

Hatchery Anniversary | NY National Treasures | Birding

NEW YORK STATE

# Conservationist

APRIL 2014



Fishing's  
**GREAT**  
in New York State



Dear Reader,

April holds special significance for generations of outdoor enthusiasts. In addition to the promise of spring, it marks the beginning of trout season in the Empire State.

This state's anglers, hunters and trappers have always demonstrated their stewardship for our natural resources. They understand that a clean and healthy environment pays great dividends in recreational opportunities, in quality of life, and for a vibrant economy. In one of New York's

recreational and tourism crown jewels, the Finger Lakes, the estimated value of recreational fisheries alone exceeds \$12 million annually to the local economy. Throughout the state, the environment and economy are inextricably linked.

I have made it a priority to improve recreational opportunities for the sporting community and to increase outdoor tourism throughout the state. Under our New York Open for Fishing and Hunting initiative, we have reduced sporting license fees, simplified license types, and made fishing licenses valid for a year from the date of purchase. We're improving access for fishing, stocking nearly a million pounds of fish, expanding fishing clinics, and increasing hunting opportunities. Through these efforts, New York has become a premier destination for fishing tournaments in the Great Lakes, Finger Lakes, Lake Champlain and Oneida Lake.

In addition, we have included in this year's Executive Budget the creation of 50 new projects to improve access to our incredible natural resources. These projects will connect anglers, hunters, bird watchers, photographers and recreationists of all kinds to more than 360,000 acres of existing state and easement lands that have not reached their full potential. These projects include building new boat launches, installing new hunting blinds, and building new trails and parking areas. In addition, we've included \$4 million for long-needed improvements to the state's fish hatcheries.

This year, we also created the New York Adventure License Series. Lifetime license holders now have the option of adding icons to their driver licenses, demonstrating their fishing or hunting privileges. New lifetime license buyers can also purchase new vehicle license plates showing how much they enjoy fishing and/or hunting. In fact, new lifetime license holders can get their plates and the first year renewal for free. These special plates will identify sportsmen and sportswomen as devoted fans of a sport shared by millions. Learn more at [licensecenter.ny.gov](http://licensecenter.ny.gov).

I wish all the state's outdoor enthusiasts a successful and enjoyable season.

Sincerely,

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo

## NEW YORK STATE **Conservationist**

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Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of New York State

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pink lady's slipper orchids

See page 22

photo courtesy of Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission

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**Front cover:** Black crappie (with rock bass behind) by Eric Engbretson | **Back cover:** Birding in Steuben County by Bill Banaszewski



Eric Engbretson

# CRAPPIE FISHING

*— Fun times fishing for this unique sunfish*



By James Everard

I love fishing for crappie and have often wondered how such a great little fish ended up with such a ridiculous name. Perhaps that's why anglers have given this fish so many nicknames: calico bass, strawberry bass, speck, papermouth and slab. Whatever you call them, crappie are enjoyable to fish—they are wide-spread, fun to catch, can be caught year-round (including ice fishing), and they taste incredible.

Crappie are members of the sunfish family, a family that also includes largemouth and smallmouth bass, bluegill and pumpkinseed sunfish. There are two species of crappie: white and black (see "Black or White" on page 3). Of the two species, black crappie are much more common and are found in numerous waters across the state. They are very popular with anglers.

Spring is the best time to catch crappie as they migrate into shallow areas to spawn. Crappie spawn earlier than other sunfish species, usually when water temperatures enter the low 60s. During this period, they can typically be found in shoreline areas less than eight feet deep, and tend to congregate around docks, aquatic vegetation, rocky structures, fallen trees or other woody structures.

Karner blue butterfly on butterfly weed

*New York State Conservationist, April 2014*

Boat anglers should try backwater areas or protected bays. These areas are the first to warm up, and are great locations for spring fishing for crappie. It's best to work your way along the shoreline, casting small jigs or minnows fished under a bobber. Once you locate some fish, concentrate in that area as crappie tend to group up at this time of year. For shore anglers, look for a shallow protected area where there is some woody structure. A small tube jig or jig/minnow combination fished under a light pencil bobber is a favorite method of many anglers. Be sure to adjust the depth under the bobber as crappie tend to be lazy and won't swim far for a meal. The slightest change can make a big difference.

Unlike other sunfish species that tend to be curious, crappie shy away from disturbance and banging tackle boxes or oars on a boat bottom is a sure way to scare them. With their large eyes allowing them to see well during low light periods,

crappie tend to bite best in the early morning, evening, or at night. Bites can be very light, so keen attention to the slightest twitch of the line or movement of a bobber is important for success. Crappie can also be very color-sensitive, so if the lure you're using isn't working, try switching colors.

Once spawning is over, crappie typically move to deeper water. At this time, anglers have the best luck fishing off points, drop-offs, over weed beds or on the outside weed edges near spawning areas. I've had great success using a jig or minnow under a bobber or casting in-line spinners or small spinnerbaits while drifting over a weedy area. I also like using a fly rod with floating line, and a 7-8 foot monofilament leader between the jig and line.

As summer progresses, crappie often stage a disappearing act and seem to vanish from a lake. However, they have merely moved and can often be found

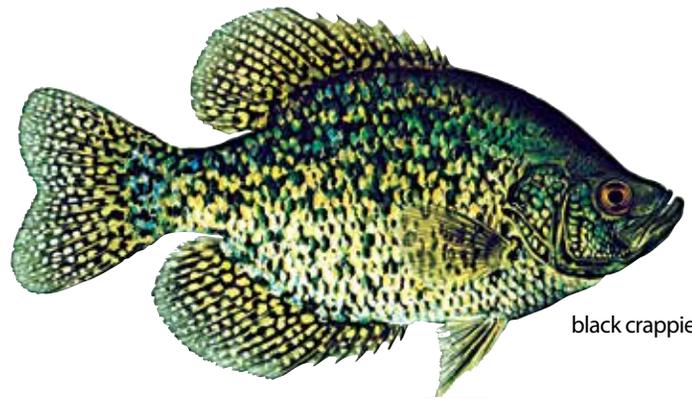


suspended over deeper open water. Suspended fish are some of the hardest to locate and catch, but sometimes they will come up to the surface to feed, and give themselves away. If you're lucky enough to see this, cast right into that area and enjoy the action, which usually doesn't

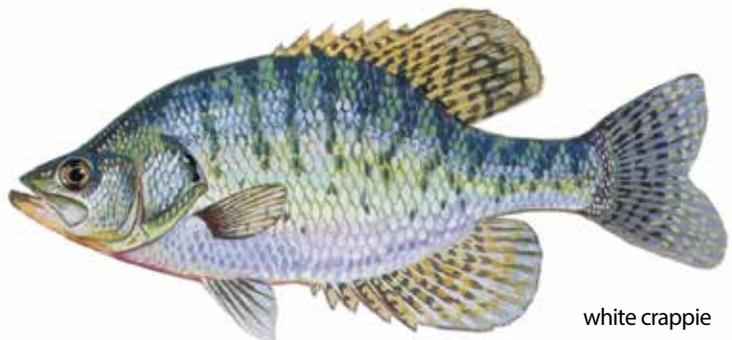
## Black or White?

Both species of crappie (black and white) call New York waters home. While white crappie prefer more turbid (cloudy) water and black crappie typically live in clear water, the two species can be very difficult to tell apart.

Coloration can vary in all fish species, but white crappie tend to be pale silver and oftentimes have vertical barring along the sides. In contrast, black crappie tend to be darker and greener with scattered black specks. The best mechanism to tell the two species apart is the distance from the eye to the front of the dorsal (top) fin: White crappie tend to have a very long forehead with the distance from the eye to the front of the fin more than the length of the fin itself; whereas in black crappie this distance is usually about equal to the length of the dorsal fin.



black crappie



white crappie

Courtesy of Duane Raver / US Fish & Wildlife Service and Tracy Lee

Children really enjoy fishing for crappie which are relatively easy to catch.





A variety of lures and bobbers for crappie fishing

last very long. Another way to locate these fish is to troll with small crankbaits or jigs. Once fish are found, simply let the boat drift and cast with small minnows.

Crappie have relatively small mouths, so you want to choose smaller baits or lures in the one and one-half to three-inch size range. Good natural baits include small minnows, wax worms, night crawlers, mousies and spikes. While small crankbaits and spinnerbaits are effective lures, the most popular artificial lures for crappie fishing are small jigs. I make sure to carry a variety of colors, including bright pink, yellow, chartreuse, white, and many shades of watermelon.

An inexpensive, light-action rod will do well when fishing for crappie. The fish's nickname "papermouth" refers to the delicacy of a crappie's mouth, and heavier-action rods can tear a hook out of the mouth. Also, crappie can be line-sensitive, meaning they get spooked when they see a line, so it's best to use clear, light lines in the 4-8 pound test range, which are thinner and less likely to be seen.

Of course, sometimes simple is best. I really enjoy throwing out a line with a bobber on it. After all, what angler, no matter their age, doesn't get excited by seeing a bobber go under? For crappie, smaller is generally better, as long as it's large enough to stay afloat with whatever weight you're using.

