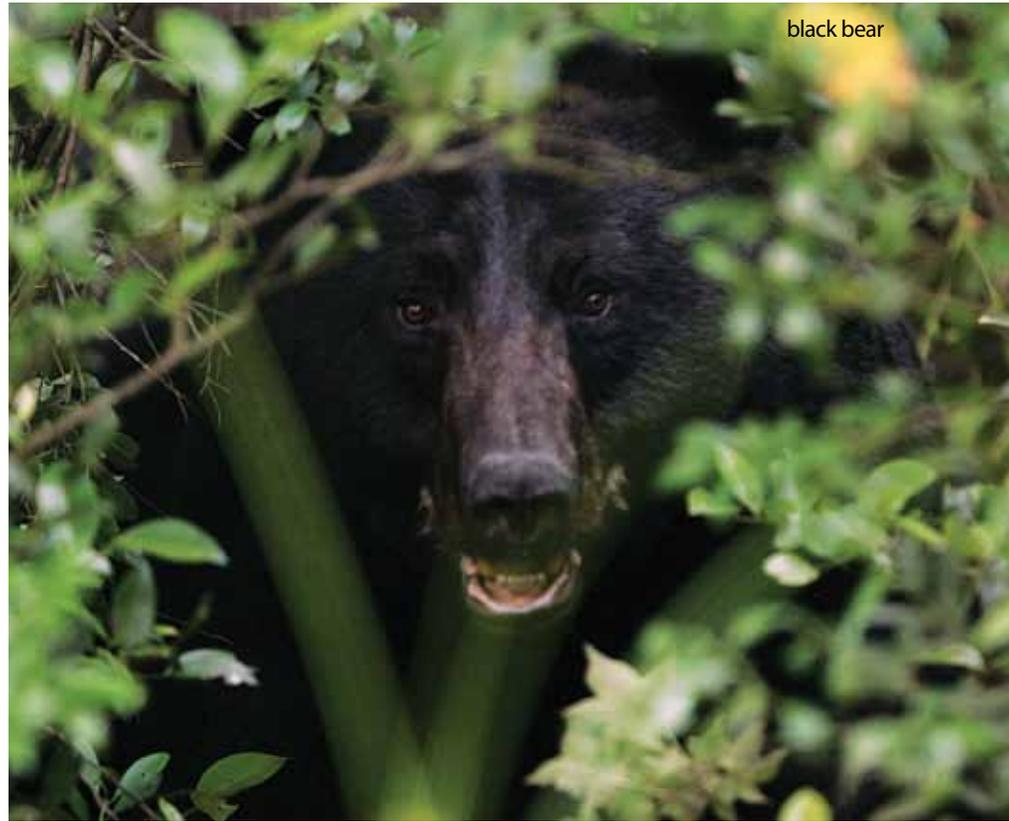
Scott Smith

a weekend trip to see a bear or two has turned into an annual tradition, and this fall four generations of our family will join us.

Watching wildlife can be as simple as enjoying birds at the birdfeeder in your yard, to planning a vacation in an area known for its viewing opportunities. With thousands of species calling New York home, the opportunities are endless—whether you are interested in birds, mammals or even fish!

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) owns and operates millions of acres of state forests, forest preserves and Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) which offer plenty of opportunity for wildlife watching. The WMA program is part of a long-term effort to establish permanent access to lands in New York State for the management and promotion of its fish and wildlife resources. There are more than 85 WMAs scattered across the state for your use and enjoyment. Together, these areas contain more than 200,000 acres, providing enough room for all of us to get outdoors and have fun.

If you're not sure how to begin, check out DEC's Watchable Wildlife Program which provides information about the



black bear

best spots to view wildlife, including many public lands. The Watchable Wildlife website ([www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/55423.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/55423.html)) breaks the state into nine geographic areas, with more than sixty locations listed. Each site description includes the species that can be viewed there, the best places for

James Clayton



red-shouldered hawk

Susan L. Shafer



fawn



viewing, other recreational opportunities like hiking, boating, skiing, hunting or fishing, and specific directions to the location. The website also includes a list of upcoming Watchable Wildlife events across the state, as well as tips on viewing and photographing animals.

Whether you choose to spend a single day birdwatching near home, or a full weekend camping and looking for bears, New York offers wildlife viewing and recreational opportunities in every part of the state. So grab your binoculars, a guidebook and bring your family or friends to spend some time enjoying New York's wild side.

**Ellen Bidell** is a citizen participation specialist in DEC's Division of Public Affairs.



spotted salamander

James Clayton



## A Sample of Watchable Wildlife Sites

### Prospect Park—Brooklyn, Kings County

The next time you're in New York City, visit Prospect Park—inhabited by reptiles, amphibians, and dozens of forest and water birds. Hikers may see red-tailed hawks, black-crowned night heron or American coot. Anglers can catch large-mouth bass and other freshwater fish. Activities include horseback riding, bicycling, paddle boat rentals and ice skating. The Prospect Park Zoo and Botanical Garden are located within the park.

### Mongaup Valley WMA—Sullivan and Orange Counties

The bald eagle can be seen from various observation buildings along the roadway. Goshawks, turkey vultures, great-horned owls and woodcock live in the area. Visitors may see white-tailed deer, black bears, coyotes and beaver. Hiking, hunting, fishing and boating (no motors) are allowed.

### DEC Five Rivers Environmental Education Center—Delmar, Albany County

The varied habitats (fields, orchards, forests and wetlands) on the 450-acre property make Five Rivers a paradise for the more than 225 species of birds that visit here. Visitors can picnic, walk (or ski) trails, and observe wildlife including birds, deer, squirrels, muskrats, beaver, turtles, frogs and several fish species.

### Salmon River Fish Hatchery—Altmar, Oswego County

Visitors in September and October (and also in early April) can see large salmon or trout jump up the fish ladder or watch biologists take eggs from female fish and fertilize them with the milt (sperm) taken from male fish. Brown trout, steelhead trout and several species of salmon can be viewed in outdoor raceways and circular tanks.



Up-close look at a frog

Susan L. Shafer



dragonfly

Susan L. Shafer

bluebirds



DEC photo

raccoon



Susan L. Shafer

eastern cottontail



Susan L. Shafer

### Upper and Lower Lakes WMA—Canton, St. Lawrence County

Upper and Lower Lakes WMA is an important nesting area for water-dependent birds, a migratory bird concentration area, and valuable wetland furbearer habitat. The Indian Creek Nature Center features trails, observation platforms and a picnic pavilion. Visitors may spot wild turkey, common loon, muskrat, otters and beaver. Hunting, fishing, hiking, birdwatching, canoeing, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing are all allowed.

