

Adirondack Bears | Brook Trout Fishing | Hudson River School

NEW YORK STATE

Conservationist

APRIL 2013





Dear Reader,

Longer days, brighter sunshine, warmer temperatures, and showers filling lakes and streams carry us into spring. Whether you enjoy casting a line for brook trout or a trek into the woods, it's a great time to venture outdoors to embrace the new season.

I like to listen for the shrill calls of spring peepers in wetlands or the nasal "peent" of American woodcock in the fields. Some of my favorite signs of spring are migrating flocks of waterfowl clustered in lines across the skies as they wing their way to northern summering grounds.

One of the most superb places to witness the wonder of migration can be found in the Champlain Valley. Here, geese and ducks by the tens of thousands feed and rest on their long journey. In this issue, we draw your attention to Point au Roche State Park, where skeins of snow geese can be found taking respite during their northward bound journey.

Watching wildlife is one of the fastest growing forms of outdoor recreation across the country and here in New York, where 3.5 million people engage in animal or bird watching and nature photography. And watchable wildlife is an important economic contributor for many communities. People who come to watch ducks, geese, songbirds and deer, buy gasoline, groceries and services from local businesses, helping to create and grow jobs.

During the week starting with Earth Day this year, April 22nd, DEC will be holding a series of events across the state to launch our *New York Watchable Wildlife Guide*, a book developed by our staff and published by Watchable Wildlife, Inc., a national foundation dedicated to promoting wildlife conservation and nature tourism.

Along with our partners from state, local and non-profit agencies, we've assembled a roster of more than 200 destinations from Long Island to Lake Erie, in state parks, forests and wildlife preserves, where you can view wildlife in their habitats. Each month the *Conservationist* will feature a Watchable Wildlife location you can visit, like Point Au Roche State Park (p. 14). For more destinations please visit our website: www.NewYorkWatchableWildlife.org

I think New York's outdoor recreation opportunities can't be beat, and spring is the perfect time to discover nature as it comes to life.

Enjoy!

Commissioner Joe Martens

NEW YORK STATE
Conservationist

Volume 67, Number 5 | April 2013

Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of New York State

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Joe Martens, *Commissioner*

Michael Bopp, *Director of the Office of Public Affairs*

Laurel K. Remus, *Director of Public Affairs & Education*

THE CONSERVATIONIST STAFF

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*

Jim Clayton, *Staff Photographer*

Bernadette LaManna, *Contributing Editor*

John Razzano, *Contributing Editor*

Elaine Bloom, *Contributing Editor*

Ellen Bidell, *Contributing Editor*

EDITORIAL OFFICES

The *Conservationist* (ISSN0010-650X), © 2013 by NYSDEC, is an official publication of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation published bimonthly at 625 Broadway, 4th 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.

TO SUBSCRIBE:

\$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

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation does not discriminate on the basis of race, national origin, disability, age, or gender.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:

Conservationist
NYSDEC
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233-4502

-Printed on recycled paper. Please recycle this issue.





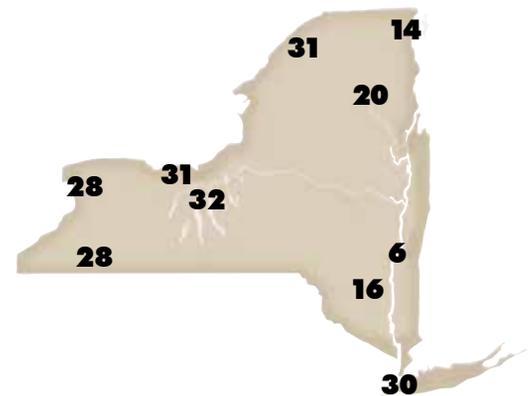
John Major

See page 2

April 2013 Volume 67, Number 5

Contents

- 2 Pond Fishing for Brookies**
By Jonathan Fieroh
- 6 Plein Air:**
How Hudson River School art influenced the American spirit
- 12 American Spirit:**
The legacy of Currier & Ives
- 14 Watchable Wildlife Site: Point Au Roche State Park**
Where to spot migrating snow geese
- 17 On the Road to Recovery**
Acid rain and the Adirondacks
By Kevin L. Civerolo and Karen M. Roy
- 20 A Close Encounter**
Family wakes to a bear in their Adirondack cottage
By Steve Schwartz
- 22 Adirondack Black Bears**
Does beech nut abundance affect human-bear conflicts?
By Courtney LaMere
- 26 Gardening with Native Plants**
By Barbara Nuffer



Departments

16 On Patrol | **28** Briefly | **30** Letters | **32** Back Trails

Front cover: A detail of *Lake George* by Alfred Thompson Bricher. Oil on canvas, c. 1866 | **Back cover:** Black bear cub by Marty DeLong





POND FISHING *for Brookies*



By Jonathan Fieroh

A lone canoe drifts silently on the cool waters of a wilderness pond. The stillness of the scene is broken by a sharp tug on the end of the angler's line. When the brief struggle is over, the angler is rewarded with a view of one of the most beautiful fish in North America—an Adirondack brook trout. As the day progresses, the experience is repeated many times, and the angler thinks, "It doesn't get much better than this."

Little compares to the excitement of a wilderness pond teeming with hungry brook trout. Angling can be fast and furious, and anglers often have these areas to themselves. New York has an abundance of both roadside and remote brook trout waters. Many hold excellent numbers of fish and the abundant forage and limited angling pressure in some lakes can produce brook trout of exceptional size. In fact, the current state record brookie was caught in a pond in the West Canada Lakes Wilderness area of the Adirondacks.

Like all kinds of angling, pond fishing for brook trout can be frustrating at times. Locating and getting fish to bite can be difficult. But for those willing to take the time to master the necessary skills, the rewards can be extraordinary.

The time of year, time of day, and weather are all key considerations when deciding when to fish and what type of lure or bait to use. Water temperature and light level are particularly important factors. In many ponds, especially those with a limited amount of cover, brook trout are easier to catch when the light level is low, such as early or late in the day and during periods of cloudy weather. Unsettled, even unpleasant, weather can produce excellent brook trout angling.

For the tenacious pond angler, the cool or even cold weather of spring and fall

very often produces the best angling of the year. This is when active hungry trout are found near the surface. As the season progresses and surface waters warm, brook trout will seek deeper water to locate acceptable temperature and oxygen levels.

The physical features of a lake, including the amount of available cover, the shape of the lake basin, and the inlets and outlets, can also play an important role in fishing for brook trout. In some lakes, brook trout stay close to cover for at least part of the time—they will tuck themselves under the edges of bog mats



brook trout

Bill Banaszewski

or underneath logs where it is dark and where they are partially protected from predators. Brook trout will also hang around underwater features like drop-offs, particularly if there is an associated inlet. Inlets allow the trout to remain fairly stationary as food is transported downstream to them. Inlets that add cold water to a lake or pond can concentrate brook trout during the warmer months.

The type of prey available in a given lake will also determine where brookies can be found. Like most wildlife, brook trout are looking for an easy meal. So knowing what brookies like to eat in a given body of water can help an angler know where to fish as well as the right bait or lure to use.