Some of my most enjoyable days have been spent out on the water, fishing for crappie. So, if you can get past the name and are looking for a fun and tasty fish to catch, go out and enjoy some crappie fishing.

**James Everard** (pictured right) is a fisheries biologist in DEC's Cortland office, and considers himself a crappie fisherman.



## Where can I find crappie?

New York has some great crappie waters and anglers may fish for crappie all year long. The following are just a few of the state's warmwater lakes and ponds that have consistently good crappie fishing:

- Long Island/NYC: Peconic River, Prospect Park Lake
- Southeastern NY: New Croton Reservoir, Muscoot Reservoir, Greenwood Lake
- East Central NY: Basic Creek Reservoir, Copake Lake, Kinderhook Lake, Burden Lake, Snyders Lake
- Adirondacks/ Lake Champlain: Saratoga Lake, Lake Champlain (shallow bays including Monty Bay, Bulwagga Bay and South Bay)
- North-Central NY: Black Lake
- Central NY: Whitney Point Reservoir, Oneida Lake-Big Bay and Toad Harbor
- Finger Lakes: Honeoye Lake, north and south ends of Canandaigua Lake
- Great Lakes: many bays and harbors in Lake Ontario and Lake Erie (in spring)
- West-Central NY: Waneta Lake
- Western NY: Chautauqua Lake, Cassadaga Lake, Silver Lake

Be sure to check out DEC's website at [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7749.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7749.html) to find additional waters where crappie can be caught.





# GET OUTDOORS

## *at New York's National Treasures*

By Patrick J. Chaisson

When the average New Yorker thinks about visiting a National Park, he or she likely imagines such famous natural wonders as Yosemite's giant sequoias or Old Faithful geyser in Yellowstone. What many people don't realize, however, is that there are more than 26 properties

managed by the National Park Service located right here in New York State. Some offer breathtaking natural views and recreational opportunities on par with the nation's best, while others hold National Historic Sites that interpret our country's rich heritage.

Kayak through a 9,155-acre wildlife refuge, home to 300 bird species and 60 different kinds of butterflies—all adjacent to New York City. Glide silently on cross-country skis across a Revolutionary War battlefield. Take a fishing trip down one of the longest and cleanest rivers on the East Coast. Or go for a swim off an Atlantic Ocean barrier island. These activities and more await visitors to New York's national areas.

In southern New York, visitors can enjoy a wide variety of activities in Gateway National Recreation Area, a 26,000-acre park with units in both New York and New Jersey. Gateway is popular with many New York City residents, as every unit is accessible by public transportation. The Staten Island Unit features parks at Great Kills and

Miller Field. Across New York Harbor is the Jamaica Bay Unit, which contains the only wildlife refuge administered by the National Park Service. Other sites include Floyd Bennett Field, Canarsie Pier, Fort Tilden and the popular Jacob Riis Park on Breezy Point.

Paddlers can rent canoes and kayaks to explore the marshes, ponds and open water of Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. Birdwatchers come every spring and fall to observe thousands of migrating ducks and geese. More than 330 species of birds have been spotted at Jamaica Bay—visit and see how many you spot.

Once a staging area for Hurricane Sandy relief operations, Miller Field's sports grounds are once again open to the public during the warmer months. The 580-acre Great Kills Park offers hiking

photo courtesy of National Park Service



Dead Horse Bay, Floyd Bennett Field, Gateway National Recreation Area

The Statue of Liberty is perhaps New York's most iconic landmark. The monument is managed by the National Park Service, and there is a museum and guided tours. Visit [www.nps.gov/stli](http://www.nps.gov/stli) for more information.



trails and a busy marina. Anglers can cast their lines off the 600-foot Canarsie Pier while the swimming is fine at Jacob Riis Park on a hot summer day. There are more trails to explore over on Floyd Bennett Field, especially when a rare snowstorm makes cross-country skiing possible.

For a truly unique experience just a few hours from Manhattan, visit Fire Island National Seashore. Stretching across 26 miles of 32-mile-long Fire Island (off Long Island’s southern coast), this national seashore can be reached via passenger ferry April to October. (Vehicle access is limited to the east and west ends of Fire Island connecting to Smith Point County and Robert Moses State Parks.) Those seeking to escape the city’s noise will find a quiet, relaxing destination here.

The National Seashore offers back-country camping (reservations are

required) in the Otis Pike Fire Island High Dune Wilderness. In summer, there’s lifeguarded swimming, picnicking and hiking at Sailor’s Haven and Watch Hill. Many families like to tour the Fire

Island Lighthouse, built in 1858 and still operational today. Birds and mammals, including the endangered piping plover and roseate tern, thrive on this unspoiled barrier island.

James Clayton



Jamaica Bay

Karner blue butterfly on butterfly weed

## The Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River



photo courtesy of National Park Service

Heading upstate, the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River is a great place to kayak, canoe, tube and raft.

Although most of the river is generally calm, those seeking excitement can find challenging Class I and II rapids. Fishing is another fun activity to be enjoyed here, with smallmouth bass, trout and walleye the favorites of anglers. While on the river, keep an eye out for bald eagles, which are occasionally sighted by keen observers.

There are plenty of places to camp after a day on the water. Several privately run campgrounds can be found along the river, and Oquaga Creek State Park is a short drive to the north. During the summer months, uniformed park rangers and volunteers staff public launch areas to provide expert advice on local attractions and services, as well as the most up-to-date river conditions.

The Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River represents a unique partnership between the National Park Service, New York State, Pennsylvania, local municipal agencies, non-profit organizations and business groups. Located along the New York-Pennsylvania border, the northern terminus can be found at Hancock, in Delaware County, and the southern terminus near Port Jervis, 73.4

miles downstream. Visitors must note: the park is the river; most of the shoreline is privately owned.

Farther north, in New York's Hudson Valley, lies the Village of Kinderhook, home to the Martin Van Buren National Historic Site. Our nation's eighth president once lived here in a 36-room mansion called Lindenwald, which is open for tours from mid-May through the end of October. The park's three-quarter-mile Wayside Trail introduces visitors to Mr. Van Buren, the gentleman-farmer;

be sure to leave time for this easy walk. The National Park Service has also joined forces with Columbia County and local community groups to open a number of new hiking paths. Well-marked and open year-round, these trails help people get outdoors while learning more about the man nicknamed "The Red Fox of Kinderhook."

Thirty miles north of Albany you'll find Saratoga National Historical Park. The battles fought here in 1777 marked a milestone in our nation's struggle for independence. Today, more than 3,000 acres of pristine woodlands are set aside in remembrance of that important American victory. A nine-mile auto tour route (April-November) is open to bicycles and walkers as well. Horse and hiking trails, available year-round, also provide hiking, snowshoeing and skiing opportunities. The park even has a hill that's perfect for sledding in winter!

Those with an interest in history will enjoy the park's 4.2 mile Wilkinson Trail, which retraces a route used by British and American forces during the 1777 Saratoga Campaign. In Victory, Saratoga County, seven miles north of the main park, the fully-accessible Victory Trail

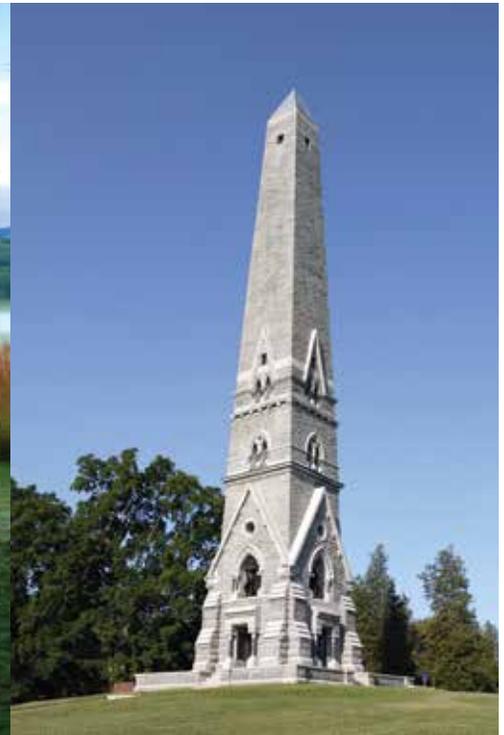


Martin Van Buren National Historic Site in Kinderhook

photo courtesy of NYS Archives



© Saratoga County Tourism



© National Park Service

boardwalk path interprets the battle's last days, which resulted in the surrender of more than 6,000 British troops.

Boaters will enjoy traveling the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor which includes the Erie, Champlain, Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca Canals. A cooperative alliance between the National Park Service, New York State agencies, cities, counties, non-profit associations

and chambers of commerce, the corridor stretches a total of 524 miles and provides boaters the perfect scenic avenue for crossing the Empire State. Visitor centers are located throughout the corridor to provide information on history, attractions, and accommodations.

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor also includes the Erie Canalway Trail for cyclists. The paved and stone-

dust off-road trail follows both active and historic sections of the Erie Canal, and will ultimately span 365 miles between Albany and Buffalo. (Approximately three-quarters of the off-road trail is currently completed.) Bikers can enjoy beautiful scenery, fascinating history, and fantastic cycling.