### Montezuma Wildlife Refuge—Seneca Falls, Seneca County

Situated in the middle of one of the busiest bird migration routes on the Atlantic Flyway, Montezuma Wildlife Refuge is best known for the tens of thousands of birds that migrate through the area each year. There are more than 240 species of birds, 43 species of mammals, 15 species of reptiles, and 16 species of amphibians found on the refuge. The visitors' center has an "Osprey cam," which offers a real-time view of an osprey nest.

### Conesus Inlet WMA—Livingston County

Two scenic overlooks and nature trails provide plenty of opportunities for viewing wildlife, while each spring, spawning walleye and northern pike draw angling enthusiasts to Conesus Inlet. Birdwatchers can look for falcons, marsh birds and ruffed grouse. Hunting and boating (no motors or trailers) are allowed in the area.

### Tillman Road WMA—Clarence, Erie County

Tillman Road WMA includes a variety of habitats—wet lowland, marsh, open water, grassy fields, a deciduous swamp and hardwood forest. Seven different species of frogs serenade visitors along the boardwalk in spring and summer. Other common species include Canada geese, herons, beaver and cottontail rabbits. Visitors can enjoy hiking trails, a viewing tower, birdwatching, cross-country skiing, fishing and trapping.

For additional Watchable Wildlife sites in New York State, click on the owl eyes logo on DEC's homepage at [www.dec.ny.gov](http://www.dec.ny.gov). And be sure to check out DEC TV at [www.dec.ny.gov/dectv/dectv.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/dectv/dectv.html) for helpful clips on watchable wildlife and recreational opportunities in New York.



# Providing for the Future

**Sometimes, the best places to view wildlife are also the best locations to hunt and fish.**

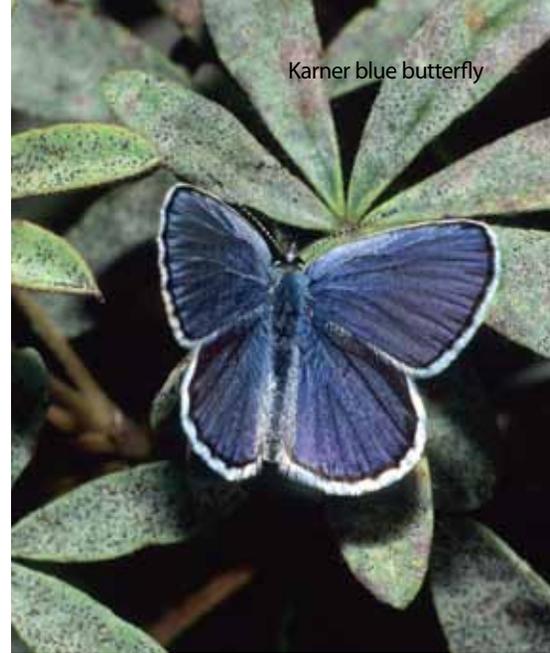
Beginning in the early 1900s, DEC and its predecessor (the NYS Conservation Department) began working with the federal government, state government, and sportsmen and women to secure parcels of land to designate as Wildlife Management Areas. These areas are primarily for the production and use of wildlife.

For more than 60 years, the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937 (Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act) and the Sport Fish Restoration Act of 1950 (Dingell-Johnson Act) have provided a reliable source of funds for the recovery of fish and wildlife populations and other conservation projects through excise taxes on the purchase of firearms, ammunition, archery equipment, fishing gear, and boats and boating equipment. In 2011, New York State is projected to receive \$20 million.

These acts ensured that public lands were truly set aside for multiple public uses, for hunters, hikers, anglers and boaters to share.

## Federal Aid projects include:

- **Protecting and restoring wildlife through the management of habitat, regulation of use, and the acquisition of natural areas**
- **Monitoring the status of fish and wildlife populations**
- **Providing hunter safety education courses**
- **Improving wildlife and fisheries management through research**
- **Educating the public about water resources**



Karner blue butterfly

Walley Haley



gray fox kits

Dr. Michael J. Walawender



walleye

Dick Thomas



family fishing

James Clayton



# TRACKING THE WILD TURKEY

Three states cooperate on gobbler survival study.

Scott Smith

By Mike Schiavone

Connie Adams



To catch a flock of turkeys, biologists deploy a large net that contains the birds until biologists can carefully remove them.

*On a cold, snowy, February morning, a small group of biologists and technicians waits patiently in hidden blinds and a nearby parked truck for a large flock of turkeys to make its way down the hillside to a small pile of cracked corn. As the turkeys come within a stone's throw of the bait, they accelerate to a quick trot, each wanting to beat their comrades to the easy meal.*

*The field team watches closely. Someone's finger is poised on the button that will ignite the explosive charge to fire rockets that will carry a large net over the flock. The birds must be in position with their heads down so that the controlled chaos that is about to ensue will result in the most birds caught without being injured.*

*Wait. Wait. Now!*

*With a bang, the net deploys and turkeys hop around under the webbing like popping corn. DEC staff, college interns and volunteers quickly descend on the scene to carefully extract birds from the net one at a time and place them safely in specially designed boxes.*

*One by one, every male bird has both legs outfitted with a metal band labeled with a toll-free number a hunter can call to report his or her harvest. After the turkeys are banded, they are released at the location where they were captured, and the tracking begins...*

With turkey populations expanding in the northeastern United States, biologists responsible for managing these great game birds realized some of their data was getting stale. They longed for better information on turkey survival and harvest rates, and better estimates of wild turkey numbers.

So, in 2006, DEC joined the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf), Pennsylvania Game Commission, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and Pennsylvania State University on a cooperative, four-year project to examine the harvest and survival of male wild turkeys (or “gobblers”) during the spring hunting season. Over four winters, biologists trapped turkeys in 54 of upstate New York’s 55 counties. During this time, DEC staff and biologists in Ohio and Pennsylvania banded a total of 3,266 gobblers; more than 1,500 were adults (or toms) and 1,700 were juveniles (or jakes). The data collected allowed biologists to more accurately estimate turkey



Biologists place captured turkeys into separate boxes and then band the birds one at a time.

harvest rates (the percent taken by hunters) and survival rates (the percent that survive from one year to the next).

During the study period, hunters (and a few other lucky folks) returned bands from 1,429 birds—nearly half of those banded.

Some hunters were no doubt surprised and delighted to find bands with the words “\$100 Reward.” The sizable reward—placed on about half of the banded gobblers—virtually guaranteed that those birds were reported.

