

i BRIEFLY by Shannon Brescher Shea



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Deer Watchers Wanted

If you like watching deer and you live in Cayuga, Clinton, Livingston, Madison, Ontario, Onondaga, or Ulster Counties, DEC wants you to help monitor deer populations. DEC's Deer Watchers Program needs volunteers to record observations of deer on three occasions from mid-August until late September. To get involved, call your local DEC wildlife office or jehurst@gw.dec.state.ny.us.

New Online Field Guides!

New field guides for New York State's rare species and natural communities are now available online, through the New York Natural Heritage Program. These guides are a valuable resource to anyone interested in learning more about the state's unique natural resources.

Each species field guide has its own website, with the front page providing the species' common name, scientific name, and rarity. Additional pages explain the species' habitat, threats to conservation, range, behavior, and identifying characteristics in more detail. For intrepid naturalists, the guides also describe general sites where people may be able to find the plant or

animal in the wild. In the case of some highly endangered animals, the guides provide locations where the public may be able to see them in captivity.

In addition, there are also field guides available for a number of New York's ecological communities. These guides describe each community's geology, its native plants and animals, and the interactions between them.

Right now, there are guides available for all of the rare species found in the Hudson River Valley. However, the Natural Heritage Program is continually adding guides for other species around the state. If you would like to learn more about our state's plants, animals and natural communities, the guides are available at: www.acris.nynhp.org.

Green Living Debuts

The Department of Environmental Conservation has launched *Green Living*, a new section on its website! It provides advice on topics ranging from preventing water pollution to creating wildlife habitat. The front page offers *10 Things You Can Do to Help the Environment Right Now*, which will be updated with seasonally relevant recommendations.

A few of the tips include:

- Vacation closer to home. Airplanes emit the highest amounts of greenhouse gases of any form of transportation.
- Reduce water use on lawns and gardens.
- Use only campfire wood gathered in the area or supplied by the campground. Harmful invasive insect species can be introduced to a new area if they are hiding in firewood that is brought in from off-site.

In addition, the pages feature "Myth Busters," a section that will debunk persistent myths regarding environmental issues. For more information, visit the *Green Living* section under Public Involvement and News on DEC's website:

www.dec.ny.gov.

Emergency Firewood Regs

On June 3, 2008, DEC issued emergency regulations regarding the transport of firewood into and within New York State. DEC implemented the new regulations to protect New York's forest resources from the increasing threat of invasive insects. Untreated firewood can carry pests such as the emerald ash borer, the Asian longhorn beetle, and the sirex woodwasp. The new regulations prohibit the transport of untreated firewood into the state, increase the documentation requirements for in-state transport of untreated firewood, and restrict the in-state transport of untreated firewood grown within New York to a maximum distance of 50 miles from its source. For more details on the emergency regulations, visit www.dec.ny.gov/animals/44008.html.

The rapid spread of the emerald ash borer from Michigan and Ontario—where it was initially discovered in 2002—has killed millions of ash trees in several states, and now threatens New York. As part of a national program to monitor the spread of this insect, DEC is working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA)

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Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the USDA Forest Service, and the New York Department of Agriculture and Markets to place monitoring traps in high-risk areas such as campgrounds. The purple traps are made of corrugated plastic and are hung in ash trees. They are baited with manuka oil, a commercially available extract from the New Zealand manuka tree that is attractive to emerald ash borers. Together, the traps serve as an early warning system to alert authorities to the presence of emerald ash borers.

For additional information on forest insect pests and firewood, see www.dec.ny.gov/animals/28722.html or reference the April 2006 and April 2007 issues of *Conservationist*.

Bronx River José

In many places, a beaver living in a nearby river is not unusual, and may even be an inconvenience. But in the Bronx River, the appearance of José the beaver has been a sign of hope. For the once heavily polluted river, José has become a mascot of its ecological renewal. Currently, his beaver lodge is located in the New York Botanical Garden, although there are also signs of gnawed trees in the Bronx Zoo and surrounding areas.

Much of the river's recovery has been due to the efforts of Rep. José Serrano, for whom the beaver is named, and the Bronx River Alliance, a partnership of community organizations, environmental groups, federal, state and local governments including DEC, and local schools. "Thanks to a spirited, community-led advocacy effort and a model partnership between government, citizens, and philanthropists, the river's ecological and aesthetic health is being restored," said NYC Parks and Recreation Commissioner Adrian Benepe. As a result of the restoration, there are numerous recreational activities available on and along the river, from canoe tours to bicycling. For more information on restoration efforts and other activities, see the Bronx River Alliance's website: www.bronxriver.org.

Correction: The address to obtain a copy of the Hudson River Estuary Public Fishing and Boating Access Map published in the April 2008 issue was incorrect. To obtain a copy of this CD, please write to the Hudson River Estuary Program, NYS DEC, 21 S. Putt Corners Road, New Paltz, NY 12561 or e-mail hrep@gw.dec.state.ny.us.

Ask the Biologist

Q: I have problems with squirrels and woodchucks on my property. Can't I simply live-trap them and release them somewhere else?

A: While live-trapping and releasing nuisance wildlife may seem like a good solution to many, the fact is that except under special permit, it's illegal.

Even if it was legal, moving wildlife is not a good idea and can actually do more harm than good. Most animals have fairly well-defined areas where they interact with others of their species and find what they need to survive. When you remove them from the familiar and release them into a new area, it puts them at a real disadvantage, especially if the new habitat is not ideal. Even in places where the habitat is good, it is very stressful to wildlife, as that habitat is almost certainly occupied by other animals. The newcomer must then compete with other well-established animals, and are likely to be driven off or even killed by intolerant residents. In addition, these new animals may then be a nuisance to another person who lives in that area or nearby.

Another good reason not to move wildlife from one site to another is that it can quickly spread diseases to healthy wildlife populations.

Lastly, even after they are moved to another location, many animals have a "homing" ability that will bring them right back to you, despite your efforts. For more information on this topic, check DEC's website (www.dec.ny.gov) and search "nuisance wildlife."

—Nancy Heaslip, Sr. Wildlife Biologist, DEC



New York State Conservationist, August 2008

Bronx River José has become a symbol of recovery for a once-polluted river.