

NEW YORK STATE

CONSERVATIONIST

\$3.50

APRIL 2019

Spring TROUT FISHING

Tips to Hike Safely
And Tales of Things Gone Wrong

Spotted Lanternfly
A Pretty (Destructive) Invader

Earth Day
A Look Back

Dear Reader,

Spring has arrived, and with warmer temperatures come an array of opportunities for New Yorkers to get outside and enjoy the outdoors.

As this issue's cover illustrates, for many people, April marks the start of the fishing season. If you have visions of landing the fish of your dreams—something you can brag about for years—check out the article on trout fishing on page 4 for inspiration and helpful tips.

DEC promotes outdoor activities and is working to protect and conserve our state lands and waters. In this issue, you can read a throwback article, originally published in 1990, about the origin of Earth Day—a message that remains relevant today. And on page 18, you can learn about DEC's efforts to address present-day environmental challenges in an article about protecting our trees from an invasive pest that has made its way to New York—the spotted lanternfly—and how you can help DEC control this unwanted invader.

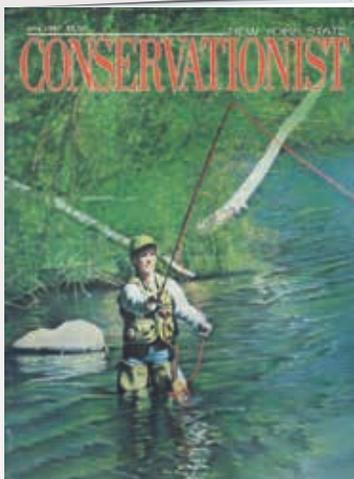
The April *Conservationist* also highlights opportunities for families to experience nature. If springtime and warmer temperatures get you excited about being outdoors, check out the article about DEC's annual Outdoors Day celebration on page 14. At events across the state on June 8, DEC will be on hand to introduce you to outdoor activities like paddling, fishing, and hiking, and provide you with instruction and encouragement. Spending a day learning something new can give you the skills necessary to enjoy a lifetime of outdoor adventures.

One of the key lessons to learn before heading outdoors is the need to put safety first. "Hike Safely—Be Smart. Be Prepared," on page 8, describes the experiences of unprepared hikers visiting the Adirondacks.

I'd like to take this opportunity to announce that longtime DEC staffer Eileen Stegemann was recently named managing editor of the *Conservationist*, and is the first woman to have that title. Stegemann was featured on the June 1997 *Conservationist* cover at right. A SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry graduate who went to work at DEC in 1982, Stegemann is a lifelong outdoor enthusiast who loves spending time in nature and sharing stories about her outdoor adventures, including pond hopping and visiting bear dens.

Enjoy spring and if you're heading out to fish, I hope you'll land a big one.

Best wishes,
Basil Seggos, Commissioner



NEW YORK STATE
CONSERVATIONIST

Volume 73, Number 5 | April 2019
Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of New York State

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EDITORIAL OFFICES

The *Conservationist* (ISSN0010-650X), © 2019 by NYSDEC, is an official publication of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation published bimonthly at 625 Broadway, 4th Floor, Albany, NY 12233-4502. Telephone: (518) 402-8047

Manuscripts, photographs and artwork will be accepted if accompanied by SASE. Please write to the above address with an author's query or to request a Contributor's Guide. The publisher assumes no responsibility for loss or damage of unsolicited materials.

TO SUBSCRIBE:

\$18 per year, \$24 for two years, \$30 for three years. Outside the U.S., add \$27 per year with a check drawn on a U.S. bank. All orders must be prepaid.

Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for new subscriptions or changes of address. Periodical postage paid at Albany, NY, and additional mailing offices.