When we analyzed the information from these bands, we learned that the annual spring harvest rate of gobblers in New York was about 17% for jakes (males under two-years-old), and 36% for toms (adult males). For some time, we had suspected that hunters were “passing up” jakes in favor of toms, and now we had evidence to support this theory. Similar patterns and estimates were observed for the other two states, as well.

Additionally, we learned turkey harvest rates were highest in the western part of the state, particularly in the Lake Plains and Appalachian Hills regions. To help explain this, we looked at the number of hunters, hunting effort, and landscape-scale habitat characteristics such as the amount of forest cover within an ecological zone. We did not find a link between hunting participation and effort (hunting “pressure”) and the harvest rates observed, but there was a relationship—albeit a weak one—between harvest rate

Lance Clark



Volunteers, college interns and DEC staff worked to capture and band male turkeys for the four-year study. Here, DEC’s Becca MacBlane holds a recently banded male turkey.

and the amount of forest cover. As the amount of forest declined, harvest rates increased. So, in areas like the Lake Plains where forest habitats are more fragmented, turkeys may be more vulnerable to harvest because hunters keyed-in on these smaller patches of habitat.

Data also provided us with a good estimate of the annual survival rate of male turkeys. These numbers varied for toms and jakes, and from one state to another. In New York, for instance, about two-thirds of jakes survived to the following year, while only about one-third of toms survived. Ohio and Pennsylvania saw similar survival rates.

Band return data also helped biologists learn how and when turkeys died. In addition to hunting in the spring and fall seasons, turkeys were killed by poaching, vehicle collisions, predation and disease. In all three states, mortality was lower for jakes than for toms. Annual survival rates for toms were only 30-40% due to high harvest rates and relatively high mortality from other sources. Other researchers found that annual natural mortality (not caused by

Rocco Saccone, Jr.



Based on results of the gobbler survey, biologists estimate there are about 61,000 toms and 64,000 jakes in New York.

humans) was 24% for juveniles and 30% for adults.

When a hunter turned in a band from a turkey he or she killed during the spring season, or when someone turned

in a band from a bird killed by a car or predator, we got valuable information on how far that bird moved from where it was captured and banded. We could also infer what type of terrain they had



National Wild Turkey Federation /Mossy Oak

This study was designed to look specifically at spring turkey hunting. However, about 5% of reward bands recovered were from turkeys taken in the fall. The few recoveries reported suggested relatively low harvest rates during the fall hunting season, but getting a fair estimate of fall harvest rates would have required additional banding of wild turkeys immediately prior to the fall hunting season. What we could tell from the data we had, however, was that more than two-thirds of fall harvest reward band recoveries were from jakes, which suggested fall harvest rates were greater for jakes than toms.



Biologists placed bands on both legs of the male turkeys.

to cross to get there. Turkeys gather in large flocks during the winter, but as the days grow longer and warmer, and breeding season kicks into gear, those flocks break into smaller groups. Our findings indicated most turkeys were recovered within four miles of their capture location, though some birds (mostly juveniles) did disperse more than 20 miles. Unlike other birds, turkeys don't move very far.

After learning about survival, mortality, reproduction, distribution and movements, it was time to address a key question: "So, how many are there?"



Following banding, toms and jakes were released at the same location where they were captured.



## Learning by Doing

One of the most challenging aspects of wildlife research is finding efficient techniques that yield good information. Biologists have been capturing and banding turkeys for more than 50 years, but are still perfecting methods.

For example, when conducting a "band-recovery" study, biologists assume that the bands placed on a bird's legs stay there. Unfortunately, the "butt-end" style of band (a metal band squeezed together to form a butt joint around a turkey leg) used in many studies can open up over time and fall off as gobblers walk, fight, forage and fly. Turkeys have strong beaks, too and perhaps could pry such bands off given enough time.

In our study, we tested the butt-end band design against a type of band that locks in place with a rivet. By putting one of each type on the same turkey, we could later determine how long they stayed on a bird. We found that after 15 months, more than half of the butt-end crimped bands had fallen off. This information will be helpful to biologists when designing future studies of wild turkeys across the U.S.

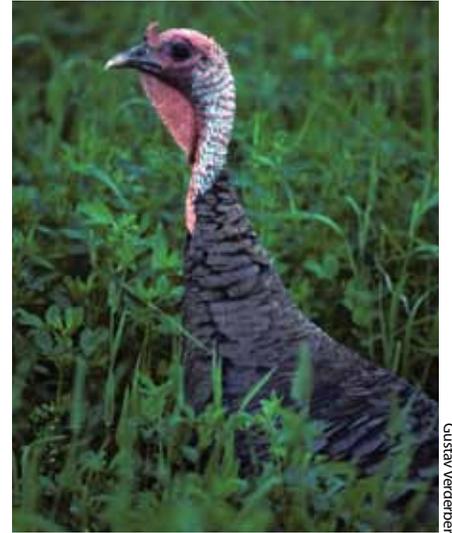
That's where the collaboration with other states came in. By combining band return data from this study with harvest data gathered by other state agencies, we built a solid estimate of the abundance of male wild turkeys. During the study, we estimated the average number of gobblers in New York to be about 125,000, of which 61,000 were toms and 64,000 were jakes. Though we banded only males, we estimated that New York's wild turkey population likely exceeds 250,000 birds because biologists have previously found there are always more females than males. Pennsylvania's gobbler population averaged about 109,000 birds (83,000 toms, 26,000 jakes), followed by Ohio at 71,000 (34,000 jakes, 37,000 toms).

A project of this scale—three states, dozens of people, thousands of turkeys—was an extraordinary

opportunity for personnel from NWTF and the three cooperating states. The exceptional determination, dedication, and teamwork of all of these organizations and many volunteers and cooperating landowners helped make this project a success. The results will continue to help wildlife managers ensure that wild turkeys will be around for people to enjoy for years to come.

Biologist **Mike Schiavone** lives in Altamont and routinely sees turkeys on his daily commute to DEC's Albany headquarters.

*This research was supported by a grant from the NWTF, the New York State Chapter of NWTF, hunting and trapping license sales, and Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration, a federal tax on sporting arms, ammunition, and archery equipment.*



Gustav Verdelber

Both jakes and toms have red, blue and white heads with no feathering (like the bird shown here), while hens' heads are a blue-gray color, often with some light feathering on the nape of the neck and top of the head.

# WHAT IS IT?

If you guessed the photo on the Table of Contents page is of a breast feather of an eastern wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo silvestris*), you're right. Turkey breast feathers are striking in appearance, exhibiting an iridescent quality. This iridescence is actually the result of how the feather's structure reflects light, and is not caused by pigment. Also interesting to note is that while breast feathers may look pretty simple, when overlapped in layers on a turkey's breast, they form a nearly impenetrable shield.

