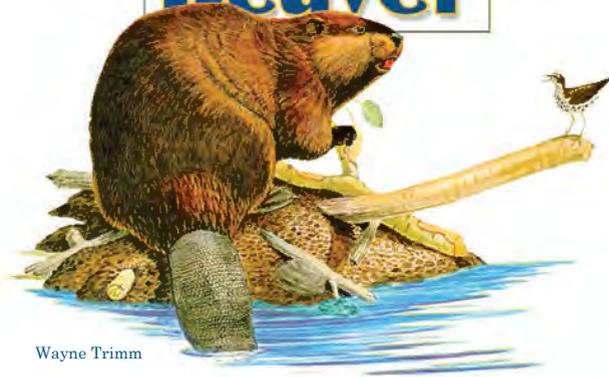


# Beaver



Wayne Trimm

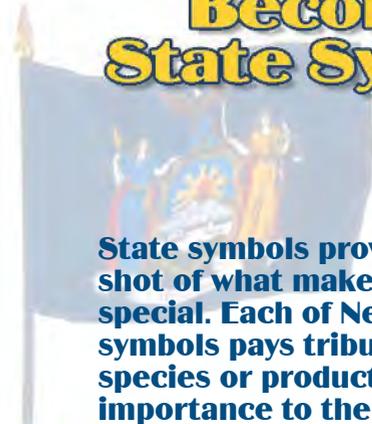
*Castor canadensis*  
Year adopted: 1975

New York's state mammal, the beaver is our largest rodent. Adult beavers average 3-3½ feet long and 30-50 pounds. Active at night, beavers build mud and stick dams and lodges on waters across the state. Lodges are usually elaborate domed structures with the entrance below the waterline to provide protection from predators. To keep the animals dry and snug, the living quarters are above the waterline. While beaver dams produce habitat for a wide variety of fish and wildlife, these dams may also cause damaging flooding.

Beavers use their large front incisors to fell trees for food and building. These teeth continue to grow throughout the animal's life, and so constant gnawing is important to keep the teeth from growing too long. Beavers eat a wide variety of plant material, such as soft, aquatic vegetation and the twigs and bark of trees. Their preferred foods are poplar, aspen, birch and willow. Highly aquatic, beavers use their broad, flat tails and webbed feet to propel them through the water. When disturbed they will slap their tail on the water's surface.

Beavers mate for life. In late March to early May, females generally give birth to four, one-pound babies, called kits.

## How Something Becomes a State Symbol



State symbols provide a snapshot of what makes a state special. Each of New York's symbols pays tribute to a species or product of great importance to the state.

State symbols are the result of a concerted effort by citizens to have a significant item recognized. To accomplish this, citizens, organizations or school children often research a particular symbol and make a request for a bill. If approved by the Legislature, the bill is enacted and there is a new state symbol.

Since 1955, New York has adopted 16 official state symbols; 11 are depicted here. The other five are: apple (fruit); milk (beverage); lilac bush (bush); apple muffin (muffin); and yogurt (snack).

