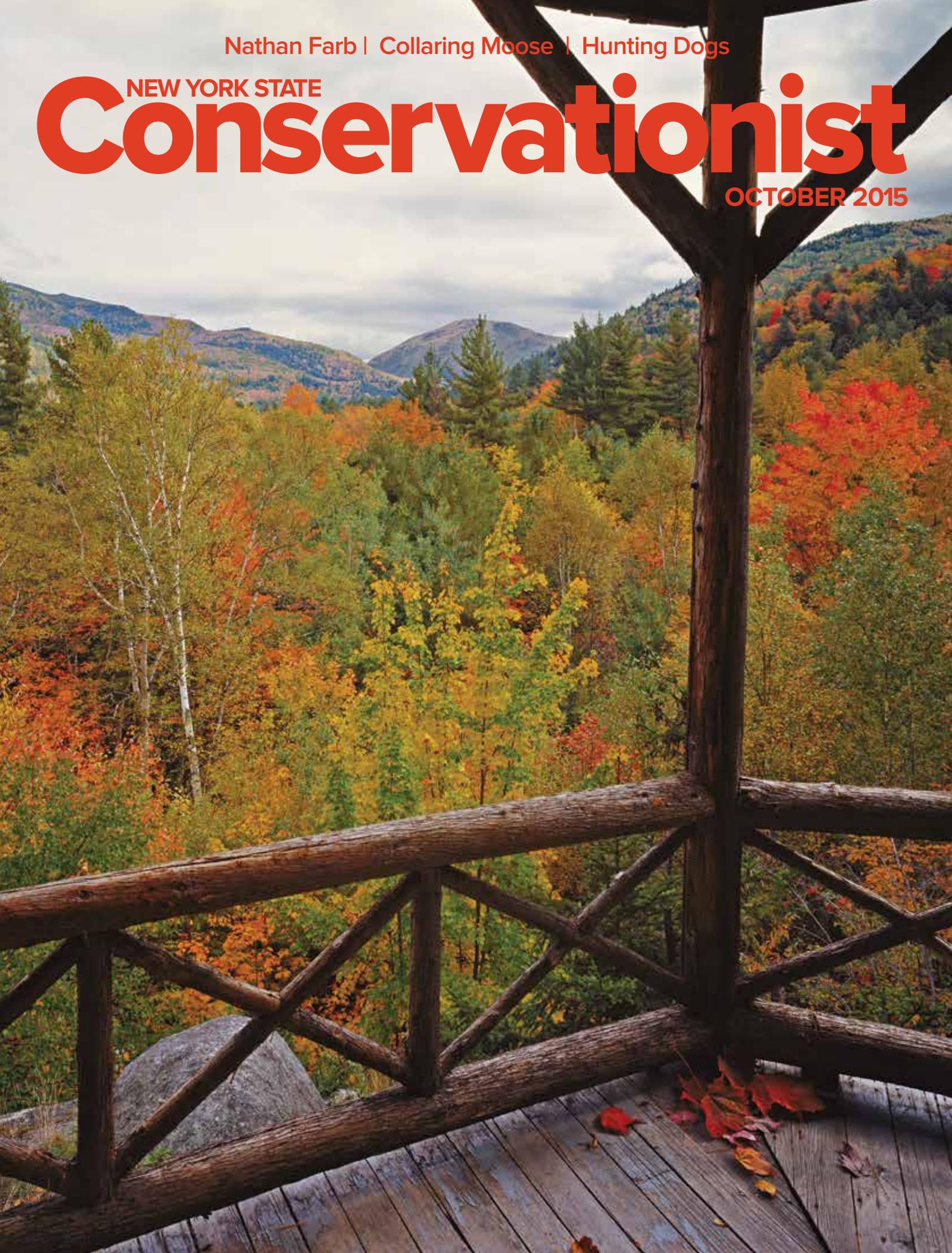


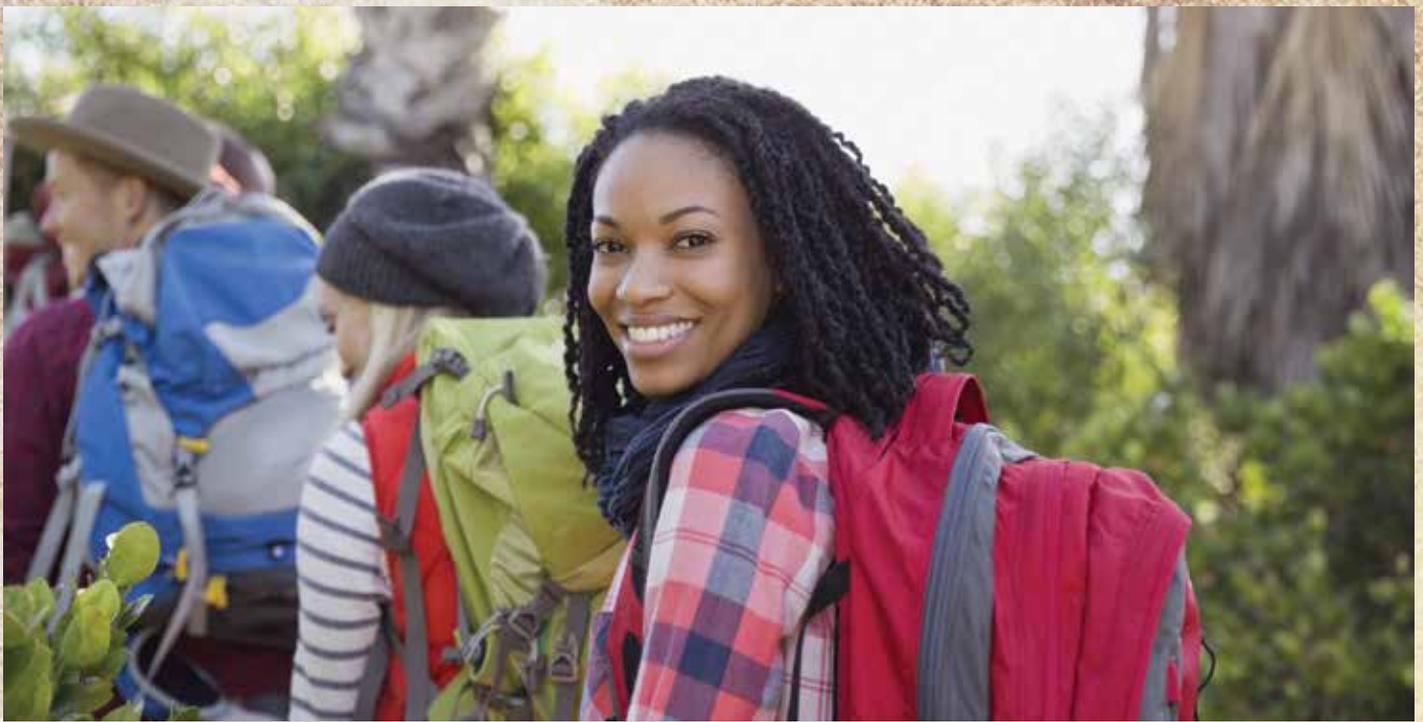
Nathan Farb | Collaring Moose | Hunting Dogs

NEW YORK STATE

# Conservationist

OCTOBER 2015





## Lark in the Park 2015! *Come Celebrate the Catskills*

Join in the fun by hiking to a Catskill fire tower, paddling on a reservoir, fishing a world-class trout stream, cycling on the Catskill Scenic Trail, taking a guided nature walk, or attending any number of scheduled cultural or social events. Lark in the Park activities are typically free of charge—and everyone is welcome!

Lark in the Park was created in 2004 to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the Catskill Park. Be sure to regularly check the Lark in the Park website at [www.catskillslark.org](http://www.catskillslark.org) for schedules and other important information, including pre-registration for some events. Follow Lark in the Park on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/CatskillsLarkInThePark](http://www.facebook.com/CatskillsLarkInThePark).

Lark in the Park is a cooperative effort between DEC, NY-NJ Trail Conference, the Catskill Mountain Club, and the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development.

**From October 3 through 12, 2015 the 12<sup>th</sup> annual Lark in the Park will offer exciting outdoor events in the Catskills.**



Robin-Lucie Kuiper



DEC photo



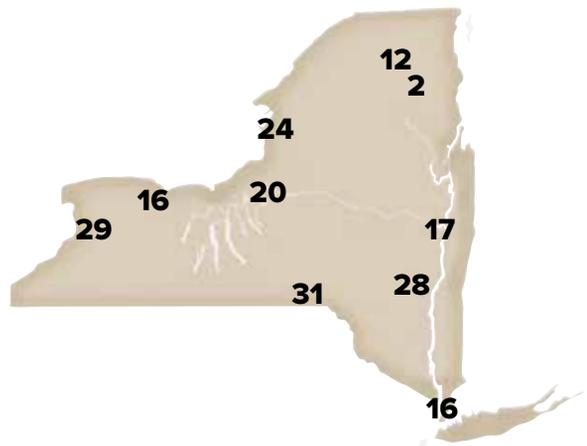
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Laurie Dirks

October 2015 Volume 70, Number 2

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**Special Insert:**  
**Conservationist**  
*Kids!*



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Weller Pond Outlet



# TRULY SEEING

*—The Adirondack landscape through the eyes of Nathan Farb*

*Text adapted from Nathan Farb's Adirondack Wilderness*

I have been looking hard at the Adirondack landscape for close to sixty years. My childhood teachers in Lake Placid would tell you that I spent too much time just hanging out at the windows with a great view of the high peaks. . . . I daydreamed of bush-whacking to places never seen by another person.

I was working as a reporter for a suburban newspaper when I bought my first camera, and I quickly felt that I had found the right medium. It seemed both a means of self-expression and a tool of persuasion that can open people's minds to your way of seeing things.

William Chapman White wrote, "As a man tramps the woods to the lake he knows he will find pines and lilies, pickerelweed, blue heron, and golden shiners as they were in the summer of 1352, 1852, as they will be in 2052 and beyond. He can stand on a rock by the shore and be in a past he could not have known, a

future he will never see." I grew up believing this implicitly, but now I wonder if we can still stand in that assumed future. I prefer to think that we can, because I believe that our psychological and spiritual well-being depends on it.

