

Hawk Watch | Double H Ranch | Chittenango Falls

NEW YORK STATE

Conservationist

AUGUST 2013

Bobcats
on the
RISE





Dear Reader,

This issue of *Conservationist* marks the beginning of the 68th year of DEC's award-winning magazine, which highlights the best of New York's fish, wildlife, and natural resources. The *Conservationist* recently surpassed another milestone, publishing its 400th issue in April. In these days of electronic media and digital publishing, tablets and smart phones, our proud history is a testament to our dedicated family of readers.

In this issue, we take readers to Beaver Lake Nature Center for wildlife viewing and to West Canada Lake Wilderness for hiking and camping. We celebrate the majesty of the state's landscape through beautiful photographs of Chittenango Falls and focus in on a tiny, endangered snail that lives only in that special place. We give readers a glimpse into the lives of many of New York's fish and wildlife species, as illustrated in the feature article about bobcats, and in the letters section spotlighting northern pike, common loons, black bear and raccoons.

Through the articles on hawk watching, and the annual lumberjack competition held at the Woodsmen's Field Days in Boonville, the August *Conservationist* continues its tradition of introducing readers to new experiences with nature and expanded recreational opportunities. We've also included an article about the Double H Ranch, which offers the pure joy of outdoor recreation to youth suffering from life-threatening illnesses.

As we look forward to our next 100 issues, we remain thankful for your loyalty and interest. We are grateful that you continue to share your backyard wildlife sightings, discoveries of wild places and insightful questions with us. We are dedicated to helping to inform and educate our readers and those with whom each issue is shared. Most of all, under the leadership of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, our goal is to help all New Yorkers enjoy the exceptional natural resources that are protected by our shared commitment to the conservation and preservation of public lands for generations to come.

Regards,
Commissioner Joe Martens

NEW YORK STATE Conservationist

Volume 68, Number 1 | August 2013
Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of New York State

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
Joe Martens, *Commissioner*
Michael Bopp, *Director of the Office of Public Affairs*
Laurel K. Remus, *Director of Public Affairs & Education*

THE CONSERVATIONIST STAFF
David H. Nelson, *Editor*
Eileen C. Stegemann, *Assistant Editor*
Megan Ciotti, *Business Manager*
Jenna Kerwin, *Staff Writer*
Jennifer Peyser, *Art Director/Designer*

DIVISION OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS & EDUCATION
Frank Herec, *Artist/Designer*
Jim Clayton, *Staff Photographer*
Bernadette LaManna, *Contributing Editor*
John Razzano, *Contributing Editor*
Elaine Bloom, *Contributing Editor*
Ellen Bidell, *Contributing Editor*

EDITORIAL OFFICES
The *Conservationist* (ISSN0010-650X), © 2013 by NYSDEC, is an official publication of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation published bimonthly at 625 Broadway, 4th Floor, Albany, NY 12233-4502. Telephone: (518) 402-8047

Manuscripts, photographs and artwork will be accepted if accompanied by SASE. Please write to the above address with an author's query or to request a Contributor's Guide. The publisher assumes no responsibility for loss or damage of unsolicited materials.

TO SUBSCRIBE:
\$18 per year, \$24 for two years, \$30 for three years. Outside the U.S., add \$27 per year with a check drawn on a U.S. bank. All orders must be prepaid.

Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for new subscriptions or changes of address. Periodical postage paid at Albany, NY, and additional mailing offices.

Send check or money order payable to:

Conservationist
NYSDEC
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233-4502

or call: **1-800-678-6399**
Visit the Department's website at:
www.dec.ny.gov

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation does not discriminate on the basis of race, national origin, disability, age, or gender.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:

Conservationist
NYSDEC
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233-4502

-Printed on recycled paper. Please recycle this issue. ♻️





See page 22

August 2013 Volume 68, Number 1

Contents

- 2 Chittenango Falls**
Central New York photo essay
By Chris Murray
- 6 Flight of the Raptors**
Hawk watching in New York
By Barbara Allen Loucks
- 10 Immersed in Wildness**
Nature getaway in West Canada Lake Wilderness
By Walt McLaughlin
- 14 Double H Ranch**
Children with life-threatening illnesses enjoy camp fun
By Richard W. Crannell Jr.
- 18 Meet the Bobcat**
New plan guides future management
By Lance Durfey and Andrew MacDuff
- 22 Calling all Lumberjacks and Jills!**
New York State Woodsmen's Field Days
By Elaine Bloom
- 26 Watchable Wildlife Site: Beaver Lake Nature Center**
A great place to spot NY's state mammal



Departments

17 On Patrol | **28** Briefly | **30** Letters | **32** Back Trails

Front cover: Bobcat by Angie Berchielli | **Back cover:** Bullfrog by Gerry Lemmo

What Is It?



See pg. 10



Chittenango Falls

Text and photos by Chris Murray

Chittenango Falls is one of the most breathtaking, yet little-known waterfalls in New York State. Plummeting 167 feet, the falls is the main attraction at the state park that shares its name. Here, Chittenango Creek makes its dramatic entrance into the park before winding its way down to meet with Oneida Lake.

Like virtually all landforms in New York State, the falls are a remnant of the last ice age; created as the glaciers retreated some 12,500 years ago. As an outflow of Cazenovia Lake, Chittenango Creek descends the north margin of the Allegheny Plateau through a narrow valley, which constricts into a gorge where the falls are today. Rather than a sheer drop, the falls are a series of cascades over ledges of resistant layers of rock.

While the falls are a relatively recent geologic feature, the rock over which they flow is much older. The gorge below the falls cuts through massive beds of limestone and dolomite that were deposited in a shallow sea more than 390 million years ago. Study the rock closely and you will see fossils of long-



Chittenango Creek



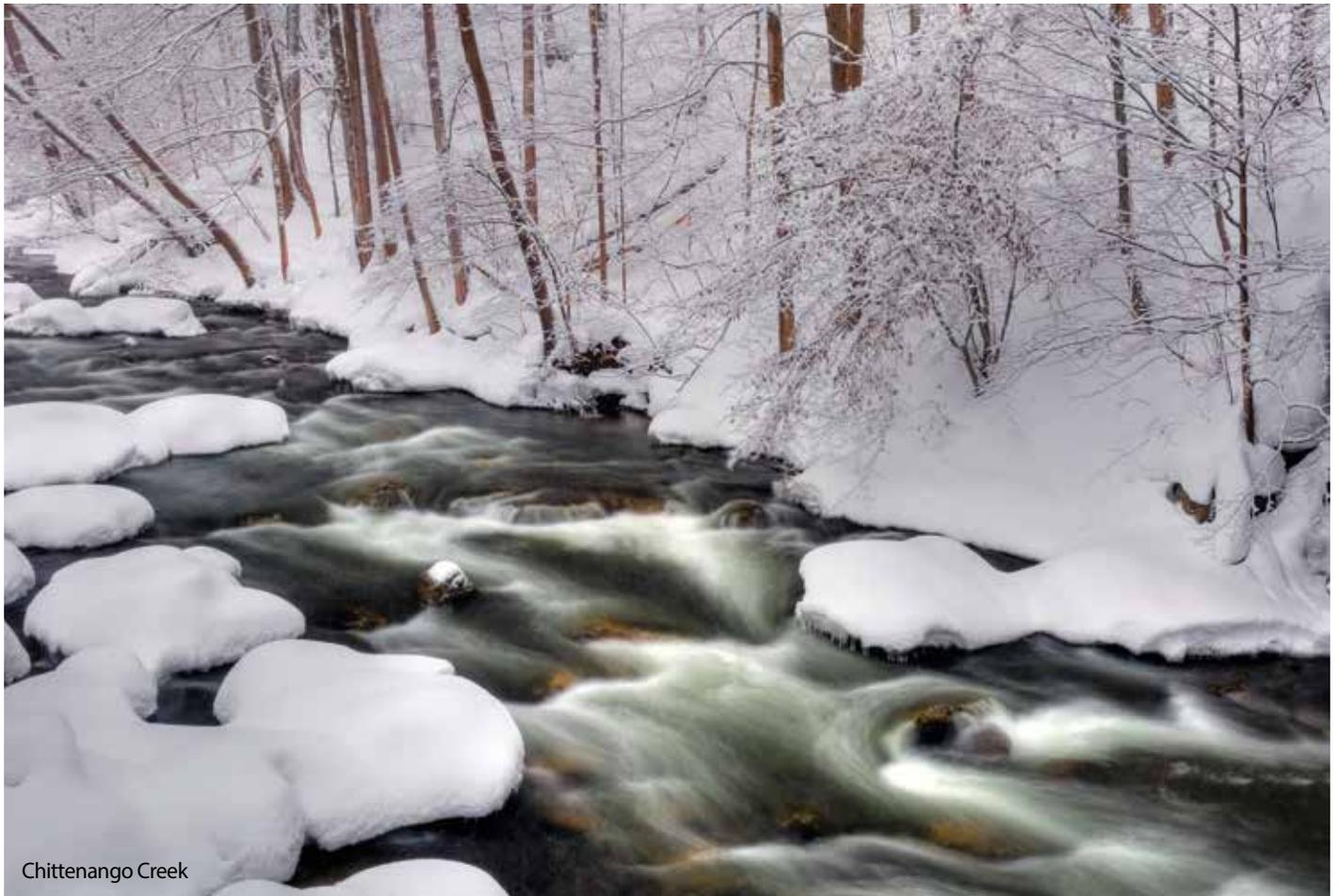


Chittenango Falls

extinct species. Early forms of marine algae, sponges, corals and mollusks are visible in the exposed outcrops and streambed in the falls area and along the creek below.