Send check or money order payable to:

Conservationist
NYSDEC
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233-4502

or call: **1-800-678-6399**

Visit the Department's website at: www.dec.ny.gov

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation does not discriminate on the basis of race, national origin, disability, age, or gender.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:

Conservationist
NYSDEC
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233-4502

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**Department of
Environmental
Conservation**



CONTENTS

- 2 A Look Back – Earth Day Remembered**
By Francis E. Sheehan, Jr.
- 4 Worm Fishing for Stream Trout**
Tips for avoiding trout swallowing the hook
By Greg Kozlowski
- 8 Hike Safely—Be Smart. Be Prepared.**
By Eileen Stegemann with personal accounts by
Lecco Morris and David Collins
- 14 Outdoors Day: Helping People Enjoy
All Nature Has to Offer**
By Laura DiBetta
- 18 Spotted Lanternfly**
A pretty (destructive) invader
By Emma Antolos
- 22 Randolph Fish Hatchery**
By Richard Borner
- 24 Leeks – A Homegrown Delicacy**
By Susan P. Gateley
- 26 Youngs Island Wildlife Management Area**
By Chip Hamilton

April 2019 Volume 73, Number 5

DEPARTMENTS

- | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| 13 | On Patrol | 28 | Briefly |
| 30 | Letters | 32 | Back Trails |



FRONT COVER: Trout Fishing by Sean Platt
BACK COVER: Hiking by Jim Clayton

1946

CONSERVATIONIST Vol. 1, No. 1

1955

1965

1975

1985

1995

2005

2015

A LOOK BACK

MARCH/APRIL 1990

We regularly receive requests from our readers for copies of old issues or past articles. In going through our past issues, we are often struck by how little, or how much, things have changed. We thought our readers would enjoy reading some of these older articles, so from time to time we'll be providing "A Look Back" at magazine content and, when appropriate, include an updated perspective on the various topics.

In celebration of Earth Week, we thought we'd start out the series with an abbreviated version of the April 1990 article "Earth Day Remembered." Nearly three decades later, the spirit of Earth Day lives on, but we continue to face many environmental challenges. Just as people gathered back then to compel our government to take action to protect our natural resources, we now often battle our leaders in Washington on major issues like climate change and rally to prevent them from rolling back policies that ensure clean air and water for all. As the following article notes, Earth Day had a major, positive impact. Today, we must keep up that fight—for our environment and our future.



Today, many people celebrate Earth Day by participating in a local tree-planting or clean-up event.

Earth Day Remembered

Earth Day Remembered

March/April 1990

BY FRANCIS E. SHEEHAN, JR.

Earth Day, April 22, 1970, did not mark the beginning of the environmental movement. But it did bring into sharp focus the tremendous problems posed by widespread degradation of our environment.

Like most of my peers starting college during the tumultuous period of the early 1970s, I was trying to figure out what I was going to do with my life. Then on April 22, 1970, many professors at Colgate University, in partnership with their colleagues at thousands of schools and colleges across the country, participated in the first environmental teach-in, a



The banner sums up the meaning of the day.

series of lectures, “sit-ins,” and films organized to highlight the need to stop ravaging mother earth. It was part of a national “Earth Day” celebration.

A hundred miles from Colgate, Governor Nelson Rockefeller, sporting a “Save the Earth” button, used the occasion to sign legislation creating the Department of Environmental Conservation. He then pedaled around Capital Park on a bicycle to lend his personal support for non-pollution transportation.

In New York City, thousands enjoyed an automobile-free Fifth Avenue or strolled through Union Square, taking in an ad-hoc assemblage of exhibits loosely erected around the theme of preserving the environment, and listening to a colorful group of speakers. School kids cleaned up their playground or collected mounds of trash along highways to focus attention on litter problems.

In Washington, legislation to fund clean air activities was approved by a congressional subcommittee, and a U.S. Senator urged creation of what was to become, by the end of the year, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The day’s events attracted millions of people to community environmental activities, and highlighted public awareness of the need to preserve the environment. It also vividly demonstrated the groundswell of broad-based support the nascent environmental movement could muster.

For a student struggling to come to terms with the social activism that defined the times, Earth Day focused attention on the possibilities of environmentalism, and helped direct me on a career path unimaginable just a few years before.

The first Earth Day jolted the administration at Colgate into developing an interdisciplinary major in environmental studies; a radical departure from the narrow focus of most traditional Bachelor of Arts programs then available. By 1973, the idea had been expanded and led to the creation of the environmental studies institute.