Another important change that affects how I see things is the acceleration in scientific knowledge about the universe and about the Adirondacks. It is now known that the dome of Marcy and the slides on Gothics are made of the same type of rock as that which has been found on the moon—anorthosite. . . . It just reemphasizes the connectivity of everything in our solar system, if not the universe.

In my life, the character of the Adirondacks has changed, making it more of an island within a larger sea of commercial development than ever before. Does this make it any less beautiful or romantic? I would argue that it makes it even more so.



© Nathan Farb

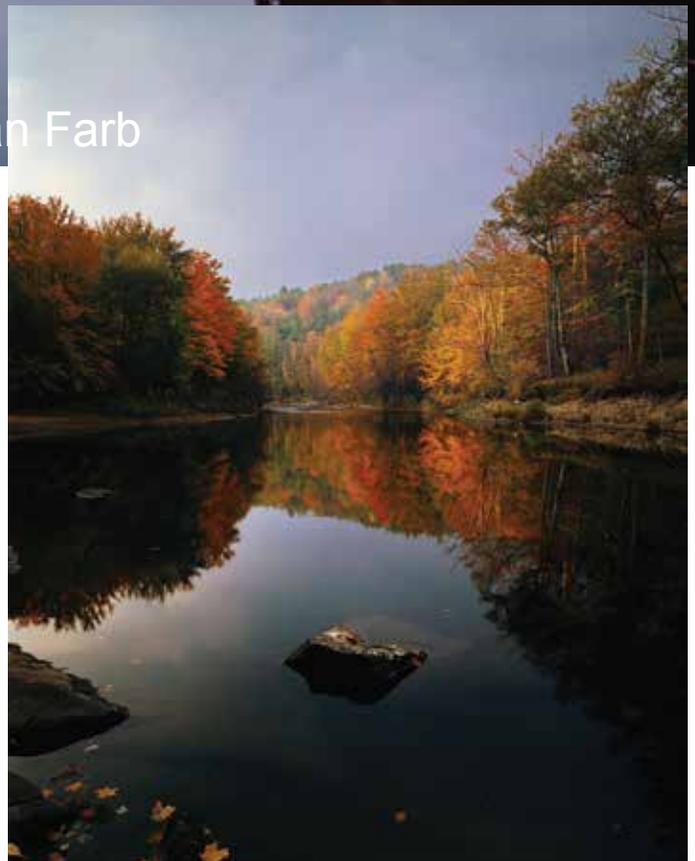
River Road, Lake Placid; West Branch of the Ausable

### Ausable River Morning (right)

This place is close to my house and I would watch it every fall. I knew there was one day each year when the light and colors were just right—usually around 6:30 in the morning—and I would trek out there for a few mornings every year. Finally, the conditions were just what I wanted and I was able to capture this image.

### Algonquin from Mt. Jo (page 4)

The orange-colored deciduous trees show an area of human impact on the forest. Birch trees and other northern hardwoods are growing in an area that was likely disturbed by fire or logging. Birch, known as a “pioneer” species, is often the first to grow after a disturbance. Young balsam fir and red spruce trees are growing under the mature birch—a patient and continually unfolding response to the changes on the landscape.



East Branch of the Ausable





© Nathan Farb

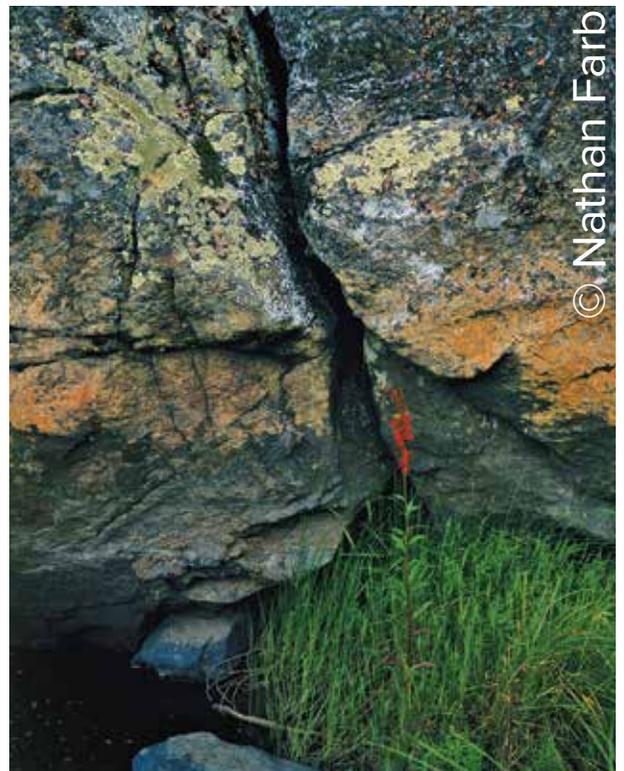
### Upper Ausable Lake with Canoe

In early August 1945, a friend of mine, Robin Pell, went walking with Henry Stimson, FDR's Secretary of War, on one of many miles of trail at the venerable Ausable Club, one of the oldest retreats in the Adirondacks. Robin voiced his worries about the ongoing war. Stimson assured the boy that the war would be over in a couple of days. In the tranquil, perhaps eerie silence of the Adirondacks, Stimson apparently confided in a child that which he would tell no adult. That hike was two days before the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

We know, sometimes in a very personal way, that this beauty cannot protect us or insulate us from the horrors of life, but still at times we embrace the illusion.

### Lichen, Rock, and Cardinal Flower

I came across this cardinal flower on the St. Regis River. The vibrant color of the flower with the rock behind it really made it stand out. Cardinal flowers tend to grow where there is a tremendous amount of iron in the water, as indicated by the coloration on this rock. This particular flower was on the Bay Pond property—a place few folks are able to see.



© Nathan Farb



## In the Studio with Nathan Farb

By Eileen Stegemann



I recently had the privilege to visit with Nathan at his studio in the Adirondacks. It's a beautiful setting—an old stone building near the Ausable River—and I instantly understand why he's set up shop here for the past 30 years. It's so peaceful.

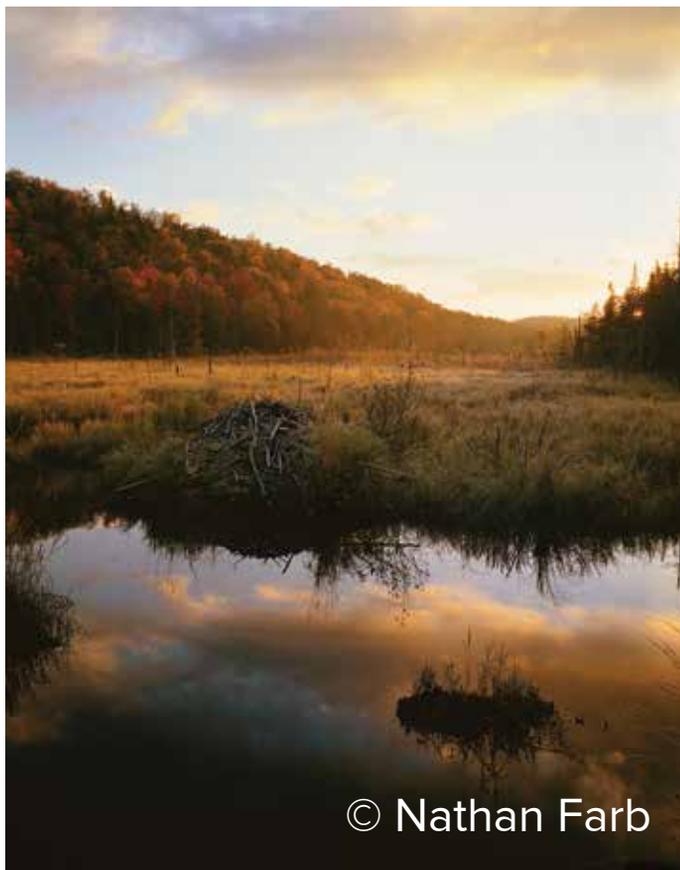
The inside of his studio surprises me. Of course there are a number of his large prints on display, but he's also got an amazing array of cutting-edge digital equipment as well. For a photographer whose body of work has largely been done using old-school equipment, I find this intriguing.

We chat for a few minutes about his photography as I admire his Adirondack images adorning the walls, then he guides me to a set of chairs set up in front of a very large state-of-the-art curved-screen TV (8 million pixels to be precise) so he can share his latest project with me. The show takes about a half-hour and I am enthralled as image after image of his famous photos (along with some that haven't been seen before) are projected on the screen. The clarity is startling and the dissolves between photographs create dream-like images that captivate you. There's so much to see. On a number of slides he zooms into a tiny section before pulling back to display the entire shot. What is most amazing is the detail—the tadpoles and leaves in the water in the foreground are just as clear and in-focus as the trees on the mountaintops in the background. It's striking and what sets his work apart.

Nathan has been working on this project for almost two years, and it shows. He explains that he plans on rolling it out to the public in the near future and we discuss the possibilities. He mentions museums, galleries and public spaces, and says he also hopes to make it available to individuals to view in their homes via Vimeo or [www.nathanfarb.com](http://www.nathanfarb.com)

On my way out, I spot his large wooden box camera. It's a gorgeous piece of equipment and I can't help but think of all the spectacular images it's captured. As I stand admiring it, Nathan shows me how the camera adjusts to give such a tremendous depth of field; the numerous large framed prints surrounding us are testament to that fact.

Driving back, I keep thinking about Nathan's newest venture. Taking some of his older work and mixing it with previously unseen images to create modern work seems like such a great idea, and it's somehow fitting to think that a whole new generation of plugged-in budding naturalists will still be able to enjoy his iconic images.