Although largely industrialized in the 1800s, the area surrounding the falls was made a park in 1922 to protect the area's rugged, scenic beauty. Today's visitors can enjoy a variety of activities here, including fishing, hiking and picnicking. The picturesque falls and creek below are a photographer's dream. While stunning in all seasons, the falls are especially attractive in autumn, when fall colors are at their peak. Just downstream from the falls, visitors can find beautiful views of Chittenango Creek from various turnoffs along Route 13.

In addition to its natural beauty and recreational offerings, Chittenango Falls is also known for its rich biodiversity. Importantly, the area around the falls itself is home to several unique and significant animal and plant species. Chief among them is the Chittenango ovate amber snail, a small land snail found nowhere else in the world and whose population is threatened (see next page). The park is also home to two unique plant species, the roseroot and the harts-tongue fern. The roseroot is known to occur in only three other locations within the state and survives by clinging to the falls' high, sheer ledges. The harts-tongue fern



Chittenango Creek

has been observed in fewer than ten locations in New York. Once more common, its existence has been threatened by plant collectors over the years.

The beauty and majesty of Chittenango Falls is without question, as is the need for its preservation. Geology and time have conspired to make the area critical to its unique flora and fauna; this fact alone makes it our duty to protect this natural resource. The survival of the Chittenango ovate amber snail and other rare species depends on our willingness to accept this challenge.

A landscape photographer for more than fifteen years, **Chris Murray** has a PhD in geology and works part-time as a geological consultant. You can find him online at www.chrismurrayphotography.com



DEC photo



Protecting a Snail

First discovered in 1905, the tiny Chittenango ovate amber snail is only found in Chittenango Falls State Park. Its preferred habitat is vegetated slopes within the moderate climate and high humidity of the spray zone of the waterfall.



courtesy of Seneca Park Zoo

Originally reported as occurring in great abundance, today the snail is endangered. Decades of trampling by park users, unaware of its existence, and the accidental introduction of a competing snail from Europe have threatened the Chittenango snail's survival. According to research conducted by SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, the total population was estimated at fewer than 500 individuals in 1982. Only 25 snails were found in 1990. Conservation efforts have restricted access to the area immediately below the falls since 1983. Recent estimates place the population at about 450 Chittenango snails which are outnumbered by the introduced pest snail at a rate of about 6 to 1.

DEC took a lead role in completing a recovery plan for the Chittenango ovate amber snail. In March 1983, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service gave final approval to the plan, and it was then revised in 2006. This plan provides a detailed outline of activities essential to the protection and perpetuation of a self-sustaining colony. Recovery of this species requires strict protection of its habitat and a reduction of contaminants entering the creek. Chittenango State Park receives nearly 40,000 visitors annually. Park managers direct visitors away from critical habitat, and the immediate falls area is relatively inaccessible. Despite these safeguards, visitors occasionally disobey the rules and venture into the sensitive area immediately below the falls. Any disturbance can severely affect the snail's survival, so please keep a safe distance from the falls and respect all posted restrictions. The snails' future depends on it.

kettle of broad-winged hawks
at Braddock Bay

FLIGHT *of the* RAPTORS

By Barbara Allen Loucks

The sky was brilliant cobalt, full of cumulus clouds. It was unusually warm, one of those late September days that makes you nostalgic about the passing of summer. We were walking up a steep, sandy trail to the top of a bluff overlooking the ocean, when someone ahead shouted, “Peregrine!” I ran up the hill as fast as I could with a backpack on, and reached the top in time to see the dark form flying quickly and steadily towards us, over the beach, almost at eye level. Before we had a chance to catch our breath, the bird passed in front of us, and then moved swiftly, determinedly down the beach. In a minute it was out of sight. It was my first peregrine—an endangered species.

Although this took place many years ago on a college birding trip to Block Island, scenes like this one occur regularly in New York during the often spectacular autumn hawk flights. At some

locations, thousands of hawks stream past, heading south on their way to wintering grounds in Central and South America. Other places are excellent for spring viewing as the birds return to their breeding grounds in the boreal forests and tundra to the north.

On the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) website (www.hmana.org), you can find descriptions and count data for hundreds of hawk watch locations and events across the country, including 25 in New York. Visitors at these watches are often rewarded with sightings of a variety of hawk species that are normally scattered across our landscape and some of which spend much of their time hidden in the forest. Sometimes there are great numbers of hawks, and visitors have the potential to spot more birds of prey in one visit than many people see in their lifetime. In addition, certain sites have special educational events for school groups and the public.

The best places to spot hawks are along mountain ridges, shorelines and peninsulas, where these raptors tend to concentrate. Crosswinds deflected over mountain ranges provide lift for the hawks, reducing the amount of energy required for flight and aiding them in their journey. In other areas, bubbles or columns of rising warm air called thermals form and help provide lift to soaring birds that glide from one thermal to the next. Some hawks are reluctant to fly over large bodies of water and so concentrate along shorelines or peninsulas.



When you participate in a hawk watch, you join people around the world contributing to scientific knowledge on raptor population trends and migration routes.

Weather conditions—wind direction and speed, amount of cloud cover, air temperature, barometric pressure and visibility—will affect hawk flights. In the fall, “tail winds” from the northwest generally mean large numbers of migrants heading south. In spring, strong southerly winds generally create the best conditions for good flights. Sometimes the presence of a low pressure area, followed by a cold front, leads to big fall flights at mountain lookouts; while a low preceded by a warm front can lead to good spring flights.

Going to a hawk watch is a great way to see raptors up close, at times even at eye level or just overhead. Seasoned watchers and official counters are happy to help rookies sort out species. Experienced

Gordon Ellmers

red-tailed hawk



Courtesy Delaware Otsego Audubon Society



In addition to viewing, hawk watches offer excellent photographic opportunities.

observers will amaze you with their ability to identify mere specks in the sky. They can show you how to identify birds by looking at silhouettes, markings, proportions, the way the wings are held, style of flight, behavior, and whether a bird is migrating singly or in a group. It won't be long before *you* become the expert.

By checking hawk watch records, you can maximize your chances of seeing certain species. For example, in fall,

the species that migrate the farthest will move through first. That means you'll likely spot broad-wings before redtails or golden eagles. In the spring, it's the shorter-distance migrants that move through first. Other factors, like food supply, may also affect the timing of migration. Immatures of most species often migrate earlier in the fall than the adults, and some may migrate along different routes.

Despite the seasonal patterns, there is always an element of unpredictability that adds to the excitement. You never know what is coming next from over a ridge, or what may emerge from a cloud. Occasionally, hawk watchers are rewarded with sightings of rare visitors to New York, including Swainson's hawks common in the western United States, swallow-tailed kites from the deep south, and even gyrfalcons of the high arctic.

If you want to go raptor watching this fall, you might want to check out Franklin Mountain near Oneonta. It is one of the few places in New York where you can reliably spot a golden eagle (an endangered species in NY and a rare bird in the eastern U.S.). Observers have reported seeing as many as 200 in a season; the eleven-year average is 179. Other good spots for autumn viewing include: Hook Mountain, overlooking the Hudson River in south-



rough-legged hawk
(dark form)

Gordon Ellmers

eastern NY; and the Long Island beaches at Fire Island, Jones Beach and Democrat Point. Falcons in particular like to migrate along the coasts.

In the spring, from March through May, numerous watchers head to Derby Hill on the eastern shore of Lake Ontario and Braddock Bay on the lake's southern



Cooper's hawk

Gordon Ellmers



Jim Clayton

Experienced watchers are happy to help rookies identify raptor species.

shore to observe thousands of raptors migrating through on their northern treks. For some species, such as bald eagles from Florida, movements continue well into June and early July. At Derby Hill, up to 16,000 broad-winged hawks have been observed in a single day! Broadwings often form large soaring groups called “kettles,” made up of hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of individual hawks. At Braddock Bay, recorders have documented more than 100,000 hawks

in a season; 42,235 hawks were seen in a single day in late April 2011—the highest ever at the hawk watch and a HMANA single-day spring record for the U.S. and Canada!

