



LETTERS

Compiled by Eileen Stegemann and Jenna Kerwin



Future Conservationist

This is my granddaughter Grace looking at the April 2011 *Conservationist*. She loves the pictures of the animals. I don't know how many times she has gone through this magazine; it's already pretty worn!

Brenda Todd
Bath, Steuben County

What a wonderful photo! It's always a pleasure to receive pictures of our future conservationists.

—*Conservationist* staff

Hitchhikers

I'm not sure what type of spider this is, but I happened across it this summer. It appears that the newly hatched spiders are hitching a ride. I have never seen this before.

Kim Kiefer
Remsen, Oneida County



This is a female wolf spider (family Lycosidae) carrying her freshly hatched spiderlings on her back. Almost all lycosid females carry young on their abdomen, and during this time the spiderlings do not feed. These spiderlings have just hatched from a spherical silken egg sac, which the female dragged around behind her, attached to her spinnerets (wolf spiders do not make a permanent web). The spiderlings are nourished by remains of the yolk from their eggs. After about a week, they shed their skin, molt into a larger size, and set out on their own.

—Cole Gilbert, Department of Entomology, Cornell University

Nineteenth-Century Remake

I enjoyed your article on the Adirondack Museum's exhibit of Arthur Tait's work and his life in the Adirondacks. Here is a photo taken at a lean-to during a camping trip on the Raquette River. Consider this the modern version of "A Good Time Coming." Amazingly, this shot wasn't posed!

Scott Miller
Norwood, St. Lawrence County



We passed this photo around and agree: This is certainly a humorous and enjoyable picture. We even noted the dog in the modern photo!

—*Conservationist* staff

✉ LETTERS

Young Wildlife

June in New York is the time of year when many people come across young wildlife. A number of our readers sent us photos of their encounters and we thought we'd share them with you. Note that fledgling loons (as well as other water birds, like mergansers and grebes) will often hitch rides on their parents' backs!

—*Conservationist staff*

Playing for the Camera

These gray fox pups spent a couple nights under my tool shed. There were a total of five, but I couldn't get them all in a photo.

Dr. Michael J. Walawender
Moravia, Cayuga County



Hidden in the Lilacs

Walking amongst the lilacs during the Lilac Festival, I noticed a groundhog eating or smelling the flowers, and these babies in a hole nearby.

Jack Phillips
Rochester

Lake Loons

I thought you might enjoy this picture I took of loons on Peck's Lake.

Robert Van Alstyn
Fultonville, Montgomery County



Ask the Biologist



Q: While I was out fishing, I saw this jelly-like blob in the water. What is this?

A: We are often asked this question. The official name for this slimy "blob" is a bryozoan (*Pectinatella magnifica*). Also called moss animals, they grow in colonies on submerged objects (usually logs) and are often misidentified as frog eggs. They are more than 99% water, and can be as large as two feet across, but are usually under a foot in diameter. One jelly-like mass can contain thousands of individuals.

Bryozoans have been around for at least 100 million years. They were once restricted in range to the eastern United States, but are now found throughout the country. Bryozoans prefer shady areas, and have been found in lakes with both good and poor water quality.

—Joelle Ernst, DEC Fisheries Biologist and Scott Kishbaugh, DEC Water Engineer

Editor's Note: President of the North American Bluebird Society John E. Ruska sent us a letter regarding the photo of the bluebirds in our "Discovering New York's Wild Side" article (April 2011). Mr. Ruska wanted to point out that the best design for a bluebird nesting box should not have a perch or wooden post, as these allow easy access for predators. You can find plans for building bluebird houses on New York Bluebird Society's website at www.nysbs.org.



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