Here are some other interesting facts about turkeys:

- Are social, usually found in flocks.
- Are able to fly at 2-3 weeks old; adults can fly 40 to 55 mph.
- Can run up to 12 mph.
- Adult male turkeys (gobblers or toms) have 5-12 inch long beards. Gobblers have ½-1½ inch long spurs (used for fighting) on their legs.
- Though uncommon, around 15% of females (hens) have a beard and 1% have spurs.



Susan L. Shafer

# On Patrol

Real stories from Conservation Officers and Forest Rangers in the field

Contributed by ECO Lt. Tom Caifa and Forest Ranger Lt. John Solan

Carl Heilman II

## Mini Penguin?—Suffolk County

This winter, ECO Kaitlin Grady received a complaint of an injured bird hopping around a lawn in Bay Shore. The complainant could not identify the bird, but described it as “a tiny penguin.” Hoping to identify the animal and notify the proper rehabilitator, ECO Grady responded to the scene and found a small black and white bird with webbed feet that did, indeed, look like a penguin. The bird was identified as a dovekie, a native of Greenland that winters in the Atlantic Ocean and is sometimes spotted in New England, but rarely on Long Island. ECO Grady brought the distressed dovekie to the Selden Animal Emergency Hospital for treatment. After being rehabilitated by a specialist, it was released back into the wild along with several other dovekies recovered by the rescue organization, Star Foundation. Biologists theorized that strong winds and stormy conditions blew the small birds off course.



Luke Ormond

## Not Your Typical Car Repair—Orleans County

Recently, ECO Rick Rauscher received a 4:00 a.m. call from deputies asking for assistance with a disabled vehicle. ECO Rauscher met the deputies and saw two rifles, spent shell casings, a spotlight, and three freshly killed deer inside the vehicle. The person who reported the vehicle indicated they saw three people in camouflage clothing walking away from the car. Officers could not locate the people or the registered owner, so the vehicle was towed. After a license check, ECO Rauscher contacted the car's owner who said she had left her vehicle at an auto repair shop the previous day and had not given anyone permission to drive it. Following a full confession from the repairman, he and his two accomplices received tickets including taking deer with the aid of an artificial light, possessing loaded firearms in a motor vehicle, discharging a firearm over a public highway, and taking deer with a rifle during archery season.

## Important Message—Greene County

On a Friday in March, dispatchers contacted Forest Ranger Jeff Breigle about two lost hikers in the northern Catskills. The area had been recently blanketed by more than five feet of snow, and was forecast to be hit by another storm. Rangers left amid poor visibility and extreme conditions in search of the hikers. By working through a cell phone service provider and Ray Brook Dispatch, rangers finally located one of the subjects near the summit of Blackhead Mtn. on Sunday night. He was hypothermic and unable to hike out, so rangers brought in an extreme weather kit containing equipment to sustain the subject and rangers overnight. More rangers and volunteers were called (a total of thirty-three rangers and thirty personnel from fire, police and volunteer search organizations were involved), and by Monday morning the first subject was successfully brought off the mountain. Unfortunately the second hiker had already succumbed to hypothermia by the time rescuers located him. Upon review of the event, rescue personnel discovered that the hikers had made a series of mistakes which led to the disaster, including leaving their backpacks and gear at a lean-to, not carrying a flashlight, and separating from each other. The unfortunate outcome serves as a strong reminder of the need for hikers to always be cautious and prepared for weather and surroundings.

## ASK THE ECO

**Q:** I would like to use my bow to fish for carp. Are there any special restrictions? Am I exempt from the “discharge within 500 feet of a residence” law?

**A:** You may take carp by longbow from May 15<sup>th</sup> through September 30<sup>th</sup> from any waters of NYS where fishing is permitted. With the exception of carp, all other taking of fish by bow is prohibited in New York waters. Also, you must possess either a small game license or a fishing license to take carp with a bow. There are no restrictions on the size or the number of carp you may take. As to your second question, no, you are not exempt from the prohibition on discharge of a firearm or longbow within 500 feet of a dwelling, house, farm building, school building, school playground, factory or church. The exemption you refer to applies only to waterfowl hunters. It does not apply in any other situation.

# A. F. Tait

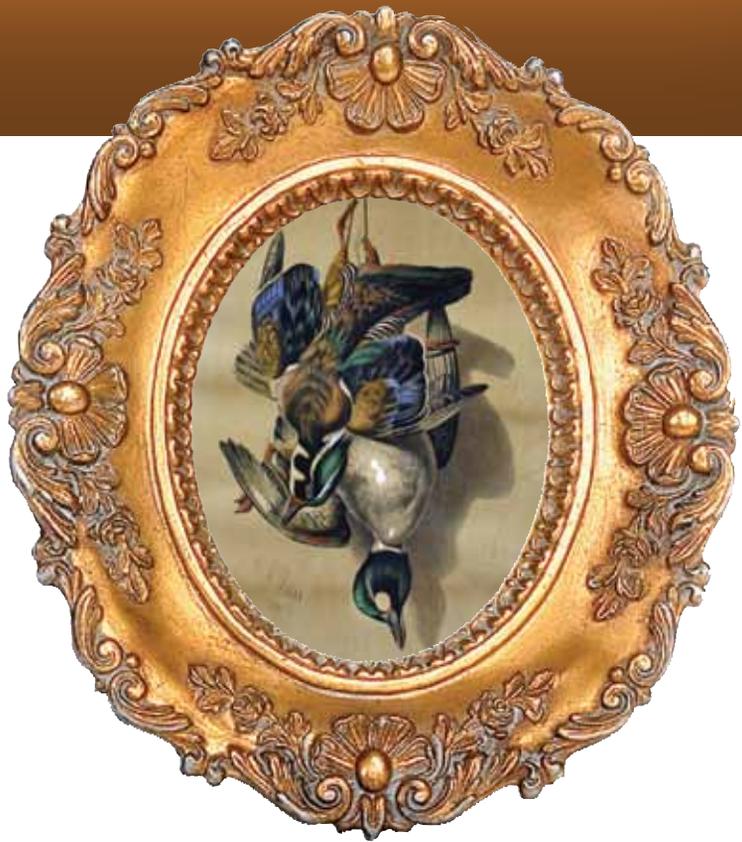
*Exhibit at Adirondack Museum  
sheds light on iconic Adirondack artist.*



*Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait (1819-1905)* was the quintessential image-maker of Adirondack sport. An ardent sportsman and lover of the outdoors, Tait lived in the Adirondack region for extended periods of time near Chateaugay, Raquette and Long Lakes. Like many of his fellow artists in the 1850s and '60s, Tait came to the Adirondacks to hunt and fish, explore nature, and to hone his skills at transcribing and interpreting the wilderness around them. In most of these artists' works, people and their activities present in the scene are dwarfed by their natural surroundings. Tait is the exception; in his art, sportsmen share equal billing with



*"Autumn Morning, Racquette [sic] Lake," 1872  
Oil on canvas*



*"American Feathered Game:  
Wood Duck and Golden Eye," 1854  
Hand-colored lithograph*



*"Fishing Through The Ice," 1854  
Oil on canvas*



*"Still Hunting on the First Snow: A Second Shot," 1855  
Oil on canvas*



*"Quails,"* 1867  
Lithograph



the flora and fauna in their sylvan settings. But nature is the underlying, if not primary, subject. The natural grandeur of the American land—particularly the Adirondacks—was taking center stage in American art, and Tait's Adirondack works define the region as a paradise for anglers and hunters.