Numerous other national sites are scattered across the state, just waiting to be discovered. Many are closer than you think, and offer special guided tours, family-friendly activities like the Junior Ranger program for kids, and very often an unexpected surprise or two. Rangers and volunteers are available to help you plan your outdoor adventure.

So grab your friends and family and visit one of New York's national treasures—you won't be disappointed.

**Patrick J. Chaisson** writes from his home in Scotia, NY. He has visited more than 150 national sites and parks across America, and returns often to the Saratoga Battlefield as a place of inspiration and natural beauty.



photo courtesy of Parks & Trails NY

Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor bike trail

Karner blue butterfly on butterfly weed

*New York State Conservationist, April 2014*

# Your Adventure Awaits!

photo courtesy of National Park Service

To see a complete list of the National Park units in New York State, visit <http://bit.ly/OoxNB9>, and visit [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov) for information on the more than 400 national NPS sites.



## Contact information for the parks mentioned in this article:

**Gateway National Recreation Area** is located at 210 New York Avenue, Staten Island, NY 10305. Phone: 718-354-4606; [www.nps.gov/gate](http://www.nps.gov/gate).

**Fire Island National Seashore** is located off the southern shore of Long Island, at 120 Laurel Street, Patchogue, NY 11772-3596. Phone: 631-687-4750; [www.nps.gov/fiis](http://www.nps.gov/fiis).

**The Saratoga National Historical Park** is located at 648 Route 32, Stillwater, NY 12170. Phone: 518-670-2985; [www.nps.gov/sara](http://www.nps.gov/sara).

**The Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River** headquarters is at 274 River Road, Beach Lake, PA 18405-9737. Phone: 570-685-4871; [www.nps.gov/upde](http://www.nps.gov/upde).

**The Martin Van Buren National Historic Site** in Kinderhook is located at 1013 Old Post Road, Kinderhook, NY 12106-3605. Phone: 518-758-9689; [www.nps.gov/mava](http://www.nps.gov/mava).

**The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor** Visitor Center is located in Peebles Island State Park, P.O. Box 219, Waterford, NY 12188. Phone: 518-237-8643; [www.nps.gov/erie](http://www.nps.gov/erie).

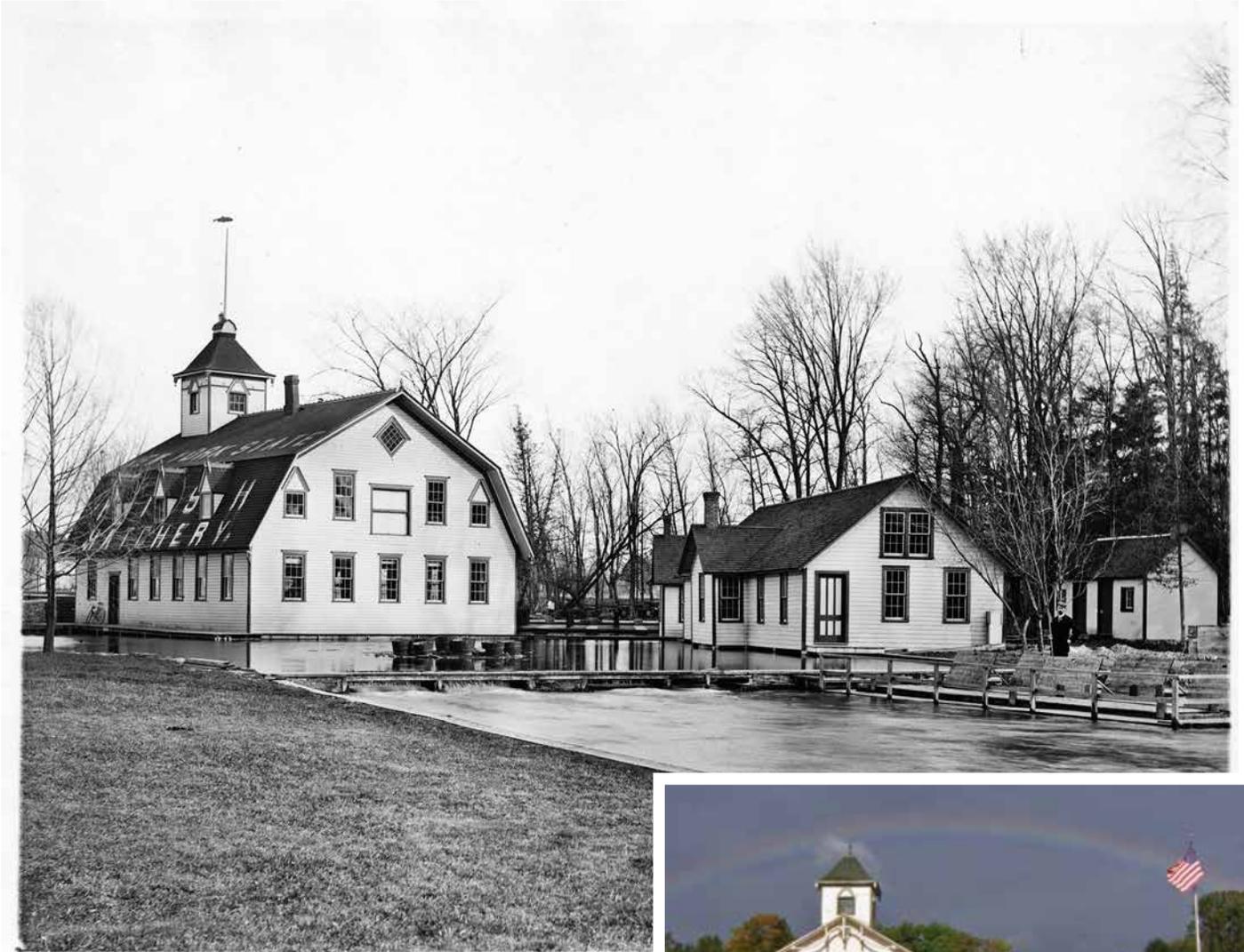
In addition, New York State manages many other lands for recreation. See DEC's "Places to Go" webpages at [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/82098.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/82098.html) for information.

**Note:** Before you visit any of New York's national treasures, be sure to check for hours of operation as they can vary. Also, some locations charge a small admission fee.



# 150 Years Strong

—Caledonia Fish Hatchery Celebrates Milestone



Early days of Caledonia Fish Hatchery



The Caledonia Hatchery today

By Alan Mack  
DEC photos unless otherwise noted

As a child, my parents would take my siblings and me to the Powder Mill Fish Hatchery south of Rochester. I was fascinated by the size and number of the trout being raised there, and spent many an hour watching them swim around. Little did I know that I would follow my interest in fish and spend my career working in a fish hatchery.

For the past 23 years, I have been the manager of DEC's Caledonia Fish Hatchery: the oldest fish hatchery in the Western Hemisphere. It's a fascinating place, steeped in history, and this year it turns 150! Many of the buildings, including the main hatchery structure, date back to the 1870s, and several of the original cultural techniques established for raising fish are still used today.

*Kamer blue butterfly on butterfly weed*

## The Caledonia Fish Hatchery is responsible for stocking all or part of eight surrounding counties...

Caledonia Hatchery was established in 1864 by Seth Green, a.k.a. the Father of Fish Culture. Born in 1817 near Rochester, Seth lived with his family in Carthage (renamed North Rochester in the 1830s) on the east bank of the Genesee River. As a young man, he was

befriended by the local Iroquois Indians who taught him to hunt and fish, and to observe the habits of fish and wildlife.

When the financial panic of 1837 took place, Seth's father's business shut down and Seth realized he needed to go out on his own. So he took up fishing for a living,

and opened a fish market on Front Street in Rochester. However, local fish populations had declined due to unregulated fishing practices and pollution, forcing Seth to go to Canada to obtain fish.

On one of his visits, Seth saw salmon constructing nests in the creek he was fishing. Fascinated, he climbed a tree and watched the spawning salmon over the course of two days. Noticing that many of the eggs laid were eaten immediately by other fish before the female could cover them with gravel, the idea popped into his head that if he could give those eggs a protected environment, there would be a lot more fish out there. So he began experimenting with spawning fish artificially, and came up with the dry spawning technique (whereby eggs and milt are gently squeezed from spawning females and males) that is still used today.

Following years of perfecting his methods, Seth bought land in Caledonia, NY in 1864 and established the country's first fish hatchery. Seth chose this site because of Spring Creek, whose waters come out of the ground at 50 degrees Fahrenheit—perfect for raising trout. In addition, the creek was loaded with brook trout.

Seth kept his dry spawning technique a secret for a few years, as he had increased survival numbers up from 15% when spawned in water, to 95% via dry spawning. Spring Creek was rerouted through the hatchery grounds and turned into ponds. Seth used these ponds to hold fish, and he began to sell fish that he propagated.



Though Caledonia Hatchery still uses some of Seth Green's methods, many things have changed. For instance, fish are no longer stocked via milk cans (pictured here); instead, most are transported directly to stocking waters via stocking trucks.



