



Hellbender

John Ozard

## Straying Sturgeon

This August, a dead lake sturgeon measuring just over four feet in length washed ashore near Oswego on Lake Ontario. Staff from the U.S. Geological Survey's Tunison Laboratory of Aquatic Sciences were working nearby, and examined the fish. They discovered that the sturgeon carried an internal identification tag which had been implanted in 2004 by scientists from Cornell University's Biological Field Station at Shackleton Point on Oneida Lake. The tag provided information about the fish, including the fact that it had probably hatched in May 1995 as part of a DEC lake sturgeon stocking program. The sturgeon came from eggs collected in Quebec and transported by DEC staff to the Oneida Lake Fish Culture Station in Constantia. DEC hatched the eggs and reared the sturgeon at Constantia, and then stocked them in several New York waters. This is the second tagged sturgeon known to have migrated from Oneida Lake to Lake Ontario—a distance of more than 50 miles, which includes seven canal locks. The cause of this sturgeon's death is unknown; though it can't have died of old age at only 16 years old, as sturgeon have been known to live for more than 100 years in the wild. Visit [www.dec.ny.gov/animals/26035.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/26035.html) to learn more about sturgeon.

lake sturgeon



## Headstarting Hellbenders

In October 2009, Buffalo Zoo reptile and amphibian keepers began working with DEC biologist Ken Roblee to give hellbenders a helping hand. Reaching more than two feet long, hellbenders are the largest aquatic salamanders found in North America. Because of their limited distribution in New York, declining population, and susceptibility to pollution and siltation, DEC lists hellbenders as a species of "special concern." Biologists collected about 700 hellbender eggs from the Allegheny watershed, and brought them to the zoo, where more than 600 successfully hatched. The hellbenders will be reared in captivity until summer 2013, when the juveniles will be tagged and released back into the Allegheny drainage. The hellbender rearing lab is open for public viewing inside the Buffalo Zoo Reptile House. Visit the zoo's website at [www.buffalozoo.org](http://www.buffalozoo.org) for more information, and visit [www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7160.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7160.html) for more information on the eastern hellbender.

## Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease

DEC recently confirmed that approximately 100 white-tailed deer found dead in Clarkstown, Rockland County, were killed by the virus Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD). EHD is transmitted by biting midges, also known as "no-see-ums" or "punkies." Outbreaks of the virus are most common in late summer and early fall. An infected deer may appear lame or dehydrated; symptoms include hemorrhages around the mouth and swelling of the head. EHD does not affect humans. Other animals are not at risk of infection from dead deer. As a general reminder: sightings of sick or dying deer should be reported to the nearest DEC Regional Office or to an Environmental Conservation Officer. Visit [www.dec.ny.gov/animals/39767.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/39767.html) for more information about EHD.



red-tailed hawk

### Studious Red-Tail

Last May, internet observers noticed that an adult female red-tailed hawk nesting on a twelfth floor window ledge on a building at New York University had a swollen foot. Observers were concerned that a USFWS band on the bird's leg was causing the swelling. A team of DEC staff and raptor experts closely watched the bird's behavior and took a number of photographs. The bird appeared to be using her foot well to land on, bear weight, and manipulate food, and the band was not preventing blood flow from reaching the foot. Staff concluded that rather than risk injury to the hawk or its nestling in a capture attempt, they would instead continue to monitor the bird's health and take action only if necessary. Furthermore, images from the previous year demonstrated the swelling was a chronic condition, one which the bird had been successfully dealing with for some time. In June, the hatchling left the nest; in August, the adults visited for the last time. The hawk's foot was

still swollen, but she appeared to be doing fine. Be sure to visit the *New York Times* blog at <http://nyti.ms/hawk-cam> to check out "Hawk Cam" archives and to read more about this red-tailed hawk family.

### New e-Newsletter

*Leaflets* is a bi-monthly, online newsletter produced by DEC's Division of Lands and Forests, covering a wide range of topics from recreation opportunities on public land, forest health and updated regulations, to urban forestry workshops. The first two issues cover topics like reforestation projects, an expanded bike trail, giant hogweed, emerald ash borer and the state tree nursery. To learn how to subscribe, visit [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/74205.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/74205.html).

### Bird Seed Passes Test

Recent testing by the American Bird Conservancy (ABC), a not-for-profit organization that works to conserve native birds and their habitats, has shown that commercially available bird

seed is safe for wild birds. While the results may not be surprising, the tests for pesticide levels were the first of their kind, and resulted from sporadic bird seed contamination incidents. "We wanted to make sure that the isolated problem cases in the past were indeed behind us, and as far as we can tell, that is the case," said Dr. Moira McKernan, Director of ABC's Pesticides and Birds Program. ABC sampled some of the most commonly used seed, testing four different supply sources from across the country, including WalMart, Home Depot, Lowes and Target. Results showed the bird seed was either pesticide-free or contained pesticides at levels too low to threaten bird health. "The bird seed producers seem to be doing a good job of producing a safe product," Moira said. Be sure to visit [www.abc-birds.org](http://www.abc-birds.org) for more information about the study and about American Bird Conservancy.

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