



Flashy Fowl

I am enclosing a picture of one of five birds my daughter's co-worker had at her bird feeder from spring to September last year. They lost their pin feathers, but stayed the same size. We couldn't find them in our bird books. Can you help?

Doris Bush

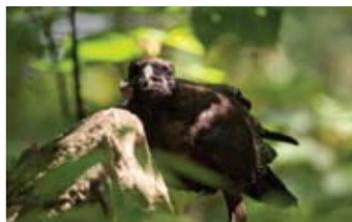
Clifton Springs, Ontario County

We had several experts look at the photo you sent, and we all agree that it is of a young Baltimore oriole. Orioles and blackbirds are closely related, and have the kind of long, pointed beak shown in your photo. However, it is a rather unusual color, for which we cannot offer a good explanation.

—Scott Stoner, DEC Research Scientist

Raven Tumor

Last August, I spotted this northern raven feeding on berries in the Moose River Wild Forest. As you can see, it has some kind of growth on its right cheek. Judging by the raven's behavior, I'd say it was acting normally. I was wondering if any of your biologists might have a comment about the growth.



William "Bunch" Lewis

Scotia, Schenectady County

Thanks for the photo. It appears that the growth may be a granulomatous lesion related to a trauma and a corresponding bacterial infection. However, it is more likely a pox virus that I see commonly in crows, but less often in ravens.

—Ward Stone, DEC Wildlife Pathologist

Super Serpent

I was on my land in Lima when I saw this snake. I was amazed at the size of it! I have never seen anything like it around here. What kind of snake is it?

Brian J. Decker

Bloomfield, Ontario County



The snake you photographed is a northern water snake (Nerodia sipedon). They are often seen basking at the edges of ponds, lakes and streams, especially in the spring when the water is cool and the air is warm. It is hard to tell from your photograph how big the snake is, but northern water snakes can reach lengths of slightly more than four feet. Their large size can be intimidating, and their defensive behavior when cornered leads some people to assume they are venomous, but these snakes are not. More often than not, when approached, they will try to escape into the water.

—Alvin Breisch, DEC Amphibian and Reptile Specialist

Mighty Moth

Ronald Stannard sent us this photograph of a rather large day-flying moth. We asked what it could be and this is the response we received.

This moth is most likely the very common white-lined sphinx (also known as a hawk moth).

Most sphinx moths are beneficial flower pollinators, and this one looks to be doing its job of pollinating deep-throated native and garden flowers. However, be careful not to confuse this moth with the other powerful day-flying moth, the hummingbird moth, which is often seen and photographed in gardens.

—Frank Knight, DEC Environmental Educator



Making a Point

I thought your readers might enjoy this picture. On April 13, we were startled to find this guy on our back porch. As we drove to church the following day, we saw the "porky" in our neighbor's meadow, and later, our neighbor called to say her dog came home with his nose full of quills!

Nick Marasco

Andover, Allegany County

Editor's note: Thanks for sharing your photo. It's interesting to note that while porcupines can come in a variety of colors, including chestnut, brown and dark grey, this one is especially blonde.



Write to us

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REVIEW by Mike Seymour

Empire State Muskies

By Matt Curatolo

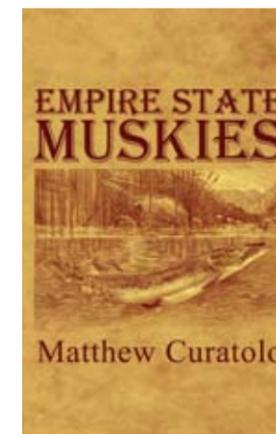
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The elusive muskellunge ranks as king of New York's freshwater fish, and anglers who pursue muskellunge often experience the playful condition known as "muskie fever." When Matt Curatolo of Ogdensburg contracted a case of muskie fever, the condition resulted in a passionate pursuit of muskellunge, and the book *Empire State Muskies*.

In a nutshell, the book discusses the ecology of New York's muskellunge, time-proven fishing strategies, catch-and-release information, and muskellunge-holding waters across the state. It's a good read for novice muskellunge anglers (as evidenced by chapter four, *Muskie Fishing 101: A Beginner's Guide*), as well as those with a general interest in learning about muskellunge in New York. Muskellunge anglers of all levels will find where-to and how-to information in the book's second half, which focuses on 25 state waters. Special attention is given to top muskellunge destinations like the St. Lawrence River,



Niagara River, Chautauqua Lake, and Buffalo Harbor.

Curatolo dedicates two chapters to the topic of how quality muskellunge fishing continues to thrive in New York because of careful angler handling and releasing of caught fish. The author acknowledges the importance of Save the River's Muskie Release Program in protecting muskellunge

populations. Since inception, the program has led to the release of nearly 1,000 St. Lawrence River muskellunge.

So if you want to learn about muskie fishing, or if you are already a muskie angler and just want to learn more, give *Empire State Muskies* a read.

Mike Seymour is a U.S. Coast Guard licensed charter captain and a NYS licensed guide. He is also a member of New York State Outdoor Writers Association, Outdoor Writers Association of America, and Association of Great Lakes Outdoor Writers.