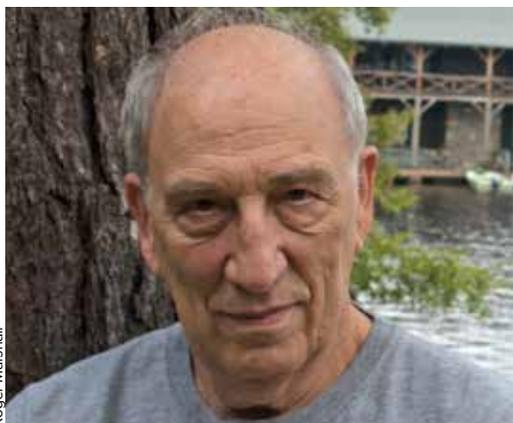


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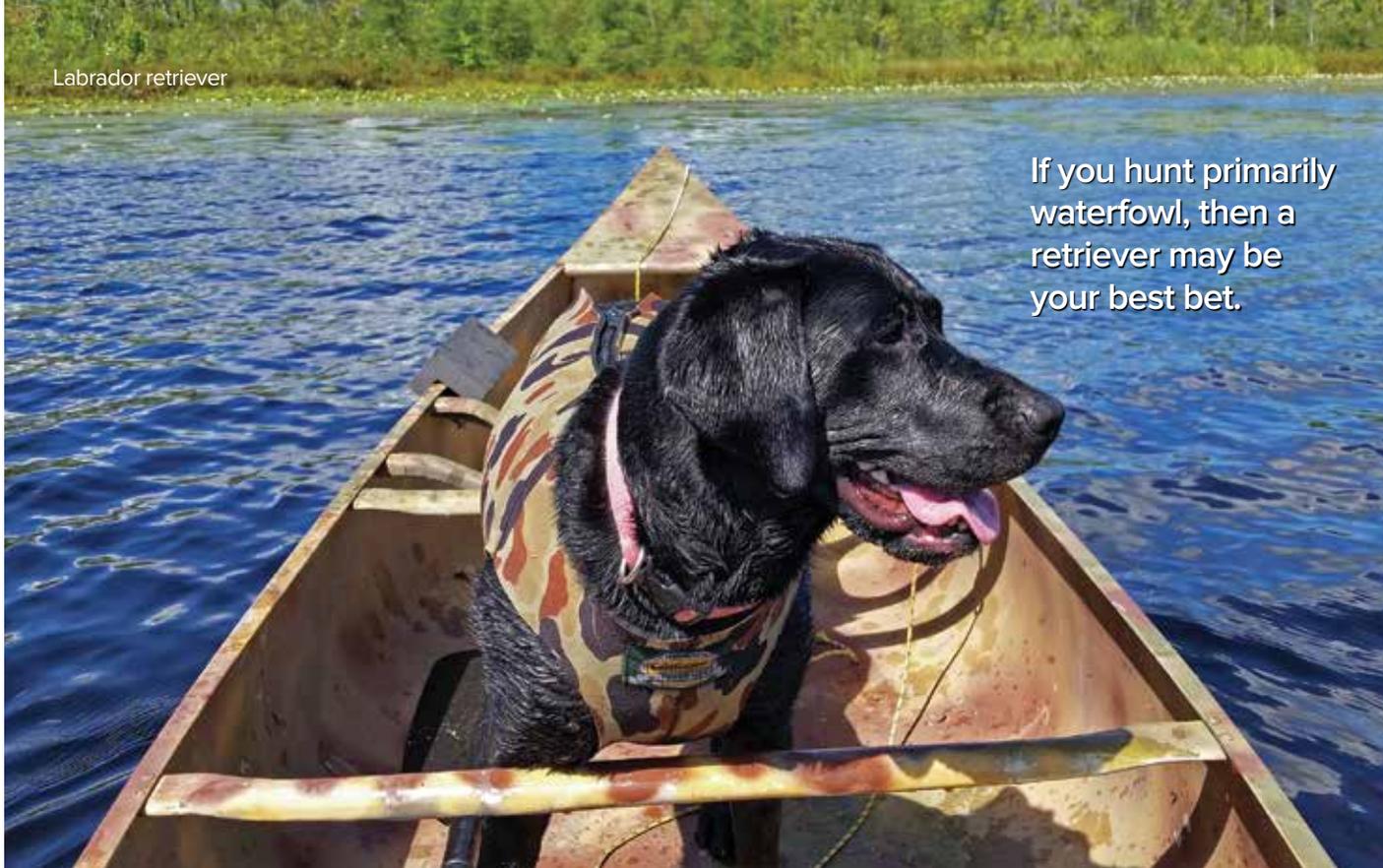
Salmon River Flow

(left) Snow Brook

Photographer **Nathan Farb** moved with his family to the Adirondacks when he was five. He's been enjoying the Adirondack landscape for nearly 70 years and has been photographing the area for the past 30 years. He has published three large-format photography books on the Adirondacks, including *The Adirondacks*, the highest selling book ever published on the region. Nathan's photographs have been shown in many museums, and are in numerous public and private collections. You can view some of Nathan's work at his website [www.nathanfarb.com](http://www.nathanfarb.com).



Roger Marshall



Kent P. Sanders

If you hunt primarily waterfowl, then a retriever may be your best bet.

# BIRD DOGS

—Popular companions for field and home

*By Timothy Post*

In his 1959 *Conservationist* article, A.W. Bromley wrote, “If we had our way, no waterfowler or upland gunner would be afield without a good dog,” and went on to say, “it is short-sighted and poor conservation to do otherwise.” Time has not changed the importance of this message. I would add that hunting upland birds or waterfowl is much more rewarding and fulfilling when done with a canine partner.

So, perhaps you have decided you’d like to get a bird dog. The first question you should ask yourself is whether you have time to adequately train the dog. Training a bird dog is fun, but time-consuming. It takes a lot of repetitive training to make a good hunting companion. If you don’t have enough time or patience, you may end up with a dog that doesn’t help you enjoy your hunting experience. If you take the time to properly train your bird dog, you can expect years of enjoyment and companionship. Many people come to love the training process as much as the actual hunting.

Where to begin? Your first decision is whether you want a pet that you can occasionally take on a hunting trip, or a hunting dog that is also a pet. If you want a pet to go hunting on occasion, you will want to pick a breed that is easier to train, and a breeder

that produces more easy-going pups. A pup that is eager to learn and easy-going will take less effort to train into a productive hunting companion.

What type of hunting do you like? If you plan to hunt primarily waterfowl, then a retriever may be your best bet. If your primary interest is hunting upland birds, then a pointing or flushing dog may best suit your needs. If you want to hunt both waterfowl and upland birds, then a retriever that will hunt and also flush might be your best choice. A pointing dog will hunt, find game birds and then stop and point (stay in position until the hunter flushes the bird). This makes it easier to flush the bird and get a good shot. A flushing dog will find a bird and cause it to fly (or flush). A flushing dog must hunt at close range and be under control since the bird must be within shooting range when flushed by the dog.

Within a breed, some individuals are bred for the show ring, distinct from those bred for hunting. Dogs bred for the show ring may not have the instincts or desire to make a good hunting dog. If you want a hunting dog, make sure that the parents that produce your pup come from good hunting lines.

Some dog breeders like to produce field trial competitors. These dogs tend to be stronger-willed with more drive and may be very challenging for a new hunting dog owner. A more dedicated hunter may find that a pup from a field trial line will be just what they want. Pick parents that competed on the game bird that you plan to hunt. There is nothing worse than having a dog that is poorly trained, has tremendous desire and cannot be controlled, except for one that does not want to hunt at all. These situations result in very poor hunting experiences and are very frustrating for the owner. Owning and hunting a bird dog should be fun; by starting with the right puppy, you will increase your chances of having a rewarding relationship.

Some of the popular hunting breeds that are highly recommended include:

## Labrador Retriever

Labs are the most popular dog in the United States. They are a great choice for waterfowl hunting since they have strong natural retrieving instincts, and a heavy coat for safe water retrieves, even in the cold. They have good size and strength to tolerate cold water and waves. A Labrador retriever is at home in a duck blind, scanning the sky and eager to burst from the blind to complete the retrieve no matter how difficult. They can also do a nice job in the uplands, quartering at close range until flushing game, and then completing the retrieve.

Labradors are intelligent, easily trained, and make great family companions as well as hunting dogs. Natural instincts and desire, along with a willingness to please and a sweet personality, make them a great choice as a companion on any hunting adventure in the blind or the field. Since they are among the more common breeds, it is easier to find a reputable breeder that can produce a good pup for hunting.

## Springer Spaniel

Springer spaniels are the best upland flushing bird dog, bar none. They are also great retrievers. They hunt with flash, energy and determination, no matter what kind of cover faces them. Their spirit, cheerfulness, and pleasing personalities make any day in the field fun, and they are the perfect companion at the end of the day. They can retrieve in the water, but lack a Lab's thick, waterproof coat. For that reason, cold-water retrieving might best be left to a Lab, but a spaniel's finer coat enhances their qualities as a wonderful house dog. Springers are medium-sized and need a fair amount of daily exercise. They are very happy dogs with expressive faces and dispositions. As a springer owner once stated: "There's no simpler pleasure than having my springer follow me around the home all day, or lie at the foot of my bed at night."

## Golden Retriever

Some consider the golden retriever the quintessential "family dog" since it is very popular with pet owners. Because many goldens are not used for hunting, finding one from good hunting stock might take a little more effort. Most are either pets or from show lines, and these should be avoided if you want a real hunting dog.

Janet Barber



Golden retrievers are affectionate, have pleasant personalities and are eager to please. If you want a pet that can occasionally hunt, look for a golden with proven hunting lines. A golden from a good hunting line will make an outstanding hunting companion and a great household member. They are good retrievers and will do a nice job in the uplands as a flushing dog when asked. Because they are smaller and lack a Lab's thick coat, they are not as well suited for cold weather water retrieves. They also lack the flash of a springer in the uplands. But as an all-around hunting companion and pet, they are fun and hard to beat.



Sheila Jweid-Webber

## English Setter

I would be willing to bet that English setters are the most written about, painted and photographed of all the sporting breeds. The prose of Burton Spiller, William Harnden Foster, Corey Ford and Colonel Harold Sheldon all bring to mind nostalgic images of stone walls, fine double-barrel guns, grouse thundering from cover, and a crackling fire with a tired English setter slumbering before it. No doubt the grouse hunter considers them the breed to have in the grouse woods.