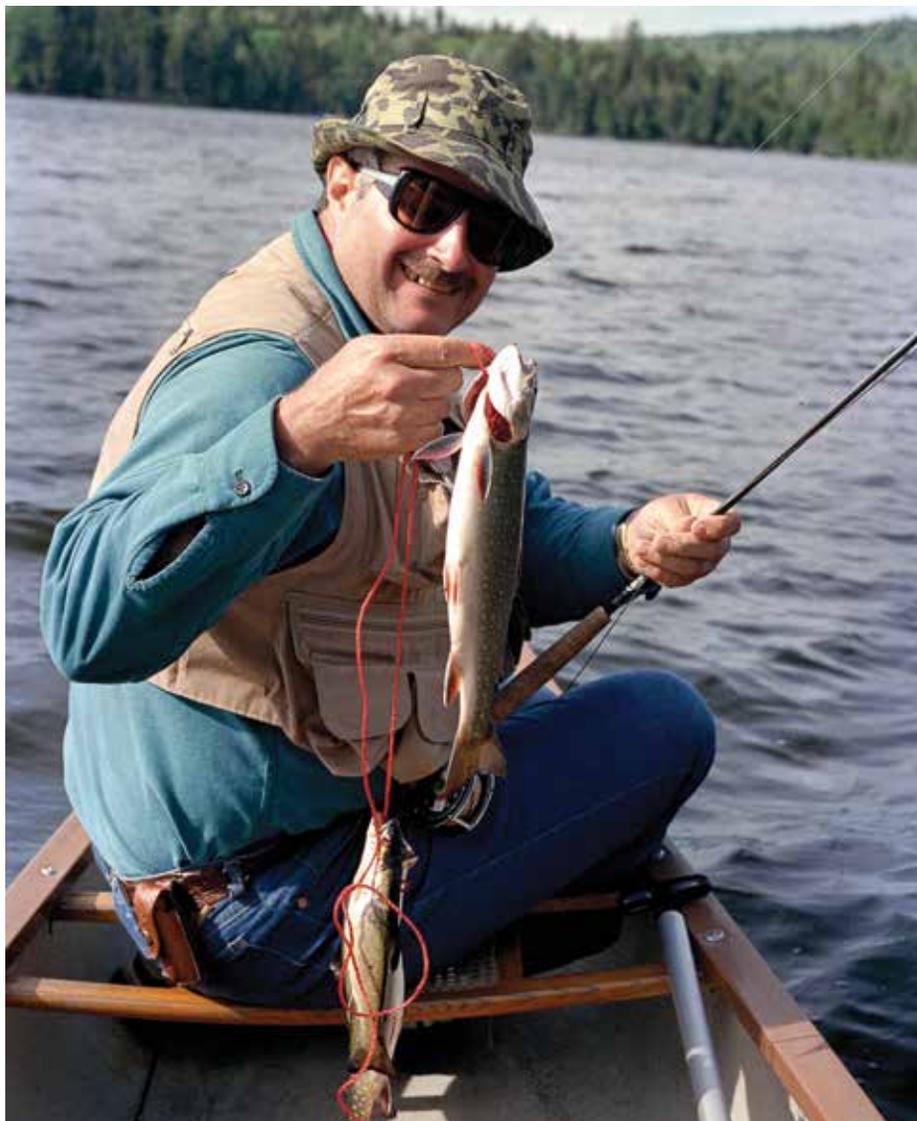
Among the state's trout species, brook trout have a reputation for being relatively easy to catch. They eat a wide variety of organisms, with aquatic insects such as dragonfly larvae, midges, mayflies and caddisflies making up the bulk of their diet. Brook trout also eat leeches, crayfish, and terrestrial insects when they are available. While larger brookies are fully capable of pursuing and eating small forage fish, brook trout populations in ponds and lakes actually do best when there are no other species of fish present.

Anglers use a variety of methods, techniques and tackle when pursuing brook trout. While jigs and spinners are popular lures, trolling a spoon and a baited hook such as a Lake Clear Wabblers with a worm



James Clayton

Some examples of commonly used trout lures.



John Major

is a time-honored Adirondack method that has taken innumerable brook trout, including some of the largest specimens. Anglers often use a light fishing rod and troll the rig so that the spoon wobbles back and forth, but does not spin. Adding split-shot to the line allows a person to fish deeper—important during the summer when fish move to cooler, deeper water.

Fly fishing is also a popular method of fishing for brook trout. A standard fly-fishing outfit for pond fishing consists of: an eight- or nine-foot rod designed to cast a five- or six-weight fly-line; a standard fly-fishing reel; and both floating and sinking tips or full-sinking lines with a 4X (0.007 inch-diameter) tippet (part of the leader at the end of the line to which the fly is tied).



John Major



While fly fishermen use a nearly endless variety of fly patterns to catch brook trout, there are a few standard patterns that most anglers carry. Black or olive wooly buggers, either un-weighted or tied with a weighted bead on the head of the fly are very popular. Other classic brook trout flies include: Blacknose Dace, Mickey Finn, Hornberg, Muddler Minnow, Baby Brook Trout, Black Ghost, and the Grey Ghost. Casting these streamer flies along the edges of cover can produce good results. While streamers are often the most popular flies, nymphs (weighted and un-weighted) can also produce brook trout.

One of the most exciting times to fly fish for brookies is during an insect hatch. An early spring midge hatch is a sight to behold, and few angling experiences can rival hooking a large brook trout rising to feast on the newly hatched insects.

If you've never been brook trout fishing, now is a great time to try it. Spring is the perfect time to fish, especially just after the ice leaves the ponds (known as ice-out) when brookies are very hungry. New York has excellent pond fishing for brook trout, and while many of these ponds are located in the

Adirondacks, there are a number of great ponds scattered across the state. Your DEC regional office (www.dec.ny.gov/about/50230.html) can help you locate a nearby water. In addition, local guides and sporting goods or fly shops are other great sources of information.

Jonathan Fieroh is a seasonal fish and wildlife technician in DEC's Ray Brook office.

Author's note: DEC reminds anglers that the use of fish as bait is prohibited in many brook trout waters. This restriction protects the fish community against the introduction of harmful non-native bait fish and also protects brook trout from competition that can devastate their population.



PLEIN AIR:

How Hudson River School art influenced the American spirit

Text adapted from: The Albany Institute of History & Art exhibit “The Making of the Hudson River School: More than the Eye Beholds” and *The Hudson River School: Nature and the American Vision* by Linda S. Ferber & the NYS Historical Society. Unless otherwise noted, all paintings represented here are from the collection of the Albany Institute of History & Art.



Asher B. Durand's *An Old Man's Reminiscences*, oil on canvas (1845).

Many of us are familiar with the muted colors, nearly invisible brushstrokes, and sprawling landscapes of the Catskills and Adirondacks by Hudson River School artists. Some of us might even know names like “Thomas Cole,” “Asher B. Durand,” and “Frederic Edwin Church.”

But what *was* this so-called Hudson River School?

Three statements offer only a beginning to understanding the term. One: The Hudson River School refers to landscape painting, specifically works created between 1825 and roughly 1875. Second: The School was not an actual school. Rather, it identifies a group of artists who mainly lived and painted in the

Hudson River Valley of New York. Third: The name “Hudson River School” was not used by the artists themselves, and it did not come into general use until the 1870s, at a time when the popularity of their style was waning.

Hudson River School (HRS) paintings are best recognized for their exaltations of wild and uncultivated nature, aspects of the American continent that differentiated it from Europe where wilderness had almost completely vanished. Emphasis on this wild, American landscape paved the way for a new sense of national pride and identity—one that the American people could call their own.



George Gerhard's *Major (Charles Temple) Dix*, oil on canvas (1865).



James Hope's *Watkins Glen*, oil on canvas (c. 1870).
From the collection of Nicholas V. Bulzacchelli.

In addition to their decorative appearance, landscapes impart a wealth of information about individuals portrayed, including their social standing and aspirations, as well as information about the economic and political climate in which a portrait was painted. In Gerhard's painting, the water in the distance most likely represents the Hudson River, and the rocky ledge on which Major Dix stands is likely the eastern extension of the Helderberg escarpment west of Albany.



James McDonald Hart's *Looking Toward Troy, on the River*, oil on canvas (c. 1850).



Thomas Cole's *View on Catskill Creek*, oil on composition board (c. 1833).

In the autumn of 1825, artists John Trumbull, William Dunlap and Asher B. Durand (a leading HRS painter) purchased several of British-born artist Thomas Cole's paintings. The three established artists promoted Cole's talents, setting him on his course to success and notoriety. What attracted viewers to Cole's landscapes were his depictions of wild American scenery—views of the Hudson River Highlands and Catskill Mountains.



Henry Ary's *View of Hudson, New York*, oil on canvas (1852).



John Vanderlyn's *A Distant View of the Falls of Niagara*, oil on canvas (1802-1803).

If European cities represented the grand museum that was western civilization, the natural scenery of North America symbolized moral worth and identity.

Spiritual truths and transcendence to a higher state of being could be witnessed and experienced through all that nature placed before the American people. Hudson River School paintings captured the emotional and contemplative forces found in the American landscape.

Landscape art of the period depicted both the enthusiasm for progress—the harmonious union between man's developments and nature—and a warning of nature's fragility. *View of Hudson, New York* (facing page) offers a look into this dichotomy by showing a city entering the industrial age. Note the several smokestacks that expel plumes of smoke into the air.

Cole and later HRS artists ventured to scenic areas throughout the nation, capturing sites that would become favored tourist destinations. Their paintings influenced the way Americans viewed the landscape as locations of wonder, beauty and historical association.



David Johnson's *Study of Nature, Dresden, Lake George*, oil on canvas (1870).



William Rickerby Miller's *View of Little Falls, New York*, watercolor on paper (1852).



William Hart's *White Pine, Shokan, Ulster County, New York*, watercolor and pencil on paper (c. 1850-1860).

HRS artists were part of a generation of artists who made New York State's Hudson Valley the landscape that defined America.

Many artists preferred the “en plein-air” (French for “in open air”) technique of landscape painting, advocating a close observation of nature. “. . . I would urge on any young student in landscape painting, the importance of painting direct from Nature as soon as he shall have acquired the first rudiments of Art,” advised Durand. Preserving such truth in appearance was thought to lead to higher truths—moral, spiritual, and truth of ideas.

Even though few Americans could afford paintings by the HRS's most acclaimed artists, many could purchase landscapes from lesser-known painters, or they could purchase painted copies or prints. One such publisher that produced copies of Hudson River School paintings was Currier & Ives, as seen on page 11.



