



### Inquisitive Mink

I photographed this mink on the shores of the St. Lawrence River, in Clayton.

Heather R. Stokes  
Accord, Ulster County

*Wow! What a great close-up of a mink! Generally solitary animals, mink are active, curious mammals. They are primarily nocturnal, searching for such food items as small mammals, fish, birds and amphibians. Their inquisitive nature and energetic behavior sometimes leads them close to people before they realize the situation and scurry off. In winter, their tracks can be seen along streams and creeks the day after a light snow. The small patch of white fur on the mink's chin distinguishes it from other members of the weasel family.*

—Conservationist staff



### Feeder Fox

I photographed this fox in our backyard. It was eating suet that had fallen from the feeder above. I opened the door to a tool room and took the photo before the fox heard the shutter and ran off.

Dave McCarthy  
Batavia, Genesee County

*Perfect timing! In winter, a red fox's diet generally consists of mice, rabbits and occasional birds. However, like many animals, red fox are opportunistic and will gladly eat an easy meal when available.*

—Conservationist staff

## Hungry Hawk

I took these photos one November morning at my home near Hammond Hill. The hawk killed one of our (not very alert) roosters. I sent the pictures to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology listserv, where there was much debate over the hawk’s identity. What do you think it is?

Megan Ludgate  
Ithaca, Tompkins County



*I consulted with several experts here at DEC, and we do not agree either! We debated whether it was a northern goshawk or the more common Cooper’s hawk. Characteristics for saying it’s a goshawk include the size of the bird compared to its prey, the proportionately large size of the bill and tail, and the presence of the white line above the eye (supercilium). Characteristics for saying it’s a Cooper’s hawk include the lack of boldness of the*

*supercilium, the lack of dark feathers under the tail, the shape of the head and bill, and barred markings (rather than spots) on the breast. We wish we could give you a definitive answer, but sometimes even “experts” do not agree!*

—Scott Stoner, DEC Research Scientist

## Friendly Hen

I want to share an experience that my hunting partner John Stansfield (a DEC ECO) and I had while hunting. We were sitting quietly when we saw this hen turkey walking toward us. We were surprised when she then lay down near us. When we started to walk away, the hen got up and followed; when we stopped, she stopped. Then we started walking again and the hen stood up, stretched her wings and walked back the way she came. Had I not seen it for myself, this is one of those “hunting stories” I would have never believed!

John R. Sandle  
Canandaigua, Ontario County

*Certainly an interesting and incredible experience! It sounds, though, like this bird may have been raised by a person and then*



*released into the wild. This would explain its tameness. It’s important for people to remember that wildlife is best left in the wild—be sure to enjoy them, but from a distance.*  
—Conservationist staff

## Ask the Biologist

**Q:** What is the difference between a pond and a lake?

**A:** While many people will tell you that lakes are generally large and deep, and ponds are small and shallow, the truth is there is no clear-cut difference between the two. In fact, if you look at the names given to the more than 16,000 New York water bodies bearing the labels lake or pond, it can be confusing. For instance, there are some very large ponds (such as 2,400-acre North Sandy Pond in Oswego County), and some very tiny lakes (such as 3-acre Central Park Lake in New York City).

That said, scientists do use certain criteria to distinguish between the two. A pond is usually a permanent, shallow, body of water or a water-filled depression. It is generally smaller than a lake and may be created naturally, or by beaver dams, or by people looking for a steady supply of water for fire protection, livestock, attracting wildlife, or backyard enjoyment.

In contrast, a lake is usually larger than ten acres in area, at least ten feet deep, and is part of a larger river system where water flows in and out. Lakes are used for drinking water and recreation, and support a great diversity of fish and wildlife.

But whether it’s a pond or lake, all these waters are enjoyed by people for a wide variety of uses. For additional information, check out the publication *Diet for a Small Lake* available at [www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/82123.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/82123.html).

—Scott Kishbaugh & Karen Stainbrook, DEC’s Division of Water



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