Perry Masotti



English setters are affectionate, smart and eager to please. As such, they make great family pets, but they do best when they have adequate daily exercise. They are not typically as strong a retriever as the retrieving breeds of sporting dogs, but excel in upland coverts, especially for grouse and woodcock. If you desire to be owned by an English setter, you'd better have a sense of humor and a lot of patience as this breed can test you. When a setter "puts it all together," it is thrilling and you will have no doubt the journey was worth the price. As a wise man once stated, "There's a reason people say that a good setter will spoil you for any other dog: because it will."

## Pointer

The pointer is a true upland hunting specialist. They tend to be a bit more strong-willed and harder to handle than a setter or Brittany, and many are not great retrievers. But, they can be the most spectacular pointing dog around.

Perry Masotti



The pointer is the athlete of the pointing dog world and excels in warmer weather. They can also do fine in colder weather, except under extreme conditions. Many pointers will challenge a novice owner because of their drive and energy. If you can't keep them under control, they will get out of range in a hurry. But in the hands of a more experienced trainer, the result is often rewarding. The site of a pointer blown up on point is awe-inspiring and is rivalled only by an English setter on point.

## German Shorthaired Pointer

The German shorthaired pointer is a very good hunting dog with natural abilities. They tend to be a bit less flashy than other breeds, but they have tremendous natural ability as hunting dogs, with strong pointing instincts. Their short coat is easy to care



Perry Masotti

for and good for running in the heat, but might not be as good in cold weather. Biddable, versatile, easy to train, and excellent retrievers, many shorthairs naturally work in range of hunters on foot. If you raise a shorthair in the house, you will have a loyal friend for life.

## Brittany

The Brittany is a medium-sized dog with an eagerness to please and a pleasant personality. They are one of the better all-around pointing dogs for the average hunter and his family.



Perry Masotti

Many will lack the flash and drive of a setter, but make up for that in being easier to train and handle. They naturally hunt at closer range and are good retrievers. They are compact; often the perfect size for a house dog. Along with their winning personality, this makes them hard to beat.

## Beagle

A beagle is not really an upland bird dog, but a bunny-chaser's dream. Their great nose and persistence on the trail, and their cheerful baying as they push rabbits in circles past gunners, make them the only choice for hunting rabbits. Their scenting ability also makes them adept at finding and flushing game birds.



Charles Gardner

Beagles are independent though, and keeping one within range might be a challenge much of the time. If your primary hunting will be upland birds, you probably shouldn't choose a beagle. But if you want to hunt rabbits and on occasion hunt for game birds, a beagle might be a fine choice.

## Chesapeake Bay Retriever

The Chesapeake Bay retriever is not really a common bird dog, but is renowned for its use in big water. If your passion is to hunt sea ducks on the ocean, or waterfowl on large water bodies that can get rough, a Chesapeake is tough to beat. Strong

Perry Masotti



and powerful, with an intense desire to retrieve, they can handle many retrieving conditions other dogs would best not attempt. They can be stubborn and a challenge to train, so are not the best choice for many new dog owners. However, when used for their specialty, they are exceptional.

DEC Supervising Biologist **Tim Post** has bred, trained, competed and hunted with bird dogs for more than 40 years. He trained and bred the English setter Magic's Rocky Belleboa who won multiple championships on grouse and woodcock, and the Seminore English Setter National Cover Dog of the Year Award in 2007.



Charles Gardner



## Pup or started dog?

If you don't have the time, ability, or access to wild birds, then you should consider trying a started dog where a trainer has taught the dog the basics, and introduced the dog to birds. They will cost more up front, but in the long run you will be much better served.

# TRACKING IN THE MOUNTAINS

## —Collaring moose in New York



DEC Photo

*By Joann Sandone Reed*

I was starving by the time we pulled into the parking lot at the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) Ray Brook office. It was 6:00 a.m. on a cold January morning and I had skipped breakfast in deference to last minute preparations for what I hoped to be a long day of moose capturing and collaring in the Adirondack Mountains. Outfitted with a backpack full of warm clothes, food and freshly charged camera batteries, I was ready to document the initial phase in an unprecedented study of the status of moose in New York.

Moose, *Alces alces*, are the largest member of the deer family (Cervidae), and the largest land mammal found in New York. An impressive presence in the wild, bulls weigh from 600 to 1,200 pounds and stand up to six feet tall at the shoulder. Cows weigh from 500 to 800 pounds.

Once native to New York and found mostly in the Adirondack Mountain region, moose were extirpated before 1900 due to unregulated hunting and loss of habitat. After a 100-year absence, moose were again spotted in the Adirondacks in the late 1970s. Researchers theorize these moose immigrated here from neighboring areas and shortly established the state's breeding population. A Wildlife Conservation Society genetic study showed the majority of New York's moose came from New

England, most likely via Vermont. Many of them probably swam across Lake Champlain. Today, New York's moose population is estimated to be between 500 and 800 animals.

This day's collaring effort involved a professional crew of six specialists from Aero Tech, Inc., who are trained in live capture and collaring of large animals. The Aero Tech team uses a helicopter to locate and capture the moose. Based out of New Mexico, Aero Tech has live-captured thousands of large animals in support of conservation and management.

Prior to their arrival, however, DEC wildlife staff flew scouting missions throughout the Adirondack region to locate moose concentrations. This pre-capture scouting was essential to the success of the capture operation, and due to these reconnaissance flights, DEC provided the Aero Tech pilots with GPS coordinates to the identified areas where moose were likely to be: conservation easement lands in Franklin County.

Once in the air, team members searched the landscape for moose. The lack of leaves on the trees made it easier to spot their quarry—a large reason why this operation is conducted during the winter. When a moose was sighted, team members used a launched net or immobilizing dart to catch the large mammal. The process can be tricky, but the Aero Tech crew is very adept at it.



The moose capture team takes off.

As soon as a moose was captured, Aero Tech personnel moved in to process the animal and assess its condition. I've been a volunteer for years, but it always amazes me just how large and powerful-looking these animals are! The first moose captured that day was a large adult cow and had an estimated weight of 650 lbs.

The captured moose was immediately secured (legs bound together and blindfolded), which kept the animal on the ground, still, and calm during its work-up. The Aero Tech team fitted the moose with a GPS-equipped collar and ear tags. They also took body measurements and biological samples of blood, hair, fecal matter and collected ticks. They worked quickly to minimize the stress on the animal.

All told, the team fitted twelve moose with GPS collars in the Adirondacks that cold, January day. Cameron Stalling, vice-president and pilot for Aero Tech, commented that he thought New York's moose looked good. "As far as the Northeast is concerned, we were really surprised when we saw New York's moose," said Stalling. "They were definitely the largest, healthiest moose that we've seen so far. Even from the air, it was



Biologists use Global Positioning Systems (GPS) to remotely track collared moose and learn about their habits.

quite evident they had nice silky coats—they didn't have any hair rubbed off—and their girth and length were much bigger than moose we've seen in other states. Some of the cows we captured here were as large as the bulls we're seeing in other states," Stalling said. "That was nice to see—big, fat, healthy moose."

The specialized GPS-enabled collars take coordinates every two hours, and then transmit them to a computer server once a day. This allows biologists to track moose movements from their computer desks or cell phones. The collars are expected



Staff pack a capture net in preparation for firing.

to transmit movement signals for about two years. If the animal does not move for a certain period of time, the collar transmits a mortality signal so biologists can locate the animal. It is important to get to the moose within 24 hours of death in order to get the best data about the condition of the animal. This helps researchers determine the cause of death.

This collaring effort is part of a new multi-year study of moose in New York State. A collaborative effort among DEC, the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF), Cornell Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, and the Wildlife Conservation Society, the research will provide valuable information for conserving and managing moose in New York State. Lead researcher on the study, Dr. Paul Schuette,



Aero Tech

Staff place a sturdy GPS collar on a blindfolded moose. With luck, the collar will last up to two years.

a postdoctoral research associate at ESF, explained that there hasn't been a comprehensive survey since moose started to recolonize the area in the 1980s, and the first thing they want to do is establish a baseline population estimate for moose currently in the Adirondack region.

Data from this study will also contribute to ongoing assessments of moose across their entire southern range where there is concern over the impacts of disease, warmer and shorter winters, and reduced productivity. New York State falls at the extreme southern end of the normal range for moose in North America, which includes Montana, Minnesota and extends east to southern Maine. Scientists along this southern range are studying startling declines in moose populations. For instance, there were about 4,000 moose in northwest Minnesota in the 1980s, and today there are fewer than 100.

Researchers do not know exactly what is happening to the moose in those states yet, but thermal stress, brain worm, liver flukes, and winter ticks are all

implicated in declining moose numbers. According to climate data collected in Minnesota, February snow depth has decreased by 50 percent and there has been a five to six degree increase in the August maximum temperature in the last 60 years. These dramatic changes are not good for moose health.

Dr. Jacqueline Frair, Associate Director of ESF's Roosevelt Wild Life Station, explained, "Moose have recolonized the Adirondacks just as climate change may be degrading their habitat. The steep declines in moose numbers in Minnesota, and high burdens of winter tick and associated mortality in the Northeast, have made this assessment of Adirondack moose a high priority. Our current research will inform managers whether the population is growing or not, and the habitat and environmental factors affecting our moose numbers."

The GPS collar study is just one element of the multi-year research project. Other components of the study include aerial surveys to assess the population and composition of the moose herd,

ground surveys to assess calf production and survival, occupancy estimates from hunter surveys, moose pellet collection for DNA analysis, and habitat assessment surveys.

Fieldwork and data collection started immediately after the moose were collared last January. New York State Police, Forest Rangers, and members of the moose team conducted many aerial "sightability survey" transects over the research area to count any collared moose they could see. The day I helped on this part of the project, we flew a survey section so far north in New York that the only other occasional voices I heard on our headsets were passing pilots speaking French. We only spotted three moose during that flight...and it was considered a good day.