When you participate in a hawk watch, you join people around the world contributing to scientific knowledge on raptor population trends and migration routes. Official counters record information that is fed into long-term databases. Organizations like HMANA compile and

compare results from the U.S., Canada and Mexico to help monitor populations and identify trends. They share summaries online and in publications, and encourage raptor research and appreciation. Many hawk-watch coordinators send email forecast alerts to help people plan their visit, and to solicit volunteer counters.

But the best reason to go hawk watching is to enjoy time outside and to get a good look at some pretty incredible birds. Sometimes you will see hawks interacting with each other, playfully or aggressively. Watchers also get to see a myriad of other migrating birds, as well as Monarch butterflies. You’ll be amazed at what you can see!

So dress in layers, bring a pair of binoculars, a bird guidebook, and prepare to watch in wonder as birds of prey flap, glide and soar their way to other states and countries on their seasonal pilgrimage.

Barbara Allen Loucks recently retired as DEC’s raptor specialist.



Susan Shafer

Hawk Watching 101: A number of field guides are available for the budding birding enthusiast, and there are even a few developed specifically on hawk watching. Check with your local bookstore to see if they carry one. Remember to bring water, sunscreen, a cap with a visor, and a notepad to record your sightings. Here are a number of websites for good hawk-watching sites in New York State:

Franklin Mountain near Oneonta:
fall hawk watching
www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/74734.html

red-tailed hawk

Hook Mountain in southeastern NY:
fall hawk watching
www.battaly.com/hook

Braddock Bay on Lake Ontario:
spring hawk watching
www.bbrr.org/hawkwatch

Derby Hill on Lake Ontario:
spring hawk watching
<http://onondagaudubon.com/derby-hill-bird-observatory>



Gordon Ellmers



IMMERSED *in* WILDNESS

By Walt McLaughlin

photos by author unless otherwise noted

A wild urge stirred deep within.

I loaded my pack and headed for Brooktrout Lake as soon as I could swing three days away from work. Brooktrout Lake is located in the heart of West Canada Lake Wilderness in the south-central Adirondacks—a huge pocket of trackless forest that few people visit.

The 20-mile dirt road winding through the Moose River Recreation Area set the right mood. The sight and smell of the surrounding forest unraveled my nerves. I spotted a deer feeding in a glade, and braked for a dozen turkeys crossing the road. Reaching the trailhead in mid-afternoon, I parked the car, shouldered my pack, and set forth. I whistled to my German shepard Matika to follow. I didn't have to whistle twice.



Susan L. Shafer

Heavy rain had fallen around midday and the forest was dripping wet. The lush understory dampened my pants a half hour down the narrowing trail. I was sweating profusely as the midsummer heat turned the forest into a steam bath. Deer flies attacked Matika and me whenever we took a water break. No matter. I reveled in the endless green world enveloping us.

Red efts crawled across the muddy trail. The deep blue petals of closed gentian illuminated the forest floor, along with the starburst white of tall meadow rue. I signaled Matika to stay back as we approached a beaver pond, hoping to spot its inhabitant. No such luck. The pond remained still beneath a formless white sky. The sharp click of my trekking poles against rocks resounded through the towering birches, spruces and firs. The tributaries of Wolf Creek blathered incessantly, but I was happy to listen.

Soon I spotted Brooktrout Lake peeking through the trees. At the shelter on the far end, I ran into a pleasant twenty-something couple settling in. We chatted briefly before I back-tracked a half-mile to a relatively flat place not far from the water's edge. There I pitched my tarp and made camp.

A primal self quickly rises back to the surface whenever the setting is right.

By the lake, I pumped water into my bottles while watching the sun slowly sink behind the nearby ridge. Dragonflies darted over blueberry bushes along the shoreline, catching mosquitoes. Matika rested on a fallen tree, taking in the scene. When the mosquitoes came out in force, we slipped beneath the netting hanging from my tarp. As darkness swallowed the forest, the loud cry of a solitary loon echoed across the lake.

At daybreak, a raven croaked loudly, startling Matika. Chipmunks chattered, and nuthatches and chickadees chirped away. After splashing water onto my face, I watched a pair of loons swimming and diving just off-shore. They captivated Matika's interest, too. I enjoyed a long, lazy breakfast, then



The author's dog, Matika, relaxing at their campsite near Brooktrout Lake.

grabbed map, compass and water bottle before taking a short walk to West Lake. Matika discovered all kinds of interesting smells along the way.

While standing on a big rock overlooking West Lake, I recalled previous excursions into this sprawling wilderness. On the far shore I had stopped to rest for a couple days during an end-to-end hike along the Northville/Placid Trail. Years before that, I had camped at Cedar Lakes a few miles farther east before venturing north to Lost Pond. A couple years ago I had sojourned at Sampson Lake to the southeast long enough for the wild to reclaim me. Now here I was completing the circle.

The day was shaping up to be another warm one. Immediately upon returning to camp, I stripped off my clothes and waded into Brooktrout Lake. Matika watched from shore, belly down in cool mud. I hesitated while standing thigh-deep in the chilly water, eventually building up courage enough to take the plunge. I swam about frog-like for some time before emerging from the lake my old self: the same wild man who had banged around the Alaskan bush twenty years earlier. Along with a layer of dirt and sweat, I had just washed off something else.



WEST CANADA LAKE WILDERNESS

The West Canada Lake Wilderness Area contains some of the most remote lands and waters in the Adirondack Park. It is located in the southwestern portion of the park, in the towns of Arietta, Indian Lake, Lake Pleasant and Morehouse in Hamilton County, and the Town of Ohio in Herkimer County. The area encompasses approximately 171,000 acres, and contains more than 50 backcountry ponds, most of which have excellent fishing. It is the second largest wilderness area in the Adirondacks.

With 69.2 miles of trails, but few trailheads leading directly into this area, a visit to the interior lakes is a true wilderness experience. Terrain ranges from swamp flats and rolling hills to steep mountains, such as Snowy Mountain. There are 16 overnight shelters (lean-tos).



For information on the area's trails and trail conditions, check out DEC's website at www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7865.html.



Parts of the trail are surrounded by a lush understory that adds to the wilderness of the place.



Common loon

Wildness is like that. Once it gets under your skin, it's hard to shake. A primal self quickly rises back to the surface whenever the setting is right. I suspect that the wild lies dormant within all of us, that even the most sophisticated urbanites aren't as removed from nature as they think. After all, our bodies are made of the same elements found in the wildest, most remote places. The earth and our humanity are inexorably entwined. That's why places like the West Canada Lake Wilderness are so important. In country like this, it's easy to sense our link to the world.

That afternoon, I sat against a spruce tree, occasionally scribbling in my journal while watching the loons at play. A pair of canoeists came out of nowhere, crossed the lake, and then disappeared.

Once my hyperactive mind settled, I entered that nether region between daydreams and conscious thought. Following a simple dinner of ramen noodles and trail mix, I continued the same thread while staring into a small campfire. Matika chased a chipmunk, and then satisfied her primal urges by chewing on a stick. The sun went down sooner than expected; both man and dog went down shortly thereafter.

The next day I lingered over breakfast, reluctant to break camp. When finally I shouldered my pack and got back on the trail, I was glad to be on the move again—almost as glad as Matika. The hike out went fast. I stopped by the beaver pond again but its inhabitant still didn't show. No matter. Wandering

through the woods on a beautiful summer day was all I needed or wanted.

Upon reaching the car, I wiped the sweat from my brow with an already sweat-soaked bandana, and then said goodbye to my favorite wilderness. I'd return soon, I promised myself, and the long drive back to pavement and buildings was pleasant enough. But I'm always a little sad whenever I leave the woods. For some of us, the wild isn't an abstraction.

Walt McLaughlin is the author of several books, including *Arguing with the Wind*, a memoir about his two-week solo immersion in the Alaskan wilderness. He lives in Vermont with his wife Judy and their dog Matika.



DOUBLE H RANCH

— Fun in the Foothills

By Richard W. Crannell Jr.

If you think a wheelchair-bound child with muscular dystrophy can't hit an archery target, think again. Maybe you haven't seen the kind of problem-solving the staff at Double H Ranch can muster when kids' happiness is at stake. All you need to do is to set up a shooting bench at wheelchair height, fasten the bow horizontally, insert an arrow, let the child pull the string back, and watch the smile as the arrow hits home.