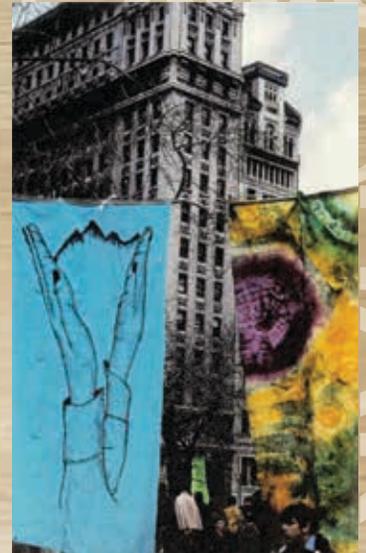
We were taught to think holistically, to see the interconnectedness of our environment and people’s often destructive influences on it. Courses and disciplines once thought to be unconnected or irrelevant were now brought together in an exciting and stimulating approach to the study of the preservation of our environment.

We learned what commitment and advocacy could achieve by reading about legendary conservationists like Gifford Pinchot, who conspired with his mentor, President Theodore Roosevelt, to preserve our country’s once limitless forests by the bold creation of the National Forest System; or of the wisdom of Aldo Leopold, whose writings in *A Sand County Almanac* presaged the modern

THEN:



Flowers, even artificial ones, symbolized the earth reborn.



An occasion for flags, banners, and instant art.

environmental movement and provided a philosophical and scientific basis for the preservation of natural environments.

Earth Day did not begin the country’s commitment to environmental protection; our own state had a proud tradition of concern for the environment. New Yorkers pioneered the legal preservation of wilderness by voting to amend the state constitution in 1894 to make parts of the forest preserve in the Adirondacks and Catskills “forever wild,” a full 70 years before Congress would enact the federal Wilderness Act.

The state began regulating industrial water discharges in 1949. And Governor Rockefeller, whose family donated much of the Palisades for public parks, championed the cause of clean water, and successfully shepherded the billion-dollar 1965 Pure Waters Bond Act to overwhelming voter approval nearly a decade before Congress acted to fund a similar national program.

New York’s conservation tradition is bipartisan, perhaps best exemplified by the Roosevelt family, with Republican Theodore leaving the National Forest System and the creation of the national Wildlife Refuge System as his legacy, while a generation later, his Democrat cousin Franklin Delano Roosevelt put millions of Depression-era needy to work restoring the environment through the Conservation Corps.

Twenty years after the inaugural Earth Day, concern for the environment has grown....and it is gratifying to witness the transformation of mainstream thinking, to realize that a philosophy once considered almost radical and out of touch with reality has now been embraced. We are almost all environmentalists now.

WORM FISHING FOR STREAM TROUT

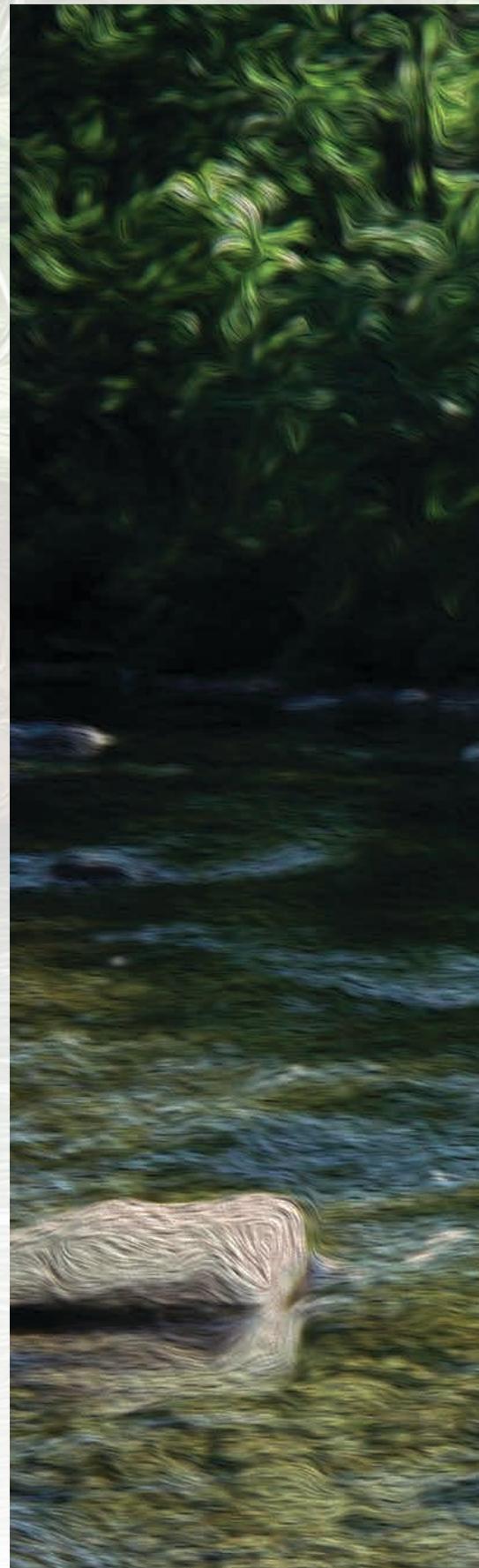
Tips for avoiding trout swallowing the hook