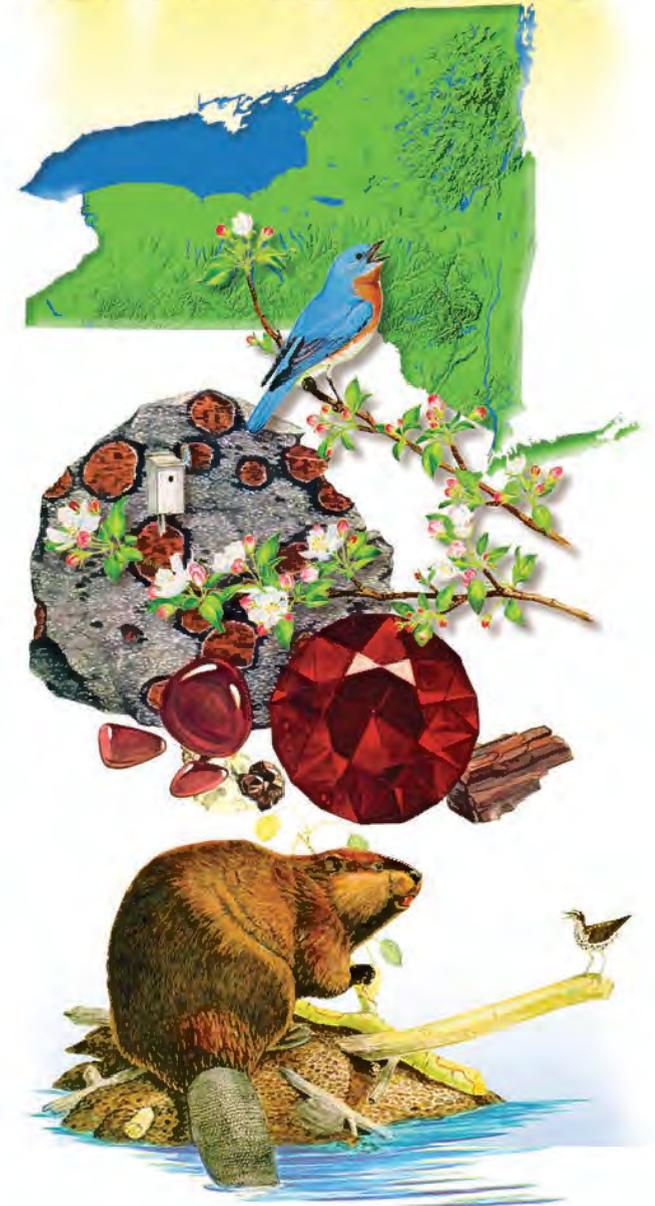
**State Motto:** New York's state motto is "Excelsior" which means "ever upward."

**State Flag:** Adopted in 1778, New York's state flag depicts the state coat of arms. The figures represent Liberty and Justice. The three-masted, square-rigged ship and Hudson River sloop signify commerce.

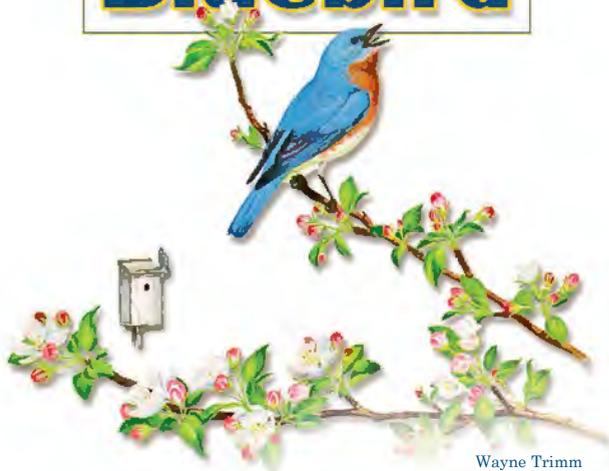


Text by Eileen Stegemann  
Layout design by Frank Herec

## NEW YORK STATE SYMBOLS



# Bluebird

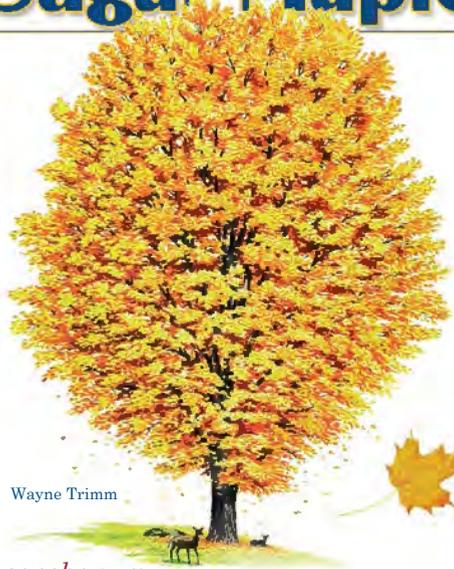


*Sialia sialis*  
Year adopted: 1970

**N**ew York's state bird, the Eastern bluebird is one of the first birds to return north in the spring. Members of the thrush family, bluebirds occur in open areas, like fields, orchards and gardens, where they dine on a variety of insects and occasionally fruit. Male bluebirds are striking with a rusty-orange breast and bright blue head, back, wings and tail. Females are duller.