Twenty years ago, actor Paul Newman and amusement park pioneer Charley Wood began a collaborative effort that today benefits more than 2,000 children and their families each year; 70% of whom come from New York State. Paul's vision and Charley's persistence (everyone at Double H goes by his/her first name) led to the opening of Double H Ranch in Lake Luzerne.

Paul had previously founded The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp in Ashford, Connecticut in 1988 for the purpose of letting children with life-threatening illnesses "raise a little hell." Charley had made his fortune in amusement parks and wanted to give back to children who needed a more specialized camp environment.

Although Paul was busy with his camp in Connecticut, Charley went to New York City to pursue his desire to establish a similar camp near his home.

George Hodgson Jr.



Archery is just one of the fun activities that children with life-threatening illnesses (like the one pictured here and the other one described in the opening paragraph) get to experience at the Double H Ranch.

Initially, Charley wished to donate his land on Lake George, but Paul considered it too steep for wheelchairs. Through good fortune, however, an existing ranch—Hidden Valley Dude Ranch on 320 acres overlooking Lake Vanare—was auctioned and the two men donated \$1,000,000 each to purchase it and get it operating.



The camp's founders: Paul Newman and Charley Wood.

The name—Double H Hole in the Woods Ranch—came from Charley’s fondness for toasting health and happiness (two “Hs”), along with a strong nod to Paul’s Connecticut camp. Interestingly, as workers were preparing the site, they discovered on the slope above Lake Vanare two pine trees with the trunks fused together to form an “H.” They felt it was a very favorable omen.

Over the years, the administration, volunteers, counselors, medical support personnel and thousands of benefactors have built Double H into what it is today: a far cry from its first summer session in 1993 when it served just four campers. Through trust, imagination, and a lot of hard work, campers now enjoy year-round activities, free of charge and nestled in the beautiful Adirondack foothills. Guided by a diverse and dedicated board of directors, medical advisory board, and passionate CEO Max Yurenda, the mission of providing specialized programs for children dealing with life-threatening illnesses and their families is unquestionably being fulfilled.

Courtesy of Double H Ranch



Two pine trees fused together to form an “H” was believed to be a favorable omen in the beginnings of Double H Ranch.



Children experience myriad activities during each of the seven summer sessions, and form friendships that last a lifetime.

During each of the seven summer sessions, as many as 126 children (aged 6 through 16) enjoy archery, an elaborate ropes course complete with zip line, horseback riding, arts and crafts, fishing and much more while forming friendships and creating life-changing experiences in a charmed setting. In autumn and spring, Double H hosts 15 family weekends centered on a variety of themes, including autism, diabetes, hematology, oncology and bereavement.

Adaptive winter sports are a focus in season. Volunteers, including the National Ski Patrol, ensure a 1:1 student/volunteer ratio. The bunny slope is ideal in length and contour for building self-confidence, while the parents savor another breakthrough with their amazing children. And if Mother Nature doesn’t cooperate, snow-making equipment guarantees Double H won’t miss a beat.

An extremely low camper-to-counselor ratio provides both safety and guidance throughout six busy days. With safety the paramount concern, Double H accepts only those children with illnesses it is qualified to handle; foremost among them: cancer, sickle-cell anemia, bleeding, immune and neuromuscular disorders, as

well as others listed on its comprehensive website, www.doublehranch.org.

Since 1994, Double H has partnered with Albany Medical Center to ensure the best medicine and best medical practices are made available. This solid medical expertise is one of the key reasons Double H has grown so dynamically as more parents became comfortable entrusting their children to Max and his accomplished team.

For those children unable to attend camp, Double H maintains its Hospital Outreach Program with 17 hospitals in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Campers and their families aren’t the only ones whose lives are transformed at Double H. Volunteers and counselors return year after year for another dose of pure satisfaction from helping these children accomplish things no one thought possible.

I learned this firsthand during a recent visit to Double H in which Max Yurenda took me on a facility tour. I was told by several of the counselors I met that their work at the camp has inspired them to pursue music therapy and middle school teaching so they could continue to have a positive impact on young lives. I also

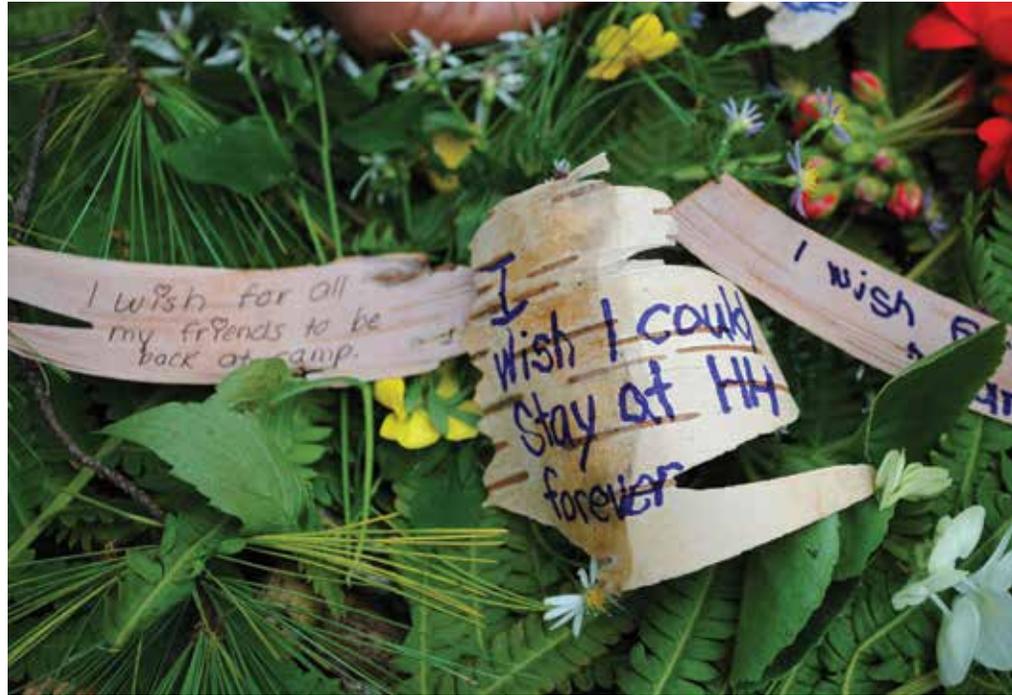
learned that many adult volunteers give up their vacation time to help realize the camp's mission, and still others create and conduct activities to help fund Double H's expenses, which run over \$3 million annually.

Of course, dedicated medical staff are key to the success of the camp. Max described how medical professionals are energized by helping kids enjoy camp and the outdoors far from an institutional setting. Many return to their regular jobs with renewed vigor and an appreciation for life which they gained through their work at Double H.

After Max gave me an overview of Double H, he walked me to the archery range where I met a couple of campers. One tall, thin, 14-year-old boy from the Bronx was in his second day at camp. I asked him what he thought about Double H. His immediate beaming smile was answer enough.

Following the talent show on the last evening of each summer session, children gather on the shore of Lake Vanare and launch birch-bark boats holding their wishes for the future. There is no doubt that hope for health and happiness drifts onto the lake at this emotional coda to camp.

Courtesy of Double H Ranch



On their last night of camp, children launch birch-bark boats holding their wishes for the future.

Everywhere I went, I saw smiling faces, on both kids and adults. Passing several plaques with images of Charley and Paul, I couldn't help but think how these two remarkable men have left a lasting legacy, nurtured by those with a passion to see that the magic of Double H Ranch continues forever.

And if the smiles I saw are any indication, it will do just that.



Avid nature lover, angler and hunter **Richard W. Crannell Jr.** works in business development for IBM and lives with his family in Somers, NY.

Courtesy of Double H Ranch



More Great Programs

To learn more about Double H Ranch and similar programs, visit the following websites:

Double H Ranch:
www.doublehbranch.org

Pediatric Oncology Resource Center:
www.ped-onc.org/cfissues/camps.html

NeedyMeds (Camps & Retreats):
www.needymeds.org/camps.taf?_function=cas_camps

New York Easter Seals, Camp Colonie:
<http://ny.easterseals.com>

On Patrol

Real stories from Conservation Officers and Forest Rangers in the field

Carl Heilman II

Contributed by ECO Lt. Tom Caifa and Forest Ranger Capt. Stephen Scherry



Montana game wardens with ECOs Chrisman Starczek and Rick Head

Elk? Poachers in New York— Onondaga County and Montana

Recently, Montana Game Wardens Lennie Buhman and Todd Anderson contacted Environmental Conservation Investigator (ECI) Jim Boylan regarding an elk illegally taken in Montana and brought back to New York. ECI Boylan, ECOs Richard Head, Scott Yacavone and Chrisman Starczek, and the game wardens interviewed the three men who had taken the bull elk. The men had previously hunted elk together in Montana, but this time purchased only one elk tag to share. Two of the men also purchased less expensive antelope tags in case they were checked. One man admitted to shooting the bull elk and using his friend's tag. Because all three men transported the elk and processed it at their camp, they were issued appearance tickets returnable in Montana, and the elk's rack was seized. Charges included: killing an elk without a tag, unlawful possession and transportation of an elk, and unlawful transfer of an elk tag. The men paid a total of \$4,200 in fines, and the shooter's hunting, fishing and trapping privileges were revoked in Montana and New York for two years.