BY GREG KOZLOWSKI

I'm a worm dunker. Don't get me wrong, probably my favorite way to catch a trout is on a dry fly, but I like my worms. For me, worm fishing is all about nostalgia. It brings me back to the 1970s, when I was a kid admiring the fishing skills of my father, a true worm dunker.

In my eyes, my father was the greatest fisherman that ever lived. My family would go camping at DEC's Beaverkill Campground every summer, and almost every morning my father would come back to camp with a big—15 inches or larger—trout. I was in awe of the trout he would catch, and aspired to be like him. We fished the Beaver Kill and surrounding waters throughout my childhood and into my adult life. I still love to fish those streams and others like them, and while my father passed away 12 years ago, I continue to connect with him every time I catch a trout with a worm.



Most anglers would agree that dunking worms is a highly effective method for catching trout. However, fishing with worms has the reputation for hooking fish in the gut (called gut hooking) because the fish often swallows the bait. I generally practice catch-and-release fishing even when worm dunking, and absolutely hate gut hooking a fish—I take it as a personal insult when it happens. Fortunately, building on the techniques my father taught me, I’ve learned how to fish streams by free-drifting worms (no bobber) in a way that avoids the fish swallowing the hook. The trick: you need to detect a fish before it has a chance to swallow the bait. Here’s how I do it.