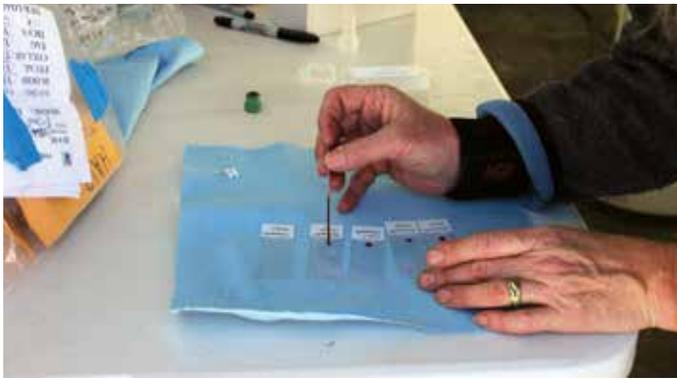
Beginning this past May, DEC staff also started walk-in surveys whereby staff use GPS coordinates to guide them to a collared moose's location. But coordinates do not guarantee a moose will be spotted; it also takes a stealthy approach. This research method is used to mainly learn about moose productivity—to see which cows have calves, and how many they have.

DEC Region 5 Wildlife Manager Edward Reed noted, "Through the use of



Aero Tech

A numbered ear tag allows biologists to identify individual moose.



Sampling blood in the field lab to assess the overall health of the moose.

GPS collars, we've already learned the herd seems productive, with a high proportion of females seen with calves.”

This is big news—New York moose are reproducing. In fact, biologists discovered during the walk-in surveys that seven of the nine collared cows delivered calves this past spring. And researchers think the other two cows were yearlings, and therefore too young to breed.

As of July 2015, eight months into the project and early in the data collection stage, a snapshot of the status of moose in

New York looks good. Dr. Krysten Schuler from Cornell University reported the preliminary results from blood drawn during the collaring indicate the twelve moose were in good health. The moose were also inspected for winter ticks. The news here was good too; only three of the moose had a few winter ticks, an almost scientifically insignificant number compared to the tens of thousands of ticks found per moose in other states.

Researchers remain hopeful this trend will continue, and that New York's moose population will remain healthy and productive. In the meantime, they'll continue to monitor these magnificent mammals.

Writer **Joann Sandone Reed** lives in Lake Placid, N.Y. She moved to the Adirondacks 29 years ago and has been a DEC volunteer ever since.

Note: This study is funded by the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937, also known as the Pittman-Robertson Act. The Act created an excise tax on firearms and ammunition that provides funds to each state to manage wildlife and their habitats. Notable species that have come back from the brink of extinction since the implementation of this Act include the bald eagle, whitetail deer, wild turkey, and wood ducks.



## Fun Fact

Moose are excellent swimmers—able to reach speeds of 6 mph in the water. They have complex snouts that feature fatty pads and muscles that close the nostrils when exposed to water pressure. This makes moose the only deer capable of feeding under water, and also allows moose to swim long distances in deep water, cool down on hot days, and avoid biting insects by submerging themselves in bodies of water.

# On Patrol

Carl Heilman II

*Real stories from Conservation Officers and Forest Rangers in the field*



## Injured Peregrine Falcon—Bronx County

ECO Jeannette Bastedo received a call about an injured “hawk” at a public school in the Bronx. When she arrived, she found a peregrine falcon with a severely injured wing. Officer Bastedo was able to secure the bird and transport it to The Wild Bird Fund, a wildlife rehab agency in New York County. The bird was determined to have broken three major bones in its wing, likely from a collision with a car or other object. Because of the severity of the injuries, it is unlikely this bird will be able to live in the wild again, and will likely be used for educational purposes.

## Too Many Bucks—Cayuga County

ECO Scott Sincebaugh received information that a man had shot four bucks during the first week of gun season and had posted pictures of each buck on Facebook. When confronted, the man admitted he shot four bucks that week but said “they were all tagged.” Officer Sincebaugh explained that while doe tags are transferrable, buck tags are not. The man said that he had two doe tags and would be happy to shoot a doe,

but all he saw were bucks, so that’s what he kept shooting. He showed the officer three buck heads in his garage, but the tag on the first one had not been completed. ECO Sincebaugh issued a total of seven tickets, and seized the deer heads and three boxes of venison as evidence.

## “Generous” Poachers—Wayne County

ECO Kevin Thomas received a call from a concerned fisherman regarding possible snagging and keeping over the limit of trout near Hughes Marina in the Town of Williamson. After two days of surveillance, Officer Thomas found a truck and fishermen matching the description he’d been given. A check revealed the men were well over their possession limits of brown trout. Upon questioning, they confessed they had caught all of the fish the day before but said they planned to give them to people in need. One even said, “I don’t like to eat fish.” Skeptical of their supposed charitable intentions, Officer Thomas issued both men tickets. The illegally obtained fish were donated to needy individuals in the county.



Contributed by ECO Lt. Liza Bobseine and Forest Ranger Capt. Stephen Scherry

## Kaaterskill Rescue—Greene County

Two people began hiking the Kaaterskill Falls Trail, continuing past “restricted area” signs and fencing placed there because of construction activity on the right side of the lower falls. By 7:00 p.m., the couple had hiked up to the amphitheater and erected a tent, planning to camp for the night. Around 2:00 a.m., they texted a friend and said they were at the top of Kaaterskill Falls and afraid because a lightning storm was moving through the area. They also were fearful after hearing animals around their tent but didn’t feel it was safe to go back the way they had come up. The friend called DEC Central Dispatch and spoke to Ranger Christine Nelson, who set out and found the duo around three hours later. They were illegally camped a couple of feet from Spruce Creek. Waiting until daylight, Ranger Nelson and the campers hiked back down and reached the trailhead by 6:30 a.m. The campers received tickets for failing to comply with DEC signs, and were arraigned at the Town of Hunter Court.

## Ask the ECO:

**Q:** What dates are my federal migratory bird hunting and conservation stamp (“Duck Stamp”) valid for?

**A:** The Duck Stamp is valid from July 1 of one year through June 30 of the following year. It is required for hunting waterfowl and may be purchased online ([www.duckstamp.com](http://www.duckstamp.com)) or by phone 1-800-852-4897. Anyone can purchase the stamp, not just hunters. Ninety-eight cents of every dollar from the sale of stamps is used to purchase wetlands.



# THE FUTURE OF FUNGI

## —Mushroom innovation at Ecovative Design

**By Jenna Kerwin**

This is a mushroom. *Coprinus comatus* (shaggy ink cap or shaggy mane), to be precise.



Frank Knight

This is kimchi fried rice with shiitake mushrooms. (It’s a Korean dish. And it’s amazing. Look it up.)



Jenna Kerwin

And this is Myco Board made from mushroom mycelium.

Wait. What? Let’s back up....



Ecovative Design

*“Myco Board stays strong and lasts long until it’s placed outside, in the dirt, to naturally decompose.”*

It was late July. *Conservationist for Kids* Editor Jeremy Taylor and I had just arrived at Ecovative Design in Green Island, N.Y., headquarters of all things “Mushroom Material.” We were on a mission to see what all this mushroom mayhem was about.

Eco- (as in “ecology”) –vative (from “innovative”) Design doesn’t believe in drilling, pumping or refining for its materials; instead, it believes in growing them. Yes, growing. And that’s exactly what happens at Ecovative’s facilities in Green Island and Troy, N.Y.

Ecovative began in 2006 as an idea; a solution to the question “What is a pressing problem in the world and how would you solve it?” That’s when cofounders Eben Bayer and Gavin McIntyre’s no-big-deal college assignment turned into a very big deal. Originally, they focused on how fungi could replace foam insulation. Over the next few years, they began more seriously experimenting with the concept.

With more research and development, Ecovative shifted its focus to mushroom packaging materials—products which are the crux of the company to this day. Ecovative’s mushroom packaging replaces existing plastic foam packaging with its innovative process. Ecovative works directly with companies to design and grow custom-fit packaging materials for the company’s products. This packaging can be tailor-made to fit anything from speakers to computers and anything in between.

Ecovative has a team of 65 engineers, scientists, developers, researchers, growers and the designers who work to intricately create a company’s product. Templates are then necessary so growers know the stipulations for what they’re creating. It may seem like a small team, but Jeremy and I quickly realized it is a dedicated team focused on passionately creating sustainable materials.

Companies like Dell, Crate and Barrel, Merck Forestry and others all look to Ecovative for this cost-competitive and safer alternative to foam packaging. Best of all, we learned (our eyes wide), after a product finally reaches a consumer, the mushroom packaging can be placed in a compost pile to naturally break down. No kidding!

A relatively new development, with which Jeremy and I were particularly impressed, is Myco Board, a super-strong material made in the same way as mushroom packaging, except that the finished product resembles something like wood. (“It even feels like wood!” Jeremy and I had both remarked, in awe.) Myco Board can be shaped and molded to whatever a company would like, such as table tops, chair backs, etc.

Gunlocke and Enjoy Handplanes are two companies that have seized upon this environmentally friendly alternative to processed wood products. Wood products can often contain harmful chemicals like formaldehyde and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Ecovative’s Myco Board doesn’t contain these chemicals. Just like mushroom packaging, too, Myco Board stays



## Grow Your Own!

Ecovative wants to see what new and interesting products you can make from its Mushroom Material. That’s why it offers a “GIY” (Grow It Yourself) kit, where you can grow your own Mushroom Material, right in your own kitchen. The idea began when Ecovative received too many requests for things they didn’t make; the market just wasn’t big enough. So, Ecovative encouraged people to grow these products themselves. With the individual GIY kits, people have developed beehives, models; and even used them for taxidermy. What will you make?

Visit <http://giy.ecovatedesign.com> to learn more.

Jenna Kerwin



A variety of mushroom packaging on display in Ecovative’s lobby.

strong and lasts long until it’s placed outside, in the dirt, to naturally decompose.

So you’re probably wondering at this point, “All this is made from the shaggy ink caps and shiitake mushrooms you mentioned earlier?” Nope. (We were wrong too; don’t feel bad.)