Bluebirds nest in bird boxes and in holes in trees made by other birds like woodpeckers. Once considered rare, the Eastern bluebird is more common today because of factors that include the ban of the pesticide DDT, protection of open spaces, and volunteer efforts to provide nesting boxes. Many people put up special nesting boxes along fence rows for bluebirds, to supplement natural nesting cavities. Along U.S. Route 20, there is a trail of bluebird boxes that stretches nearly 400 miles.

# Sugar Maple



*Acer saccharum*  
Year adopted: 1956

**N**ew York's state tree is the sugar maple. It is a magnificent forest tree that is abundant everywhere upstate. The tree is best known for its "helicopter" seeds, the sugar and syrup made from its clear spring sap, and its brilliant red or yellow-orange fall foliage. A mature sugar maple can be 60 to 80 feet tall and have a trunk more than two feet in diameter. It makes an excellent shade tree.

Maple sugar and syrup are made from the sweet sap that flows through the trunk of the sugar maple; something the northeastern Native Americans were making before Europeans arrived. It takes 40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of maple syrup!

In addition to syrup, the sugar maple is prized for its wood. It is hard, strong, close-grained, and tough with a fine, satiny surface, and is in great demand for furniture, flooring, veneer, interior finish, and as a high-quality fuel wood.

# Brook Trout



*Salvelinus fontinalis*  
Year adopted: 1975/2006

**F**irst adopted as the state fish in 1975, the brook trout was re-adopted as the state's freshwater fish in 2006. Symbolizing pure, cold water, brook trout are found in hundreds of lakes and ponds in the Adirondack and Catskill mountains and are scattered in cool, clear streams throughout the state. Also called speckled trout, these New York natives are beautiful fish with pink or reddish spots inside blue halos on their sides.

Hatched in coldwater streams, brook trout move downstream into larger stream sections or coldwater lakes as they mature. In late summer and fall, adults move upstream to spawn in areas where waters flow through gravel and rubble. Females deposit eggs in nests (or redds). Tiny fry emerge in 50 to 100 days.

Brookies seldom live longer than five years. Although some can weigh more than eight pounds, fish weighing more than two pounds are uncommon. Wary and scrappy, they are highly popular gamefish.

**N**ew York's state gem, the garnet gets its name from the Latin word for pomegranate, *malum granatum*, because of the gems resemblance to red pomegranate seeds. With hard, sharp edges, most garnet is used as an industrial abrasive for waterjet cutting, airblasting, polishing TV glass and filtering drinking water, but occasionally gem-quality stones are found. New York produces more garnet than any other state. Crystals up to three feet long have been found here, though most measure only five inches. Most garnet is red, but it can also be green, orange, brown, yellow and purple.



Wayne Trimm

Year adopted: 1969

## Eurypterid



Frank Herec

*Eurypterus remipes*  
Year adopted: 1984

**N**ew York's state fossil is the eurypterid. A close relative of horseshoe crabs, scorpions and spiders, the eurypterid lived more than 400 million years ago. Known as water scorpions, eurypterids are thought to be among the most fearsome swimming predators of the Paleozoic Era. They were found along the bottom of the shallow, brackish sea that extended from what is now Buffalo to Schenectady and south to Poughkeepsie. The fossils are rare worldwide, and only found in a few states in America. In New York, they are locally abundant in dolostone and shale that is 400 to 415 million years old. Most eurypterid fossils measure 4 to 8 inches in length.