Tait immigrated to America from England in 1850 and established himself as a painter. He discovered the Adirondacks in 1852, and spent the next thirty years painting the woods, waters, and people he found there. His images were among the best-known in nineteenth-century America thanks to Currier & Ives, whose lithographs of Tait's paintings helped popularize the Adirondacks as a sportsman's paradise.

*"A Buck: Foggy Morning,"* 1879  
Oil on canvas



*"American Hunting Scenes: A Good Chance," 1863  
Lithograph*



*"American Speckled Brook Trout," 1864  
Chromolithograph*

The images Tait created depict with great accuracy the details of life in the woods and on the waters of the Adirondacks. The clothing and equipment of Tait's hunters reveal much about mid-nineteenth-century technology and culture, and in that sense, his paintings also serve as historical documents.

The Adirondack Museum's exhibition, "The Adirondack World of A. F. Tait," consists of 38 works of art—prints and paintings—including a dozen loaned works. The exhibition assembles the best of Tait's Adirondack work on the artist's signature subject: hunting and fishing in the Adirondack wilderness.

—text and images courtesy of the Adirondack Museum



*"An Anxious Moment: A Three Pounder Sure," 1874  
Lithograph*

Tom Dwyer



## *Visit the Adirondack Museum*

Located on Route 28N/30 in the village of Blue Mountain Lake, the Adirondack Museum celebrates the art and history of the Adirondack region. The museum is set on 32 acres that house numerous exhibits depicting how people have lived, worked, traveled and played in the Adirondacks since the 1800s. Themes include: boats and boating, land transportation, outdoor recreation, the environment, logging, rustic traditions, fine arts and tourism. There are interactive discovery centers and hands-on activities.

The museum is open daily 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. from May 27 through Oct. 17, 2011. For details on events, programs, and facilities, visit [www.adirondackmuseum.org](http://www.adirondackmuseum.org) or call (518) 352-7311.

Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art



A photo of the artist A. F. Tait, taken in July 1893.



American sycamore

# Silent Giants

National and state registries honor the country's big trees.

By Jenna Kerwin

There is a secret kingdom in my grandparents' backyard. You can only get to it by going through the hidden portal in the big sugar maple tree.

At least that's what I always thought growing up. I remember the tree being taller than the houses and so wide I could press myself against it during games of hide-and-seek. Cicada casings stuck to its bark and my cousin laughed as he picked them off and chased me with them. I remember swinging lazily in the tire swing attached to its branches, watching the squirrels prance higher and

streets; some wear the scars of time; and some are so grand, their histories are part of the town's personality. Each year, many of these trees are nominated as "champion trees," and a few lucky ones are even crowned national winners.

The program in charge of this arboreal contest is the National Register of Big Trees, spearheaded by the non-profit citizens' conservation organization, American Forests. In September 1940, *American Forests* magazine contained an article that invited people to find the biggest trees. This

to an oak that is an incredible 100 feet tall with a twenty-two-foot circumference.

Nominated trees are reviewed by committee at the beginning of every odd-numbered year. Whether a tree is included in the list depends on how high it scores. Points are awarded based on the sum of the tree's trunk circumference, height, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the average crown spread. The tree with the most points is crowned the national champion, which means they are the largest recorded specimen in their species. If a tree is not named a national champion, but has a high score, it remains on the list. These "challenger trees" are not big enough to qualify as a champion, but are still included in the database in case a current champion is not able to keep its winning status and must be replaced.

Many states run their own state tree register, listing state champions; DEC maintains New York's Big Tree Register. Big trees are selected based on American Forests' criteria and the champions and challengers are included on its list. If a state champion is a potential national champion, it is nominated by DEC to become part of the national register.

Several of New York's own trees are currently listed as national champions and challengers. They include: a northern bayberry in Nassau County; a common juniper in Schenectady County; a black locust in Wayne

Champion trees come in all shapes and sizes,  
but all are the largest of their species.

higher up the limbs. I wished I could have followed them to the top.

Such a tree naturally lent itself to imaginary games in other worlds—even if the "secret portal" to that world was nothing more than climbing a few low branches and jumping back down. That sugar maple always seemed more special than the other trees dotting the central New York landscape. To me, it was a champion of trees.

Across the United States there are trees just like this. You've probably seen these trees before—the ones that look far too big for their species, or so large they must be hundreds of years old. Not all of them may be doorways to secret kingdoms, but they are all eye-catching natural wonders of our world: some are contradictory centerpieces of urban

captured the public's interest, and the register was begun. Over the years, the register has gained more support, seen numerous name changes, and, perhaps most importantly, listed more than 700 registered champion trees.

The main goal of the national register is to educate the public about protecting and preserving our country's trees. The register helps garner public interest in this important topic by highlighting the pantheons of the arboreal world, and awarding special "champion" status to the juggernauts of each species.

Champion trees come in all shapes and sizes, but all are the largest of their species. As such, a champion tree can range from an eighteen-foot tall hazelnut with a five-inch circumference

County; a scarlet hawthorn and a Norway spruce in Oneida County; and a northern oak, a speckled alder, a prairie crab apple and a purple osier willow in Monroe County.

It's easy to nominate a tree to be part of the national and New York State registers (see sidebar this page). You can check American Forests' and

DEC's websites for species eligible or in-demand, and guidelines for nominating and measuring trees. If you need help measuring your tree, you can contact a local arborist or forester for assistance.

Many trees worthy of placement in the national and state registers of big trees are never nominated, and some lost their national champion status because they

were never re-measured to update the listing. In some cases, though, current champions have been replaced simply because a larger tree was found and nominated. Be sure to explore your town, woods or even backyard for a champion near you. Remember to measure the tree periodically so it can be updated with the register and potentially keep any champion tree status it may win.