Workers standing by fry-holding troughs



Dedication of Seth Green Memorial in 1938



The building of additional concrete ponds enabled increased fish production at Caledonia.

James Clayton



Staff at NYS hatcheries still use the dry spawning technique (whereby eggs and milt are gently squeezed from spawning fish) first developed by Seth Green more than 150 years ago.

By 1868, the State of New York saw the wisdom in what Seth Green was doing, and so he was appointed to the first Fish Commission along with former NYS Governor Horatio Seymour and Robert Roosevelt (future President Theodore Roosevelt's uncle). When Seth sold the Caledonia Fish Hatchery to his assistant, Albert Collins, the Fish Commission leased some of the hatchery property and began raising fish to distribute to the public. Seth Green resigned from the Fish Commission in 1870 and was immediately appointed the Superintendent of Fisheries. New York State bought the facility from Albert Collins in 1875.

Caledonia Fish Hatchery still uses Seth Green's hatchery building and many of his fish cultural techniques, such as dry spawning. (One of Seth Green's sons, William C. Green, designed the main hatchery building.) However, many other factors have changed over the years. For example, fish are now taken directly to the receiving water and stocked via a stocking truck, as opposed to sending them in milk

cans on a railroad car. There are also many more ponds (built from concrete rather than dirt) that have allowed an increase in production. Today, Caledonia produces the most pounds of fish of any of the state's 12 fish hatcheries, averaging 135,000 pounds per year.

Each year, Caledonia's staff raise 90 – 95% of the nearly 100,000 two-year-old brown trout that are stocked in New York. They also raise more than 300,000 yearling brown trout, as well as 70,000 yearling rainbow trout that are raised at the Hatchery's satellite facility, Cedar Springs Fish Hatchery.

While Caledonia used to have its own brood stock (adult fish used to produce eggs in-house), the hatchery now receives approximately 320,000 fingerling trout from other state fish hatcheries, which they grow to yearling size. Of these, they keep 100,000 for an extra year to stock as two-year olds.

The Caledonia Fish Hatchery is responsible for stocking all or part of eight surrounding counties, including the western basin of Lake Ontario, the eastern basin of Lake Erie, and several Finger Lakes.

James Clayton



Volunteers enjoy helping DEC stock fish.

# Fish for the Future

In addition to Caledonia Fish Hatchery, DEC operates 11 other fish hatcheries throughout the state. These hatcheries produce fish for stocking more than 1,200 public waters across New York. The modern facilities and special equipment used in hatcheries allow DEC to produce large numbers of healthy fish so that they can be stocked for recreational fishing, or to restore native species to waters they formerly occupied. DEC's hatcheries annually produce close to 1,000,000 pounds of fish—from lake trout and lake sturgeon, to Chinook salmon and paddlefish! All hatcheries are open to the public, from spring to fall; some are even open year-round. Visit [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7742.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7742.html) for more information.

The Caledonia Fish Hatchery is on the New York State Registry of Historic Places, and staff are currently working towards getting it on the National Registry of Historic Places. There will be a 150<sup>th</sup>-anniversary celebration at the hatchery the weekend of August 9, 2014, so stop by to join the fun and see the oldest fish hatchery in the Western Hemisphere. You won't be disappointed.

**Alan Mack** is the hatchery manager at DEC's Caledonia Fish Hatchery.





# NEW YORK ENVIROTHON

—*Growing Environmental Leaders for 25 Years*

By Fred von Mechow and  
Betsy Ukeritis  
Photos courtesy of NYS  
Envirothon Committee

“Envirothon” might sound strange for a student competition, but its name describes it well. For nearly 25 years, this environmental marathon has been one of New York’s largest environmental education programs for high school students. The program began in Pennsylvania in 1979 and quickly spread throughout the U.S.; New York held its first Envirothon in 1990.

Just like major sports and academic events, extensive preparation is required for competing in the Envirothon. Students use knowledge gained in high school classes as the foundation for the competition, and teams choose different ways to build upon this knowledge as they prepare. Teams of five high school students learn about core topics of forestry, soils and land use, aquatic ecology, wildlife, and a current environmental issue which is the focus of a ten-minute oral presentation. For 2014, the current issue will be “Sustainable Local Agriculture/Locally Grown.” In 2015, the issue will be “Urban Forestry.” Students utilize problem-solving techniques, teamwork skills, and hands-on learning to bolster their individual and team knowledge.

Pat Walker, Envirothon advisor from Randolph High School (Cattaraugus County), explained that “students learn to go beyond the facts and initial information presented. They learn to apply the information to problem-solve and really think about solutions. They also learn to work as a team to come to a consensus.”

Teams participate in a one-day county or regional competition in which they take an exam in each of the five topics and present their ten-minute, oral presentation to a panel of judges. The winners of these county and regional competitions gather in May for the “playoffs” at the New York State Envirothon. The State University of New York Morrisville State College

hosted the 2013 NYS Envirothon and will host it again on May 21 & 22, 2014.

The two-day event at the NYS Envirothon allows teams an opportunity to meet like-minded peers, refine teamwork skills, experience an overnight stay at a college, and let their knowledge of natural resources shine. Day One includes presenting oral presentations to a panel of five judges, and then educational and team-building activities. Day Two includes testing in the five categories: forestry, soils, aquatic ecology, wildlife, and the current issue.

First place teams from participating U.S. states and Canadian provinces compete at the North American Envirothon. In 2013, the North American Envirothon was held in Montana, where the New York State Champion, Mount Academy from Esopus, was crowned the North American champion.

Neal Horning, the Mount Academy Envirothon advisor, credits Envirothon for making the natural world come alive, stating, “Through studying the Envirothon’s content areas, students become more actively engaged in learning about the natural world around them and thereby gain a greater knowledge and respect for the environment and its conservation.” Former New Paltz High School Envirothon team member, Erin Barclay adds, “It was interesting to have a real-life environmental problem to solve. It was also really interesting to hear other people’s presentations and see many ways to solve a problem.” Ms. Barclay is now pursuing environmental engineering and environmental studies at Lehigh University.



Through a unique, hands-on approach, Envirothon works to foster an appreciation for environmental science in young people, helping to develop future generations of conscientious environmental stewards. The program is a great opportunity for everyone—from participants to volunteers—so check the box below to learn how to participate. We hope to see you at the next competition!

**Fred von Mechow** serves on the State Envirothon Committee. **Betsy Ukeritis** is a DEC environmental educator in central New York.

The NYS Envirothon is coordinated through the New York State Conservation District Employees Association. To learn more about the program, including how to participate, coach, sponsor, or volunteer, visit: your local Soil and Water Conservation District at [www.nys-soilandwater.org](http://www.nys-soilandwater.org) (Contacts link); the NYS Envirothon website at [www.nysenvirothon.net](http://www.nysenvirothon.net); and the North American Envirothon website at [www.envirothon.org](http://www.envirothon.org).

# On Patrol

Real stories from Conservation Officers and Forest Rangers in the field

DEC photos



## Hiking to Helicopter Rides—Cattaraugus County

While hiking in Zoar Valley (a popular area known for its spectacular scenery created by its deep gorge, sheer cliffs, flowing waterfalls and dense forests) with a friend, a young lady slid down a gorge wall. Her companion called 911. Because the victim was believed to have suffered a compound fracture of the lower leg, she had to be evacuated. Cellphone coordinates indicated the two were just under a half-mile upstream from the parking area. The location was confirmed by Erie County Air 1 helicopter, which then landed on the opposite

bank of the south branch of Cattaraugus Creek. Gowanda Ambulance performed initial medical care while Forest Ranger Bob Rogers set up a technical ropes lowering system to ensure a safe carry to creek level. The victim was secured on a ranger litter and carried by Forest Rangers (Bob Rogers, John Kennedy, Wayne Krulish) and members of the Gowanda and Otto Fire Departments to the waiting helicopter, which transported her to the top of the gorge. Once there, she was transferred to a Mercy Flight helicopter and flown to Erie County Medical Center for further medical treatment.

## Doesn't Pay to Advertise—Wayne County

ECO Erik Dalecki received information about a Craigslist advertisement offering guided snow goose hunts in the Town of Lyons. The complainant stated the guide was unlicensed and conducting hunts throughout the Finger Lakes region. Officer Dalecki and Lieutenant Matt Lochner subsequently arranged to join a snow goose hunt with the allegedly unlicensed guide. On the day of the hunt, Lt. Lochner and ECOs Scott

Carl Heilman II

Contributed by ECO Lt. Liza Bobseine and Forest Ranger Capt. Stephen Scherry

Angotti and Todd Smith checked a group of hunters, which included ECOs Dalecki and Brian Wade working undercover. The ECOs confirmed that the guide was unlicensed and found he also was guilty of infractions involving the hunting of migratory waterfowl.