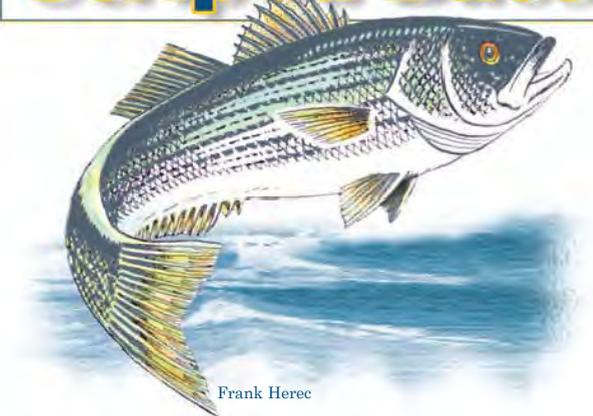
## Bay Scallop



*Argopecten irradians*  
Year adopted: 1988

**N**ew York's state shell is the bay scallop. Native to New York, bay scallops may be found in the small embayments and tributaries of Long Island Sound, as well as in the Peconic Bays. They occur in shallow water and in eelgrass beds. After hatching from eggs, bay scallops go through a free-swimming stage before attaching themselves to submerged supports via secreted stems (byssal threads). They remain there until they reach one inch wide, at which time they change into free-roaming animals that move around by rapidly opening and closing their shells. Accompanied by a jet of water, these shell flaps can move smaller scallops several feet. Bay scallops feed on phytoplankton that they take in with the water used for breathing. These scallops are a favorite of seafood enthusiasts.

## Striped Bass



Frank Herec

*Morone saxatilis*  
Year adopted: 2006

**N**ew York's state saltwater fish, striped bass are important sport and commercial fish. Their speed, power and size make them a favorite of anglers. Striped bass are big, ranging from 18 to 55 inches in length and 3 to 70 pounds in weight. Anadromous, they move from the sea to fresh-water to spawn. They generally occur around rocky areas near jetties and drop-offs. Stripers are migratory, seasonally entering New York's tidal portion of the Hudson River and coastal waters around Long Island. Smaller bass generally travel in large schools; larger bass usually move in small pods. Adult stripers are voracious feeders, primarily eating fish and invertebrates, especially crabs and squid. The Hudson River estuary is an important spawning ground for stripers.

# Ladybug



*Coccinella novemnotata* or Ladybird Beetle  
Year adopted: 1989

**T**he nine-spotted ladybird beetle (or ladybug) is New York's state insect. Brightly colored, relatively small beetles, they are generally a favorite of children. There are a number of different ladybug species, and as a group they are common throughout much of the state. Adults live two to four months. Ladybugs are highly regarded because both larvae and adults feed on pest aphids. A single ladybug can eat 100 aphids a day. It is this fact that probably accounts for the old superstition warning people that to kill a ladybug is unlucky, and to release one brings good luck.

Adult ladybugs frequently overwinter in groups, sometimes indoors where they will congregate at windows in spring and fall. Because of their beneficial qualities, several different species of ladybugs have been introduced into New York as a method of aphid control. Unfortunately, many native ladybugs (such as the nine-spotted) are now rare because of these exotic introductions.

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# Wild Rose



Wayne Trimm

*Rosa carolina*  
Year adopted: 1955

**T**he wild rose is New York's state flower. There are a number of different species that grow in various open spaces across the state. Some grow in wetlands, while others like the pasture rose are found along dry roadsides and in hedgerows. All are characterized by having five, usually pink, petals above five sharp, green sepals. Most species are armed with sharp prickles which discourage browsing by cattle and deer. Preferring full sun, this flowering plant can grow in dense colonies from roots and underground stems. As a low shrub in windbreaks or hedgerows, the wild rose enhances both the landscape and wildlife habitat. Its pink flowers bloom from May through August.

Beginning in July, the wild rose produces hips (or fruits) which often remain through the winter. Rose hips are high in vitamin C and are valuable as food for many species of birds and small mammals.

# Snapping Turtle



Jean Gawalt

*Chelydra serpentina*  
Year adopted: 2006

**N**ew York's state reptile, the snapping turtle is the state's largest freshwater turtle with some adult snappers reaching 35 pounds in weight, and having a shell length of 20 inches or more. Often seen in or near lakes, ponds, rivers, streams and marshes, they are easily identified by their distinct saw-toothed tails and jagged, saw-toothed rear edge of their shells. These turtles are known for their defensive nature and if threatened, will attack on land, but prefer to flee in water. Snappers often scavenge, but they also take live food ranging from small invertebrates to young waterfowl or small fish.

Between April and November, female snapping turtles lay 20-40 Ping-Pong-ball-size eggs in a hole in sandy soil near water. The eggs hatch in 80-90 days, and the quarter-sized young immediately head for the safety of water. Snapping turtles can live 30-40 years.