Whether there's a giant maple in your backyard with a swing tied to its branches, a towering weeping willow looming over a pond at the outskirts of town, or a huge oak hidden deep in the forest, champion trees are everywhere. Their size begs recognition and respect; their stature exudes something like magic. If you know of one of these trees, consider nominating it for a place on the National Register of Big Trees.

**Jenna Kerwin** is the staff writer for *Conservationist*, and is still trying to find a way back to the secret kingdom in her grandparents' backyard.

Anyone can  
nominate  
a big tree.

In New York State, visit DEC's website at: [www.dec.ny.gov/animals/5248.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/5248.html)

to find information on the program, download a nomination form, and locate contact information for a DEC forester.

To nominate a big tree for the national register, just follow these guidelines:

- 🌿 Be sure of the tree's species.
- 🌿 Measure the height, trunk circumference, and average crown spread. (For a measuring guide, see [www.americanforests.org/resources/bigtrees/measure.php](http://www.americanforests.org/resources/bigtrees/measure.php).)
- 🌿 Take pictures of the tree.
- 🌿 Have your tree verified by a qualified forester or arborist.
- 🌿 Contact your local DEC Lands & Forests office with your information.

...a champion tree can range from an eighteen-foot tall hazelnut with a five-inch circumference to an oak that is an incredible 100 feet tall with a twenty-two-foot circumference.



Susan L. Shafer

# Tree Talk

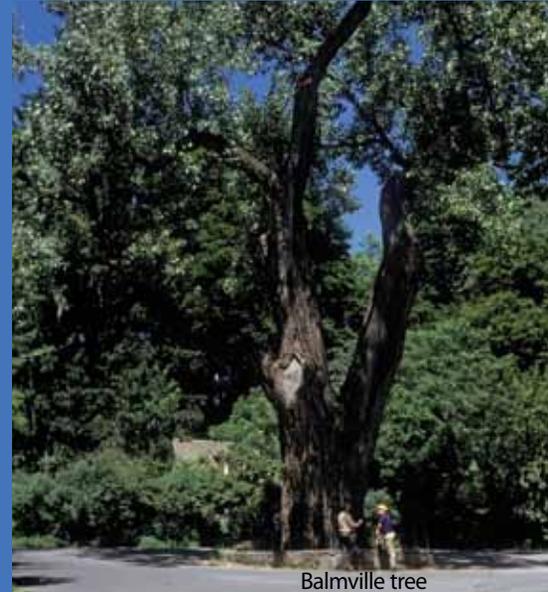
Rich Claus

If trees could talk they'd probably entertain people for hours with their stories. Champion trees naturally lend themselves to grand fantasies, but sometimes a tree's story needn't be imagined.

The Scythe Tree is a balm of Gilead (a type of poplar) in Waterloo, New York. While the passage of time has taken its toll, the tree remains a famous historical treasure. In 1861 a young farmer boy named James Wyman Johnson enlisted in the Union Army. As a promise to his parents that he would return, he placed a scythe in the crotch of a balm of Gilead tree in the yard. In April 1864, James died in a confederate hospital from a severe wound. His parents refused to accept his death, and so left the scythe in the tree, hoping their lost son would return. Within 20 years, both of James' parents died, and the scythe was never recovered. Years later, two brothers—Raymond and Lynn Shaffer—were living on the Scythe Tree Farm, as it became known, and enlisted in World War I. They, too, placed scythes in the poplar tree,

beside James', which the tree had now grown around. The two brothers returned safely, but only retrieved the handles of their scythes, leaving the three blades in the tree. Today, the blades are painted to make it easier for them to be seen in the old bark that has engulfed them.

The Balmville Tree is the oldest living eastern cottonwood on record in the United States. For a long time legend had it that the tree grew out of George Washington's riding crop, but core sampling proved the tree dates back to 1699—years before Washington. In fact, in Washington's day the tree had already reached its life expectancy of 75 years. Defying the odds, it continued to grow into the nineteenth century. Locals mistook the tree for a balm of Gilead. They named it Balm Tree, and the subsequent municipality "Balmville" sprang up. However, with the advent of concrete and pavement, roads built around the tree trapped it behind steel and concrete, causing it to weaken. In the 1970s, DEC Commissioner Ogden Reid declared it the first individual



Balmville tree

tree to be protected by New York, and named it a state park—the smallest in the state. The tree was near death in the latter part of the twentieth century, but residents and various consultants were able to repair it, though the tree had to be cut from 110 to 83 feet. To this day, DEC is responsible for the maintenance and care of this historic treasure. Interestingly, several efforts were made to clone the tree, but to no avail. However, a neighbor and devoted caretaker of the tree, Dick Severo, planted one of the Balmville Tree's branches in his yard where it has grown ever since.



Scythe tree

Rich Claus



Scythe tree

Rich Claus



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Steve Hillebrand

## Don't Feed Bears

To prevent human-bear conflicts caused by bears seeking out human-provided food, DEC recently announced a new regulation prohibiting the intentional and direct feeding of black bears. The regulation also prohibits, after written notice from DEC, the incidental or indirect feeding of black bears through food attractants such as garbage or bird seed. Additionally, DEC generally recommends stopping bird-feeding activities in the spring when bears are emerging from dens and natural foods for birds are more abundant. To read about the new regulation, visit [www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/71580.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/71580.html), and visit [www.dec.ny.gov/animals/6960.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/6960.html) to read more about black bears.

## Be Firewise

April 18-24 is National Wildfire Awareness Week. During this week, DEC will promote safe practices with outdoor fires like campfires, promote the prevention of forest fires, and work with the Firewise Communities program. The Firewise program is designed for homeowners, community leaders, planners, local government officials and firefighters to take a proactive approach in identifying property risks associated with wildfire, as well as how to protect against such risks. You can read more about Firewise by visiting the "Firewise New York" page on DEC's website at [www.dec.ny.gov/public/42524.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/public/42524.html). Also, visit [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7827.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7827.html) to learn more about fire safety and read tips for safe burning practices. Open



burning of residential waste is the single largest cause of wildfires in New York. In 2009, DEC extended restrictions on open burning to prohibit the practice in all communities state-wide, regardless of population size, with certain exceptions, including burning tree limbs and branches at limited times of the year. During last year's eight-week ban period (March 16 to May 14, 2010), the new regulation resulted in a 33 percent decrease in wildfires caused by debris burning.

## Bear Crossing Signs

DEC recently worked with the NYS Department of Transportation to install bear crossing signs along select highways in the western half of the state. The effort was the result of reviewing several years of data to determine the areas with the most bear/vehicle collisions. The first group of signs was installed in Chautauqua and Cattaraugus Counties along I-86, as well as state routes 16 and 219, just north of the Pennsylvania border.