## Snake House—Orange County

ECO Michael Buckley responded to a call for assistance from a local police department stating they had found a cobra inside a Newburgh apartment. Earlier that morning, the owner of the snake had been arrested for assault. Officer Buckley responded and found a venomous, black-necked spitting cobra in a container, inside the residence. With assistance from Investigator Cynthia Harcher, a search warrant was obtained and executed, revealing one beaded lizard, two puff adders, and three monocled cobras. The animals were transported to the Bronx Zoo, and the owner was charged with several counts of illegal possession of live venomous reptiles because he lacked the necessary DEC license required to possess them.

## Ask the ECO

**Q:** I just purchased certified baitfish from a bait dealer. How long may I possess and use them?

**A:** The regulation now allows a person to possess and use certified baitfish for a period of 10 days (Note: anglers must have a dated receipt). However, DEC places some restrictions on the use of baitfish on certain waters in the state, so before using baitfish, anglers should make sure it is legal to use them on the waters they plan to fish.



By William Preston

***For as long as I can remember, birds have fascinated me. It's not just that they can fly, it is their variety, the ways they fly, and the ways they move, nest and look... but never in the different ways they sound.***

I am deaf. That is not to say I am part of the Deaf culture; I was raised in a hearing environment. In fact, when I started school in Rochester, in 1949, signing was discouraged. I was sent to special classes for the hard-of-hearing, but was there to learn lip-reading, not sign language. I began wearing hearing aids in 1951, and have had a cochlear implant since 2003. It was only after getting the implant that I began to hear bird sounds, but I still identify birds (or try to) without sound.

My earliest recollections of birds are of the usual city-dwellers: robins, English sparrows, pigeons and starlings. The first “birding” event I remember is Rochester

police shooting at European starlings on the street where I lived. The point was to scare them away, but I thought they were shooting to kill.

From time to time, I would visit my grandparents in Henrietta, a suburb that was then “in the country.” There I began to notice other kinds of birds; the first I remember were red-winged blackbirds, American goldfinches, common crows and great blue herons. I was amazed at how big the latter two were, especially the slow-flying herons.

In Henrietta I began to realize that people identified birds by sound. I recall my father saying, “There’s a catbird.” I

didn’t see anything, and he said he didn’t either, but he could “tell by the mewing sound it makes.” I spent years imagining a flying cat, until I finally saw a picture of a gray catbird.

That picture was in a little green guide my mother gave me. I think the author was Chester Reed. On those trips to Henrietta, I used that guide to help me identify birds which were unfamiliar. I noticed that many birds seemed to have favorite haunts; though I didn’t use the word till years later, I was beginning to notice “habitats.” I also noticed that I had to keep quiet when I was in those places; if I moved around too much, I never saw any birds. If I found a place and stayed there quietly, sooner or later the birds would move about and I would see

gray catbird



them. This led to a corollary: keep still and watch for movement. Or rather, let movements happen and notice them. I had good peripheral vision, and the slightest flicker would attract my attention. Sometimes it would be a breeze; at other times it would be a bird. This tactic became my substitute for sound.

I spent hours looking at the pictures in the little green book, and reading its short descriptions. I began to form permanent mental images of many species I had never seen. The pictures in the little green guide weren't all that helpful, but they were a beginning. Years later I got a Peterson Field Guide and the images blossomed: I could see songbirds and other kinds of birds as well. That helped when I began to identify ducks and hawks.

Some strange drawings of birds are also etched in my mind. For example, long ago I read a book by Thornton Burgess that had a drawing of a big owl. To this day I can't imagine a great horned owl without placing a top hat on its head.

For me, book study became a prelude to field observation; time spent studying birds at home proved useful. While memorizing pictures was most helpful, I was surprised at how much I learned by reading books like Beston's *The*



red-winged blackbird





"Hooty the Owl" from *The Adventures of Danny Meadow Mouse* (1915) by Thornton Burgess, illustrated by Harrison Cady

*Outermost House*, Thoreau's *Walden*, or Ogburn's *The Winter Beach* and *The Adventure of Birds*. Skilled writers created mental images I could use in the field. Perhaps a quote from Henry Beston might help make the point: "Outermost cliff and solitary dune, the plain of ocean and the far, bright rims of the world, meadow land and marsh and ancient moor: this is Eastham; this the outer Cape. Sun and moon rise here from the sea, the arched sky has an ocean vastness, the clouds are now of ocean, now of earth."

Knowledge of different habitats, the ability to remain still, awareness of movement, and memorized pictures and words all helped me learn about birds. In the field, however, it all came to life. It was one thing to read about how certain birds behaved; it was another to see the behaviors and retain them in mental movies.

I made most of those mental movies in a few spots along the Lake Ontario shore near Rochester. Two favorite places were the hawk watch at Braddock Bay and the woods and ponds at Island Cottage. My first birding mentor, a retired physician



named Gordon Meade, introduced me to both with the single most important tip I've ever had for identifying birds: "Tell me what you see, not what bird that is." Meade meant I should describe appearance and behavior without trying to name the bird, and compare both to the appearances and behaviors of known birds. This discipline was more important than I realized at the time, and I'm glad he suggested it; it has often paid off since. For example, one of my mental movies from Braddock Bay is of a rough-legged hawk hovering. Years later, in California, I saw a ferruginous

hawk doing the same thing. The colors were different, but the size and behavior were similar; the image of one birthed the identification of the other.

Another salient experience occurred at Island Cottage. I spotted a worm-eating warbler skulking along the ground. I studied it for a long time before I had to leave. As I returned to the parking lot, I encountered a group led by an experienced birder. She asked if I had seen anything; I reported the warbler, remembering, as Meade had taught, to describe its location and field marks. She asked what it sounded like. I replied that I



couldn't hear it. The group leader gave me a look of what I took to be disbelief and disdain, and led her group into the woods. I remember being irritated at her behavior, but I was happy to have seen the bird. Later, I learned the same leader reported that warbler on a local hot line. Without benefit of sound, and with the help of Meade's teachings, I had correctly identified a bird I had never seen before.

Sometimes I would see what I wanted to see, rather than what was actually there. This had nothing to do with deafness. I was at a spring hawk watch at Braddock Bay, on a windy day in the early 1970s, and called out, "peregrine falcon," as a bird swooped low in front of me. A more-experienced birder rushed over, got a glimpse of the bird, and said kindly to me, "No, that was a Cooper's hawk." Peregrines were uncommon then; recovery efforts for the species were just getting under way. It would have been an exciting event, if I had seen what I thought I saw. I've tried to avoid snap identifications ever since.

Sometimes I would find the unexpected. I have seen only one hoary redpoll, again along the Lake Ontario shore, but it was because I looked over a flock of common redpolls carefully and spotted one so white, with a clear rump, that I figured it had to be a hoary. (Some birders remain skeptical about my sighting.) The main lesson I took from that encounter was: look flocks over carefully, in as much detail as possible; you never know what you might find. There may be a lesser black-backed gull standing on the shore amongst the greater black-backed; a little gull may have joined a flock of Bonaparte's; there may be some Lapland longspurs mixed in with flocks of horned larks.

Gordon Meade once told me that what keeps birders coming back to the same spots year after year is the hope that something unexpected will turn up. Surprisingly, something often does, as I found out one spring when Meade pointed out a Eurasian widgeon amongst

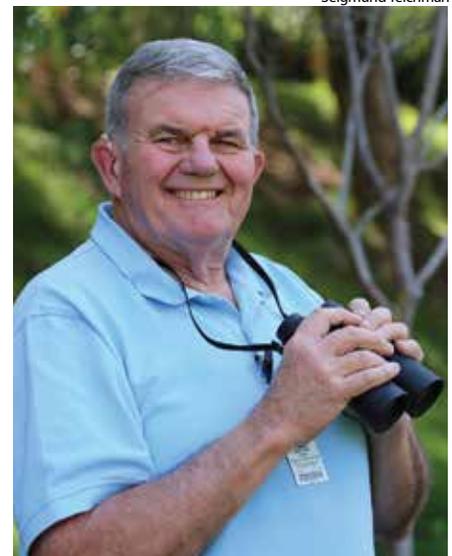
a small flock of American widgeons and gadwalls in a pond near Lake Ontario. Even for someone like Meade, an old man who had spent his whole life birding, that chance to see something new remained exciting.

To me, deafness is not a detriment to birding. I have had to adjust, in my case for lack of sound, but so do those with other kinds of disabilities. Since receiving a cochlear implant in 2003, I have been able to hear many bird sounds and even to recognize a few, such as the chickadee, mourning dove and crow, but for the most part, I hear a unidirectional cacophony. The habits I have learned to employ (finding a likely spot, remaining quiet, knowing habitat types and bird behavior) are still my basis for enjoying birds.

"Enjoying" is the salient word. Almost all birds, to use a line from John Gillespie Magee's *High Flight*, can venture to "the high untrespassed sanctity of space" and be at home. This has always felt uplifting to me, and my adjustments to birding without sound have helped me to enjoy—and share—a small part of the birds' home.

**William Preston** lives in Wayne County with his family and is currently a writer-editor for the Department of Radiation Medicine, Loma Linda University Medical Center (California). In addition to birding, he is an avid reader, a sometimes-published poet, and a very much amateur photographer.