Bald Eagle Rescue— Chenango County

Recently, ECOs Eric Templeton and Andy McCormick responded to a report of an injured bald eagle in the Town of Afton. When ECO Templeton arrived, a witness stated the bald eagle was in a field behind his residence and seemed unable to fly. Smaller birds had been dive-bombing the eagle, driving it into taller grass along the field's edge. Templeton and ECO McCormick, along with Tom Gragg, a DEC employee, swept the tall grass until they located the eagle. McCormick then subdued the eagle with a heavy blanket while Templeton secured its legs. They trans-



DEC photo

ported the eagle to the Cornell University Wildlife Clinic for examination where several superficial wounds were found on the eagle's wings; fortunately, there were no fractures. After a short recovery period, the eagle will be released back into the wild.

Illegal Party Cut Short— Ulster County

While patrolling Kenneth L. Wilson Campground, Forest Ranger Marie Ellenbogen came upon a group of 24 young campers, only one of which was old enough to possess alcoholic beverages. Ranger Ellenbogen told her to keep such beverages in her vehicle, and that Lieutenant Stephen Scherry would be patrolling later that night. When Lt. Scherry reached the campsite, two intoxicated young women staggered in his direction. After identifying himself, he summoned all campers together and had them place the alcoholic beverages in front of their campsite. In all, there were 152 unopened cans of beer and two bottles of vodka. The forest ranger asked for photo IDs and questioned everyone. Lt. Scherry could not prove the 21-year-old provided the alcohol, but he emphasized the seriousness of such an offense. Nine underage campers who drank were fined \$125 each. Before the group left the next morning, the 21-year-old wanted the confiscated beverages returned; her request was denied.

ASK THE ECO

Q: May I cross private property to gain access to a stream stocked by the state?

A: No, not without first obtaining permission from the landowner.



**MEET
THE**

BOBCAT

— *New plan guides future management*

By Lance Durfey and Andrew MacDuff
photos by Angie Berchielli unless otherwise noted

Dusk on a cold November evening. A light snow is falling, and a young varying hare—only partially transitioned to his all-white winter coat—is dining on some maple twigs a few yards from a dense stand of hemlock. He shuffles slowly from one twig to another, nibbling as he goes. It is the hare's first fall, having recently dispersed from its mother and two littermates in October. As the hare shifts his position to reach another bud, he turns his back to a small boulder. A fatal mistake. From 10 feet away, a bobcat, unseen behind the rock, leaps onto the hare...

Bobcats are champions of stealth. They are secretive, solitary cats that can move quietly about their environment, often in search of a meal. In fact, despite an estimated one to two million bobcats across North America, few of us will ever see one in the wild. Those lucky people who do spot one are often struck by the similarity of the animal's appearance to a house cat.





Bobcats eat a variety of prey, from mice to deer, and will also feed on carrion.

Bobcats get their name from their stubby, “bobbed” tails. With short, dense, soft coats, whiskered faces, a ruff of longer fur around the face, and black-tufted ears, they are nearly unmistakable. Occasionally, people confuse a bobcat for a Canada lynx, but lynx are considered extirpated in New York. Bobcats are about twice the size of a house cat, and have obvious black bars on their forelegs. Their coats vary from beige to reddish-brown to gray, with spots that are distinctive in some individuals and faded in others. Found farther north, lynx are taller, generally lighter in color, and the tips of their tails are black all the way around, while the tips of bobcats’ tails are black only on the top.

Historically there were only three major bobcat population centers in New York, namely the Adirondacks, Catskills and Taconics. Recent observations by hunters, trappers, and the general public suggest that bobcat populations are expanding. This is not unique to New York; most northeastern states report increasing bobcat populations. With the exception of Long Island, bobcats are currently found in suitable habitat throughout the state. While they can be found in a variety of habitats, including shrubby fields, wooded

farmland, and timbered swamps, they prefer coniferous, mixed, and hardwood forests with rocky ledges or hollow logs for denning.

Bobcats are most active at dawn and dusk, but can be seen at any time of day. Rabbits, hares and white-tailed deer are their preferred prey, with deer being particularly important during the winter, as a single kill can provide food for weeks. Bobcats usually kill winter-weakened fawns (deer born the previous spring),

but they can take healthy fawns, yearlings and even adults on rare occasion. Opportunistic carnivores, they will also eat small mammals like mice, voles, shrews and chipmunks, as well as birds, squirrels, muskrat, beaver, woodchuck and opossum.

Although bobcats can climb trees, they do the majority of their hunting on the ground. They rely on stealth and surprise to capture prey, using available cover to get close to attack, or sitting quietly and ambushing prey that passes by. Because of their smaller size and lack of speed in deep snow, bobcats are poorly adapted for preying on moving deer; most kills are of deer that are bedded down.

The amount of prey available in an area helps determine the population density and home range size of bobcats. In areas of good habitat with abundant prey, they will have smaller home ranges because the area can support more cats. In areas of poor habitat with low prey numbers, the reverse is true. The average home range of a bobcat in North America is highly variable, but averages about 15 square miles for males, and only 6 square miles for females.



C. Miller

In keeping with their solitary nature, adult bobcats typically do not use the same areas at the same time, except during the breeding season. To let other cats know an area is occupied, they mark their territory with droppings, urine and scrapes (scratching the ground with their hind feet after scent-marking an area).

Bobcats breed in February or March. Females can reproduce in their first year, while males typically breed in their second. Dens are located under fallen

trees, inside hollow logs or trees, rocky crevices, thickets, shallow caves, rock piles and sometimes in abandoned or little-used barns and out-buildings. A single male may mate with multiple females; males do not aid in raising the young.

Following a gestation period of 60-70 days, females give birth in April or May to a litter of one to four, 12-ounce kittens. The newborn kittens are blind and covered with spotted fur. The eyes open at 8-10 days, and the young nurse for 60

days. After they are weaned, the young eat prey brought to them by the females; sometimes the prey is alive, allowing the young to practice their hunting skills. At three- to five-months old, the kittens start accompanying their mother on nightly hunts until autumn or winter when the young disperse.

For years, bobcats were viewed as “varmints” and destructive predators. Many northern New York counties paid bounties on the cats until 1971 when the New York State Legislature passed a law prohibiting this practice. It wasn’t until 1976 that bobcats were given protected status in the state. At that time, the state legislature granted DEC authority to establish hunting and trapping seasons. In 1977, DEC closed a large portion of the state to bobcat harvest and started a pelt-tagging system to track the numbers harvested by hunters and trappers during the open seasons. Since that time, there has been a steady increase in the bobcat population (as indicated by increased sightings and harvest).

DEC biologists have continued to monitor the state’s bobcat populations, and recently completed a statewide management plan for these cats (see sidebar). Among the plan’s recommendations are several changes in harvest regulations—a reflection of the increased number of these felines.

Harvest and observation data provided by hunters and trappers are key in assessing the status of the state’s bobcat populations. Likewise, sightings from hikers, farmers, trailcam users, and others who spend time outdoors also provide important information that helps biologists get a clear picture of bobcat population trends and range expansion. Members of the public who spot a bobcat are encouraged to report the sighting by filling out a Furbearer Sighting Survey (available online at www.dec.ny.gov/animals/30770.html).



Even young bobcats are good climbers.



Monitoring the state's bobcat population, including receiving valuable observation data from the public, will assure a healthy population in the future. After all, it's not only hunters, trappers and photographers who value bobcats; most New Yorkers like to know that our only native wild cat thrives in the Empire State—a seldom seen indicator of a healthy ecosystem.

Lance Durfey is the regional wildlife manager in DEC's Ray Brook office, and **Andrew MacDuff** is a wildlife biologist in DEC's Watertown office. They help oversee the bobcat management program in the Adirondacks.



Bobcat Management

New York biologists have been studying bobcats for many years. Recently, DEC adopted a bobcat management plan (2012-2017). The plan focuses on two objectives: 1) maintaining or increasing bobcat populations in all areas of the state where suitable habitat exists; and 2) providing for the use and enjoyment of bobcats in a sustainable manner by the public.