Up the Hudson, published by Nathaniel Currier and James Merritt Ives, hand-colored lithograph (c. 1872).

Editor's Note: For more information about the Hudson River School and its artists, see “*River Visions*” in the February 2008 *Conservationist*.

ART ACROSS NEW YORK

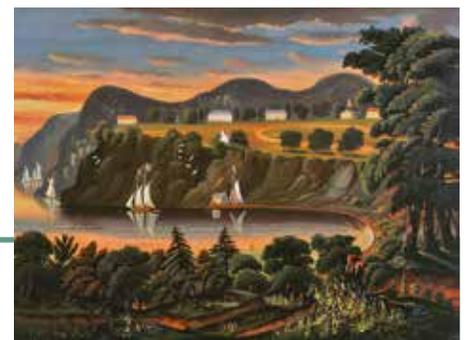
The Albany Institute of History & Art is displaying 140 works by artists of the Hudson River School in its exhibit, “The Hudson River School: More than the Eye Beholds,” which runs through August 18, 2013. The exhibit includes more than 80 pieces owned by the Institute, as well as paintings from several private collections. Additionally, the Institute is paying tribute to the popular nineteenth-century print-makers in the exhibit “Legacy of Currier & Ives; Shaping the American Spirit,” which showcases 64 hand-colored lithographs. That exhibit runs through June 15, 2013.

The Albany Institute of History & Art is open Wednesday through Sunday, and on Tuesdays for registered groups. Visit the

website at www.albanyinstitute.org for more information, including hours and directions.

You can find paintings by Hudson River School artists elsewhere around the state, too. The Hudson River School Art Trail, for instance, is a project that maps the painting sites of accomplished HRS artists. Visit the website at www.hudsonriverschool.org to find helpful brochures, maps, pictures and other resources to guide you on your virtual or literal journey following the trail of the artists. One of the sites included on the HRS Art Trail’s website is Cedar Grove, Thomas Cole’s home and studio, which is a national historic site.

The Albany Institute of History & Art and Cedar Grove are destinations in New



Thomas Chambers’ *View of Hudson River at West Point*, oil on canvas (c. 1855).

York’s new Path Through History project, a statewide roadmap highlighting more than 200 of the state’s significant historic sites and milestones. Highlighting places like the Albany Institute and Cedar Grove will help draw attention to New York’s rich cultural history so that residents and tourists may appreciate and experience all that our state has to offer. For more Path Through History places to go, visit the I Love NY website at <http://iloveny.com> and click on “Path Through History.”





AMERICAN SPIRIT: the legacy of Currier & Ives

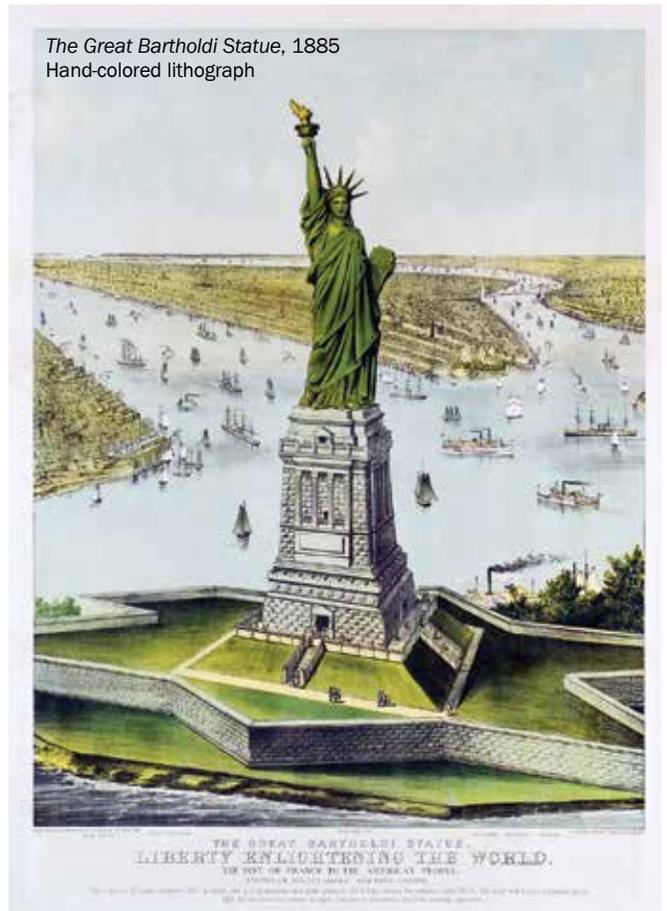
Text and images courtesy Michele and Donald D'Amour
Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, MA

For many, the mention of Currier & Ives conjures up images of horse-drawn sleighs, the holidays and rural winter scenes. Iconic artwork depicting idealized nineteenth-century American life, Currier & Ives' prints have hung in homes and businesses across America for decades and continue to grace the front of many a greeting card.

Washington Crossing the Delaware, undated
Hand-colored lithograph



The Great Bartholdi Statue, 1885
Hand-colored lithograph



To commemorate the friendship forged between France and the United States during the American Revolution, sculptor Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi was commissioned to design the Statue of Liberty (also known as "Liberty Enlightening the World").

Nathaniel Currier (1813-1888) and James Merritt Ives (1824-1895) were publishers, not artists. Partnering in 1852, the two men successfully capitalized on rapid advances in the printing industry and enhanced distribution methods to make and sell prints at prices affordable to the general public.

Currier & Ives commissioned art from a number of artists—including such prominent artists as Eastman Johnson, Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait, and George Durrie. In the seventy-two years that Currier & Ives was in business, the company produced more than 8,000 lithographs.

The Express Train, undated
Hand-colored lithograph



The Boston and Albany Railroad at Greenbush (East Albany) NY.

Preparing for Market, 1856
Hand-colored lithograph



Idyllic scenes like this presented the American farm in an attractive light to the public.

Note: All works of art represented here are courtesy of: Michele and Donald D'Amour Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, Massachusetts. Gift of Lenore B. and Sidney A. Alpert, supplemented with Museum Acquisition Funds.

Point Au Roche State Park



*Located on the northwestern shore of Lake Champlain, near Plattsburgh—size: 825 acres
A great watchable wildlife site*



Bill Banaszewski

snow geese

For about two weeks in the spring and fall, birders from near and far flock here to see the thousands of migrating snow geese. Point Au Roche, with several peninsulas, bays and nearby cornfields, is a significant stopover on the Atlantic flyway for migratory waterfowl. The landscape is mostly undeveloped, with an interesting mix of upland forests, scrub, fields and nearshore marshes on Lake Champlain. This variable landscape provides habitat for a diversity of wildlife. In addition, Point Au Roche's alluvial lake-plain soils and shoreline shale outcrops provide unique microhabitats for rare plants.

Wildlife to Watch

Unlike snow geese that stop only during migration, resident Canada geese nest here. Other waterfowl regularly seen are mallards, black ducks, wood ducks, blue-winged teal and mergansers. Killdeer search for worms and insects in plowed fields, while herring gulls are seen gliding near the water, sitting quietly on the beach, or squabbling over scraps of food. Egrets and herons hunt for small fish and invertebrates along marsh edges.



DEC photo

beaver

Canada geese



Susan Shafer

Abundant fish, frogs and small mammals attract ospreys and hawks which hunt during the day. At dusk you may catch sight of or hear barred, great horned, or screech-owls as they begin their nocturnal search for food.

Skittish white-tailed deer are the most frequently seen large mammal at Point Au Roche, emerging from the woods to feed

in fields and wetlands at dawn and dusk. Wary red and gray fox also appear at these times. Beavers, muskrats, mink and the occasional otter may be observed in their natural wetland habitats. Many of these wild animals have become somewhat used to the presence of people at Point Au Roche, making it easier to watch and enjoy them.

white-tailed deer



Susan Shafer



Site Features

Notes: Open year-round. Staff offer a variety of public programs. The large day-use area has a protected sandy beach and picnic facilities with restrooms and parking. Canoeing, kayaking, power-boating and fishing are popular activities and the park offers 60 designated mooring sites in Deep Bay. A vehicle-use fee is charged for access to the beach from June to Labor Day. In winter, the park provides excellent access points for ice fishing.

Trails: The park's nearly 14 miles of nature, hiking and biking trails wind through all of Point Au Roche's interesting wildlife habitats. The trails are available for use all year for school programs, nature hikes and cross-country skiing.

Accessibility: This site has some accessible features, including picnic areas and recreation programs.

Directions: Northway/I-87 exit 40; right onto NY 456/Spellman Rd.; first right onto US-9 south; left at County Rd. 22/Point Au Roche Rd.; right onto Camp Red Cloud Rd.

