

Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources

Monthly Highlights

July, 2009

Issue Priorities:

Connect New Yorkers to Nature

I FISH NY Adds Fishing Component to Bronx YMCA

Summer Camp – Region 2 I FISH NY staff took approximately 150 Castle Hill YMCA day-campers fishing at Van Cortlandt Lake, Bronx. Prior to fishing, anglers, ranging from 8 – 12 years old, received instruction on local fish species, fishing regulations and fishing safety. This was the first time fishing for many of the participants, and several asked how they could fish again. Working with this Castle Hill, Bronx community is helping the I FISH NY program to fulfill its goal of reaching underrepresented communities.



Bureau of Fisheries

Melissa K. Cohen

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West Branch Delaware River Boat Launch Opened - A trailered boat launch on the West Branch Delaware River tailwater by Deposit was completed by the Region 4 Operations Unit in July. It involved the construction of an approximately 1,000 foot roadway, a 100 x 120 foot parking area, and a gravel ramp. The access site is expected to receive wide use by the commercial and recreational drift boat anglers in this very popular and productive wild brown trout fishery. It will also be a popular parking area for wade anglers. Hopefully, this access site will reduce conflicts between the wade and boat anglers in the 3.5 miles of river above the access site when river flows are boatable.

Bureau of Fisheries

Norman McBride

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Peconic Estuary Program and Southampton Residents Explore Reeves Bay Beach -

On Friday July 24, the Peconic Estuary Program (PEP) led a guided beach exploration around Reeves Bay, located in the western portion of the Peconic Bay system in the Town of Southampton. Reeves Bay watershed residents, civic organizations, neighbors, friends and family walked the beach early that evening with buckets, nets, and shovels in-hand and discovered natural treasures including shellfish, fish, crabs, osprey and salt marsh vegetation. PEP and participants discussed the importance of protecting Reeves Bay water quality and the habitat it provides for numerous ecologically and economically important species. The PEP has initiated several public outreach programs to engage residents in PEP's Subwatershed Management Initiative whereby PEP is partnering with the East End Towns to implement highly concentrated subwatershed-based stormwater management in ten subwatersheds throughout the Peconic Estuary to restore impaired waters and re-open closed shellfish growing areas (SGAs). Reeves Bay was once one of

the most productive shellfishing areas in New York State, but currently experiences year-round SGA closures due to polluted stormwater runoff. By combining efforts to educate and engage residents and efforts to improve structural stormwater conveyance systems, PEP anticipates making significant measurable water quality improvements.



Bureau of Marine Resources

Laura Stephenson

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[Safeguard New York's Unique Natural Assets](#)

NY Natural Heritage Program completes draft vegetation classification and mapping at the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site (ROVA). ROVA includes the Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, and Roosevelt Farm and Forest (land between the Franklin D. Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt sites).

Fifty vegetation associations occurring within the park were identified and described in detail. A map showing the locations of vegetation associations in the park was created, following the United States Geological Survey/NPS Vegetation Mapping Program protocols. These vegetation associations were also cross-walked to the US National Vegetation Classification System (USNVCS) in order to provide a regional and global context for the parks' vegetation. A dichotomous field key was developed for these vegetation associations to assist with field recognition and classification.

The following four New York natural community types found at the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site are considered significant occurrences by NY Natural Heritage: hemlock-northern hardwood forest (combination of five USNVCS hemlock-northern hardwood forest associations), oak-tulip tree forest, vernal pool, red cedar rocky summit, and freshwater tidal marsh (combination of two USNVCS freshwater tidal marsh associations).



1 Red Cedar Rocky Summit at Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site. Photo taken by Frederick Sechler.

Bureau of Habitat

Frederick Sechler

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New York Natural Heritage Program Finishes Remapping Plant Records on Long Island -NY Natural Heritage is currently working on a five-year project, with funding from NYS Department of Transportation, to improve the quality of information from Long Island in the Natural Heritage databases. Many of the locations of rare plants, rare animals, and significant natural communities on Long Island were mapped in the years before Natural Heritage and DEC used GIS on a regular basis. When NY Natural Heritage data were converted to GIS about ten years ago, many of the locations already in the database were represented in the GIS with generalized, approximate boundaries. One major piece of this project is to upgrade all these “legacy” boundaries to more precise and accurate polygons in GIS. A major milestone was reached this month, as Stephen Young and Nancy Davis-Ricci finished remapping 275 plant locations on Long Island. All but a few animal locations have also been remapped, and upgrading of natural community maps is ongoing.