As part of the plan, DEC implemented several changes in bobcat harvest regulations, including extending the trapping season in northern New York to match the existing hunting season, and establishing a new, limited (3-4 week) trapping and hunting season in portions of central and western New York. This is expected to produce only a small bobcat harvest, allowing for continued population growth. In areas newly opened to trapping and hunting, trappers and hunters will be required to obtain a free permit to participate, and to both log their take and effort, and provide biological samples from all harvested bobcats. Log books will also be offered to hunters and trappers in existing harvest areas on a voluntary basis.

The new plan will enable DEC to obtain better data, making it easier to monitor bobcat populations. DEC will track harvest trends closely and make sure that harvest seasons are appropriate for a given area. DEC's goal is to manage bobcats sustainably so that the state's bobcat populations continue to exist for the enjoyment of all.

To view DEC's *Management Plan for Bobcats in New York State, 2012-2017*, visit www.dec.ny.gov/docs/wildlife_pdf/finalbmp2012.pdf.



Log rolling competition

Calling all Lumberjacks and Jills!

—*New York State Woodsmen's Field Days*

By Elaine Bloom
photos by Jim Clayton

Even if you missed the banners strung across Route 12 entering Boonville or the barbecue smoke wafting from institutional-sized grills in parking lots across town, you would sense something was up on this sunny August morning. Maybe it's the dry, sweet whiff of fresh sawdust; the distant whine of countless chainsaws; the "If You Don't Like Logging, Try Wiping with a Pinecone" bumper stickers.

It's the New York State Woodmen's Field Days, an Adirondack institution that combines the traditional skills and savvy of the old-time lumberjack with the roaring charisma of monster logging equipment.

The first Woodmen's Field Days, held in Old Forge, NY in 1948, benefitted the Woodsmen's Club, which supports logging families, especially those that lose a breadwinner to injury or death. The festival found permanent home in Boonville in 1972 and still supports the same worthy cause.

The field days tradition harks back to the fierce, informal competitions that sprang up in logging camps of the mid-1800s to mid-1900s. As if their work wasn't dangerous enough, lum-

berjacks, living and working deep in the woods, competed to outdo each other in skills ranging from log rolling to felling trees and bucking them with crosscut saws.

The Boonville-Oneida County Fairground is the focus of Boonville's contemporary Field Days, but the entire village gets involved, with ham dinners at churches and all-you-can-eat breakfasts at the Masonic Temple. Parking is easy, with locations available throughout the village.

As you enter the fairgrounds, you might want to slip in the earplugs you so wisely brought along. Make your way down the rows of vendors. Your attention is initially commanded by dealers of state-of-the-art chainsaws, slicing—with casual skill and deafening noise—large logs into piles of thin "cookies."

All rows lead (after stopping off at hawkers of woodcrafts, forest art, portable sawmills and irresistible delicacies such as fried dough) to the grandstand. There you can marvel at an assortment of exhibitions and competitions, some using ultra-modern technology and techniques, but all contested every bit as fiercely as those of yesteryear.

Horse Skidding

Wandering the grounds, I was drawn to the horse skidding competition where teams of sleek draft horses “skid,” or slid, a log (and by log, I mean a pretty darn big tree trunk sans limbs) through a slalom line of thick poles simulating a dense stand of trees. If this sounds easy or safe, then you need to see it. The horses weigh upwards of a ton each, and, although well trained, don’t come with power steering. The driver, holding the reins on foot behind the horse, may ride the log or, more commonly, hop deftly from one side of the log to the other as it fishtails through the poles. Miss a step and the driver risks having his or her legs slammed by the heavy log.

When you work with animals (or timber for that matter) you learn to expect the unexpected. At the 2012 Field Days exhibition, Jennie Hatch handled just such a moment with aplomb, much to the alarm and delight of the crowd. When her team ran away out of control, she ran behind them with the 16-foot log



Opening ceremony at the field days.

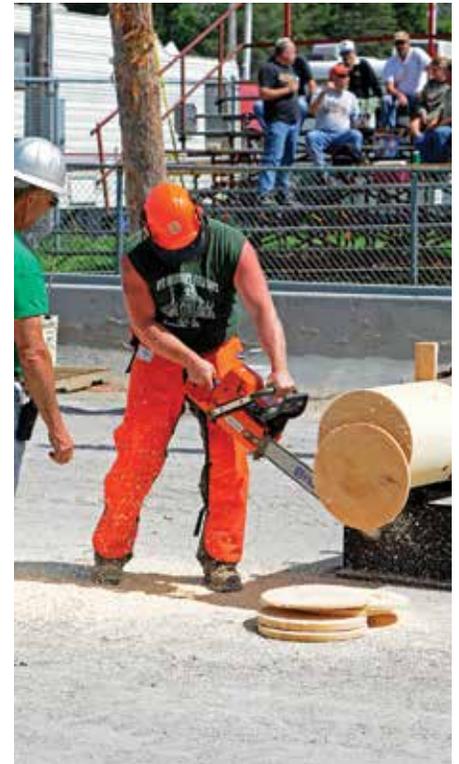
swinging behind her. “Trying to hold back two spooked Percherons, it’s scary to realize how big they really are,” she said. The only woman in the competition and a crowd favorite, she still managed to finish 5th out of 11 teams.

Game of Logging

Developed to promote new, safer techniques in an inherently risky profession, Game of Logging competition events are anything but dull. The timed events are based on using a chainsaw with a speed,



One-woman crosscut competition.



Cutting “log cookies” with a chainsaw.

precision and skill that astounds. Competitors face a variety of situations they might encounter in the woods, such as making an open-faced notch in the trunk and leaving just few inches of wood holding the tree, and a precision “bore cut” to allow the tree to fall exactly where aimed. Another event, releasing a “spring pole,” simulates one of the trickiest and potentially dangerous circumstances loggers encounter: a felled tree pinning a sapling under great tension. Spring poles can release with huge force, causing serious injuries.

Lumberjack and Lumberjill

Lumberjack and lumberjill competitions pit contestants against their opponents’ times in more traditional events such as one-man and two-man crosscut, axe throwing, underhand chopping, and log rolling. (By the way, if you imagine that the lumberjill contests are tame versions of the men’s contests—don’t. These women train just as hard and are equally as determined and proficient as their male counterparts.)

One of the most spectacular of all the lumberjack events is the springboard chop, a technique first used by old-time time loggers to establish a cutting platform part-way up the trunk of massive trees. In this competition, each contestant uses an axe to chop pockets into a 9-foot pole and place narrow planks into the pockets. Climbing the planks, the competitor chops through a 12-inch diameter log at the top of the pole. It goes without saying that agility and good balance go a long way in this event.

For those awed by watching dinosaur-sized equipment thunder around the stadium, the Field Days offers loader and skidder contests, as well as a logging truck show. Other do-not-miss fun includes the crowning of the forest queen, the Wood Nymph fashion show, chainsaw ice carving, the Brothers of the



A demonstration of the springboard chop.



There is plenty state-of-the-art wood-processing equipment on display at the field days.

Bush beard contest, and loads more. For the more serious-minded individual there are seminars on forest management and ecology. All seminars are free and open to the public. Check the Woodsmen's Field Days website at www.starinfo.com/woodsmen for full details.

The 2013 Field Days will be held on August 16, 17, & 18. Consider spending a day enjoying crafts, food and logging excitement, and to show your support for New York's lumberjacks and jills. Oh, and don't forget the earplugs!



Elaine Bloom is a contributing editor for *Conservationist*.



Good balance and agility are important in birling (see definition below).



Learn the Lingo

Before heading to the Woodsmen's Field Days, you might want to brush up on your lumberjack and logging lingo so you understand what everyone's saying!

Barber chair: a tree which splits upward along the grain during felling

Birling: the game of log rolling in the water

Buck: to cut a tree into lengths after it has been felled

Cat Skinner: bulldozer operator

Fall guy: person who cuts down the trees in the forest—also known as a “Jack”

Ink slinger: a logging camp timekeeper-bookkeeper

Macaroni: sawdust

Nosebag: a lunch bucket

Pike pole: a long aluminum pole with a spike and hook on one end used to maneuver floating logs

Schoolmarm: a log or tree that is forked; stable in river driving because it does not roll easily

Swedish fiddle: a crosscut saw

Tramline: suspended cable that skids or carries the logs to the mill

Tree harvester: large rubber-tired machine with jaws for holding tree while a blade cuts them off

Tree farmer (or skidder): large machine with multiple choke cables or big claws for skidding logs out of the woods

Kids enjoy playing in the “macaroni” at the fair.