DEC photo

## Youth Turkey Hunt

DEC's annual Youth Wild Turkey Hunt weekend will be held April 23-24, 2011. The weekend gives junior hunters ages 12-15 an opportunity to spend time in the field with experienced adult hunters in pursuit of wild turkeys before the regular turkey season opens. Both adult and junior hunters must have a hunting license and a turkey permit in order



Courtesy of Colleen Dye

## BRIEFLY

to participate. Additionally, adult hunters cannot carry a firearm or longbow, or kill a wild turkey during the youth hunt. Suffolk County will be included for the first time this year. Visit DEC's "Youth Hunt for Wild Turkey" webpage at [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/27836.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/27836.html) for complete details.

### Fun Web Fact

The results are in: the DEC web pages that are visited most frequently by the public are hunting and fishing pages. In addition, the three most common search terms used are "hunting," "fishing" and "lake." Happy web surfing!

### Become a Licensed Outdoor Guide

Interested in becoming a guide for fishing, hunting, camping, hiking, whitewater rafting/canoeing/kayaking, or rock climbing? Then sign up to take a licensed guide examination held at select DEC offices. Examinations are currently scheduled for the following dates in 2011: April 14, May 19, June 30, September 22 and October 20. Detailed information can be found on the licensed guide application form available on DEC's website at [www.dec.ny.gov/permits/30969.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/30969.html).

James Clayton



*New York State Conservationist, April 2011*

Gloria Van Duyne



## Urban Forests

To many people, the term "urban forestry" sounds contradictory. I've even heard some say, "There aren't any forests in the city." But the city, surrounding suburbs, and small communities are where most people live, and where they experience trees and all they do for us.



Healthy trees produce a variety of benefits that scientists now call "ecosystem services." They take in carbon dioxide, produce oxygen, clean the air, filter water, reduce storm-water runoff, and shade our streets and buildings. They also reduce the need for costly investments in facilities to manage storm water, mitigate air and water pollution, and insulate against temperature extremes. Collectively, city trees comprise an urban forest that can be thought of as a city's green infrastructure.

Urban trees provide other benefits as well. They contribute to "walkable" neighborhoods and livable communities; trees help provide attractive places with a strong sense of place.

Numerous studies show the mental, physical and educational benefits of trees: patients recuperate faster if they can see trees from their window; stress levels are lower in treed environments; children learn better after they spend time outdoors surrounded by green space.

Planting and caring for community trees are wise investments in what is perhaps the only part of a city's infrastructure that actually increases in value over time. So, even though there are fewer trees in cities and towns, in some ways, the services each one provides are even more important!

The tree in front of your apartment, home or office is much more than a decoration. It is a living organism that provides benefits to you by doing what it does naturally—simply by being a tree.

### *What you can do:*

Urban forestry includes care and management of trees and forests to improve the developed environment. You can help New York's urban forests by joining ReLeaf ([www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5307.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5307.html)), a public/private partnership that promotes urban forestry and citizen volunteer involvement. You can also plant a tree, and learn how to care for young trees. To learn more about urban and community forestry, visit DEC's website at [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4957.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4957.html).

—Gloria Van Duyne

## Beautiful Bloodroot

My daughter Renee took this photo of a bloodroot that we took to the Altamont Fair where it was chosen to go to the State Fair. Unfortunately we never made it there. However, I thought your readers might be interested in seeing it.

Nancy Davis-Ricci  
Guilderland, Albany County

*Beautiful shot! Thanks for sharing it with us.*  
—Conservationist staff



## Memories of Camp

We recently heard from Mr. Tim Scheltz, an attendee of Camp Rushford during the summer of 1955. He fondly remembers learning to tie flies, helping fisheries biologists shock fish, and caring for raccoon cubs until they were placed with a wildlife rehabilitator. Mr. Scheltz described how after he returned to



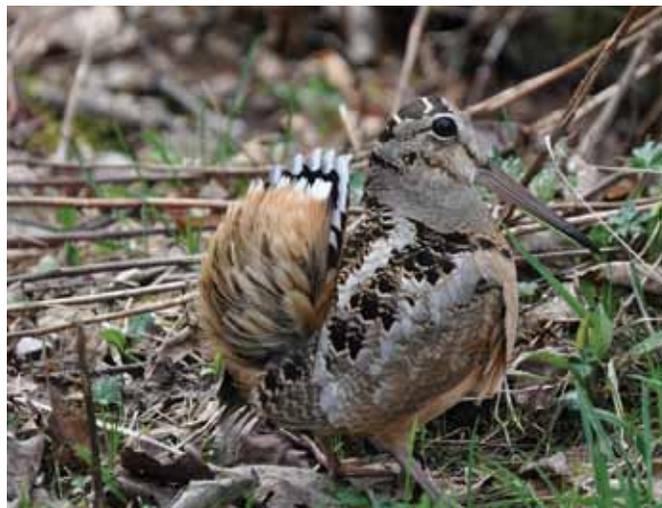
central New York following discharge from the Marine Corps, he continued to enjoy the outdoor pursuits he honed at camp. Today, he remains an avid fisherman, and still treasures his camp certificate, photographs and memories of Camp Rushford.

If you know a girl or boy aged 12 to 17 who would enjoy an outdoor adventure, consider sending them to one of DEC's four residential camps! We are still accepting applications for 12- to 14-year-olds for the 2011 season. Registration forms, available weeks and detailed program descriptions are available at [www.dec.ny.gov/education/29.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/education/29.html) or by calling (518) 402-8014.

## Meeting a Timberdoodle

I enjoyed your article on the American woodcock (April 2010 issue). After I read it, I scouted out mud puddles on my property and stumbled upon this timberdoodle. I assume this is a male as it was in fluff mode.

Walter Eisserer  
Margaretville, Delaware County



*Tremendous photo! Because male and female woodcock look alike, it's hard to say for sure, but this looks like a male woodcock in courtship display. Each display is a little different, but raising the tail, dropping the wings, calling, and puffing the chest are common in courtship displays of gamebirds like grouse, turkey, woodcock and pheasant. Notice the underside of this bird's tail is beautifully colored, further enhancing the attractiveness of the bird during courtship. Only males perform the aerial display, so if you see a woodcock performing the courtship flight, it is a male.*  
—Mike Murphy, Retired DEC Wildlife Biologist

## Mudpuppies

Can you tell me if mudpuppies and hellbenders are the same salamander? If so, there are hundreds of them in the Erie Canal/Mohawk River near one of the locks.