Mushroom Materials are made from agricultural waste such as corn stalks, seed husks (or whatever is readily



Bags of mushroom ingredients in the plant, waiting to be turned into final products..

available in the local area), and mushroom mycelium which can best be described as mushroom “roots.” Much to our dismay, Ecovative’s “myceliation team” kept the specific mushrooms it uses hush-hush, but we did learn that 510 different strains are used for various materials!

The crop waste acts as food for the mycelium. In the highly advanced Green Island and Troy factories, the ingredients go through several steps where it is mixed, packaged tightly in mini “greenhouses” to grow, molded to a company’s specifications, and then dried to stop the growing process. What’s left is Mushroom Material.

What’s great about the process is that Ecovative has built relationships with many local farmers, and works directly with them to obtain their agricultural waste. Unlike the ingredients for traditional packaging, this biomass is readily available; Ecovative only needs to ask a farmer to obtain it.

What’s in store for the future of Ecovative Design? For now, said Gavin McIntyre, they’re concentrating on exploring all uses of the Myco Board technology. If touring the Green Island plant showed Jeremy and me anything, though, it’s that Ecovative will be coming up with new and exciting environmentally friendly concepts for its Mushroom Materials before we know it.

**Jenna Kerwin** is the staff writer for *Conservationist*.

**Author’s Note:** Visit [www.ecovatedesign.com](http://www.ecovatedesign.com) to learn more about Ecovative Design and Mushroom Materials.



Ecovative’s co-founders Eben Bayer and Gavin McIntyre

## Good for the Environment; Good for the Economy

In 2012, Ecovative Design was a recipient of a NYS Environmental Excellence Award for serving as a model of innovation and sustainability with its Mushroom Material packaging. These annual DEC awards are given to businesses, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, facilities, government agencies and individuals in recognition of outstanding commitment to environmental sustainability, social responsibility and economic viability.

The environmental benefits of Ecovative’s products include replacing 196,000 cubic feet of plastic foam packaging parts and diverting that material from landfills post use, saving 77 thousand gallons of petroleum annually and diverting 686 tons of agricultural waste from landfills or incinerators on an annual basis. Ecovative demonstrates that innovative, bio-based products grown in the USA can be high-performance, ecologically sensible and have a place in the global market.



# WOODLOT WILDLIFE

—Consider wildlife habitat before you cut that dead tree

*By Cynthia Dayton*

We'd been talking about cutting down the grove of dead trees behind our house for years. Once a thriving poplar stand, they no longer pushed forth green leaves to shimmer in the breeze. They had become eyesores: mere skeletons of the tall, proud trees they once were. Despite our best intentions, other tasks kept getting in the way; the brief window of opportunity we had each spring to cut them down passed before we actually did the deed.

So there they stood, ugly and decaying, while lush goldenrod and berry briars sprang up at their feet.

Our son was the first to lobby on the dead poplars' behalf. "Just leave them," he urged, claiming they provided valuable foraging and nesting opportunities for birds and small mammals. It was shortly after he returned from college, where the forestry courses he had taken at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse had shaped his opinions of forest management.



**It was the pileated woodpecker that captured and held my interest.**

“It’s just the natural progression of the forest,” he said, noting that the decaying trees would eventually fall and add nutrients to the soil as they decomposed. And that summer, when we spotted a pileated woodpecker for the first time in the grove of dead poplars, he said, “See? If you had cut those trees down, you wouldn’t have all the woodpeckers.”

He was right. It had been ten years since the two dozen poplars had begun to die, and during that time, the bird and small mammal population in our yard grew by leaps and bounds. We have always had birds at our feeders, but now we had many more—all shapes, colors and sizes. We saw every type of woodpecker native to western New York in our backyard, and even one that was considered uncommon: the red-headed woodpecker. But it was the pileated woodpecker that captured and held my interest.

I first heard its call on an early summer morning. It announced its presence when it landed in a tree across the road, but it was cautious and remained out of sight. I remember waking up thinking a jungle bird must have escaped from the zoo and somehow ended up at our house. I soon connected the sound to the creature, and attempted to glimpse the elusive bird every time I heard its distinct call. For three years I chased the majestic creature with my camera, never quite getting close enough to

take a good picture, but often catching a glimpse of it as it flew away to another woodlot.

I finally got my wish one cold day in February 2015, when I looked out our back window to see a bright red something hanging on the feeder post. It was so close and so big—crow sized—that I didn’t recognize it at first. But then, for the next half-hour, “Woody” posed for numerous photos beneath the feeder and on the dead poplars while I snapped away. He’s been back several times since then, and now he sometimes brings a companion. We still get the camera out every time they show up in the yard.

A few years ago, we decided to become better stewards of our woodlot. Our interests had been piqued by a display at the Wyoming County Fair attributed to the New York Forest Owners Association. It was there that we signed up for a woods walk—in our own woods, mind you—with a forest volunteer. We were fortunate to be in the company of Jeff, a retired NYS Environmental Conservation Officer, as we took the morning walk. Jeff pointed out many items of interest as he made observations and offered improvements for us to consider.

“What would you use that tree for?” he asked, as he pointed to a half-broken old sugar maple in the deep part of our woods.



## Forest Management Assistance

If you would like to improve your woodland, DEC's Forest Stewardship Program can help. DEC foresters can provide expert advice and give you one-on-one technical assistance at no cost to you, including creating a forest stewardship management plan tailored to your goals. This service is free to all private, non-industrial forest landowners. There is no minimum forest acreage needed to participate in this program.

**Where to begin? Contact the DEC office that serves your county. Ask for information about the Forest Stewardship Program.**



“Firewood?” my husband offered, although neither of us were foolish enough to take on that gnarly monster.

“There are a lot better choices for firewood in your woods,” Jeff observed. He suggested the stringy old maple be left as a “wildlife tree” to give shelter to animals living deep in the woods.

The next year, we contacted DEC for assistance with woodlot management. A senior forester helped us write a forest management plan. As we walked through

the woods, he plotted our woodlot and advised us on the best practices we could employ to achieve our objectives: woodlot management for timber production, a portion reserved for maple syrup production, and wildlife habitat and recreation. He recommended no action for the stand of decaying poplars.

In fact, as the DEC forester marked sections of the woods to meet our short- and long-term management objectives, he left several hollow or dying trees lining

a deep gully. One of them, an especially large hollow poplar along the bank of the ravine, has become a den for a family of raccoons. My husband first noticed them the previous year, when the female raccoon ousted three kits in late summer. A couple of juveniles returned the following winter, intent on setting up house in the same tree. We’ve seen them several times since.

And then there’s the missing colony of honeybees that rebuffed our attempts to house them in a sturdy man-made bee hive. The swarm left for a more natural habitat and we suspect they found refuge in one of the half-dozen old hollow maples that line the sunny edge of the gully.

The progression of our woods is slow, but constant. It is always offering new foraging and shelter options for wildlife. It’s been more than a decade now since the first poplars died; only a few of their tall poles remain. But the ones that do are still a source of food and safe haven for woodpeckers, nuthatches and chickadees. And although they’ll soon return to the forest floor from which they grew, other trees stand ready to take their place.

The woodpeckers are now hammering holes in the 80-foot dead elm behind our house that succumbed to a lightning strike. If it’s anything like the poplars, it will be standing for several more years as it makes its slow descent back to the earth. All the while, insects and birds benefit from its demise.

I feel like we are the real beneficiaries of the ever-changing forest. We get to witness a small fraction of the wildlife that lives there, just by looking out our back window.

**Cynthia Dayton** lives with her husband on a small farm in western New York. They enjoy observing wildlife and living with nature.



# DESTINATION: SALMON RIVER HATCHERY

*By Fran Verdoliva  
Photos by Susan Shafer*

Each fall, thousands of anglers make a pilgrimage to the Salmon River in upstate New York to try their hand at hooking a giant Pacific salmon. The river is teeming with spawning salmon—Chinooks and cohos—that have returned to the water where they first hatched. Pulled by an unseen natal force, the fish are drawn into the mouth of the Salmon River from Lake Ontario, and head upstream where they battle running rapids, fight for space, dodge eagles and anglers, and then mate, lay eggs and die, returning their bodies to the river forever.

Many of these fish were raised in the Salmon River Hatchery, located just a few miles upstream. The hatchery serves a critical role in New York's fisheries management program. In 1968, New York State embarked upon a mission to revive and enhance Great Lakes fisheries. Extirpation of native Atlantic salmon from Lake Ontario and lake trout from both Lakes Ontario and Erie led to an overabundance of alewives, a nonnative species. Without predators, the alewives rapidly reproduced. So DEC biologists stocked Pacific salmon, steelhead and brown trout to control alewife numbers and to provide outstanding fishing opportunities.

Initially these salmonid species had to be raised in some of the 11 existing hatcheries scattered around New York. But many of these facilities were not designed for raising Pacific salmon or steelhead, and the fish had to be transported many miles before reaching their destination. Enter the Salmon River Hatchery.



An observation deck allows visitors to watch hatchery staff handle incoming salmon during the fall egg-take process

Built in 1980, Salmon River became the last and largest hatchery of the state-operated system of 12 fish hatcheries. Designed specifically to raise Pacific salmon, steelhead and brown trout, the Salmon River Hatchery became the crown jewel of the system: a modern facility able to produce all of the introduced salmonids needed to create what has become a world-class multi-million dollar sport fishery in Lakes Ontario and Erie.

Each year the Salmon River Hatchery raises as many as 1.8 million Chinook salmon, 250,000 coho salmon, 900,000 steelhead and 400,000 brown trout. Chinook salmon, coho salmon and steelhead are all developed and raised from eggs taken from wild broodstock that live to adulthood in Lake Ontario and return to the hatchery to spawn.

Raising fish at the Salmon River Hatchery is a major endeavor, employing a staff of eight when operating at full capacity. Staff are tasked with feeding, housing and caring for the fish, stocking them in more than 100 public waters in eleven counties across the Lake Ontario and Lake Erie shorelines, and maintaining the facility and grounds.