Seigmund Teichman



William Preston

# Albany Pine Bush Preserve

*Globally rare pine barrens—size: 3,100 acres*

*A premier watchable wildlife site*



This unique oasis of brush-covered dunes, pitch pines and scrub oak is surrounded by suburbia and shopping malls, making it accessible to many. Its prominent feature—sandy soil—was left behind when an ancient glacial lake drained.

Within its 3,100 acres, the Pine Bush holds a remarkable 45 “Species of Greatest Conservation Need,” including 16 bird, 17 insect and 12 reptile and amphibian species. It also supports 20 at-risk plant and animal species listed as rare or endangered by the state or federal government.

The preserve’s most famous resident is the endangered Karner blue butterfly, a small silvery-blue insect dependent on the wild blue lupine that grows only in dry, sandy clearings. The preserve is also a Bird Conservation Area, with more than 90 species counted. Hundreds more species of plants and animals also call the Pine Bush home.

Wally Haley



Karner blue butterfly on butterfly weed



John Bulmer

### Wildlife to Watch

In summer, sighting the Karner blue butterfly is a special treat. A Lupine Festival is held in late May when lupines (a favorite food of the Karner blue) are in full bloom. Visiting at this time increases your chances of seeing this rare butterfly. If you visit in autumn, look for the inland barrens buckmoth, a day-flying moth in the giant silkworm family with black-and-white wings.

W. Craney



prairie warbler

Gerry Lemmo



spotted turtle

Though dominated by conifers, occasional hardwood stands are scattered throughout the preserve. Both provide habitat for fisher, deer, cottontail rabbits, red and gray foxes and coyotes. The barrens also attract songbirds like eastern towhees, prairie warblers and indigo buntings, and raptors like great horned owls and red-tailed hawks.

Spring snowmelt leaves vernal pools and swampy areas. Look for American woodcock, whose mating flights are a wondrous sight. Amphibians like the eastern spadefoot toad, and reptiles like eastern hognose snakes and spotted turtles, can also be found in the barrens or along the shore of Rensselaer Lake. See Canada geese, mallards and great blue herons at the lake during the warmer months.

Tom LeBlanc



red fox kit

Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission



Discovery Center



## Site Features

**Site Notes:** Admission is free. There is a small charge for educational programs. The preserve's Discovery Center is open year-round except some holidays. Hunting, fishing and trapping are allowed in season.

**Trails:** Nine trailheads provide access to 18 miles of trails; two are near Rensselaer Lake.

Most trails are not difficult. Hiking, biking, horseback riding and cross-country skiing are allowed. Interpretive signs are located on trails near the Discovery Center. Trail maps and information are available at the center and on the preserve's website (see Directions below).

**Accessibility:** The Discovery Center has accessible features. A 0.25-mile trail is wheelchair-accessible.

**Directions:** From I-87, take exit 2W. Follow Rte. 5 west for about two miles. Turn left onto Rte. 155 (New Karner Rd.) and continue south about 1.2 miles. Call 518-456-0655 or visit the preserve website at [www.albanypinebush.org](http://www.albanypinebush.org).





Chautauqua Lake

Jane Conroe

# My Poor Little Lake

Jane and Doug Conroe call Chautauqua Lake home. Not as a place to receive mail or store stuff, but as a special place to dream of a future, build memories, and protect everything they hold dear. Yet Jane often refers to Chautauqua Lake as “my poor little lake,” and laments that “she [the lake] needs our help.” Jane and Doug often speak about how much “she” has given to those who love her—and that it is time to help her.

Across the state, some lakes like Chautauqua are showing colors caused by algal blooms. Some of these blooms may

appear light green, blue-green, have white streaks, or can look like paint spills or pea soup, and they indicate a problem. Though algae are one of the first essential building blocks of all life in lakes, in excess they can create a host of issues, from generating an off-putting color to presenting significant health risks for those who swim in or drink untreated water.

## Harmful Blue-green Algae

Algae blooms color the landscape throughout the world, and are not new to lakes and rivers. Harmful blue-green algae have existed for at least 3.5 billion

By Scott Kishbaugh and  
Karen Stainbrook

years, and blooms have killed fish as well as a wide range of mammals, from elk to manatee.

Not all blue-green algae blooms produce toxins. However, exposure to any blue-green algae can cause negative health effects, specifically if people and animals come into contact with dense blooms, swallow them, or if they inhale airborne droplets. For some people, direct contact with a bloom may cause allergic reactions such as irritation of the skin, eyes, nose, throat and respiratory tract. Swallowing water with blue-green algae blooms or

*New York State Conservationist, April 2014*

toxins can cause nausea, diarrhea and vomiting; reports suggest that ingesting water with high levels of blue-green algae toxins over long time periods can affect the liver and nervous system.

Children and pets are most susceptible to toxins associated with harmful algal blooms (HAB) because their behaviors are more likely to place them in contact with dense blooms. Additionally, children weigh less, which means they are more likely to be affected by a smaller amount of toxin. Dogs can magnify their exposure because in addition to drinking contaminated water, they can ingest it when grooming after wading. Algae nerve toxins likely killed dogs in Lake Champlain in 1999 and 2000, and were suspected in dog deaths elsewhere in New York in 2012.

Blooms also affect lake ecosystems by reducing oxygen levels, which can result in fish kills and prevent the growth of beneficial algae. Luckily, there have been no reports of people becoming sick from eating fish caught during a bloom. To help reduce any potential risk, anglers can limit their consumption of fish organs, and rinse and/or freeze fillets before cooking. The New York State Department of Health (DOH) also recommends avoiding eating fish caught from areas with water that looks like thick paint or pea soup.

While HABs can cause problems with our waters, studies to date indicate that public water treatment systems effectively remove algal toxins. In fact, there haven't been any human illnesses in New York that could be attributed to drinking algae-tainted water.



Some lakes across New York suffer from blooms of harmful algae.

### Blooms: Then and Now

Some New York lakes have historically been plagued with blooms, but recently, government officials are fielding more complaints about surface scums and heavily discolored water. In 2013, a National Wildlife Federation survey turned up reports of blue-green algal blooms in at least 150 waterbodies in 21 states—more than one-third were in New York, which has a large number of lakes and one of the most active monitoring programs.

In Chautauqua Lake, the Conroes first observed persistent late-summer blooms during the 1970s. Back then, the blooms were isolated, but now blooms are visible at more locations along the north basin shore and have spread throughout much



William Boia, Chautauqua Co. Dept of Health & Human Services

Blue-green algae blooms may have the appearance of spilled paint or pea soup.

## Blue-green Harmful Algae Blooms (HABs)

- Blue-green algae are photosynthetic bacteria (cyanobacteria) that are naturally present, in low numbers, in lakes, ponds and rivers.
- Excess nutrients, warm temperatures, and other environmental conditions promote the growth of blue-green algae, forming visible, dense build-ups (blooms) that discolor the water or form surface scums.
- Some types of blue-green algae produce toxins that can be harmful to people and animals. These blooms are collectively called blue-green harmful algal blooms.
- The first official report of dead livestock associated with a blue-green algae bloom occurred in Australia in 1878. The suspicious death of a Wisconsin swimmer in 2005 may have been due to blue-green algae exposure in a golf course pond.

of the southern basin. In addition, green water now extends into November, even coloring winter ice.

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), DOH, and the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation are working together to identify and respond to blue-green algae concerns. DEC and DOH have collected information about blooms for the last several years, and are conducting research to evaluate the risks to public health and the environment. Much of this information is collected by volunteers from the Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment Program, a lay monitoring program run by DEC and the NYS Federation of Lake Associations.

### Dealing with HABs

Just as “location, location, location” is the mantra for realtors selling homes, “phosphorus, phosphorus, phosphorus” is the mantra for lake managers and DEC when addressing HABs. As phosphorus is the primary “fuel” for an algal bloom, large persistent blooms are generally limited to lakes with high phosphorus content.

DEC evaluates data to determine how much phosphorus is too much. In waterbodies affected by algal blooms, DEC identifies the sources of phosphorus entering the lake. Phosphorus can enter the water from septic systems, stormwater, municipal wastewater treatment plants, agriculture and waterfowl. DEC regulates some of these sources of phosphorus, such as municipal wastewater treatment plants and stormwater.

The solution seems simple: Reduce phosphorus and blooms go away. But reducing phosphorus is complex and can be costly. In addition to phosphorus levels, many other factors, such as water depth, wind, nitrogen content, and “good” algae removal by zebra mussels can trigger or concentrate blooms. Blooms



People love swimming in NYS lakes and ponds, but should avoid any areas with an active blue-green algal bloom.

often come and go in lakes, sometimes showing up only in the morning or afternoon, sometimes staying for weeks. They can move within a lake or linger like a green cloud.

While DEC, DOH and their partners work to understand how HABs develop, both agencies are focused on public awareness and safety. DOH closes regulated beaches where an HAB is visually identified. This is a proactive approach that deals with sensitive individuals and the transient nature of blooms.

Throughout the summer, the public can view a list of lakes with current blooms on DEC’s website (see “Additional Resources” sidebar). DEC and DOH recommend avoiding contact with floating rafts, scums and discolored water. The best advice is: If you see it, avoid it and report it!