Contact: 518-563-0369, www.nysparks.com/parks/30/details.aspx. For more Watchable Wildlife sites in NY, visit www.NewYorkWatchableWildlife.org



female wood duck



Jeff Nadler

On Patrol

Real stories from Conservation Officers and Forest Rangers in the field

Carl Heilman II

Contributed by ECO Lt. Tom Caifa and Forest Ranger Capt. Stephen Scherry



Smelt Poachers Pinched—Niagara County

An angler contacted ECO Jason Powers to relay that a group of six men were keeping more than their legal limit of smelt on the Lower Niagara River. When ECO Powers arrived, he watched the group dip for smelt. After the men finished and began to leave, ECO Powers approached them and found they had roughly 40 gallons of smelt. The legal limit for smelt is two gallons per person. ECO Powers also discovered one man had no fishing license, which meant the group's total legal limit of smelt was only 10 gallons. He issued tickets to the men for having 30 gallons of smelt above the daily limit.

Don't Drink and...Shoot! — Dutchess County

The City of Beacon Police contacted ECO Deo Read regarding a tip about several men who were target shooting inside an abandoned factory. When ECO Read arrived, he saw the men had placed targets and

bottles against a wall and done quite a bit of shooting while drinking alcohol. The factory is located within 500 feet of two schools, several houses, a church, and an apartment building. More than 50 bullets had exited through the building's thin walls, traveling across the street and into a park. ECO Read issued tickets to the men for discharging firearms within 500 feet of schools and residences, and for discharging a firearm across a public highway. Beacon Police added a few charges of its own.

Radioactive Basement—Saratoga County

Acting on an anonymous tip, T/Sgt. Walt Maloney and ECOs went to a house in the Town of Halfmoon, where a retired medical/nuclear physicist had illegally disposed of a significant quantity of Cesium, a radioactive material. Because the physicist knew the Cesium was dangerous, he dug a hole in his basement floor and sealed it under cement. In time, it could have found its way into the local water table. After a search warrant was

executed, the material was safely removed. A criminal investigation is ongoing in conjunction with the Saratoga County District Attorney's Office.

Day Hike becomes Nightmare—Ulster County

Late last year, the New York State Police at Kingston contacted rangers, requesting assistance for a couple who had begun hiking late the previous day. "Erin and Mike" mistakenly thought they were on a loop trail that would return them to the Slide Mountain trailhead by sundown. They were not properly equipped, and it began raining heavily that evening. Lt. Stephen Scherry asked Rangers Kenneth Gierloff, Robert Mecus and Jacob DesLauriers to respond to the Slide Mountain Wilderness to look for the couple. Eventually, the searchers found Erin and Mike at a primitive campsite occupied by John Vanasco and a partner. When the cold, wet couple came upon Vanasco's tent, he and his partner encouraged them to use their tent and sleeping bag and remained outside next to the campfire, before going for help. When rangers arrived, they provided Erin and Mike with clothing and rain gear from a winter survival kit. After the couple warmed up and had something to eat and drink, rangers escorted them back to their vehicle. Had it not been for the selflessness of Mr. Vanasco and his partner, this rescue might have had a tragic outcome.

ASK THE ECO

Q: My canoe has a small motor on it. Do I need to register it with the Department of Motor Vehicles?

A: Yes. Any motorized vessel, including a canoe, must be registered with the DMV and display the registration numbers.



ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

—*Acid rain and the Adirondacks*

By Kevin L. Civerolo and Karen M. Roy

It has been approximately 40 years since acid rain first headlined as a problem in the Adirondacks. And while we've seen a lot of negative impacts due to acid precipitation—from die-offs of large numbers of trees to sensitive fish species like the brook trout disappearing from affected waters—there's been much improvement in recent years. In fact, in the past five years, all indications are that the Adirondack ecosystem may be on the road to recovery from the effects of acid rain.

A by-product of fossil fuel combustion from automobiles, factories, coal-fired power plants, and other sources, acid rain (or more appropriately called “acid deposition” since it also includes snow, sleet, fog, clouds, and gases and particles that fall to the earth) has caused significant environmental harm. And the effects aren't just local; emissions of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides undergo complex reactions in the atmosphere and can be carried by the winds for hundreds of miles. In New York State and many other parts of the country, it was becoming clear by the 1960s that acid deposition was having devastating impacts on forests, soils, surface waters, and many of the forms of life that depend on these resources for food and habitat.

The Adirondack Mountains were particularly affected by acid deposition. The region is downwind of many pollution sources, receives high rates of precipitation, and its higher peaks are often surrounded by clouds and fog which are generally more acidic than rain. Soils, stripped of important nutrients from decades of acid deposition, were less able to sustain healthy plant life. As a result, ecologically and economically important tree species such as red spruce and sugar maple experienced noticeable symptoms of decline and scattered die-offs (particularly at high elevations) in the 1970s and 1980s. Lakes and streams became unnaturally acidic, and species began to disappear. Researchers warned that melting snow combined with heavy spring storms



John Bulmer

were an additional serious threat. These “spring surges” concentrate the release of pollutants into the water; acidity sharply increases before tapering off, leaving aquatic organisms no time to adapt.

Scientists found that acidified soils, lakes and streams also foster the accumulation of toxic forms of aluminum and mercury, resulting in declining fish populations and higher levels of mercury in those fish that do survive. The concern was equally grave in forests and high mountain areas where soils are thin or poorly buffered and acid clouds and fog can release additional pollutants. Plants and animals in these areas (like Bicknell’s thrush) are affected when the health of their habitat is compromised.

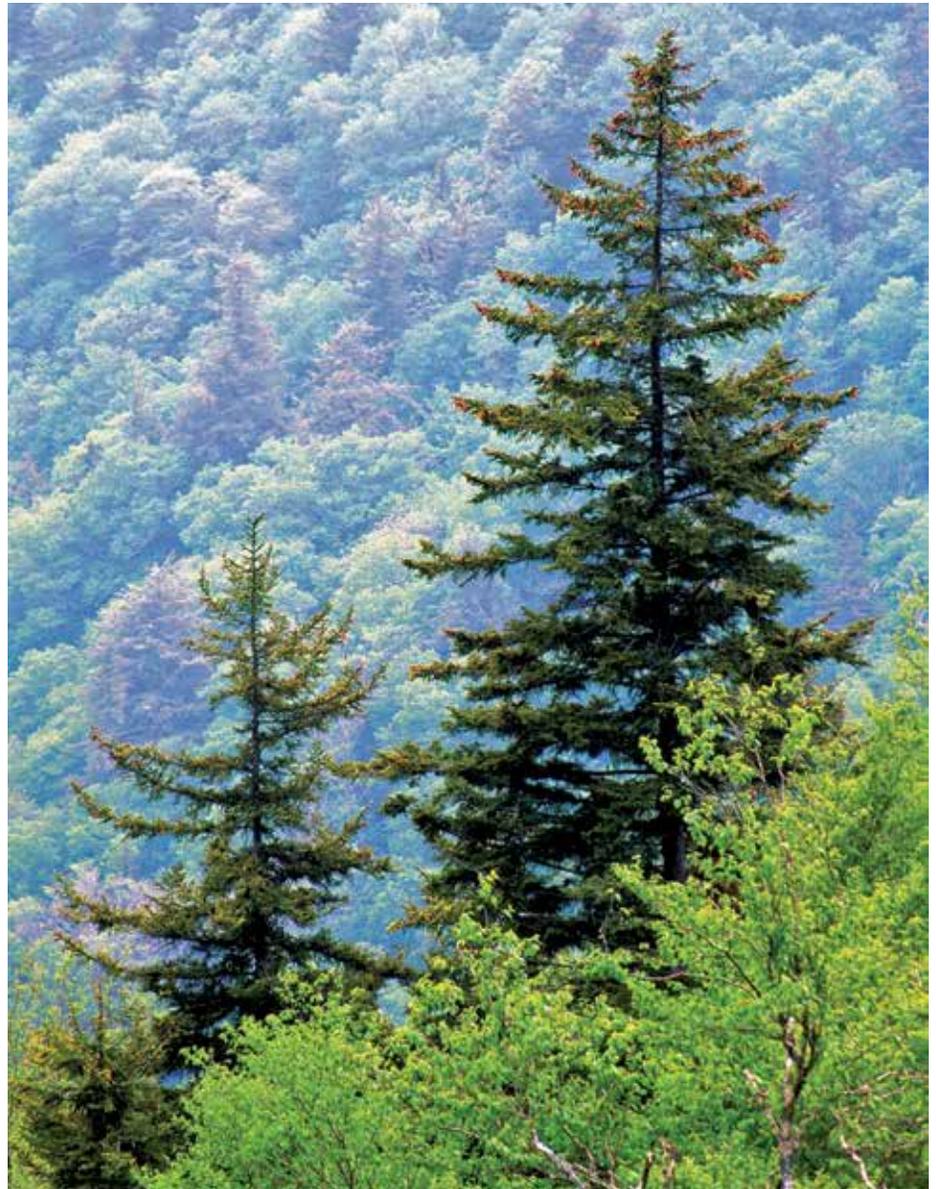
Over the past four decades, it became clear that the damaging effects of acid deposition on forests, agriculture, and soils needed to be documented. So, a consortium of federal and state agencies and academia established the first acid deposition network in the U.S.: the National Atmospheric Deposition Program (NADP). The first NADP sites were established in 1978 and included Huntington Forest in the Adirondacks. In the mid-1980s, the DEC Division of Air Resources began independently monitoring acid deposition

Jeff Nadler



Bicknell's thrush

USDA Forest Service, SRS, Bugwood.org



Acid rain killed many red spruce trees in the Adirondacks in the 1970s and 1980s.

at additional sites across the state, from Niagara Falls to remote locations in the Adirondacks, to the New York City metropolitan area and Long Island.