Beaver Lake Nature Center

Just 15 minutes northwest of Syracuse, this nature center on a glacial lake attracts a menagerie of wildlife to its diverse habitats—size: 671 acres

A great watchable wildlife site



beaver

Bill Banaszewski

The rich mix of forest, wetland, meadow and open water at this nature center in central New York attracts more than 200 species of birds, and nurtures more than 800 varieties of plants. The landscape is dominated by 200-acre Beaver Lake, a large, water-filled kettle hole created by the massive weight of a thawing glacier from the last ice age.

During spring and fall, Beaver Lake is a resting spot for thousands of migratory waterfowl. On its southern shore is a fen, where visitors can find cranberries and insect-eating plants such as sundew, pitcher plant and bladderwort.

Wildlife to Watch

As its name suggests, beavers can be seen here, and the wetlands created by the dams of these industrious mammals serve as habitat for mink, muskrats and many other plants and animals. Bald eagles, ospreys and double-crested cormorants search the waters for fish.



white-tailed deer

Susan Shafer

Gerry Lemmo



indigo bunting

As evening's shadows lengthen, bats swoop after flying insects while sharp-eyed great horned owls patiently wait for nighttime to begin hunting for prey.

In the warmer months, look for snapping and painted turtles in the bog, as well as great blue herons stalking fish and bullfrogs in shallow water. Belted kingfishers noisily make their presence known, too. Canada geese by the thousands assemble in spring and fall on their long migratory journeys.

Wary white-tailed deer roam forests and fields. Chattering chipmunks and squirrels share the woods with strutting wild turkeys. Chubby woodchucks pop up from meadows, and raccoons search shallow water for frogs and crayfish. All keep a wary eye out for roving coyotes and foxes.

The most colorful feathered denizen you may encounter is the brilliant blue of the male indigo bunting. These sparrow-size birds arrive in late spring from the Caribbean islands and breed through summer. They prefer brushy fields and forest margins to deep woods, so look for them there.

In the deep woods, listen for the loud knocking of a pileated woodpecker as it drills into a tree. These nearly crow-sized birds, with red crests, white stripes, white

Gerry Lemmo



mink

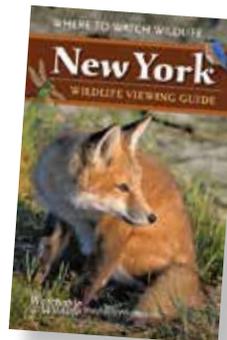
Gerry Lemmo



pileated woodpecker

underwings and undulating flight, are always a thrilling sight.

Beaver Lake Nature Center is just one of the more than 100 wildlife viewing sites described in the recently published *New York Wildlife Viewing Guide*. See www.NewYork-WatchableWildlife.org for how to obtain your copy.



Site Features

Notes: The nature center opens daily at 7:30 a.m., except on Thanksgiving and Christmas. Contact the center for closing times and fees. The grounds include an arboretum. Spotting scopes are available for use in the visitors center. Enjoy weekend guided walks.

Trails: More than nine miles of maintained walking trails cross gentle terrain and include an observation tower, overlook deck and observation blind. Several boardwalks, one nearly a mile long, take you for a close look at unique wetland flora and fauna. Paddle your canoe or kayak through a wetland on the west side of the lake for a great view of wildlife from the water.

Accessibility: Some features for people with disabilities, including trails and a visitors center.

Directions: The nature center is located just 15 minutes northwest of Syracuse, at 8477 E. Mud Lake Rd. in Baldwinsville. It is accessible via the NYS Thruway; exit 39 from the west and exit 40 from the east.

Contact: 315-638-2519
106 Lake Drive, Liverpool
<http://onondagacountyparks.com/beaver-lake-nature-center>



Adirondack Acquisition

New York recently purchased 9,300 acres of land in the Adirondack Park from The Nature Conservancy. The lands, which were previously owned by Finch Paper (formerly Finch, Pruyn & Co.), include: the OK Slip Falls in Hamilton County; the Casey Brook tract in Essex County; the Spruce Point tract in Washington County; the Saddles tract in Washington County; the Hudson Riverside/Ice Meadows tract in Warren County; and the Indian River tract in Essex and Hamilton Counties. This acquisition complements the state's purchase of more than 18,000 acres of land from the Conservancy in 2012. The new purchase helps ensure the protection of the region's forests, waterways and wildlife, as well as provides future tourism and recreational opportunities. For more information, search "Finch Pruyn" on the governor's website at www.governor.ny.gov.



Connie Prickett/TNC



Spruce Grouse Recovery Plan

DEC recently released a final spruce grouse recovery plan, available at www.dec.ny.gov/animals/89794.html. Spruce grouse were first listed as threatened in New York in 1983 and later moved to the endangered list in 1999 due to declines in population. Highlights of the recovery plan include ways to maintain grouse habitat, and information on reintroducing the birds into specified areas. Visit www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7078.html for more information about spruce grouse.

EAB Spreading

The invasive beetle, emerald ash borer (EAB), was recently confirmed for the first time in Delaware and Otsego Counties, bringing the total number of counties with confirmed EAB sightings to 15. The New York Department of Agriculture and Markets expanded quarantine areas to include all or part of 42 counties. The quarantine prohibits any movement of live EAB from where they are found, which includes infested ash logs. DEC's "Don't Move Firewood" regulations prohibiting the transportation of firewood of any species more than 50 miles from its source or origin remains



in effect (www.dec.ny.gov/animals/28722.html). To report signs of EAB, call DEC's emerald ash borer hotline at 1-866-640-0652, and visit www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7253.html for more information about the beetle.



New State Record Brookie

On May 16, Rick Beauchamp of Fulton County caught a new state record brook trout while fishing on Silver Lake, Hamilton County. Rick caught the 22.5-inch brookie using a Lake Clear Wabblers and worm. The trophy fish weighed in at slightly more than 6 pounds, surpassing the previous state record by 2 ounces. Rick submitted the details of his catch to DEC's Angler Achievement Awards Program, a program designed to recognize the accomplishments of anglers. Check out the June 2013 article "Nice Catch!" (www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/91050.html) for information about the program, and visit www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7727.html for a downloadable application form.

Ranger School Turns 100

The SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry Ranger School recently celebrated its centennial. Begun in 1912, the Ranger School started as a place to "train men to fill the gap between the average woodsman and the professional forester," and today offers several degree programs (Environmental and Natural Resources Conservation, Land Surveying Technology, and Forest Technology) to both men and women. Throughout last year, students and faculty celebrated the institution's rich history with festivals, lectures, an alumni reunion, games, dinners, and much more! For more information about the important work students are doing to protect our natural resources, and to learn about the centennial, visit the Ranger School's website at www.esf.edu/rangerschool.

Tracking Dog Exam

DEC recently announced the upcoming examination date for people interested in obtaining a license to use certified leashed tracking dogs to find dead or injured deer or bear. The test will be given at designated DEC regional offices on August 16, and the deadline for registering is August 2nd. For more information, visit www.dec.ny.gov/permits/25020.html. (Note: Licensees must have a valid NYS big game hunting license.)

Museum Features Rare Works

In the "Great Wilderness, Great Expectations: Masterworks from the Adirondack Museum" exhibit currently on display at the Adirondack Museum, visitors can peruse more than 50 works of art depicting the changing Adirondack landscape over several past centuries. The exhibit, which runs until October 14, 2013, features rarely or never-before-exhibited drawings, paintings, sketches and photographs by artists like John Frederick Kensett, Seneca Ray Stoddard, Edward Bierstadt, Thomas Cole, Nathan Farb, and others. These images have helped define the American wilderness, and show how artists from the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries portrayed the Adirondack region. Visit www.adkmuseum.org for more information.



*The Road to Ausable, Roswell Morse Shurtleff
Oil on canvas (c. 1893)*



Perfect Pike

I recently went to the Conesus Lake Inlet to see the fish spawning and took this photo.

Judy Smith-Cronk
Dansville, Livingston County

What a great “action” photo of a northern pike. Conesus Lake Inlet is known as a place where people can see spawning runs of northern pike and walleye, and your photo captures the scene perfectly. Northern pike are one of the most widely distributed freshwater fish in the world, and among New York’s most important sportfish. They can grow quite large, with some specimens reaching more than 40 pounds!

—Eileen Stegemann, Assistant Editor

Climbing Cub

I thought you might be interested in this black bear cub I photographed earlier this year.

Maureen Moore
Cornwall, Orange County

Thanks for sharing your photo. Female black bears typically have two to three cubs in the winter while the female is in the den. Cubs will stay with her for more than a year before dispersing on their own.

—Conservationist staff





Loon Ride

Here is a photo of a loon with her chick in the southern Adirondacks. I love to hear the loons calling at night!

Gladys Forman

Great photo! It also serves as a good reminder that summer is when loons nest and raise their young. Common loons are protected by state and federal laws, and disturbing them is illegal. So please remember to admire these birds from a distance.