Bureau of Habitat

Stephen Young

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NY Natural Heritage Screens More than 800 Project Sites so far in 2009 - The New York Natural Heritage Program screens the sites of proposed projects and actions for potential impacts on rare animals, rare plants, and significant natural communities (habitat types). During the first six months of 2009, Tara Seoane and Jean Pietrusiak have reviewed 832 project sites. 440 of those sites were reviewed in the first quarter of FY 09-10, between April 1 and June 30. Most screening requests are turned around in less than two weeks. The reports and maps we provide enhance the ability of municipalities, regulators, planners, developers, and landowners to make decisions which benefit New York’s imperiled plants and animals and its significant ecosystems, or which at least minimize deleterious impacts.

In 2009 to date, Tara Salerno has also prepared 35 GIS datasets of Natural Heritage locations for distribution to other New York state agencies, such as NYS Department of Transportation and NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historical Preservation, and to federal agencies, municipalities, non-profit conservation organizations, academic researchers, and land managers. Since the data deals with precise locations of rare plants and animals, each distribution of data is subject to a data sharing agreement that contains provisions for using and presenting the data in ways that accommodate its sensitive nature.

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Jean Pietrusiak and Tara Salerno (518) 402-8935

Adverse Environmental Impacts to be Minimized at Astoria Generating Station - The Astoria Generating Station, located in Queens along the East River, kills millions of fish of all life stages each year through the operation of its cooling water intake system. DEC recently modified Astoria’s State Pollution Discharge Elimination to require the use of “Best Technology Available,” or BTA, to minimize this adverse environmental impact. The modified State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit requires the facility owner to install variable speed pumps to reduce the volume of cooling water used

and replace the old debris screens with new fine mesh Ristroph-type intake screens to significantly increase the survival of fish impinged on the screens. This combination of technologies is expected to reduce the number of fish eggs and larvae entrained (and killed) through the station by 65 percent, and result in survival of 85 percent of impinged fish. The installation of these technologies is to be completed by the end of 2013.

Bureau of Habitat

Michael Calaban

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AquaPlow Used in Ridgebury Lake - As a ramification of the Northern Snakehead Eradication effort conducted by DEC Region 3 in 2008, all of the fish in Ridgebury Lake in the town of Wawayanda were killed. The bulk of the population in the lake consisted of common carp and approximately eight tons of carp were removed from the lake. Without the carp disturbing the lake bottom, the turbidity in the lake was drastically reduced allowing light to penetrate and support plant growth. By June of 2009, filamentous



The “AquaPlow” designed and built by Fish & Wildlife Technician Tim McNamara.

algae had spread throughout the lake and covered much of the surface. Residents around Ridgebury Lake turned to DEC to remedy the situation as, in their view, actions by DEC had caused this algae bloom. In response, a team of agency staff from the Divisions of Fish Wildlife and Marine Resources and Operations went to the lake and removed several tons of algae. The operation was expedited by the use of the newly patented McNamara AquaPlow pictured above.

Bureau of Fisheries

Larry Wilson and Tim McNamara

845-256-3070

Canandaigua Lake Standard Gang Gill Netting - Region 8 Fisheries staff set gill nets on Canandaigua Lake during the weeks of July 6 and 13. This survey was conducted in order to collect lake trout samples for the Toxic Substance Monitoring Program, collect lake trout and alewife samples for wild fish health surveillance at the USFWS Lamar Fish Health Center, and to evaluate the status of the lake trout population. Similar surveys using the same sampling methods have been conducted seven other times in the past (1978, 1982, 1985, 1998, 1999, 2002, and 2006).

A total of 197 lake trout were collected in 24 net nights for an average of 8.2 per net night. This is the highest average of lake trout collected per net since the 1985 netting. These catch rates, along with angler diary catch rates, suggest that lake trout are abundant in Canandaigua Lake.

Preliminary results suggest that less than 10% of our age one through five sample consisted of naturally recruited lake trout. Approximately 42% of our lake trout sample consisted of age one through three and age five lake trout, indicating successful stocking over the past five years (absence of stocked age four lake trout because no lake trout were

stocked in fall 2005 or spring 2006). The age five lake trout average just over legal size (15") and should start contributing to the fishery over the next few years.