Instrumentation technology has vastly improved since those early years, and DEC is in the process of transitioning its deposition sites to join the NADP network. This will ensure consistent, efficient monitoring both statewide and nationwide, and will continue tracking progress toward healthier lakes, streams and forests. As of December 2012, DEC has converted three sites in the Adirondacks to the NADP network:

Wanakena, Paul Smiths College, and Piseco Lake. Later this year, sampling sites in the Buffalo, Rochester and New York City areas will also be converted, resulting in a total of 17 NADP sites across New York.

Throughout the years, New York’s commitment to addressing the problem of acid deposition has remained steadfast. As a result of passage of state and federal legislation that targets large pollution sources like coal-fired power plants, emissions of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides from these sources are approximately 80% lower now than they were in 1990. Acid

DEC photo



A DEC staffer checks the equipment at one of the acid rain monitoring stations.

deposition levels across New York have declined by a factor of two or more, which in turn has led to decreases in acidity and toxic aluminum levels in a number of Adirondack lakes in recent years.

Perhaps due, at least in part, to this progress, many people think of acid rain as a “problem of the past.” But this is not the case. Although acid deposition is considerably lower in New York than it was several decades ago, and many Adirondack lakes have improved, some lakes continue to be impaired. In addition, there appears to be more of a delay in biological recovery. Not all lakes in the region have recovered sufficiently for fish populations to be sustainable. Bio-

logical damage continues in a number of lakes and even more so in streams. A recent study supported by NYS Energy Research and Development Authority and conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey, DEC and the Adirondack Lake Survey Corporation showed more than one-third of streams in the east-central and more than two-thirds in the western Adirondacks had acidity levels harmful to fish and other organisms.

As we continue to tackle the issue of acid deposition, we must be mindful of other uncertainties and challenges that face us. For instance, how will manufacturing, transportation and energy sectors—sources of the pollutants that cause acid rain—change in the coming decades? Or how will pollution emissions from Asia and other parts of the world affect air quality here? And how might projected changes in precipitation patterns or frequency of drought or severe storms affect acidic deposition? These are important questions in the fight to alleviate acid deposition, and the best way to be objective about what to do is to have adequate and reputable datasets pub-

lically available to examine and interpret. In New York State we are fortunate to host several state and national agencies, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations that contribute to assuring that essential monitoring is in place. Armed with these datasets, we can continue to manage the problem and protect these world-class ecosystems for generations to come.

Kevin L. Civerolo and **Karen M. Roy** are research scientists with DEC’s Division of Air Resources in Albany and Ray Brook.

Susan Shafer



Learn more about acid rain in New York State:

April 2008 *Conservationist*—*Acid Rain Rain Go Away* by Shannon Brescher Shea

Acid deposition monitoring:

<http://nadp.sws.uiuc.edu>

Adirondack Lakes Survey Corporation:

www.adirondacklakessurvey.org

New York State DOH fish consumption advisories: <http://www.health.ny.gov/fish>

National Acid Precipitation Assessment Program Report to Congress 2011: <http://ny.water.usgs.gov/projects/NAPAP/>

NYSERDA Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation, and Protection Program: www.nyserda.ny.gov/Environmental-Research/EMEP.aspx



brook trout

DEC photo

A Cl🐾se Encounter

By Steve Schwartz

photos provided by author

Wednesday July 18, 2012. Town of Indian Lake, near Sabael, in the central Adirondacks, Hamilton County, NY.

“There’s a bear in the house!”

I suppose there are worse things one could hear at 2 a.m. in a pitch-black room, but I can’t think of many. Our adult daughter, Ingrid, had burst into our sleeping quarters in Indian Lake, sounding excited but not exactly panicked.

Ten extended family members, including three of our adult children, four grandchildren, and a friend were renting a cottage on the lake shore. We had rented the cottage for a week and were having a lovely time. The night was warm and muggy, so we had left most of the screened windows open to let in the night breeze.

“There’s a bear in the house?” I thought groggily, making sure I had heard her correctly. Indeed, there was a bear.

...locals told us that this was the first time in memory that a bear had entered a cottage to forage for food.

According to my daughter’s account, she had been sleeping near the kitchen when she heard rude noises and assumed one of us was snacking, which is unlikely given our habits. She had a small flashlight and shined it on the kitchen floor through a small hole in the door and saw garbage and food strewn about. “Damn, a raccoon got in,” she thought. She raised the flashlight to scan the area and saw that it was a black bear. She immediately woke us up.

The first thing I said was, “Call the police!” Of course, we had no landline phone, and no cell coverage. Ingrid handed me the flashlight, and I got focused quickly. I shined it toward the kitchen and there was a medium-sized bear calmly dining on pasta and ramen in the pantry. In the pitch black I grabbed my camera, opened the kitchen door wide, took a picture of the bear and quickly shut the door. By now another adult daughter, Liz, and her



boyfriend had stumbled around behind me. I opened the door again and flashed another shot of the bear. This time it seemed to move toward me. I jumped back and banged into someone standing behind me. At this point it felt like a kind of melee. The truth is, we were scared and had no idea what to do. How does one get a bear out of the house?

Our uninvited, four-legged intruder was more than just a nuisance, as there were small children sleeping in two rooms



A broken screen and muddy pawprints on the siding show how the bear got into the house.

(with doors ajar) on either side of the pantry. Ignoring the bruin was not an option. We thought we should bang pots and pans to make noise, but they were in the kitchen near the bear. I had a boat horn somewhere, but couldn't immediately find it in the dark. Maybe just shouting would work. However, if any of these didn't work, they might wake the sleeping kids, and cause a terrible encounter.

I looked into the kitchen again, and thankfully, the bear was gone, perhaps scared off by the flash of the camera. What a relief! The place was empty except for food and garbage all over the floor, and the smell! The odor was powerful, like the worst wet dog you have ever smelled, times ten.

I sheepishly admit that we had not taken out the garbage because of heavy rain earlier. The owners had admonished us to remove the garbage by 7 p.m. every day. Oops.

When we investigated, we saw that the bear had broken a screen and entered through a low window in an entrance vestibule off the kitchen. Apparently, it had exited by the same route.

We cleaned up the mess, patrolled outside a bit, exchanged excited notes on the event, and actually tried to go back to sleep. We didn't sleep too well the rest of that night, or the next. We kept lots of lights on. The bear did not return. I feel that we were quite lucky that the camera flash scared the bear.

The little kids were basically undisturbed, except they played "bear attack" with growling and howls of laughter on and off for the rest of our vacation.

The next day, locals told us that this was the first time in memory that a bear had entered a cottage to forage for food. One question that immediately arises is, "What should you do if you are confronted in the middle of the night with a hungry bear in your cottage?"

Steve Schwartz resides in Ithaca and is a long-time subscriber of *Conservationist*.

Editor's Note: We asked DEC biologists what they recommend in this type of situation. Here's what they said: "The best thing to do in such a situation is to keep your distance and make as much noise as possible (using whatever means at your disposal), turn on lights, and generally try to startle the bear into leaving. The flash of the camera here thankfully had the desired effect on the bear. People should also immediately call local law enforcement, or the DEC dispatch, so an officer can respond. In most cases, DEC will attempt to trap a bear that has entered an occupied building, and euthenize it. It's important to keep in mind that every situation is different and like all wild animals, bears are highly unpredictable—especially when trapped in a building. It's best if you can avoid something like this from happening by practicing good habits so that bears are not enticed to enter a dwelling in the first place." (See page 25.)

ADIRONDACK BLACK BEARS

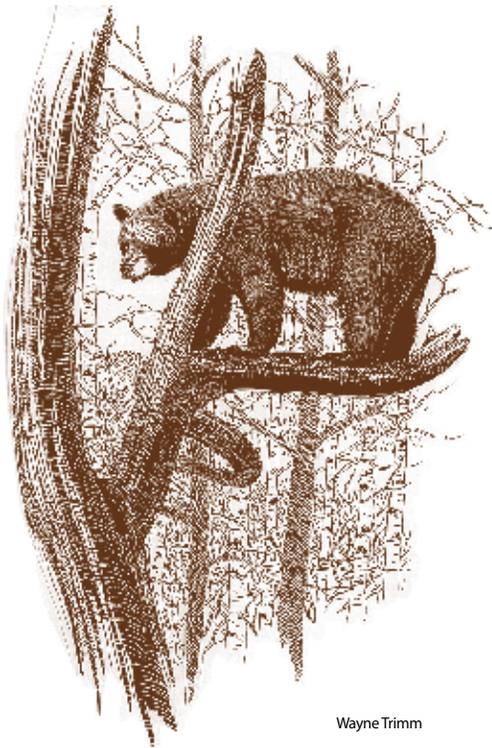
—Does beech nut abundance affect human-bear conflicts?