Eggs are collected during the spawning run and placed in special incubator trays which are supplied with a constant flow of water. When the eggs hatch, the emergent fry are moved to aluminum indoor start tanks where they are fed a dry diet each day. The food comes in a variety of sizes and is adjusted as needed to ensure optimum growth and development. These 56 rearing tanks must be cleaned each day to remove accumulated waste. As the fish increase in size and additional space is needed, the fish are moved to 24 large outdoor concrete raceways and four new outdoor circular tanks. Hatchery staff monitor the fish weekly to assess growth rates, and adjust feeding rates accordingly to maintain optimal production. Overall condition



A hatchery staffer fertilizes eggs (collected from ripe female salmon) with milt squeezed from male salmon.

and disease monitoring occurs daily, ensuring that the fish grow properly and stay healthy before being stocked.

When ready, the fish are stocked into Great Lakes tributaries directly from hatchery trucks, or offshore from a barge. Stocking the fish offshore enhances the survival of newly stocked fish from predation by birds and other fish. Staff also work cooperatively with angler groups to finish raising fish at designated sites around the lakes. These fish are kept in pens for approximately two to three weeks prior to stocking to improve imprinting of the fish to these selected sites, and to increase protection from predators and allow for additional growth before release.



Eggs are present at the hatchery from mid-October to November and again from mid-April to mid-May. These "eyed" eggs (fish eye visible) are close to hatching.



Every fall, salmon are drawn upstream to the hatchery to spawn in the waters where they hatched.

High quality water is a key component of raising quality fish. A large rearing facility such as the Salmon River Hatchery uses an average of 10,000 gallons of water per minute. Water comes from deep drilled wells, shallow water infiltration wells, and from Salmon River water which is piped in from the Lower Salmon River Reservoir. The optimum temperature for raising salmon and trout is low to mid 50s° F, and water temperatures from the above sources can range from 34°F to 74°F, depending on seasonal variation. As such, hatchery staff monitor the water temperature and use the above sources alone or in combination. A planned recirculation system will allow for more efficient use of the existing deep water wells (the source of the coldest and best quality water), thereby providing more consistently favorable temperatures.

The Salmon River Hatchery hosts thousands of visitors each year. Anglers, civic groups, school class field trips, bus tour groups and families come to visit from local, regional, national and international destinations. Open from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. seven days a week from April through November, the facility provides visitors an opportunity to experience the hatchery through a self-guided tour.

There is a viewing deck overlooking the confluence of a fish ladder and Beaverdam Brook that allows visitors to view the migrating salmon and trout as they enter the ladder, spawning naturally in the brook. A new aquarium at the visitor center will display fish species that inhabit the Salmon River and Lake Ontario. In addition, a new underwater video system with a large outdoor TV screen is being installed at the hatchery's fish

ladder to give visitors a better view of salmon as they migrate through the ladder.

During the annual fall Pacific salmon run, starting in September, guided interpretive tours are available, with seasonal environmental educators on hand to assist. Visitors can observe the many interpretive displays and videos in the lobby, and there is a 75-seat auditorium where guests can watch videos showing hatchery operations: steelhead egg take in the spring; the Pacific salmon run and egg take in the fall. Other videos include: fishing opportunities in the Salmon River, environmental projects in Lake Ontario and the Salmon River, and operations at the Adirondack Hatchery, which specializes in raising landlocked Atlantic salmon. Visitors who want to witness the fall Pacific salmon egg take firsthand should plan to visit the hatchery the two weeks after Columbus Day. Egg collection is done between 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. on weekdays.

On the fourth Saturday in September each year, the hatchery hosts an open house in celebration of National Hunting and Fishing Day. Many of NYS's partner agencies, conservation groups, angling organizations and DEC staff from other divisions display and present information to the public at the event. Hatchery staff give tours of the facility, including the start tank room, spawn house, outdoor rearing tanks, fish ladder and hatchery stocking trucks. This gives the public a more thorough understanding of how the facility works, a close-up view of both juvenile fish being raised and adult fish returning at this time of the year, and how fish culture contributes to the restoration of fisheries in Lake Ontario, the Salmon River and Lake Erie. The

open house is geared toward families and provides ample opportunity for parents and children to participate in and learn about outdoor recreational activities such as tying flies, learning to cast a fishing rod, boating safety, kayaking, and custom canoe building. Information is also available on stream ecology and other outdoor activities available in the area such as shooting sports, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing and ATV use. As many as 3,000 visitors attend this one-day event each year.

Even after 35 years, the Salmon River Hatchery continues to fulfill the goals and objectives of helping restore Great Lakes fisheries while enhancing the recreational fishing opportunities associated with them. As a young child in the late 1950s and 1960s, I could only dream of catching trophy-sized salmon or trout without traveling great distances and at great cost. One had to travel to the Pacific Northwest or Alaska to catch Pacific salmon or steelhead, the Maritime Provinces of Canada for Atlantic salmon, or other exotic locations such as Argentina or New Zealand for trophy brown trout.

At that time, these dreams were fulfilled only vicariously by watching television shows like “The American Sportsman.”

Today, my fellow anglers and I can catch these fish right here in our own backyards. For the cost of a fishing license, fishing tackle, and a little travel, one can catch these magnificent trophy fish. Anglers now travel from all over the world, including the places I once only dreamed of, to fish New York’s Great Lakes. This provides millions of dollars of economic activity to local businesses.

The Salmon River Hatchery is the catalyst that has produced a world-class sport fishery through stocking, providing the opportunity for returning stocked fish to reproduce naturally, and enhancing the fishery in high-quality river systems such as the Salmon River.

In short, the Salmon River Hatchery provides the opportunity for an angler’s dreams to become reality.

**Fran Verdoliva** has been the outreach coordinator at the Salmon River Hatchery for the past 25 years.



## If You Go:

The Salmon River Fish Hatchery is located on County Route 22, one mile northeast of the Village of Altmar, Oswego County. The Hatchery is open to the public from April 1<sup>st</sup> (weather permitting) until November 30<sup>th</sup>, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. daily. There is a picnic pavilion available for public use.

If you’d like to see the process of egg-taking, visit the hatchery in the two-week period following Columbus Day, between 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

For more information about the hatchery, or to arrange tours for organized groups, contact the hatchery at 315-298-5051.



Anglers from all over the country travel to the Salmon River each autumn to try their hand at hooking a trophy salmon.

## NY Works

Governor Cuomo has made \$8 million in New York Works funding available for critical improvements to DEC’s 12 fish hatcheries. Projects include replacing concrete raceways, water filters and purification systems, installing new boilers, painting hatchery buildings, and repaving. DEC also bought 16 new trucks for the busy stocking season to replace aging vehicles. These projects will help ensure that we can raise enough fish to meet conservation and recreational objectives.

Douglas Racine



## Changes to Turkey Hunting Seasons

DEC has adopted new fall turkey hunting seasons due to a declining turkey population across the state. The new fall seasons are two weeks long with a statewide season limit of one bird of either sex. Season dates vary regionally. The new structure is based on results of DEC-led research on factors that influence turkey populations and turkey management. Visit DEC's website or consult the hunting regulations guide for more information.

Robin-Lucie Kuiper



## New Fisheries Newsletter

DEC's newest electronic newsletter, the *Freshwater Fisheries Insider*, is now available. This quarterly newsletter is designed to keep New York anglers up-to-date with information on fishing in New York, and what DEC's Bureau of Fisheries is doing to improve the state's fisheries. To receive this and other electronic newsletters, visit DEC's website and sign up.

DEC photo



## Improving Public Safety at Kaaterskill Falls

DEC is working to enhance public safety and improve access to the popular Kaaterskill Falls in Greene County. Known for its spectacular views, the area is a favorite among hikers. Unfortunately, each year some visitors are injured when they leave the marked trail, attempting to view or photograph the falls (see "On Patrol" on page 16). Improvements include a new foot trail from the base of the falls to the Escarpment Trail at the top of the falls, a 300-foot spur trail to view the middle pool of the falls, a set of stone stairs to provide access to the middle pool area, a fully accessible trail that leads to an accessible viewing area and overlook platform at the top of the falls, and 10 permanent anchor points in the middle pool area to assist first responders with rescue operations. Furthermore, DEC will expand two nearby parking areas to accommodate approximately 35 cars each. The improvements are designed to reduce the number of injuries, while still allowing people to enjoy views of the falls.

## Deer Management Pilot Project

DEC wildlife managers are testing a new way to involve the public in setting deer population goals. In cooperation with Cornell University and Cooperative Extension, DEC will conduct broad public education efforts and public surveys in units 7H, 8J and 8S in the central Finger Lakes region. The new method will incorporate modern technology and gather input directly from a broad cross-section of New Yorkers. Results will be used to improve the process before it is employed in other areas. For information about DEC's deer management program, visit the Deer Management webpage on DEC's website.

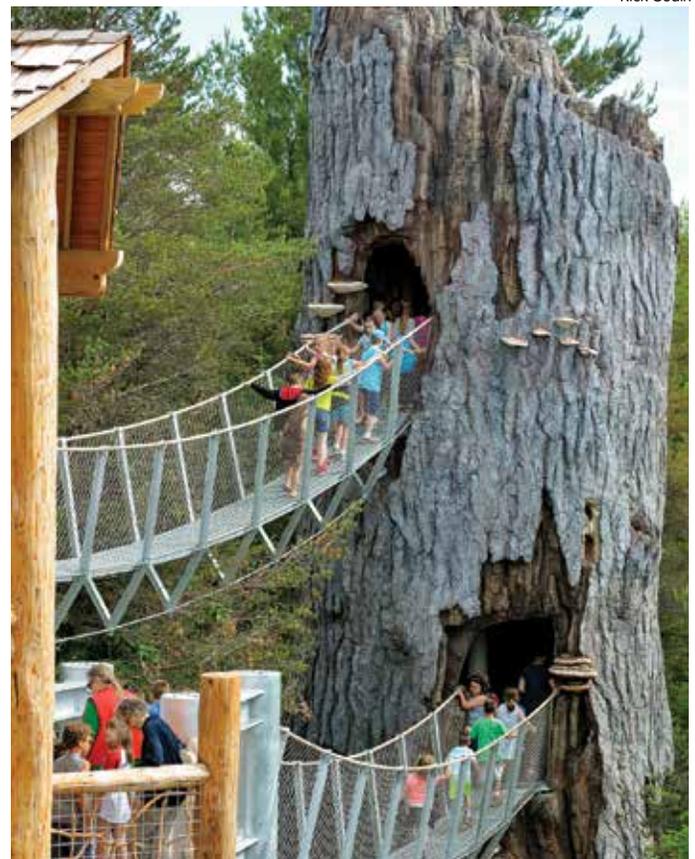


Jim Clayton

## Treetop Trails

Earlier this summer, the Wild Center in Tupper Lake opened "Wild Walk," an elevated nature trail and interactive museum high in the treetops. This "High Line of the forest" consists of a series of winding bridges and platforms up to 40 feet above the ground. It features observation platforms, an oversized eagle's nest, a human-sized spider web, and a reproduction of a massive white pine whose hollowed core can be explored via a spiral stairway. The walk is open until Columbus Day; an admission fee is charged. Visit the Wild Center's website, ([www.wildcenter.org](http://www.wildcenter.org)) for more information.