Bureau of Fisheries

Peter Austerman

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Lake Ontario Fishing Boat Survey - Preliminary results for the month of June indicated both fishing effort and quality declined from levels observed during May; however, catch rates were sufficient enough to maintain a good quality fishery. Significant findings from the June survey include:

- There were an estimated 8,351 fishing boat trips, the second lowest estimated for June in the 25 year data series.
- Boats targeting trout and salmon accounted for 62% of the total June effort.
- The quality of trout and salmon fishing during June 2009 (2.2 fish per boat trip), as measured by catch rate, was 21.4% lower than the previous five-year average. Despite this lower fishing quality, the catch rates for Pacific Salmon were the seventh and eighth highest, respectively, in the 25-year data series.
- Consistent with trends observed in recent years, lake trout catch rate (0.3 fish per boat trip) remained low and was among the lowest recorded in the data series.
- There were an estimated 1,608 boat trips targeting smallmouth bass, 324 of these trips were during the pre-season catch and release period and 1,284 trips were during the traditional open season which began June 20.
- Effort during the traditional open season was the second lowest recorded and was a 57.4% decrease compared to the previous five-year average.
- Smallmouth bass catch rate during the June traditional open season period peaked in 1999 (13.1 bass per boat trip) and has declined since, with the June 2009 (2.8 bass per boat trip) rate the third lowest observed.

Bureau of Fisheries

Jana Lantry

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Another Successful Year for Canada Geese Banding in New York - DEC Waterfowl Biologists from around the State, along with a multitude of volunteers, have successfully completed another year of banding Canada geese in New York. More than **5,000** unbanded geese, plus **900** previously banded birds, were captured at over **90** locations in **40** different counties across the state. Hunter returns and other reports of banded geese received later provide information on harvest, survival and movements of local-nesting or "resident" populations of Canada geese. That information is used to help develop and evaluate management programs for geese throughout eastern North America.

Goose banding occurs during late June through mid-July when adult geese are molting their primary flight feathers and some are rearing their young. Since these newly hatched birds or "goslings" are not able to fly yet, adult birds will rarely abandon them. Family groups do tend to stay together during this time as adults seek out feeding sites like large

mowed fields or manicured lawns found chiefly in public parks, golf courses and even cemeteries. Add a source of water nearby and geese now have ideal conditions in which to raise their young.

Once DEC staff have located these flocks, the biologist in charge devises a plan to first surround the birds to prevent them from escaping, and then to “herd” the birds into a temporary holding pen. This may involve using canoes and kayaks on some of the larger water bodies, or if on land, just a lot of willing volunteers to surround the birds and then walk the birds into the waiting pen.

Once in the pen, the birds are carefully removed one at a time, checked for both the age and sex, fitted with a uniquely numbered aluminum leg band, and released. All of this information is recorded along with the banding location and the day’s date. If any of the geese were already banded, that information is recorded as well. Previously banded bird whose band number is illegible, the band is replaced as well.

All banding data is collected and forwarded to Central Office where it is entered into a specialized computer program called Band Manager, where it is checked for completeness and accuracy. Once satisfied, this data is then forwarded to the United States Geological Survey, Office of Wildlife Research Center, Bird Banding Laboratory in Patuxent, MD.

Individuals who recover a banded goose or any other banded bird, are encouraged to contact the Banding Lab @ 1-800-327- BAND (2263) or by going on line to their website WWW.REPORTBAND.GOV

Bureau of Wildlife

Tom Sutter

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Moose Relocation, Saratoga County - A yearling cow moose was reported roaming the streets of Saratoga Springs during the early morning hours of June 19. City police were able to guide the moose into the executive parking area of Saratoga Raceway and closed the gate containing the moose inside a six-foot high metal fence.

Local Law Enforcement and DEC ECO’s controlled the gathering crowds and kept them away from the moose until the Region 5 immobilization crew arrived. With the gathering crowd kept at a reasonable distance by Law Enforcement personnel, the situation was very conducive to a smooth immobilization effort.

The moose was immobilized with two darts, tagged with plastic ear tags, and monitored for respiration, temperature, and heartbeat. After about four hours, the animal arouse and stood up in the trailer, causing a mad scramble to get staff out of the trailer and the doors closed. The moose remained standing, so staff cleaned up the area and left for the release site.

The release site was on Fox Hill Road near Lake Desolation in the Town of Edinburg, Saratoga County, where there is a known population of moose. On release the animal appeared to be in very good condition and walked down the shoulder of the road a short

distance, then went into the woods north of the road. A volunteer returned to the area about two hours after the release and observed the moose cross the road going south, eat some vegetation, and proceed into the woods.