By Courtney LaMere

Every few summers in the Adirondack Park, incidents like the one the Schwartz family experienced (pp. 20-21) serve as vivid reminders of the saying, “A fed bear is a dead bear.” Bears that get food from humans (whether intentionally or unintentionally) lose their natural fear of people, which can lead to dangerous encounters with bad consequences for both humans and bears.

Most people who live in bear country know that they need to secure all potential food items that may attract a hungry bear. However, every year we hear about black bears getting into garbage cans, coolers and cabins in search of an easy meal. Some years—like 2012—are worse than others. Perhaps this results from the previous year having few bear encounters and lulling us into letting our guards down.

As a graduate student studying wildlife biology and management at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, I wondered why we saw these spikes in human-bear conflicts, and perhaps more importantly, wondered if there was a way to predict when they would happen. Why would DEC have 39 bear complaints filed in the Adirondacks by the public one year (2006), followed by 194 (almost five times as many!) the next



Wayne Trimm

year, and then only 14 bear complaints the next year? Was natural food availability driving complaint numbers, or did it have to do with the number of bears in an area at any given time?

Previous research in other areas of the U.S. has shown that black bears’ home range sizes and long-distance movements are greater in times of food scarcity. This, in turn, increases the opportunities for bear-human interactions, as bears cover more area in search of food. In New York,

DEC biologists theorized that natural cycles in beech nut production (literally the nuts of beech trees, an important fall food for bears) might have an impact on the number of human-bear conflicts experienced in the Adirondack Park.

To test this theory, I studied how beech nut cycles relate to human-bear conflict levels and how they influence cub production in black bears, suspecting that high cub production one year might lead to a higher prevalence of conflicts with people the following year when those young bears disperse.

Bears and Beech Nuts

Black bears routinely seek out easy, energy-rich meals like acorns or beech nuts when they are available, or sometimes garbage and bird seed. And biologists in some areas have observed that years of high and low cub production are tied to the availability of high-quality food. Pregnant females need to enter their dens in late fall with maximum fat reserves as they require large energetic stores to draw from during gestation and lactation. In years with poor food availability, some female bears may forego cub production.

Beech nut leaves and fruit



Adult female bears (sows) regularly breed every other year and, in New York, they generally produce two or three cubs per litter. Breeding every other year allows for the cubs to remain with the sow for 16-18 months. Biologists have observed that in certain habitats a large proportion of female bears breed on the same two-year cycle, a trait known as reproductive synchrony.

Beech nuts have a high fat content and when they are abundant they are a primary fall food source for Adirondack black bears. Beech trees intermittently produce large seed crops (called “mast”). In New York, they typically follow an alternate-year pattern of mast production—one year the forest floor will be covered with beech nuts (as many as tens of thousands per acre); the next year hardly any nuts will be produced.

So the first thing I looked at was whether female black bears in northern New York were on the same two-year cycle as beech trees (i.e. successful pregnancies coinciding with beech mast). Through a process called population reconstruction, I used harvest-by-age data to calculate a minimum estimate of the number and ages of bears in the population in any given year. For example, there were an estimated minimum of 716 yearlings in the Adirondack black bear population in 1980, meaning they had been born in 1979. In contrast, I calculated a minimum estimate of 199 yearlings in 1981 (born in 1980), suggesting that 1979 had a higher cub production than 1980. After looking at the number of yearlings in the population from 1970 to 2008, I was able to see that the data indicated that with a few exceptions, female bears in northern New

DEC photo



A collared female bear with her cub in their winter den.

York have been producing cubs in a synchronized alternate-year pattern for the past 40 years.

Now it was time to test whether the bears were synchronized with the beech nuts. To do this, I compared the calculations on bear reproduction with data on annual beech nut abundance gathered since 1988 by Stacy McNulty at Huntington Wildlife Forest in Newcomb, NY. The results: cub production did, in fact, correspond closely to beech mast production, with peaks of cub production in the springs following abundant mast crops.

Predicting Human-Bear Conflicts

Knowing that black bear reproduction and beech nut abundance are correlated can help us predict when there is the potential for increased human-bear conflicts. For instance, we could counsel visitors to be extra vigilant during summers that follow a large fall beech nut crop as there will be more bears.

Young black bears leave their mothers at the beginning of their second summer. Males travel long distances to find new home ranges, while females typically occupy home ranges adjacent to their mothers'. Results of the first step of my study showed that every other year there is an elevated number of young bears in the population. Given that, I wanted to also look at whether there was an obvious increase in bear-human encounters during the same years there was a higher number of young bears dispersing. So, the next step of my research project was to investigate whether the pattern in cub production and the natural food abundance cycles—black bears eat fruits such as raspberries, blueberries and serviceberries in summer, then hard mast like beech nuts in fall—affect the level of human-bear conflicts in the Adirondack Park.

I analyzed DEC records of bear complaints reported by the public to come up with annual levels of human-bear conflicts in the Park. I then used statistical models to test the effect of summer bear



John Adamski



It's important to keep the cubs warm while the sows are being weighed, measured and tagged by biologists.

food abundance (data available from Huntington Wildlife Forest), beech nut abundance, the size of the whole bear population, and the number of the young male bears on levels of human-bear conflicts each year from 2001-2009. Contrary to my hypothesis, neither the size of the total bear population nor number of young bears were the most important factors for predicting human-bear conflict levels, though overall bear population size was a strong contributor. Of all the variables tested, only the abundance of

beech nuts in the previous fall correlated closely enough to be able to predict spikes in bear complaints. This may have to do with the availability of overwintered beech nuts as an energy-rich food in the spring. Once the overwintered beech nuts are gone, the transition to lower-quality leafy vegetation that's available in spring may be a difficult one and bears that are less wary of people may seek human food sources, leading to negative encounters.

While more research is needed, we know enough to say that residents and visitors to the Park can expect elevated levels of human-bear conflicts in summers that follow a fall with a large beech nut crop, as illustrated by the summer of 2012. But regardless of this human-bear conflict forecast, it's important for all of us to remember that people are half of the equation, and we need to do our part to keep bears wild.

Courtney LaMere graduated with her Master's degree from SUNY-ESF in 2012 and is currently working for USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services on the feral swine management and disease surveillance project in Central New York.

Author's note: Funding for this project was provided by the Pittman-Robertson Program and the Edna Bailey Sussman Foundation. Additional data assistance was provided by the Wildlife Conservation Society's Adirondack Program.

Help Prevent Human-Bear Conflicts

By Steven Heerkens

Each year, DEC responds to reports of bear damage ranging from tipped garbage cans and raided bird feeders, to agricultural damage and home entries. While DEC cannot always predict when a bear might become a nuisance, we can anticipate problems by understanding the conditions that lead to visits by bears.

- Bird feeders attract bears, particularly in the spring after bears emerge from winter dens. Bears will stay near homes and camps for a longer period of time if feeders are available. Consider removing bird feeders by April 1st.
- Garbage cans and dumpsters (especially those left unsecured in garages or along the roadside) are easy targets for bears. DEC recommends that garbage be brought to the curb as close to pick-up time as possible—do not put them out the night before! If you have a commercial dumpster in bear country, request a bear-resistant container from your waste management company or erect an electric fence.
- Feeding bears is illegal! Some people will intentionally place food outside their tents, cabins or homes in hopes of attracting bears for viewing, but this is illegal. When a bear is rewarded with food, it is encouraged to continue seeking human food sources. If allowed to continue, this behavior can lead to property damage or potential threats to human safety. In many cases, DEC staff are asked to intervene and handle nuisance animals whose behavior has escalated to these levels.
- Home entries are, fortunately, one of the least common complaints DEC receives annually. However, a number of these occur each year. Considered the most serious nuisance incident by a bear, DEC has a zero-tolerance policy for such behavior. Bears that enter homes are a severe threat to human safety and are euthanized. Property owners in bear country can reduce the risk of home entries by: maintaining a clean home and yard; minimizing attractants on porches; and by closing windows when not at home.
- Bears are native to New York; many people live in close proximity to them and never experience a problem. If we maintain clean properties and minimize attractants, we can avoid human-bear conflicts and appreciate these magnificent animals from a distance.

DEC is currently developing a statewide black bear management plan. To learn more about bears and bear management, visit www.dec.ny.gov/animals/6960.html.

