

# Backyard Biology

By Dave Nelson



Susan Shafer



Bill Banaszewski



Susan Shafer

The young boy's week always ended on a high note. Schoolwork completed, Sunday night meant it was time to watch Mutual of Omaha's *Wild Kingdom*. Village life presented the lad many opportunities, but arctic expeditions in search of caribou, wrestling man-eating pythons and darting elephants from an open Land Rover weren't among them.

Once, a din of cawing crows caught his attention. Picking slowly, carefully through the tangled mat of tree roots that served as jungle, he craned his neck to peer up the trunk of a tall willow tree. High up in the tree, hunched against its trunk for protection, stood a beautiful, blinking great horned owl. Stunned as much by the bright daylight as by the

state where you can see wildlife, descriptions of popular wildlife species, and a listing of wildlife watching events by calendar month. You'll also get quick tips on how better to see and photograph wildlife, and what to do to avoid disturbing them. You can also subscribe to an electronic newsletter which will give you periodic updates on watchable wildlife events.

...every overturned rock exposed a hidden treasure trove of tiny critters to examine.

With rapt attention, he soaked up information about nature like a black hole consumes electrons.

And then there was the creek.

The creek. A cool, verdant oasis to which a young boy could escape, and once there, create his own safari. A safari in which piranhas were replaced by stoneys and chubs, pythons were foot-long garter snakes, and every overturned rock exposed a hidden treasure trove of tiny critters to examine. Out the back door, across the backyard, and down the ladder; he was transported from suburban lad to nature nerd.

raucous harassment it was receiving from the crows, the owl peered down at the boy below. It was the first owl the boy had ever seen in the wild, and one he would never forget...

But you needn't be a kid living on a creek to watch wildlife. You can experience nature in your own backyard, or at a site known for its wildlife viewing opportunities.

Not sure where to start? Visit DEC's website at [www.dec.ny.gov](http://www.dec.ny.gov) and click on the watchable wildlife button. There you'll find quick links to locations around the

Whether you'd rather watch spawning walleye in Conesus Inlet, view the spectacle of 85,000 Canada geese stopping over at Montezuma Refuge on their northward migration, or see a grazing white-tailed deer in a summer meadow, New York is blessed with a plethora of places to see wildlife, and plentiful wildlife to watch. Whatever piques your nature interest, you can find it in New York. The *Conservationist* and DEC's watchable wildlife web pages stand ready to help.

**Watchable Wildlife**  
  
[www.dec.ny.gov](http://www.dec.ny.gov)