



LETTERS

Compiled by Eileen Stegemann and Jenna Kerwin

Far-reaching Conservationist

We're always thrilled to hear where people find the Conservationist in their travels. Here are two recent stories. If you come across the magazine in a fun or interesting place, send us a photo. We'll try to include it in a future issue.

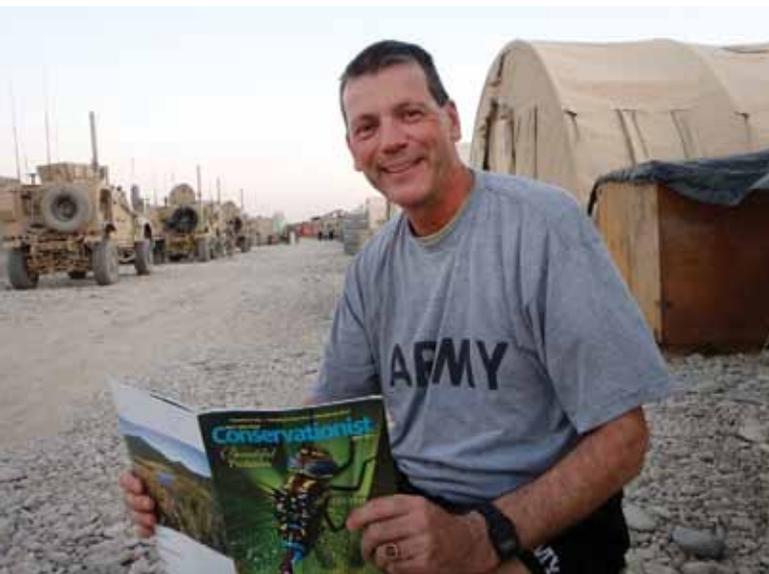


We took our dog on a hike up Black Mountain and found this inside a lean-to at Millman Pond.

Brian Frank
Albany County

My brother-in-law, longtime ECO Myles Schillinger, sent me a Conservationist subscription during my two deployments to Iraq and now to Afghanistan. Each issue reminds me how much I miss the Adirondacks. After reading, I leave the magazines in our community center, and even though most of the soldiers on my base are from Colorado, each issue quickly disappears.

LTC Paul Brisson
126th Forward Surgical Team
FOB Todd
Afghanistan



Editor's note: Why not follow Mr. Schillinger's lead and send a subscription to a service member you know? Call 1-800-678-6399 and ask about our special offer for service members.

Nap Time



During my first time venturing to Owl Woods in Braddock Bay Park near Rochester, I saw this saw-whet owl. Since it is nocturnal, I didn't expect it to have its eyes open. It was still a treat to photograph!

Laurie Dirxx
Ontario, Wayne County

Mystery Stones

Years ago, I spent time at a family friend's place located near Kirby Point on Lake Champlain. While exploring a rocky shoreline in a nearby bay, we found these unusual stones with holes in them. Can you



explain what these are and how they came to be?

Fran Pavek
Orange County

They are "concretions," formed in glacial lake deposits when minerals concentrate around some kind of nucleus (often organic material), forming a harder material than the surrounding sediment. We always called them "clay dogs." These concretions are often round and formed somewhat like pearls, by adding layer after layer around the nucleus. I have found almost solid, thin layers of this hard limey clay with holes punched through. My guess on the holes is that as the clay dogs eroded, their centers weathered more quickly, leaving the wonderfully symmetrical holes. I've always loved collecting them!

—Karin Verschoor, Geologist, DEC Lands and Forests

✉ LETTERS

Time for a Swim



I saw this critter poking around the fish/frog ponds in my yard. I thought the raccoons were responsible for my missing fish, but after looking at these photos, maybe I was wrong. Is it a fisher?

John Yanzek
West Shokan, Ulster County

Actually, it's a mink. It's in the same family (Mustelidae) as the fisher, but mink are much smaller. Both have elongate bodies, but mink appear a little thinner for their size. Mink are equally at home in water or on land. They eat small mammals, birds, fish and amphibians, so you may be right about the raccoons not being the culprits who ate your frogs and fish.
—Conservationist staff

Adirondack Lean-to

A few years back, we requested the floor plans for an original Adirondack lean-to, which we finally completed building. My dad, brother and I love the Adirondack Park. We used our own pines that we spent countless hours cutting and peeling; it was a labor of love. Thanks.

Jordan Baird
Sayre, PA



We love the photo—thanks for sharing. If others want to learn more about building an Adirondack lean-to, check out our December 2010 issue, available online at www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/conservationist.html.

—Conservationist staff

New York State Conservationist, December 2011

Ask the Forester

Q: When driving from Albany to Long Island, my travels took me along Rtes 90, 684, 84, 22 and the Taconic Parkway. I noticed the landscape is changing rather quickly; the evergreens and deciduous trees are disappearing in mounds of the invasive vine kudzu. Is there anything that can be done?

—Mary Ann Zwiebel



James Clayton

A: The landscape is indeed changing, but most of the vines you are seeing are probably not kudzu. Instead, you are probably seeing wild grape, Virginia creeper, poison ivy and Oriental bittersweet. Of these, bittersweet is the most invasive and problematic, being well-established in NY.

Roadsides are almost ideal environments for vines—disturbed forest edges with direct sunlight and physical structure (trees, fences, utility poles) on which to climb. But while you may see many invasives as you drive along, it's not all bad news, because if you look past this wall of foliage, you'll see thriving healthy forests.

As to what can be done, there's no easy answer. DEC is pursuing eradication of kudzu, but there are many more invasive plants, animals, and pathogens that are either too well-established or not destructive enough to justify the effort and expense. They then become the “new normal.” Individuals can help by choosing native species for gardens and landscaping, and buying local firewood. People can also clean aquatic weeds off their boats when moving between water bodies. If we all do our part, perhaps we can slow down the spread of invasives and the threat they pose to our native species.

—Jason Dehnam, Forest Health Specialist



Write to us

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