Rick Godin



Jim Clayton



## Stewart State Forest Boardwalk

In late summer, DEC announced the opening of a new, 800-foot boardwalk and trail that crosses the Great Swamp in Stewart State Forest, Orange County. The boardwalk and newly created trail are compliant with the American with Disabilities Act, and offer great views of the swamp and opportunities for wildlife watching and other forms of recreation. At the western end of the boardwalk, the new trail connects with existing trails to create a loop that hikers, bicyclists and cross-country skiers can enjoy year-round. Special care was exercised during construction. To minimize disturbance to the swamp, no heavy equipment was used; instead, materials and supplies were hand-carried or brought in by boat.



### Dancing Bears

Kevin Durkin and his daughter, Raveet, captured this great image of two black bears on their trail cam in Windham, Greene County. DEC Wildlife Biologist Jeremy Hurst commented that it looks like they've photographed a moment of tension between two adult bears that may be attempting to resolve a dispute over food or territory.



### Adirondack Surprise

Just wanted to share the surprise I got when I attempted to register at a trail head. There were around ten of them inside. Pretty safe spot from predators, I'd think!

Carolyn Peterson

*—That is an unusual surprise at a trail sign-in. Maybe they were waiting to sign in, too!*

### All in the Family

My family is a big fan of your magazine. I wanted to share the biggest fish I have ever caught with you all. I caught this salmon on my second trip to Point Breeze on Lake Ontario. I used a ¾ oz Little Cleo. We slow-smoked the fillets and shared them with the family. Delicious!  
Derek Wulf, Erie County



This is my first steelhead caught on the east pier at Point Breeze on Lake Ontario. The guy in the background has a 53" muskellunge on the line at this exact moment! It was truly incredible.  
Josh Wulf, Erie County  
*—Congratulations on your catches. The smiles on your faces tell the stories!*



### Morning Beauty

I took this image at Beaver Lake Nature Center in Baldwinsville on an October morning. Photography has been a lifelong career and passion of mine. I enjoy spending time outdoors and recording nature's beauty.

Kevin Baker

Baldwinsville, Onondaga County

*—What a great fall "mood" piece. Thanks for getting us into the autumn spirit.*

## Autumn Rest

Melissa C. Rowell of Vestal, Broome County, sent us this photo of a female fox resting after giving her kits lunch.



## Peek-a-Boo, I See You

Coming home from my daily hike, I spotted this owl at the base of an oak tree. I realized he was hunting squirrels at midday. Is it common for owls to hunt in midday, in bright sunshine?

Steve “Choo Choo” Ribustello  
Hancock, Delaware County

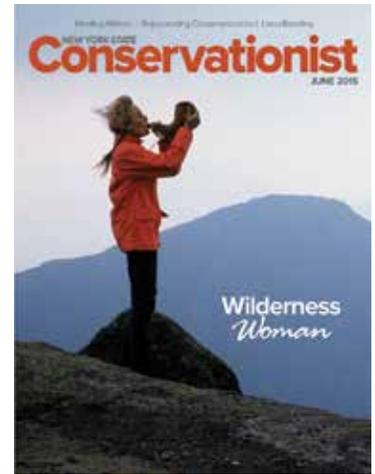


—Great photo of a great horned owl! These owls are usually nocturnal hunters, but they will occasionally make daytime hunting appearances, especially if they are hungry.

## Praise for Anne

Our article about Anne LeBastille in the June 2015 issue elicited a number of letters. Several people fondly described encounters they had with Anne, while others wrote to say how she had inspired them to either venture into the outdoors or

pursue a job in the environment. Marjory Greenberg-Vaughn of Saugerties, N.Y. recounted how she and Anne had corresponded for years and that Marjorie had made a birdhouse replica of Anne’s cabin which she gave to Anne. Anne’s friend and executrix, Leslie Surprenant, confirmed that Anne made a point of trying to personally respond to people who wrote to her. It’s clear that Anne touched a lot of lives.



## Use Caution with Mushrooms

We received a letter from Steve Rock (author of “Hunting Mushrooms” in the June 2013 Conservationist) who said he thoroughly enjoyed reading Mike Raykovicz’s Back Trails piece “Popinki” in our August issue, and wanted to remind everyone that you should never eat a wild mushroom unless an expert mycologist identifies it as an edible species.

## ASK THE BIOLOGIST

**Q:** I saw a white-tailed deer eat a dead gray squirrel in my backyard. I thought they were herbivores. Do deer eat small mammals?—Joel Plumley, Baldwinsville

**A:** Yes. Though it is rare, deer will occasionally eat animal proteins. White-tailed deer are herbivores adapted to eating a wide variety of plant materials. They have a four-chambered stomach, just like a cow, and this digestive system is well-adapted for efficiently breaking down cellulose and other plant components. That said, outdoor enthusiasts occasionally report sightings of deer eating animals, including bird eggs and nestlings they come across while browsing, and rarely fish and small mammals (e.g., squirrels). It is doubtful that animals (dead or alive) are a significant component of the diet of deer in any part of North America. Nevertheless, there must be at least a small adaptive benefit to consuming animal proteins, and it certainly does not appear to be harmful to deer.

—Gordon Batcheller, retired Chief DEC Wildlife Biologist

## Contact us!

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# BackTrails

Perspectives on People and Nature

John Bulmer

## First Deer, Second Season *by Stephanie Lorraine*

I grew up watching Tiffany Lakosky, the female star of *Crush with Lee and Tiffany* on TV. Her enthusiasm for hunting is obvious; watching her inspired me to give hunting a try.

There were two more reasons why I began hunting in my twenties. My dad played a big part: he has always been an avid hunter. He hunts deer, turkey, woodcock, pheasant and sometimes even chukar. My mom has many pictures of me posing with my dad after he took a deer or turkey.

And the second reason? I absolutely love venison! I prefer it over turkey or ham. The joke in my family is that everyone had better get to the venison before I do, or it will be gone.

Just after the 2012 hunting season had ended, I asked my dad about deer hunting. I told him I would like to try it. A couple months later, I took a hunter safety course and got my certificate.

The next fall, I poured my heart and soul into my first deer season. Dad and I hunted together nearly every

day, but I didn't get anything. My friends and family told me not to be discouraged. "You'll get a deer next year!" they said.

While I was disappointed that I didn't get a deer, hunting with Dad was a wonderful experience that I wouldn't trade for anything. Each time we go afield, he teaches me something new about nature, and I learn something about myself.

Dad and I are both members of Sauquoit Creek Fish and Game Club, which has an outdoor range. As soon as the snow melted that spring, we went there so I could hone my skill on my Remington Model Seven deer rifle. That summer I put in lots of hours at the range. I was determined to get a deer that fall.

On the fourth day of deer season, Dad and I had been in the stand for about 45 minutes when a five-point buck came from behind us, on my left side. As he got closer, I moved a little too

fast, and he began to run. I figured I had blown my chance, but he stopped running and began walking. There I was, waiting for a good shot, but I was running out of time: he was headed for some thicker brush. He FINALLY turned sideways and I could see his whole body. I quickly shifted my scope to the heart/lung area. My aim was where I wanted it, and I knew it was now or never. I took the shot, and got my very first buck!!!

My hard work had paid off. I replay that scene in my mind almost every day. Just typing this makes me smile, ear to ear. Having my dad there with me that day was very important. I wouldn't change anything, except I wish I had started hunting at a younger age. I had no idea that I would enjoy it this much!

Hunting isn't just for men anymore. My hope is that girls of all ages have the opportunity to go hunting, and once they start, to never give up. You never know who will be the next Tiffany Lakosky, or Eva Shockey!

Sometimes people ask me if I'm going to take up turkey hunting. I tell them I'd rather hunt something I'd like to cook and eat. I'll leave the turkey hunting to Dad.

I wish it was November.

**Stephanie Lorraine** lives in Sauquoit, and loves sharing her experiences with fellow and future hunters.



Stephanie's first buck—her smile says it all.

# 2014 BIG BUCK CLUB AWARDS

The New York State Big Buck Club, Inc. is a private organization that maintains records of large deer and bear taken in New York. Each year since 1972, the Big Buck Club has recognized the hunters who take the largest trophy bucks in the state. The winner for each category receives original art of his or her deer by artist Michael Barr of Corning.



**LARGEST GUN DEER**



**LARGEST BOW DEER**



Taken in: Ontario County  
Score: Net 176-0;  
Gross 182-4/8  
Typical  
Points: 12  
Taken by: Austin Avanzato



Taken in: Orange County  
Score: Net: 161-4/8;  
Gross: 164-3/8  
Typical  
Points: 10  
Taken by: Chris J. Grant

For more information: write to NYSBBC, Records Office, 147 Dog Tail Corners Rd., Wingdale, NY 12594, email [mosbuck@aol.com](mailto:mosbuck@aol.com); or visit their website at: [www.nysbigbuckclub.com](http://www.nysbigbuckclub.com)



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