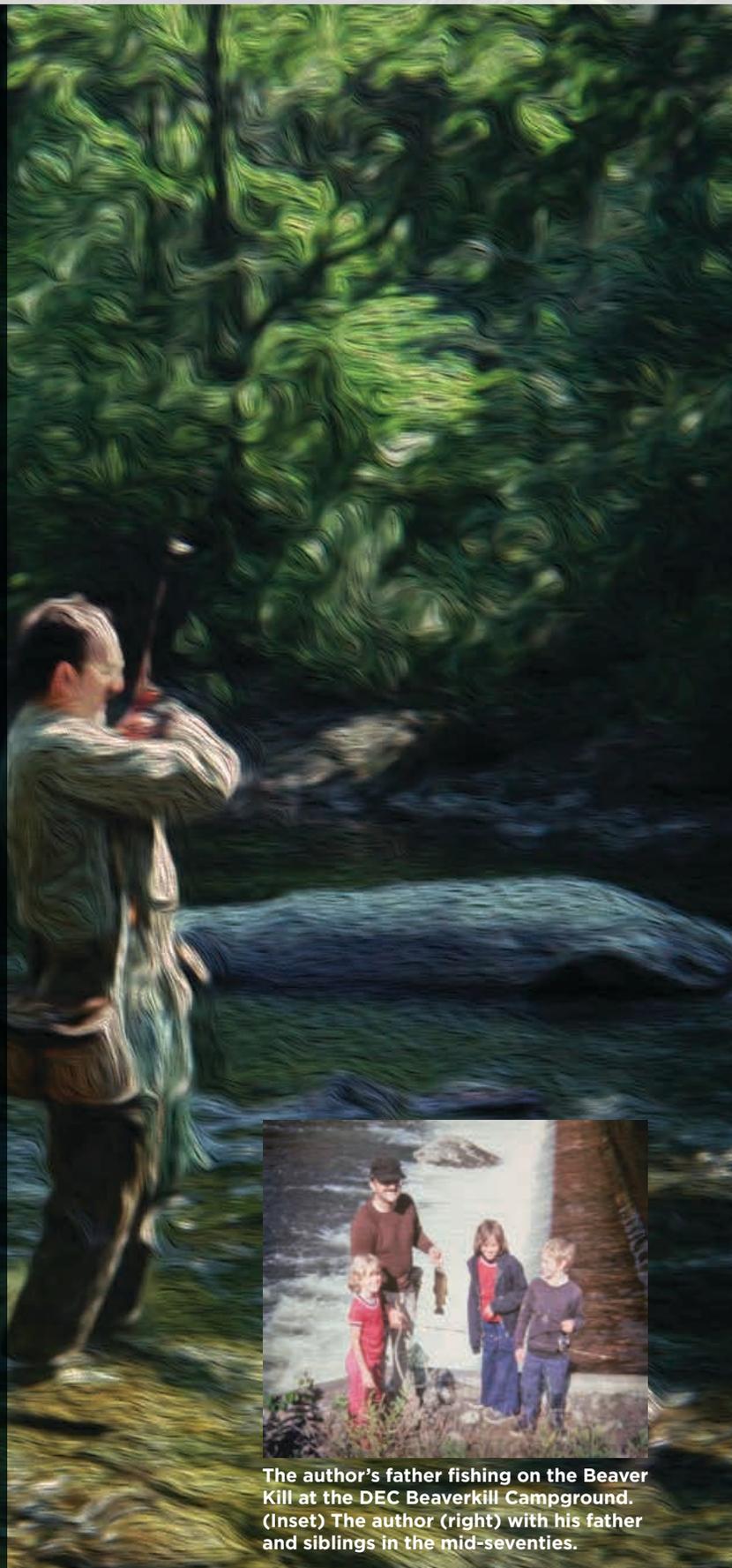
Keep a Tightish Line

This might be the trickiest part about the way I fish, but it is key to detecting a strike prior to the fish swallowing your bait. Basically, you need to have the line tight enough to either feel the strike directly through the rod or see the line twitch, but not so tight that it affects the natural drift of the worm. Trout often ignore worms that aren’t drifting naturally. Keep in mind you may have to reel in some of the line during the drift to keep a tightish line. It takes practice, but once mastered, this technique will catch you a lot more fish.

Watch Your Line

It’s important to watch your line. If you wait until you feel a trout hit, you’re missing a lot of hits that you are getting. By watching the line, you can see the slight line twitches when a trout hits that you would never feel through the rod. When you see the line twitch, reel in slightly to tighten the line and check if you feel a fish at the end of it. If you do, set the hook. You’ll catch at least twice as many fish when you watch your line, and also avoid gut hooking trout. I like those odds.

To help me better see the line, I use a clear blue fluorescent line for high visibility. This color stands out better than any other color I have tried. The brand of line doesn’t really matter as long as you can see it to watch for those telltale twitches.



The author’s father fishing on the Beaver Kill at the DEC Beaverkill Campground. (Inset) The author (right) with his father and siblings in the mid-seventies.

Use A High Line

High line is when you keep your rod tip up high, keeping as much of the line out of the water as possible. There are times when I hold my rod over my head to get as high a line as possible. This does several things for you: it lets you keep a tightish line; it gives you more line to watch; and it allows you to keep your worm in the slow pocket next to fast-moving water. All these are good things!

Avoid Still Water

The problem with still water is that it's hard to keep a tightish line. As a result, trout can take the worm without you realizing it. The longer the fish has the worm, the more likely it is to swallow it. This happens much more in still water than it does in moving water. This isn't a problem if you keep the trout you catch, but avoid still water if you want to hook the trout in the mouth and release your catch.



Fish Pockets and Seams

Two of the best places to fish are pockets and seams, "sweet spots" where hungry fish live. Pockets are the quiet water behind structures (rocks, stumps, downed trees) in the stream. Fish like to sit in these pockets because it gives them a quiet place to wait for food drifting down in the fast water next to the pocket. Do I want to cast into a place where fish are waiting for food? Yes. Yes, I do!

