



Camera Cats

I've been messing around with trail cameras and have been having a ton of fun. I thought you might enjoy some of the shots. For the past five years or so I've been lucky to share a patch of woods with a couple of bobcats during deer season. Most of the time I observe them from my tree stand while they have no idea I'm even around.

Noah Funicello
Schoharie County



Thank you for sharing such wonderful photos of bobcats. It is truly amazing what one might capture with a trail camera. It is striking that the environment in the photos appears so different from day to night. You can tell the location has not changed, however, because of the position of the log and other vegetation. Also of note—your photos show a relatively common occurrence, but one that is rarely witnessed: that animals often use the same paths to travel from place to place. Take a look at our August 2008 article “A Shot in the Dark” for similar photos and more information on trail cameras.

—Jenna Kerwin, Staff Writer

Hide and Seek



While at my parents' home in Heuvelton, I observed this screech owl in the maple tree in their backyard. I don't think you can get more camouflaged than this!

Don Morley Jr.
Ogdensburg, St.
Lawrence County

This is a great photo of a gray phase eastern screech-owl. You are lucky to have seen this bird; it is so well hidden. The dark vertical feather streaks imitate the fissures in the bark of the maple very well. New York is at the northeastern edge of this species' range, which extends through much of the eastern U.S., and a bit into Canada and Mexico. A red phase is more common on Long Island.

—Barbara Allen Loucks, DEC Research Scientist

Hungry Hawk

This photo was taken from my kitchen window. I have seen many hawks over the years, but this is the first time I witnessed one cleaning my feeder for me. It held on with one foot and stuck the other foot in the feeder until it could reach the large chunk of suet I put out the day before. It then tore the suet into smaller pieces and gobbled it down. Now every time I look out in the morning and see the feeder cleaned I will not blame it all on the squirrels.



Mrs. Irene Wilder
Oswego

This is a most interesting and unusual behavior for a red-tailed hawk. Normally, red-tails are seen soaring aloft or sitting in trees or on poles, and eat small mammals. I've been watching birds for 40 years and have never seen one on a feeder, much less eating suet at one!

—Scott Stoner, DEC Research Scientist

LETTERS

Mysterious Creature

I was driving with my wife in a rural area of Cayuga County, near Locke when I came upon a strange-looking animal crossing the road in front of us. It appeared to be a fox, but it had a red belly and black face, back and sides. To top it off, it had a ringtail like a raccoon. It ran across the road like a fox. Has anybody ever seen a fox with these markings?



Eric Dresser

Willard "Bump" Warner
Moravia, Cayuga County

You describe an interesting sight. I am finding it hard to make an educated guess on this sighting, but via the process of elimination, I suspect it may have been a gray fox. The gray fox is a small, almost cat-like animal, and they do have

coloration similar to what you described. (See the attached photo.) I am sorry I cannot be more definitive, but without a photograph to accompany your letter, it is often difficult to provide a positive identification of wildlife sightings.

—Gordon R. Batcheller, DEC Wildlife Biologist

Cicada Correction

In the letters section of the June 2010 issue, we indicated a photo of a cicada was a periodical cicada, *Magicicada spp.* We heard from a couple of readers, including Cole Gilbert of Cornell University who informed us that the one pictured is likely in the genus *Tibicen*, which includes the "dog day" cicada of late summer. Periodical cicadas are black with red eyes, and have bright orange veins in their wings. *Tibicen* cicadas emerge every year, but scientists don't know exactly how long their development requires. Some believe the development requires more than one year.



Cole also pointed out that cicadas do not, in fact, pupate. The pupal stage is only found in insects with complete metamorphosis, such as flies, bees, beetles, butterflies and moths. Insects in which the immature stages look more or less like the adults and eat the same thing do not have a pupal stage. Instead, over time, the nymphal stages or "instars" get successively larger and more adultlike in proportion.

—Conservationist staff

Bill Banaszewski



Ask the Biologist

Q: My neighbor says he no longer has to have his deer checked for chronic wasting disease (CWD). Is that true?

A: Great question—and timely, as the deer hunting season is in full swing. CWD is a rare, fatal, neurological disease found in members of the deer family. It is a transmissible disease that slowly attacks the brain of infected deer and elk, causing the animals to progressively become emaciated, display abnormal behavior and invariably results in the death of the infected animal.

New York has completed its fifth year of sampling for the detection of CWD. Despite intensive testing of wild white-tailed deer, no additional cases have been detected in the state since those initially found in the spring of 2005 in central New York.

As a result, DEC adopted new regulations this fall. The twenty-town containment area has been "decommissioned;" successful hunters no longer need to have their deer checked and can transport their harvest outside the area. New York will continue to conduct annual statewide surveillance sampling and testing of deer suspected of being infected. Restrictions on deer feeding, and on the importation of deer and elk from other states and provinces remain in effect. For a list of these areas and more information on CWD, visit DEC's website at www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7191.html.

—Chuck Dente, DEC Wildlife Biologist



Write to us

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