### Take Action and Reduce Blooms

Everyone can help keep our lake systems healthy. Proper care of septic systems, limiting use of fertilizers, and planting shoreline buffers can have profound effects on an adjacent water body, and can limit nutrients that fuel HABs. Local government plays a role, through zoning and development decisions. A helpful reference for lake



Blue-green algae blooms can look different in every lake.

users is the publication *Diet for a Small Lake* (available online at [www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/82123.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/82123.html)), which includes information on the ecology, monitoring and management of lakes and watersheds throughout New York.

In Chautauqua Lake, the solutions are neither clear nor simple. The Chautauqua Lake Association and the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy lead the effort to identify what is literally a clearer path. Their many partners include the county Department of Health and state Office Kerner blue butterfly on butterfly weed

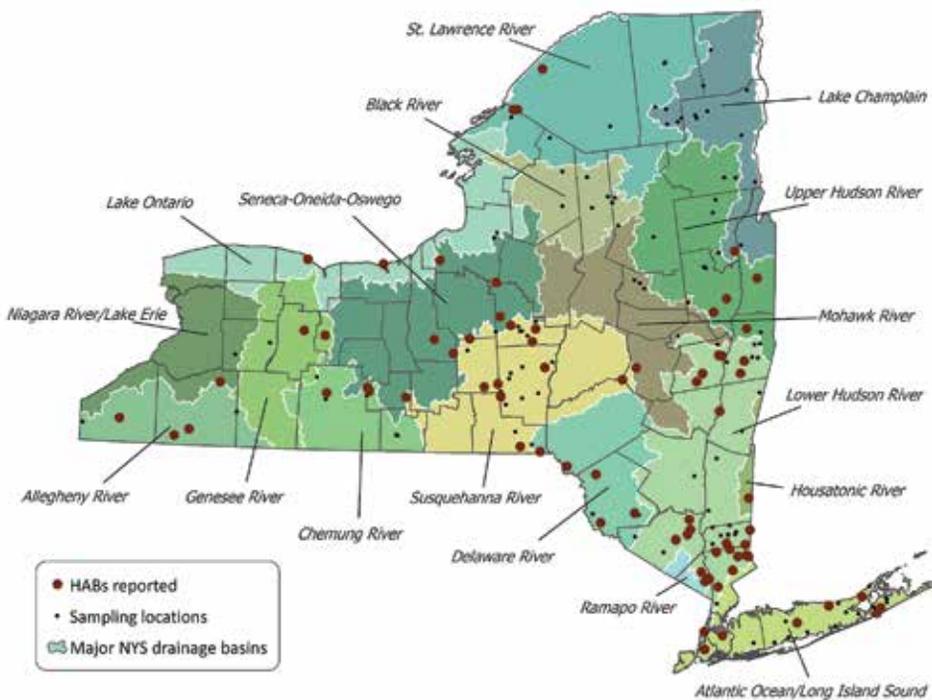
of Parks and Recreation, which actively monitor conditions and close public swimming beaches when appropriate. DEC oversaw a study that identified the sources of phosphorus entering the lake.

It is tempting to seek a magic bullet—a simple and cheap solution—but the algae did not start blooming yesterday and will not stop blooming tomorrow. It is important for overwhelmed lake residents to realize that each action makes a difference, but bloom management can only work when government, organizations, and individuals roll up their sleeves and work together.

### Future of Blue-green Algae in New York

Are blue-green algae blooms getting worse? A *Conservationist* article in 1985 suggested a relatively low level of concern about blooms, mostly because “people are not prone to drink or swim in water covered with blooming algae.” Our evaluations and DOH protocols show that the precautionary message implicitly heeded in 1985—avoiding blooms and highly discolored water—still applies today.

However, with global climate change resulting in warmer air and water, more drought and extreme storms, and with more nutrients to feed blooms, the problem with blue-green algae blooms is likely to worsen. Nutrient and algae



The accompanying map shows locations where blue-green algae blooms were confirmed or strongly suspected in 2013, and additional sampling locations where blooms were not found.

levels currently appear to be increasing in many lakes. Blue-green algae are known to thrive in warmer conditions, and the longer ice-free seasons experienced over the last 100 years is allowing these blooms to start earlier and last longer.

So what does the future hold for Chautauqua Lake? The Conroes are optimistic. They are continually energized by a lake community frustrated by blooms but fiercely and passionately loyal to their home. They are also encouraged by many lake residents stepping up to give back

to the lake that has given them so much. These blooms may be just the latest lake problem that demands great effort but offers great opportunities for lasting improvements. The local community, DEC, DOH and others have worked on this issue for years, and are committed to finding a solution.

**Scott Kishbaugh** and **Karen Stainbrook** work in DEC's Division of Water in Albany.

Editors Note: DEC and the editors would like to thank DOH staff for their assistance on the above article.

## Additional Resources

DEC posts Blue-green Algae notices on its website at [www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/83310.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/83310.html) that show locations of current blooms. The site is updated weekly, and includes a map to help swimmers, parents, and pet owners make informed decisions before recreating. Note: The notification system is only as good as the information it contains. Blooms may also occur in locations not reported to DEC; please report any suspected blooms at [www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/77118.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/77118.html).

Be sure to visit DOH's blue-green algae webpage at <http://bit.ly/1mZGiCw> for further information. Also, don't forget to sign up for DEC's Division of Water's newsletter *Making Waves* to receive weekly updates on blue-green algae bloom notices; visit <http://bit.ly/1ignXz7> to sign up.





## Sauger Plan

DEC recently adopted a new management plan for sauger, with a goal of establishing and maintaining their populations in all suitable New York watersheds by 2030. A member of the perch family and closely related to walleye, sauger were once common in New York portions of Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, the St. Lawrence River and Lake Champlain, but are now relatively scarce. Some of these places where sauger once occurred may no longer be able to support populations of the fish, so management efforts will initially focus on waters where biologists believe suitable habitats exist including the Allegheny River, Lake Champlain and Lake Erie watersheds. Recovery efforts will begin in 2014 with initiation of a sauger stocking program in the Allegheny River watershed and habitat assessments in the Lake Erie watershed. Sauger population and habitat assessments in Lake Champlain will begin in 2016.

## DEC Reclaims Sargent Pond

In October 2013, DEC reclaimed Lower Sargent Pond in the town of Arietta, Hamilton County to restore native brook trout. Pond reclamation (which eliminates non-native fish) is one of the many tools fisheries managers use to restore resident fish populations. During the past ten years, Lower Sargent Pond

DEC photos



## BRIEFLY

became dominated by largemouth bass and brook trout were out-competed. The weeklong reclamation project was supported by the New York State Police Aviation Unit, and DEC staff from across the state. The pond will be restocked with Little Tupper strain brook trout in the fall of 2014. Visit [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/31920.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/31920.html) for more information on Adirondack brook trout management.

### New Licenses

DEC's new computerized sporting license system is up and running, allowing hunters, anglers and trappers to purchase sporting licenses, stamps and permits, as well as to report harvests. Visit DEC's website for more details, including a link to the new system. Also available to outdoor enthusiasts is the new Adventure License, whereby Lifetime License holders can add symbols to their NYS driver's license or non-driver ID to display their commitment to outdoor recreation. Show your support—visit <http://licensecenter.ny.gov> to learn more about the New York State Adventure License.

Jim Clayton



### Environmental Excellence

Eight organizations were honored in December 2013 at the 10<sup>th</sup> annual New York State Environmental Excellence Awards Celebration for exhibiting outstanding commitment to environmental sustainability, social responsibility and economic viability. These DEC awards recognize those who are improving and protecting New York's environment and contributing to a healthier economy. The 2013 winners were: Advanced Climate Technologies (ACT) Bioenergy, LLC, for producing high-efficiency biomass boiler systems with lower emissions; Delaware County Soil and Water Conservation District, for an innovative and sustainable flood rescue protocol and pre-flood training program; Gotham Greens Farms, LLC, for developing the nation's first commercial-scale, urban rooftop facility that grows pesticide-free produce without genetically modified organisms; Onondaga County's Save the Rain Program, for transforming the "civic strip" in downtown Syracuse into a green infrastructure corridor; Schoharie River Center, for its Environmental Study Team youth development program; Southampton Advocates for the Village

*New York State Conservationist, April 2014*

Environment's (SAVE), for enacting the Reusable Shopping Bag Program, the first municipal program to prohibit single-use, plastic grocery shopping bags; The Omega Center for Sustainable Living, for the nation's first building to achieve both LEED® Platinum and Living Building Challenge™ certification; and TurnKey Internet, Inc., for its innovative green data center project. Visit [www.dec.ny.gov/public/945.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/public/945.html) for details on each award recipient, as well as how to apply for the 2014 awards. Completed applications are due by May 9, 2014

### iMapInvasives

iMapInvasives is an online mapping system scientists use to track invasive species threatening New York State's natural resources. All interested groups, including land and water managers, citizen scientists, and educators, are encouraged to help keep the map up-to-date and accurate by reporting invasive species locations and management efforts. Training is required to enter data, and, once again this spring, the NY Natural Heritage Program will offer free sessions throughout the state. In addition to data entry training, invasive species identification sessions will be offered. Visit [www.nyimainvasives.org](http://www.nyimainvasives.org) for schedule details and registration, and contact [imainvasives@nynhp.org](mailto:imainvasives@nynhp.org) with general questions.