A yearling cow moose, relocated from the Saratoga Raceway, shortly after its release near Lake Desolation.

Bureau of Wildlife

Ed Reed

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Bat Monitoring Effort Begun - A new survey protocol to track changes in bat populations statewide was launched in June. Its purpose is to generate an index to abundance for the majority of NY's bat species, especially those that are not addressed well by winter hibernation surveys. The methodology consists of attaching a device that records bats' echolocation calls to the roof of a vehicle and driving a pre-established route at a speed of 20 mph, continuously recording bats along the way. Surveyors are guided by GPS, which also continuously records their location.

Despite unfavorable weather for much of the month-long survey period, 80 staff, most of whom are citizen scientist volunteers, drove a total of 1900 miles on over 50 routes all across the State of NY.

Originally conceived as a way to track the abundance of migratory bats, about which little is known, the project has taken on new significance since the appearance of White-nose syndrome and the devastating effects this affliction has had on some bat species. The effort is funded for at least three years by the State Wildlife Grants program, but it is hoped that it can be continued indefinitely, providing a view on bat populations that is unavailable through other means.

Bureau of Wildlife

Carl Herzog

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Peregrine Falcons - Peregrine falcons had a great 2009 season. Six breeding pairs have now been documented in Western New York, with three new pairs added this year alone at the Central Terminal, the South Grand Island Bridge, and the University of Buffalo. All six pairs are known to have bred successfully this year. The Statler Tower chicks were the first to fledge, and three were known to have survived. All four chicks from the U.B. Heating Plant fledged successfully after careful monitoring by DEC and UB staff. Fledglings are present in the Niagara Gorge and can be seen chasing each other and harassing the gulls. We also had a surprise with the reappearance of the previous male resident peregrine from the Statler Towers. He vanished a year ago, and was recovered at a home in Amherst. He was rescued by DEC wildlife staff, taken to the SPCA, and was

found to have a broken femur. He went through rehabilitation for several weeks only to succumb to respiratory distress and was euthanized after three weeks in captivity. His presence accentuates the importance of bird banding, since through his band records, we learned he was 20 years old, one of the oldest known wild peregrines.



Niagara Gorge Fledgling at University of Buffalo



Peregrine fledglings at the new nest box

Bureau of Wildlife

Connie Adams

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Terns - Common Terns had a difficult breeding season on Lake Erie, and the Niagara River, which was believed to be due to cold weather, and rough winds which made foraging for prey fish (emerald shiners) difficult. Additionally, the fireworks displays near tern colonies prove to be another hazard terns face each year. DEC has worked closely with the cities of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda to minimize impact of fireworks to the terns nesting in the Niagara River. Biologist Adams spent the 4th of July evening observing the response of Common Terns which nest on the Niagara River water intakes, to the nearby fireworks display in the Tonawandas. The adult terns were visibly disturbed initially by the intense boat traffic that passes and congregates around the water intakes where they nest. After circling for several minutes, the adult terns abandoned the nest site and had not returned by 11 pm at which time observations were concluded. Few fledgling terns were present on either water intake prior to the start of fireworks.



Common Tern on nest, with three egg clutch nearby, and nest shelter
Photo: Lee Harper

Bureau of Wildlife

Connie Adams

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Fishing for Summer Flounder Resumes - Part Two of the recreational season for summer flounder began on July 2. The season reopened after a brief closure designed to reduce fishing mortality so as to keep New York from exceeding its harvest target for 2009. Extreme measures are necessary in order to comply with the Interstate Fishery

Management Plan for summer flounder, which requires that coastal states rebuild the stocks by 2013. The latest stock assessment review shows a strong year class in 2008 will help propel the stock toward rebuilt status in 2012. Severe economic loss has led to mixed feelings about the results of the rebuilding effort, which appears to have sacrificed much of the industry infrastructure in order to achieve the required objectives. Many commercial entities have moved on to other business or left the state in order to sustain themselves in the industry.