A seam is where two faster currents collide together. This creates a small seam where the current is slower between the two faster currents that are bringing food downstream. It's like being in a buffet line with food on either side of you, and that's a good place to find hungry trout. Have I mentioned how much I like hungry trout?

To fish both pockets and seams, cast your worm into them and use a high line so your line comes out of the slow water. This keeps your bait in the pocket or seam longer. If your line touches the fast water, the bait will quickly get pulled out of the sweet spot where the trout are. The longer you keep your worm in the sweet spot, the better chance you have of catching a trout. Don't discount small pockets. You will be amazed at what you can catch out of a pocket that is only a foot or two long.



The author caught this two-year-old hatchery raised brown trout in the pocket depicted in the top photo.

Worm and Line Selection

I prefer to use half a nightcrawler when trout fishing. Half is heavy enough to allow me to cast without having to put split shot on the line, which gives the bait a better free drift. I've found, however, that not all worm halves are created equal. The half with the head and the ring is heavier, sinks quicker, and casts farther, but is more likely to get stuck on the bottom. I use this half when I'm fishing fast water or need to cast a longer distance.

The half with the tail is a little lighter, doesn't cast as far, and has better fish catching action as far as I'm concerned. I like to use it in slower water because it sinks slower than the head and doesn't get stuck on the bottom as often. When choosing which half of a worm to use, look at the water you're about to fish and choose the one that best fits the conditions.



Like pockets, seams (top) are another great spot to fish, as illustrated by this beautiful brown trout that was caught here.

Line strength is another consideration when fishing, and plays a role in how far you can cast. I use two-pound test line to help me cast a worm farther, but it also means I have to play the trout more if I hook a big one. Four-pound test line will get a big trout in quicker, but you will not be able to cast as far. I'm also convinced line-shy trout avoid the heavier line. Since there are pros and cons to each type, choosing the line strength is a decision you have to make for yourself.

Next time you are trout stream fishing, give worms a try. And remember to watch your tightish line to detect strikes early, and hit the pockets and seams, even the small ones. You'll catch more trout, and hook more in the mouth.

Fishing enthusiast **Greg Kozlowski** is the Inland Fisheries Section Head in DEC's Albany office.



What to Bring

All anglers have their own preference for the equipment they use. Here's what I prefer when trout fishing using worms:

- Rod: 6- to 7-foot ultralight rod;
- Reel: Matching reel that can hold 100 yards of 4-pound test mono; bring along a spare spool if you can;
- Line: 2- or 4-pound test fluorescent blue mono fishing line;
- Hook: Size 6 baitholder. Make sure the eye of the hook is completely closed if using 2-pound test line;
- Belt bait box: To hold your worms. Don't forget the belt;
- Fishing forceps: to help remove hooks;
- Polarized sunglasses: to help see the line and into the water; and
- Hat and sunscreen for those sunny days.

Note: If your fish swallows the bait and becomes deeply hooked, avoid yanking the hook out, as this can harm the fish. Instead, simply cut the line above the hook.



HIKE SAFELY

**Be Smart.
Be Prepared.**

BY EILEEN STEGEMANN

WITH PERSONAL ACCOUNTS BY LECCO MORRIS AND DAVID COLLINS

Hiking through the woods and along mountains is a favorite pastime for many. On a nice sunny day, a myriad of people—experts and novices alike—head to New York’s Adirondack and Catskill mountains for some exercise and adventure. Unfortunately, some hikers unknowingly embark on their excursions unprepared. They may lack sufficient supplies of food and water; or don’t have appropriate clothing, footwear, or navigational equipment and lighting with backup batteries to power them; or perhaps fail to share their itineraries and expected departure and return times with friends or family.

In the mountains, a beautiful, warm, sunny day can quickly turn into a cold, windy, rainy one, and conditions on the mountain’s peak can be dramatically different from conditions below. The old adage “Hope for the best, but prepare for the worst” is a great guide for hikers. Accidents happen, so even if you think “I’m only going for a short hike,” it’s important to always be prepared.

DEC is committed to providing great recreational hiking opportunities in the Adirondacks and Catskills, and areas all across the state. But we urge anyone heading out for a hike to take the proper precautions. The following true-life accounts illustrate what can happen when you head out unprepared or make some ill-informed choices on a hike. We want everyone to enjoy the outdoors safely.