Steven Heerkens is a wildlife biologist in DEC's Utica office.

DEC photo



DEC photo





One of the author's gardens.

Gardening with Native Plants

By Barbara Nuffer

photos provided by author unless otherwise noted

It's springtime and for many, thoughts turn to gardening. If you're one of the millions of people who enjoy landscaping or gardening, consider using native plants in your project. Native plants are low-maintenance because they are already adapted to our local environment, and they attract local wildlife.

Native plants are defined as those species that would have been found in your geographic area before the arrival of European settlers. They are the perfect solution to achieving true low-maintenance plantings. If the plants are provided with the same soil type, level of moisture, and sun or shade that they would find in their natural setting, they will live a relatively carefree life—no need for the routine maintenance (such as

pruning and fertilizing) that labor-intensive, non-native, ornamental garden plants demand. Furthermore, native plants rarely require treatment for disease and insect problems because they have evolved to resist them.

Another enjoyable reward of using native plants is the variety of wildlife they attract. Native plants provide food, cover, shelter and nesting sites for birds and other animals which thrive in this native landscape. According to Stephen Kress of the National Audubon Society: "Native plants, which have co-evolved with native wild birds, are more likely to provide a mix of foods—the right size, with the right kind of nutrition—just when the birds need them."



columbine

Unlike the case with many non-native ornamental plants, the timing of flowering and fruiting of native plants corresponds to meet the needs of particular bird or animal species. For instance, the white flowers of the attractive Virginia creeper eventually mature into blue fruits that become an important source of food for birds in late winter when other food sources are scarce. Many types of woodpeckers and robins enjoy this nourishing food. Interestingly, these same berries are toxic to mammals due to their

high levels of oxalates. In addition, the oxalates in the plant's leaves prevent deer from eating the plant, making it an ideal addition to your garden.

Using non-native plants can be detrimental to the natural landscape and have negative impacts on local wildlife. For example, purple loosestrife—introduced in the 1880s from Europe, Asia and Africa—has spread like wildfire, pushing out native plants like broad-leaved cattail species in many of our wetlands. This has affected a number of our wildlife species,



The milkweed plant can attract butterflies (like this fritillary sp.) and hummingbirds to your garden.

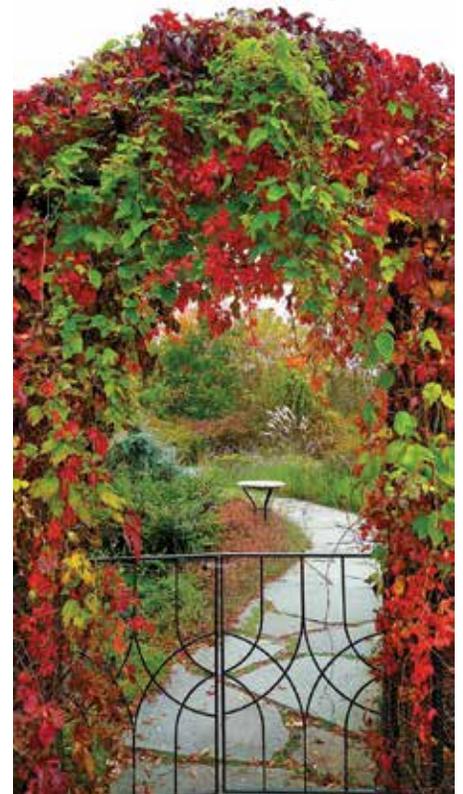
including muskrats which use cattails for food and for building their homes. Many types of waterfowl will also avoid wetlands choked with purple loosestrife as it does not provide adequate nesting cover. Additionally, songbirds will not eat the small, hard seeds of loosestrife.

By reintroducing native plants to your yard, you will likely attract local birds and wildlife which you can enjoy watching. Easily maintained, as well as beautiful, native plants may be the answer to creating the garden you've always wanted.

To get you started on your own native garden, check out the website for the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center www.wildflower.org/collections for a huge database that includes more than 100 plants native to New York. And be sure to purchase your native plants from responsible nurseries or garden centers.

A Cornell Master Gardener volunteer, DEC retiree **Barbara Nuffer** is a wildflower and gardening enthusiast.

Virginia creeper



Aase Nielsen



lake herring

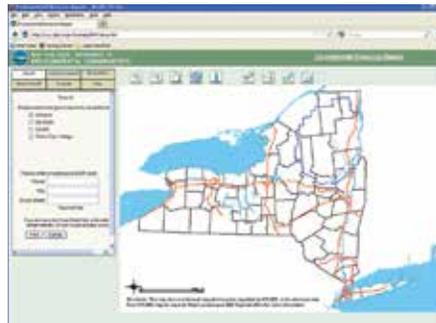
Steve Geving, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Stocking Lake Herring

DEC recently stocked lake herring into Irondequoit Bay on Lake Ontario. Lake herring were once an important prey fish in the lake and supported important commercial fisheries that collapsed in the early 1950s largely due to overharvest. The stocking of this once-abundant fish represents another pivotal benchmark in DEC's efforts to restore native species to the lake. DEC recently re-introduced the bloater, a deepwater whitefish, into Lake Ontario. Lake herring occupy and spawn in shallower water than the bloater, and spawn earlier in winter. Visit the Herrings of New York webpage at www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7043.html to learn more about lake herring, and visit www.dec.ny.gov/press/87875.html to learn more about DEC's re-stocking efforts.

iMapInvasives Training

Scientists and conservation professionals are monitoring invasive species in New York, and you can help! The NY Natural Heritage Program uses its iMap-Invasives database to track invasive species threatening the state's natural



resources. Educators, landowners, citizen scientists and volunteers are encouraged to help update the map by reporting invasive species locations and management efforts. Training is required to enter data, and the Heritage Program is offering free sessions throughout the state this spring. Visit www.nyimainvasives.org for schedule details and registration, and contact imainvasives@nynhp.org with general questions.

Salamander Success Story

Last November, DEC staff captured an eastern hellbender (a large salamander, up to 2 feet long) that had been raised in captivity in DEC's Hellbender Headstart Program at the Buffalo Zoo and

Kenneth Roblee



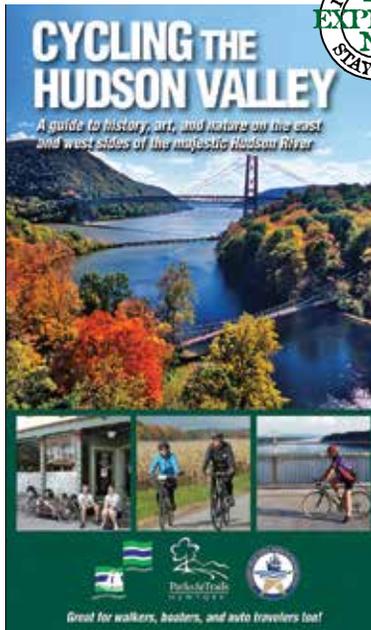
eastern hellbender

then released into the wild. Apparently the hellbender was adapting well, as it weighed nearly 40 grams more than when it was released last July. Beginning in 2009, more than 400 young hellbenders were raised at the Buffalo Zoo as part of DEC's effort to revitalize dwindling populations of eastern hellbenders. To date, 146 juveniles have been released into the Allegany River watershed, with the rest to be released soon. Biologists implanted a small electronic chip in each animal to track its progress. DEC plans to monitor release sites through 2017 and hopes for more success stories like this one. To learn more about the eastern hellbender, visit DEC's website at www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7160.html. Also, check out the Buffalo Zoo at www.buffalozoo.org.

New Cycling Guidebook

The non-profit advocacy group Parks & Trails New York recently produced a newly revised *Cycling the Hudson Valley* guidebook. The 142-page book includes color maps, and is full of information on Hudson Valley attractions, historic sites, visitor centers, lodging, parks and much more! It's great for walkers, hikers, bikers and boaters, and its spiral binding and convenient size make it perfect to tuck inside a saddle bag or backpack. You can

BRIEFLY



order your copy by visiting <http://ptny.org/guidebook/hudsonguide.shtml> on the Parks & Trails New York website.

Youth Summer Camp

DEC's summer camps are now accepting registrations for campers ages 11-17. A link to the new online application can be found at www.dec.ny.gov/education/29.html. Those registering

campers will be able to see immediately which sessions have openings, sign campers up directly (including selecting the optional Sportsman Education program offered at each camp), and pay by credit card or e-check. Confirmation will be sent via e-mail. Paper applications and paper checks will no longer be used. The fee is \$350 per session per camper.

Reminder: Don't Burn!

Like Kenneth Grahame's Mole from *Wind in the Willows*, many people across the state find spring perfect for "cleaning time." DEC reminds everyone that burning trash is prohibited across New York, and in some areas burning yard waste is also prohibited. Open burning can create air pollution and increases the risk of wildfires. There are several alternatives to burning trash and yard waste, including composting and recycling. Visit DEC's Don't Trash Our Air webpage at www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/32060.html for links to more information, including answers to common questions and more alternatives to burning.

