

LETTERS

Compiled by Alex Hyatt

Youngest Reader

My husband and I live in Ohio with our son Charlie, but we're natives of New York, so my parents bought us a subscription to *Conservationist*. Charlie likes to flip through the pages and look at all of the great pictures...and we enjoy flipping through the pages, too. Thanks for such a great publication!



Brenda Hite
via email

Great shot, and thanks for the kudos! It's never too early learn about our environment. We're planning to increase content for kids in the magazine and on our website. Pop in anytime for a visit: www.TheConservationist.org

—Alex Hyatt, Assistant Editor

Seeing Stars

In your February 2007 issue there is a great article on the Rogers Environmental Education Center. In the article, there is a picture of a student with a “starfish.” I thought there was no such thing. Aren't they called sea stars? When I went “tide-pooling” with my daughter she said there was no such thing as a “starfish.” She said they do not have fins, and they are not fish.



Marianne Ludwigsen
Cincinnati
Cortland County

Thanks for writing. You and your daughter are correct, starfish are not fish at all. They are marine invertebrates from the phylum Echinodermata and are therefore more closely related to sea urchins and sea cucumbers than fish. Sea star is the more biologically correct term, but starfish is a common name and common names aren't necessarily scientifically accurate.

—Melissa Albino, DEC Marine Biologist,
Long Island

Hightailin' Ringtails

My Boston terrier took great exception to these



two ringtail raccoons on her turf, so she ran them up a tree. Fortunately for the dog the mother never showed up. My dad got within five or six feet of them to shoot this photo. They then

climbed higher up, and settled in for a daytime nap.

Erin Farrell
Massapequa
Nassau County

Raccoons are very good climbers and will often climb trees to avoid perceived danger. Although raccoons are mostly nocturnal, it is not unheard of for raccoons to be active during the day, especially in spring when females are in search of more food when nursing their young. It is important to remember that you should always keep a safe distance from any wild animal even though they may appear harmless.

—Nathan Champine, DEC Wildlife
Technician, Albany

LETTERS

Good Advice

I enjoy reading your interesting stories and viewing your beautiful artwork and photos. One suggestion: each issue should have a map of New York State on the inside with the locations of the stories highlighted on the map. Keep up the good work!

John Merenda
Suffolk County

Thanks for your advice. Each Table of Contents of every Conservationist issue henceforth will contain a map just as you've described. It's an idea we've been considering for some time and your letter helped nudge us along.

—David Nelson, Editor



Karner Blue

This picture was taken in May in my backyard, about two miles from the Albany Pine Bush (a known habitat for Karner blue butterflies). The bush is a Korean lilac. I would love to know what kind of butterfly it is, if it is not a Karner blue.

Suzanne Ports
Guelderland, Albany County

Karner blues like this one feed only as caterpillars on lupine leaves, but as adults derive flight energy by nectaring on a wide variety of flowers. They do travel some distances, sometimes outside the Pine Bush, on the breezes especially along open streets. Thanks for a nice photo!

—Frank Knight,
DEC Environmental Educator, Albany

REVIEWS

Discover the West Central Adirondacks: A Guide to the West Canada & Moose River Backcountry

by Barbara McMartin and Bill Ingersoll
203 pages; softcover \$16
North Country Books
Phone (315) 735-4877

Reviewed by Brian W. Swinn

For hikers and explorers, it's always cause to rejoice when a new trail guide hits the presses. No exception is *Discover the West Central Adirondacks*.

The book covers four major Forest Preserve tracts: the West Canada Lake and Blue Ridge wilderness areas, and the Jessup River and Moose River Plains wild forests. Together, they form the largest contiguous body of public land in the Adirondacks. With limited road access and varied topography, there's a huge area for hikes long and short, as well as canoe trips and bushwhacks in some of the most remote terrain in the state. Now in its third edition, the book not only gives estimated times, mileages and the expected stepwise trail accounts, but also

helps you choose hikes and trips based on your interests. A helpful feature is the inclusion, in the introduction to each hike or trip, of short synopses of the best uses of each area. For example, one trail might list "hiking, camping, fishing" while another might give "snowmobile trail, cross-country skiing" as hallmark uses. Trail descriptions not only guide you to your destination, but give interesting facts and historical perspective. It all adds to your Adirondack sojourn, whether you're actually in the woods or camped out in your favorite living room chair.

With clear writing, useful organization, interesting information and some great photos, this little book deserves a ride in your backpack.

Brian W. Swinn is a senior editor with DEC's Bureau of Publications and Internet.

