

BRIEFLY

Befriending Wildlife



4-H leader Dick Orth and his Tioga County club have been putting some elbow grease into helping their local bat and bluebird populations. Last year, the club—made up of nine teenaged girls—built bluebird nesting boxes and donated them to an Owego park. This past winter the club constructed bat houses and donated them to Oakley Corners State Forest in Owego. Prior to mounting the bat houses, club members and parents met with Mr. John Clancy, a senior forester with DEC, Mr. Al Snover, a Vestal resident and a DEC Adopt-A-Natural Resource volunteer steward, and Tom Harvey, another volunteer. Mr. Clancy talked about bat habitat and the importance of maintaining New York State’s wildlife. In July 2007, the club created a bat display for the public and showed it at the Tioga County Fair. It won blue and purple (Grand Champion) ribbons.

Officer Awarded



DEC Environmental Conservation Officer (ECO) Michael C. Terrell has been named the 2006 New York Officer of the Year by the Northeast Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs Association (NECLECA). NECLECA is an association of Conservation Law Enforcement agencies from 13 states.

ECO Terrell is a lifelong resident of Greene County and currently works in DEC’s Region 4 and was also recognized in 2004 by the National Wild Turkey Federation as “Wildlife Enforcement Officer of The Year,” testifying to his commitment to both wildlife law enforcement as well as his outstanding efforts in support of sportsman education and youth outreach.

Turkey Survival Study

In January 2006, DEC began a four-year wild turkey banding project designed to estimate harvest and survival rates of male wild turkeys (“gobblers”) in New York. This study is being conducted in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, researchers from Pennsylvania State University, and the National Wild Turkey Federation.



In winter 2007, DEC staff and volunteers banded 383 gobblers, far exceeding the annual statewide goal of 300 birds. During the spring season, 120 bands were recovered (109 hunter-harvest birds, 11 non-hunting mortalities). This includes bands from 41 birds that were banded during winter 2006 and 79 banded



during winter 2007. Whereas last year DEC recovered bands from about 27% of the gobblers banded (81 of 296 gobblers), this year the recovery rate dropped to about 21% (79 of 383 gobblers). In

either case, recovery rates have thus far been similar to rates observed elsewhere. If you are interested in participating in the study, please contact your regional DEC office.

Hunting Advocate Honored



DEC Environmental Conservation Officer (ECO) Thomas F. Flaitz has been named the 2006 Conservation Officer of the Year by the New York Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF). ECO Flaitz was selected by a statewide committee of New York State Environmental Conservation Police Officers and Investigators to receive this recognition. ECO

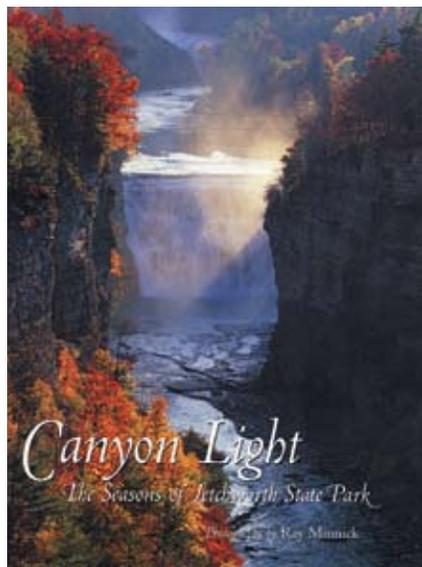
Flaitz has been active in sportsman education and the promotion of youth hunting opportunities throughout his career as an ECO.

In 1993, Officer Flaitz worked with the Orleans and Genesee County Federation of Sportsmen, local

sportsmen clubs, and individual hunters to introduce the NWTJ J.A.K.E.S. program (Juniors Acquiring Knowledge Ethics and Sportsmanship) to the two counties. In 1994, ECO Flaitz helped organize a three-day resident youth camp for bowhunters, with the first camp held at Letchworth State Park. Using this program as a template, other DEC regions now offer a similar three-day youth camp. In 2001, ECO Flaitz organized a youth turkey hunt at Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge. Thanks to his work, in 2004 the state-wide two-day youth turkey hunt became a reality.

A Walk in the Park

Many *Conservationist* readers have inquired about Ray Minnick's photography in the August 2007 issue (Unforgettable: Letchworth State Park). Those



readers are in luck. Minnick's brand-new book of photographs, *Canyon Light: The Seasons of Letchworth State Park*, is now available at regional bookstores. Published in partnership with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation,

the book is a solid choice for your coffee table. It sells for \$19.95 and weighs in with 108 colorful pages. The photographs it contains are top-notch and offer an excellent and comprehensive look at one of New York State's most attractive state parks. Visit www.burlinghambooks.com.

Rifles Allowed

A new law allows deer hunters to use rifles in three Southern Tier counties beginning this year. Governor Eliot Spitzer approved the legislation, which allows rifle use for big-game hunting in Chemung, Steuben and Yates counties. It is similar to legislation enacted in 2005 for 10 counties in central New York and the

Southern Tier. However, this measure expires in one year and would have to be renewed in 2008 by state lawmakers.

The law will be in effect for the upcoming hunting season. Regular deer season in the Southern Zone, including all of Chemung, Steuben, and Yates counties, runs from Nov. 17 to Dec. 9. Regular bear season in the Allegany Bear Range, including portions of Chemung and Steuben counties, runs from Nov. 24 to Dec. 9; the rifle authorization applies to bear hunting in those portions of Chemung and Steuben.

White-tailed Deer Study

In January 2007, DEC initiated a study to look at the breeding activity of New York State's white-tailed deer. The last statewide study of this kind was completed by



the department in 1974 by William Hesselton and Larry Jackson. DEC biologists felt it was time to repeat this work to determine if changes in habitat and human activity in the last three decades have had an impact on reproduction in our deer herd.

The study is designed to measure conception rates, the timing of breeding, and the number of fawns that are conceived per female. The easiest way to gather this information is to check road-killed deer during late winter and early spring. Wildlife staff involved in this project worked with state and local road crews who routinely remove deer that meet their demise on our highways. After these deer are collected, wildlife technicians and biologists examine the reproductive tracts of female deer, and then determine the age and note the physical condition of each animal. By counting and measuring the fetuses found in these deer, DEC can estimate the conception rates, the dates when conception occurred, and the birthing period for this year's fawns.

In 2007, 319 female deer were examined for this project. The study will conclude next year following a second season. The results of the study will be made available on DEC's website at www.dec.ny.gov and in a future issue of *Conservationist*.