Foster Green and Healthy Communities

Report on Radiation Effects Completed—The Ecotoxicology and Standards Unit completed the first draft of an assessment of the risks of ionizing radiation to fish and wildlife. This project began in the fall of 2008. The Bureau of Hazardous Waste and Radiation Management requested the assistance of the Bureau of Habitat in responding to questions and concerns raised by the State Legislature regarding the risks to fish and wildlife from ionizing radiation. In recent years, the ecological risks from ionizing radiation have been a subject of great interest by both the United States Department of Energy, the European Union, and other international agencies as well. The Department of Energy has developed standards of protection for terrestrial animals, terrestrial plants, and aquatic animals. The standards are designed to protect populations of species, but not necessarily every individual animal from harmful effects of radiation. The radiation risk assessment document reviews the literature of the effects of radiation to plants and animals, and the regulatory approaches taken by different national and international agencies to protect ecological resources. The document proposes to integrate Department of Energy standards of protection with European Union predicted no effect values. The combined standard would be used to identify different zones of risk surrounding the site of an accidental spill or release of radioactive material. The document is currently undergoing internal review.

Bureau of Habitat

Tim Sinnott

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Organizational Priorities:

Partnerships and the Public

Region 3 Habitat Biologist Brian Drumm Gives Presentation about State Regulated Wetlands at Workshop for Conservation Advisory Council (C.A.C.) Members from Westchester, Putnam and Dutchess Counties - The wetlands workshop for C.A.C. members was held at Teatown Lake Reservation in Ossining, Westchester County. Approximately forty attendees spent a full day learning about the characteristics, functions, and benefits of wetlands and how the myriad of regulations from the federal, state, and in many cases local governments, protect wetlands and the water resources of their communities. Brian Drumm's presentation focused on Article 24 regulatory maps, delineations, validations and the permitting process. The question and answer period was dominated by questions of why DEC would issue any permit for work within the regulated area and explanations about the standards for permit issuance. Mr. Drumm left

the meeting after being asked if he thought that Dow Chemical was genetically modifying and releasing cockroaches to be attracted to the bait that they use in their traps.

Bureau of Habitat

Brian Drumm

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Maintaining Success: Paddle the River, 2009 - On July 11, under bright blue sunny skies, volunteers paddled approximately four miles of the Peconic River on a quest to find and remove the floating invasive plant, *Ludwigia peploides*. As colleagues, friends, and families carefully searched the River, it quickly became apparent that the hard work was well in the past. 2009 marked the fourth successful year of the PEP's *Ludwigia* monitoring and eradication program. The July 11 event only removed three cubic yards; nearly 93% less than what had typically been removed in a typical day while the invasive ran rampant just a few years ago. Since 2006, the Peconic Estuary Program has held 12 removal events at which 397 volunteers spent 2140 hours removing a total of 129 cubic yards of *Ludwigia* from the Peconic River. Minor maintenance and monitoring is still necessary. PEP will be holding its 13th event on Saturday, August 8 to ensure continued maintenance.

Bureau of Marine Resources

Laura Stephenson

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Climate Ready Estuaries – The NY Long Island Sound Study Coordinator traveled to Washington, D.C. with a representative from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection to attend the first ever EPA Climate Ready Estuaries (CRE) Partner Workshop. The Long Island Sound Study (LISS), a program DEC is a partner in, received two grant awards through the second year of the CRE program. The CRE Program is a fairly new initiative of the EPA's National Estuaries Program (NEP) designed to encourage and assist the 28 NEPs, of which LISS is one, to plan and adapt to climate change impacts.

The CRE Partner Workshop brought together representatives of the NEPs that received awards last year and the new recipients this year as well as the EPA. Past recipients described their lessons learned and offered insight to both the new recipients and the EPA personnel overseeing this effort. In discussions over the course of the two-day meeting, it was evident participants had the same concerns including a lack of funding for initiatives, not enough information about what will change, and not enough public support, though it was also agreed that awareness is increasing.

The LISS received a CRE Direct Technical Assistance award to support the development of a bi-state climate monitoring strategy for Long Island Sound. Through the award, EPA and selected contractors will provide man-hours to accomplish tasks towards strategy development such as literature reviews, monitoring recommendations, and facilitating bi-state discussions. Strategy development is already under way in both states.

The second award is a Partnership Start-up Grant to develop a climate change adaptation plan for Groton, CT. The main focus of this effort will be facilitating workshops to train

and educate stakeholders to identify climate change threats and adaptation strategies and plan for implementation. When complete, this is expected to be a model for other northeastern communities.

To learn more about LISS, the EPA's National Estuary Program, and the CRE Program visit:

www.longislandsoundstudy.net

<http://www.epa.gov/nep/>

<http://www.epa.gov/cre/>

Bureau of Marine Resources

Sarah Deonarine

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