—Dave Nelson, Editor



Peek-a-boo

I took this photo of a young raccoon in my backyard peeking out from behind a tree in the woods.

Shelly Lannon
Clifton Springs, Ontario County

We think it might be camera shy!

—Conservationist staff

Forest Hike

I just wanted to pass along a photo of a “wee little thing” my wife and I enjoyed while hiking in Allegany State Park.

Steve Firlit
Rochester, Monroe County



A great capture! A red eft is the juvenile phase of an eastern, or red-spotted, newt. Adult red-spotted newts can be found in small waterbodies such as ponds and marshes from spring through fall; juvenile efts can be found on moist forest floors.

—Jenna Kerwin, Staff Writer

Hunting Buttons

I have a collection of my fiancée’s grandfather’s license buttons dating from 1917-1941. (I’m missing years 1922 and 1923.) Do you have any information about these buttons?

Barry L. Hogan
Maryland, Otsego County



What a wonderful collection; there is much history here! These buttons were a way for hunters and trappers to show they were licensed to take game in New York. See the article, “Sporting Licenses—From the “Good Ol’ Days” ‘til Now” in our August 2003 issue about early New York State hunting licenses and buttons. Do any of our other readers have hunting buttons like these?

—Conservationist staff



Write to us

Conservationist Letters
NYSDEC, 625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233-4502
or e-mail us at: magazine@gw.dec.state.ny.us



Back Trails

Perspectives on People and Nature

John Bulmer

Night Safari: Searching for Nightcrawlers and Summers Past

by Jenna Kerwin

We went ahead of our fathers in a row of five, almost (but not quite) in a run, wanting to be the first kid to find one. Our flashlights shook from our excitement; the torch glow broke the darkness, sending beams of light through the trees. We were young and carefree, and our bare feet squished along the fairway. The grass, wet with dew, stuck to our feet...but we didn't care. We were on a mission; we were searching for nightcrawlers.

Each summer, years ago, my three younger cousins, my older sister, and I would often search for those elusive nightcrawlers. Hunting for the slippery, slimy earthworms was a tradition. We would run across the golf course behind “Tutu and Papa’s” (our names for our grandparents) house, with nothing to keep us from exploring the night world. But it wasn’t just an excuse to stay up and run free; we were gathering bait for the following day of fishing with Papa.

On warm, sunny mornings, Papa would take us fishing at Sunset Lake (really a small pond), and we needed bait to catch pumpkinseeds (or something larger if we were lucky). Buying worms at a store was simply not an option. And forget about fishing lures and flies—that was not the way Papa learned and that was not the way our fathers learned. So, naturally, that wasn’t how we learned.

Instead, our patriarchs taught us to find our own bait. We set out on our night safaris like Kipling characters, peering between blades of grass and around bushes, looking for our skittish prey. And our prey was everywhere. If you tiptoed



The author, cousin Kelsey, cousin Kara, sister Laura, cousin Ian.

and flashed your light quick enough, you could spot dozens of them before they disappeared beneath the earth.

“There’s one! Get it!” we would whisper-shout to each other. “No, over there! Quick!” and we’d pounce onto the grass, our hands desperately reaching for the slippery, spaghetti-like creature.

When we managed to grab hold, we’d laugh and tug gently—like our dads taught us—then pull the nightcrawler from the soil and place it in our plastic pails. And when all was said and done, we *had* to compare who bagged the most worms. (This almost always resulted in our dads splitting our loot so that everyone went home with the same amount.)

Truth be told, we were probably more excited to search for our bait than to actually use it. We were squeamish kids, after all. Though there was something honest and elemental about learning to bait our *own* hooks with our *own* earthworms. With Papa guiding our nervous, little fingers, we learned more

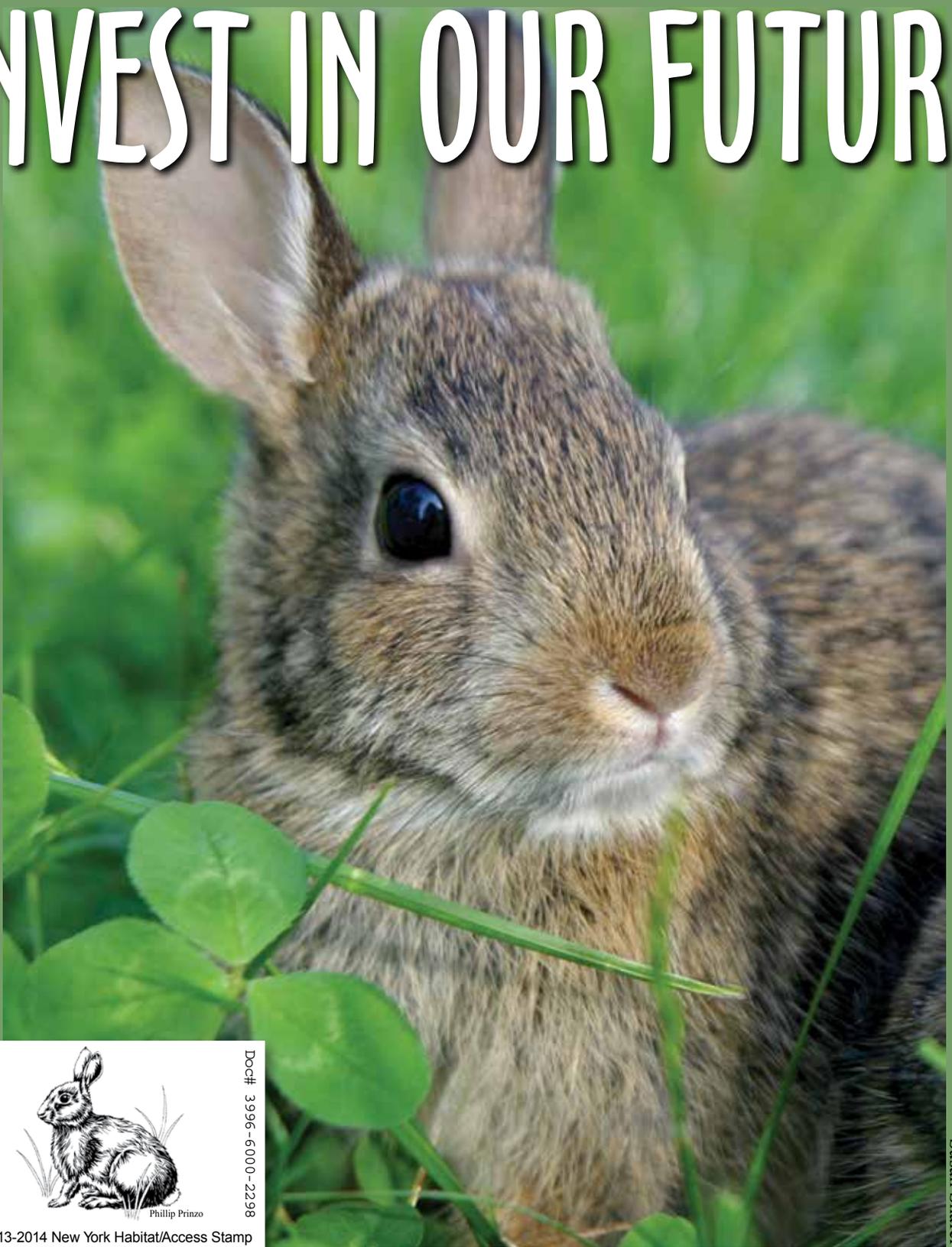
than the proper way to bait a hook; perhaps even more than how the food chain operated in Sunset Lake. We learned true life lessons.

Our fathers weren’t simply noting the delicate composition of earthworms when we tugged at them; Dad and Uncles Scott and Evan weren’t just keeping the peace when they split our loot. They were teaching us to be forthright and confident, but also to be humble and pragmatic. Papa taught us to keep things in perspective. In his own way, he taught us that the world is bigger than just five kids along the edge of a small-town pond.

So maybe it’s not just searching for nightcrawlers or (perhaps secretly for some of us) baiting our own hooks that we all enjoyed during those summers. Maybe what we really liked, and what I at least, still search for to this day, are the teachings of our fathers.

Jenna Kerwin is the staff writer for *Conservationist*.

INVEST IN OUR FUTURE



Susan Shafer



When you purchase a \$5 Habitat & Access Stamp you help open and improve land for outdoor recreation. It's a perfect way to conserve New York's wildlife heritage. All funds are deposited in the Conservation Fund's Habitat Account.

**For more information, visit your license issuing agent, or visit
www.dec.ny.gov**





See pg. 26

Gerry Lemmo

Subscribe today!
Call 1-800-678-6399

Visit online:
www.TheConservationist.org