K.B.  
Schenectady



*Actually, hellbenders and mudpuppies are different salamanders. The biggest difference is that mudpuppies have very noticeable bushy, red external gills, whereas hellbenders don't have external gills. Instead, hellbenders have several loose flaps of wrinkled skin that run laterally along either of their sides. Also, a mature hellbender can reach an average of 12-29 inches, while a*

## ✉ LETTERS

*mudpuppy averages 10-11 inches. Hellbenders actually don't occur in the Erie Canal/Mohawk River, but there is a good population of mudpuppies in that system—it looks like you've been seeing these.*  
—Conservationist staff

### Peek-a-boo

We saw this fox den near our home. I sat off a ways and took pictures as one baby fox after another came out. This is the second time that I saw the mother using this den.

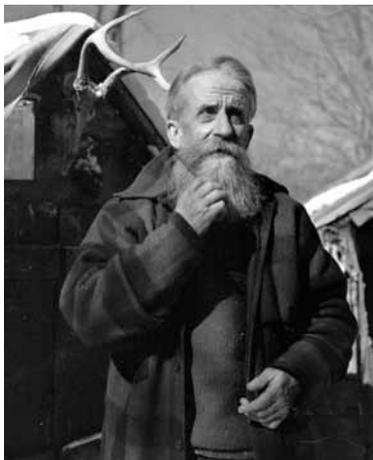
Nevada Caparulo  
Cameron, Steuben County

*Thanks for sharing these photos of young red foxes. It's lucky to have the opportunity to photograph one young pup—much less four! Your images really show the inquisitive, yet apprehensive nature of foxes.*  
—Conservationist staff



### Kudos for 'Noah' article

Thanks to all our readers who wrote in to tell us how much they enjoyed the article “Secret Scratchings” (February 2011 issue) about Noah John Rondeau, the hermit of Cold River. Katherine Grimard of Altamont described hearing stories of Noah John, his friend Red, and her grandfather hunting and fishing together. John Smith of Randleman, NC, explained how his father



knew Noah, and Marie Stanger of Cragmoor recounted how after reading the article she got out a picture she had taken of Noah at Whiteface Mtn. Another reader, George Nimmo of NJ spoke about having hiked to Cold River many times in his younger years and how the article has triggered a desire to go there again.

### Ask the Biologist

**Q:** Can holding a musky or northern pike vertically out of the water harm it?

**A:** Yes, it can. Holding long fish such as musky or pike vertically can put unnecessary strain on the fish's internal organs, body tissues and vertebrae and can lead to death. This isn't a problem if you plan to keep the fish.

If you intend to release members of the pike family (including muskies, pickerel and northern pike) it's best to keep the fish in the water when removing the hook or measuring the fish. If you must take the fish out of the water, be sure to hold it horizontally with one hand cradling its belly (as shown in photo).

—Ed Woltmann, DEC Fisheries Biologist



### Write to us

Conservationist Letters  
NYSDEC, 625 Broadway  
Albany, NY 12233-4502  
or e-mail us at: [magazine@gw.dec.state.ny.us](mailto:magazine@gw.dec.state.ny.us)

# Back Trails

Perspectives on People and Nature

## Fly Fishing with Dad

by Emily Selleck

My father always wore a fedora and a bow tie when he fished the Ausable—or any river, for that matter. He carried a wicker creel and a wooden net, and his bamboo rods—a Payne, a Hardy, and a Leonard, had been handed down to him by his father.

When I was ten, Dad took me to Beaver Meadow Pond on the East Branch of the Ausable to teach me how to fish for browns. I watched him cast, counting out loud on the back cast, “One...” and holding it for “two, three...” and “four” on the forecast. I swear nothing moved but his forearm from the elbow, back and forward, from 10 o’clock to 2 o’clock. The fly landed perfectly, exactly where he wanted it, without a ripple, then sunk slowly to where a brown trout was waiting. A swirl of gin-clear water, a brief tussle, and the trout was artfully scooped out. Now, it was my turn. “Think like a trout,” he said; that was his only advice.

I took the rod and looked out over the still water.

“Think like a trout. Count One, Two, Three, and Four,” ran through my mind as I tried to emulate the man standing by my side. On the count of “Four,” I cast forward with such vigor my feet slipped out from under me, and, to my great chagrin, I found myself underwater.

“Well, that’s the right idea,” my father said, as he pulled me up on shore. “Try again.”

On my next attempt, I kept my feet, but my line landed in a heap, causing the water to break apart in noisy ripples. There were many more attempts that day, and almost all had their inglorious moments. I was sure the fish were laughing. But I was as certain as my father was patient that eventually, I would land one.

*Now, it was my turn.  
“Think like a trout,”  
he said; that was  
his only advice.*

Long shadows of late afternoon had spread across the pond when at last I hooked a brown. My heart was

pounding. I was so afraid it would get off the hook that I waded in to try to net it, forgetting that I must “Keep the tip up” as my father was calling out to me. Waist deep in water, and with the rod being all of nine feet long, that was no easy matter. But I did it! And soon the fish was in my net.

“Were you thinking like a trout?” my father asked as we walked back to the cottage.

“I was thinking I want dinner,” I answered.

“Well, that’s the right idea,” he replied.

**Emily Selleck’s** essay was a winner in DEC’s Great Stories from the Great Outdoors contest. To view other winning entries, visit [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/69643.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/69643.html)



Dad fishing the Ausable in 1954.

# Arbor Day

*“Other holidays repose on the past. Arbor Day proposes the future.”*  
 —J. Sterling Morton, founder of Arbor Day

**Arbor Day** is a time to celebrate the importance of trees in our lives. Trees clean the air, filter water, shade our homes, create a rich landscape and are vital to our economy. Every day, we rely on products made from trees: paper, fruits and nuts, furniture, firewood, toys, musical instruments, and maple syrup. And perhaps best of all, trees are renewable!

Arbor Day was first celebrated in Nebraska in 1872 as a way to encourage farmers and homesteaders to plant trees to provide shade, shelter, food, fuel and to beautify open areas. Reportedly, more than one million trees were planted on that first Arbor Day.

Today, Arbor Day continues to promote tree planting, reminding us to share the importance of trees and how to care for them with today's youth.

***Planting trees is an investment in our future.***

J. Sterling Morton (April 22, 1832 – April 27, 1902), was born in Adams, Jefferson County, New York. He moved to Nebraska in 1854. He was appointed Secretary of Agriculture by President Grover Cleveland in 1893.

Bill Banaszewski



New York celebrates Arbor Day on the last Friday in April.



Subscribe today!  
Call 1-800-678-6399

*"A Good Time Coming," 1862  
Oil on canvas*

See page 18

Visit online:  
[www.TheConservationist.org](http://www.TheConservationist.org)