### Don't Spread Aquatic Invaders

DEC has proposed new regulations to prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species. The changes would require boaters to remove all visible plants and animals from boats, trailers and associated equipment, and to drain boats before leaving or launching at a DEC boat launch or waterway access. Boaters are reminded to always check their boats, trailers and equipment for plant and animal matter, and to remove it. Nuisance Invasive Species Disposal Stations are provided at many DEC boat launches for just this purpose. See the proposed regulations at [www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/propregulations.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/propregulations.html) and visit [www.dec.ny.gov/animals/50121.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/50121.html) for more information about invasive species and how to prevent their spread.

Ed Woltmann





### Porcupette

This photo was taken in Otsego County, during the first week of turkey season. The baby had a large quill stuck in its lower lip, perhaps a result of breakfast. As you can see, the mother was standing on her hind legs, but was not really aggressive.

Bob Moshier  
Richfield Springs, Otsego County

*Great photo! Here's some trivia for our readers: a baby porcupine is called a pup or porcupette.*  
—Conservationist staff

### Historical Markings

While hunting on state land, I came across this sign. I am 63 years old, have been hunting since I was 16, and have never seen one before. Could you tell me if this is an old sign, or is it something that's used a lot and I just have never come across it before?

Ed Pry  
Chenango Bridge,  
Broome County



*This is a State Reforestation Area sign, but based on the holes, it looks like it was moved from its original location to this tree. Outside of the Adirondack and Catskill Parks, one of the major categories of state lands that most people*

*know are "State Forests," but these are actually, technically, Reforestation Areas. There are about 800,000 acres of Reforestation Area lands in New York. During the Great Depression, a lot of the marginal farmland in the Appalachian uplands (mostly the southern tier) was abandoned and bought by the state from County governments. Under Gov. Roosevelt, the then-Conservation Department was asked to put these lands to their best use: growing trees for harvest. Public recreation and water quality protection were also seen as part of the value of these lands.*

—Charles Vandrei, DEC Historic Preservation Officer

### Hooked on Fishing

*We recently received these wonderful images of devoted angler, Chloe Pouthier. The first image is Chloe in 2009, at age seven, with her 10" crappie that she snagged during "Walleye Weekend" on Honeoye Lake. The second is Chloe in 2013, at age 11, with her 17.5" largemouth bass that she also caught on Honeoye Lake. Impressive catches, Chloe; keep on fishing!*

—Eileen Stegemann, Assistant Editor



## ✉ LETTERS

### Porkies in Trees

Would porcupines climb up a 12-foot apple tree and chew off branches an inch in diameter? I have beaver down back but I don't think they are that tall, and I don't believe they can climb.

Charles Gardner  
Berne, Albany County



*Wouldn't put it past a porcupine! Porcupines like apples and can climb trees. Plus, their teeth and skulls are remarkably similar to beavers' teeth and skulls, so they'd probably have no problem pruning an apple tree.*

—Dave Nelson, Editor, with Gordon Batcheller,  
Chief Wildlife Biologist

### Frog with a Dye Job?

While visiting Hollyhock Hollow Sanctuary in Selkirk, I came across this odd-colored green frog at a pond. Is this normal?

Timothy Eidle  
Albany County



*I have never seen a green frog this yellow. The unusual green frogs in photos I see are usually blue. Green frogs have no green pigment; we see green because the frogs have blue and yellow pigments. The ones that look blue are deficient in yellow pigment. Your frog, though, is deficient in the blue pigment. Also of note is that your frog is a male as indicated by the tympanum that is larger than the eye.*

—Al Breisch, Retired DEC Wildlife Biologist

### Ask the Biologist:

**Q:** I caught these yellow perch on Copake Lake in Columbia County. Can you tell me why one is “blackish” in color?

—Gary Walkley



**A:** Color variation in yellow perch (and other fish species) is common and is usually related to differences in age, reproductive condition, habitat and/or diet. However, a blue color phase of perch has been reported in many northern states and Canada. Theories vary as to why this color exists. Some believe it is a form of albinism (i.e. the lack of pigmentation results in the “blue” color), while others report this color phase occurring because of the presence of a blue pigment in the actual mucous (slime) of the fish. In any case, it is usually a rare occurrence.

—Ed Woltmann and Jeffrey Loukmas,  
DEC Fisheries Biologists

### Contact us!

✉ E-mail us at: [magazine@gw.dec.state.ny.us](mailto:magazine@gw.dec.state.ny.us)

✉ Write to us at: Conservationist Letters  
NYSDEC, 625 Broadway  
Albany, NY 12233-4502

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# Back Trails

Perspectives on People and Nature



John Bulmer

## *Mornings on the River* by Kelly Greenwood

*“The rivers flow not past, but through us...” —John Muir*

It’s spring in the North Country. Snow melts; rivers swell. My gaze shifts down from the Adirondack Mountains onto the St. Lawrence River. On cool mornings when the seasons are changing, a swift, warm wind precedes the sun. It rolls down the river and washes over my rowers and me, and seconds later the sun arrives to relieve the chill from our bones.

Rivers are the most dynamic aspect of any landscape, fluid in more ways than one. Rivers rise and fall with the seasons and droughts, and the currents shift unpredictably, swift and fierce one morning, languid the next. I have seen windstorms whip the river into a frenzy of white caps, and days so still that the surface turns to glass. Some days I hesitate to launch my boat into the river, reluctant to shatter the silence; other days I strain to get out and run with the water.

Of all the early mornings, the ones I remember best are those when fog dominates the river. It rolls in from the seaway and narrows the world down to the ten feet in front of your face. In our crew shells, we turn the volume to the max on our mics to locate each other on the river. The fog envelops everything; in the middle of the river, it feels like the world is just shifting grey curtains and smooth glassy water. Shorelines become a memory, and all that exists is pure river.

When practice ends, we leave the boathouse behind, but the river stays with us.

Warm weather creeps into our days, but even in late April, frost creeps into our nights. Daffodils and crocuses bloom on campus, but the most obvious sign of spring is the changing behavior of students lounging in the sun. Mysteriously, vacant classroom seats appear as snow boots and skis are traded for sandals and paddles.

One day, some friends and I decide to spend a lazy afternoon on the Little River. The Canoe Shack is open, and the three of us load into a dark green Duck Hunter. I take the stern, Andrea the bow, and Caroline paddles casually from the middle. We are feeling senior spring this afternoon, with all its highs and lows. We wonder where our lives, like this river, will take us in the weeks to come. Andrea, paddling determinedly and expertly along, will attend graduate school in Ireland. Caroline and I have vaguer courses ahead, and honestly I’m looking forward to some time to drift along, freely.

George Repicky



The banks of the Little River are coated in a thick fur of green shoots. We reach a fork and check the boat starboard to follow the Grasse. We glide past the rope swing, and an old hunting camp with a rusting pickup out front. I spy something moving quickly through the water ahead of us, a muskrat perhaps, but it scoots into the thick reeds before we can be sure. I lay back on the stern deck and enjoy the renewed feeling of warm sunlight on my skin. It feels as good as the cool water that passes lazily beneath us, taking us casually along. I wish this moment could last. I think about how lucky we are to have this river, these canoes, this school, and how much I will miss it.

Unfortunately we all have places to be, so we head back. We seniors can skip only so many commitments. Regrettably, this day and this idyllic part of our lives must come to an end. We stall as we near the Canoe Shack to let another canoe launch, and to let the moment sink in. A lone boy loads his canoe with fishing gear, and we watch him curiously as he sets everything just so in the hull before taking off swiftly, to see where the river will take him.

Women’s varsity crew member **Kelly Greenwood** graduated from St. Lawrence University in 2013.

Kamer blue butterfly on butterfly weed

*New York State Conservationist, April 2014*

# New York is OPEN for Fishing and Hunting



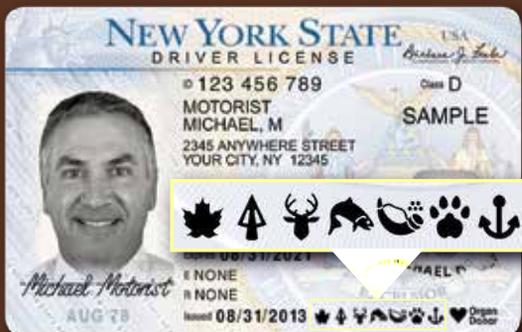
Darren McGee

New York State has world-class fishing. Whether you prefer smallmouth bass on Lake Erie, brook trout on a crystal clear Adirondack lake, salmon on Lake Ontario, stripers or bluefish in Montauk's surf, or fly fishing on a Catskill stream, there's something special for everyone.

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Bill Banaszewski

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