National Wild Turkey Federation



Turkey Hunting Tips

To ensure safe and successful turkey hunting this spring, the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) has advice for turkey hunters. For instance: never wear blue, white or red—not even on buttons or socks—as these are the colors of a gobbler's head and body; and if you're using one, always make sure your decoy is not visible when you're transporting it. Also, make sure your back is to a stump or rock wider than your shoulders and higher than your head when calling turkeys. For more tips, search "safe turkey hunt" in the press release section on the NWTf website at www.nwtf.org, and have a safe season!

DEC photo





An Old Friend Visits

My family enjoys *Conservationist* and we thought you might appreciate the attached photo I took. We have not seen bobwhites in years!

Sophie Janeway
Stuyvesant, Columbia County

What a great photo! Important game birds, northern bobwhites are small chicken-like birds that are members of the quail family. They occur in the eastern United States and Mexico. However, their numbers have been declining in most states and the International Union for Conservation of Nature lists bobwhites as “near threatened.” In New York, there is a limited hunting season.

—*Conservationist* staff

The Mystery Remains

We heard from several interested readers, birdwatchers, rehabbers, falconers and bird banders about our attempts to identify the hungry hawk that appeared on page 31 of the December issue. It was great fun reading the responses, for while each correspondent was certain of their identification, they reached different conclusions as to the identity of the bird! (“It’s



clearly a Cooper’s hawk and here’s why...”; “It’s clearly a goshawk and here’s why...”) However, all seemed to agree that it is an immature accipiter (or bird hawk), but whether it was a Cooper’s or a goshawk, it seems only the bird knows for sure!

—*Conservationist* staff

I Fish New York City

John Bacaring sent us this photo of an impressive striped bass he caught and released in New York Harbor. Striped bass are anadromous, meaning they migrate from the sea into freshwater



✉ LETTERS

to spawn. In New York, they are found seasonally in the tidal portion of the Hudson River and in the coastal waters around Long Island. Spawning takes place in the Hudson River estuary in May and early June. Striped bass are popular sportfish, known for their speed, power and large size (up to 4 ½ feet!).

—Eileen Stegemann, Assistant Editor

What's in a Name?

Our December 2012 feature on Seneca Ray Stoddard's photography prompted a reader to ask us: "What led to Seneca Ray Stoddard's name? Was he a Seneca?" We didn't know, so we turned to an expert historian for answers...



Seneca Ray Stoddard

"No, he wasn't a Seneca. He was born in Wilton, NY in 1843. While his given name may refer to the Seneca Nation, it could just as easily refer to the Roman stoic philosopher by the same name. The 1840s was the height of the Classical Revival period in the U.S., and so a lot of places and some people drew their names from classical Greek and Roman sources: Ovid, NY; Homer, NY; Romulus, NY; Carthage, NY."

—Charles E. Vandrei, DEC Historic Preservation Officer

Photogenic Tom

I wanted to share this photo I took of a wild turkey in Penfield.
Laurie Dirx
Ontario, Wayne County

Great photo! For tips on how to enjoy a safe turkey hunt this spring, check out page 29 of this issue.

—Conservationist staff



Ask the Biologist



Q: I saw these adult bullheads next to a mass of young bullheads and wondered—are they protecting their young?

—Chuck Roda, St. Lawrence County

A: Yes. How lucky you were to see this, and to get some pictures. The fish in your photos appear to be brown bullheads. Members of the catfish family, bullhead spawn in late spring and early summer in New York. Like many fish, they construct nests, usually building them in a shaded spot near a log. Occasionally they will nest inside objects such as an auto tire nailed to a boat dock. As illustrated by your photo, adult bullhead guard their eggs and schooling young for several weeks. This differs from many other freshwater fish species (such as yellow perch, trout and pike) who simply lay their eggs and leave. By chasing away potential predators, bullheads are ensuring better survival for their young.

—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



Back Trails

Perspectives on People and Nature

John Bulmer

Listen to the Sunrise by Thomas Adessa

As I sit in the silent, pre-dawn darkness waiting for the first gobble, my thoughts wander. The vapor of my breath and patches of frost on the ground bring back memories of my youth and of pheasant hunts with my father.

Morning in the spring woods during turkey season is a special time afield. It is a time of renewal; the forests and fields are coming alive again after a long, sleepy winter. Deer still have the tattered remnants of their winter coats, and a shaded hollow can hold so many trilliums that the ground appears to have a leftover patch of snow.

On some treks into the woods I carry a shovel as well as a shotgun. On the way home I dig leeks that are bound for a thick soup. Always mindful of an old friend, I dig some for him, too. A bum hip makes his days of turkey hunting a thing of the past. His blue eyes and weathered face light up when I hand him a freshly dug batch. "Spring tonic," he says, as he crunches one. Between sips of coffee he tells stories about turkey hunting.

Impatient for the dawn, I check my watch for the third time. I am still sleepy after a restless night of anticipation. Two cups of coffee have not fully awakened me. "Just close your eyes until the first gobble," I think. Leaning my head back against a large silver maple, I listen to the silence.

There is no cell phone to chirp messages, or traffic noise to spoil the morning. Then I hear it: "Fffttt, Fffttt, Fffttt." It's the sound of a sparrow flitting from branch to branch. Looking up into the twisted branches of a nearby beech tree, I think, "How many turkeys have roosted here over the years?"



Edward Jakubowski

Off to the east the new day is but a pink blush on the horizon.

Suddenly a male cardinal voices his distinct song and the woods come to life. I hear a woodpecker hammering out his first meal of the day. Or maybe he is courting a mate? Even the cattle in a nearby pasture can't resist joining, and that prompts a boss gobbler to sound off.

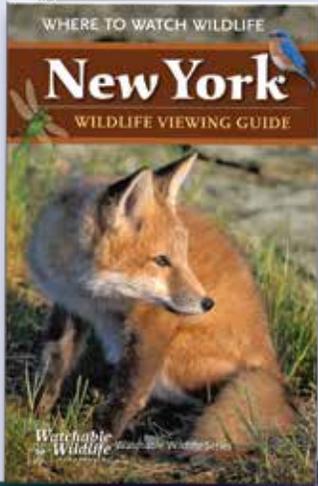
No matter how many times I hear it, the morning's first gobble is always exciting; it makes the pulse pound in my ears. I scratch out some soft tree yelps and another booming gobble splits the cool air. Long minutes go by and just before the start of legal shooting time, comes the "Whoof, Whoof, Whoof" of turkeys flying down from their overnight roosts. I hear the cackles of an anxious hen, and the tom's response. During the next hour, I try as I might to entice that tom, but instead he leads his entourage of ladies away, over the ridgeline.

As the sun breaks over the horizon, songbirds sing to the new day and to their mates. The crisp morning air carries the sound of a farmer chugging his tractor to life as he prepares to start his long day.

There is no turkey slung over my shoulder as I hike back to my truck. But I smile as I listen to the distinct cry of a pileated woodpecker and watch its undulating flight. Its call prompts the gobbler to sound off one more time. It is just the tom's way of letting me know he is still there. And although I return without a turkey, I go home with a different kind of bounty; one I receive every time I make a trip into the early-morning woods.

It's a gift that carries more weight than the heaviest tom. I took the time to listen to the sunrise.

Thomas Adessa is a Central New York native and an avid lover of the outdoors.



COMING SOON:

New York Wildlife Viewing Guide!

- 248 pages of beautiful color photos
- more than 100 great wildlife viewing sites
- tips on viewing and photography

Take it with you on your next outdoor adventure!



to order your copy visit:

www.WatchableWildlife.org



Courtesy NYC Parks

Celebrate Arbor Day—April 26th

Trees are important in our lives: they clean the air we breathe and filter the water we drink; they use and store carbon dioxide (a greenhouse gas); they cool our homes and streets; and they provide places for birds and other wildlife to live. Trees are also a renewable resource that can be made into the furniture we love in our homes.

DEC works year-round with communities, organizations and landowners to: spread the word about the importance of trees; to teach people how to properly choose, plant and care for trees; and even how to manage their forests. Some of our many efforts include:

Trees for Tribes restores streamside buffers through tree planting.

Tree City USA provides direction, technical assistance, and recognition for urban and community forestry programs.

New York ReLeaf creates partnerships between forestry professionals and dedicated citizens.

Forest Stewardship Plans whereby DEC foresters help forest owners create plans to manage their woods.

The State Tree Nursery offers landowners low-cost tree and shrub seedlings for conservation plantings, and provides free seedlings to schools.



To order seedlings, visit
www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7127.html

Celebrate trees—plant a seedling this Arbor Day!



Marty DeLong

See pg. 20

Subscribe today!
Call 1-800-678-6399

Visit online:
www.TheConservationist.org