As you will read, it doesn’t take long for a situation to turn serious.



When Things Go Awry

BY LECCO MORRIS

Sunday, 9:30 a.m., I entered Dix Mountain range, solo, for an intended 18-mile loop over the five high peaks of that range as a (very long) day-trip. My gear consisted entirely of 3 liters of water in a Camelbak, 3 apples, 2 Clif bars, 2 lighters, a penknife on my keys, and the clothes and boots on my body. As a last-minute thought, realizing that no one knew where I was, I texted my father the GPS coordinates of the trailhead and told him that if I died I'd be found there. (Oof, word choice.)

Having experience primarily on the Appalachian Trail's fully blazed trails, I knew some high peaks were marked less clearly. I did not realize the Adirondack route I chose was, in fact, a local-knowledge herd path—and unmarked. River crossings were indicated by cairns across the river, sometimes hundreds of feet away and with no clear path of boulders to cross. There were junctions where the turn was indicated by a large broken branch. I lost hours of time and wasted my phone's battery getting my bearings with my GPS. Before I summited the first peak, I started jogging all relatively flat terrain to make up time.

On the summit of Macomb (my third peak), at just shy of 4:00 p.m., I met a quartet of women who were finishing their final peak of five. While attempting to use their map and my phone to figure out my route, the group's leader told me: "I'm not one to tell someone what to do, but even if you ran the whole way you couldn't finish this loop before daylight. If you turn back and run, you might get back to your car."

Then my phone died.

I started running down the peak—having to cross the same three peaks I just summited (still an easier and shorter hike than finishing my intended route). I was in the homestretch and through all the high peaks, but the switchbacks on the river, over and under boulders and waterfalls, and marked only by cairns, were difficult to follow. I got lost and doubled back. The "path" was almost impossible to positively identify. Is that pile of rocks a cairn? Was that branch broken intentional?

I suddenly realized I was losing light and was going to be overnighing in the woods—I needed to get as much dry wood as I could, and quickly. I collected firewood along the riverbank until the last drop of light, and made a five-foot by one-foot fire using a downed birch as wind cover. I fed the fire continuously

from 8:00 p.m. – 6:00 a.m., getting jarred awake by the cold when it would start to ebb. I couldn't make the fire large, as there was a very real risk of it spreading. The stars were endlessly clear.

At 6:00 a.m., my embers were down to nearly nothing, and I didn't have a single stick left in my pile. Time to get moving.

I decided I would bushwhack to find my herd path, and spent several hours getting ripped to shreds by shrubs. I found dozens of herd paths; none were mine.

Sometime late morning, I realized I was hopelessly lost. I sat down for the first time since the drive to the peaks the day before and took stock.

I realized I had to stay put and attract the attention of a search party, which I hoped was looking for me. In the river there was a large sandbar mostly made of pebbles and driftwood. I started making a huge signal fire from driftwood. I found that birch bark burned oily and black, so I started collecting more.

I was down to less than a liter of water with no purification tablets, so I couldn't stay in the sun. When I heard rotors or saw a chopper, I would leap out from the shade to throw on more birch and look up, willing them to come my way.

Lecco Morris checks the map with other hikers on the trail.





Too Many Miles, Not Enough Time

BY DAVID COLLINS

Sunday, August 12, 2018. My brother Mark and I arrived at the Adirondack Loj parking area just outside Lake Placid about 8 a.m., signed in at the trailhead, and were on our way. We had done a little hiking, and decided to tackle Mt. Marcy.

When we reached Marcy Dam, we met a group who advised us to take the small trail spur to Indian Falls for some nice views of the High Peaks. We had time (or so we thought), so we did.

In hindsight, we should have taken on something less challenging than Mt. Marcy. At one false summit, we discussed with some fellow hikers how steep the climb was and the level of difficulty coming back down. One of them said, “You know, the trail continues on down the other side of Marcy and it doesn’t look that bad.” This would be our undoing.

We reached Marcy summit around 2:30 p.m. I was happy to have made it the 7.4 miles in. After eating lunch and some granola bars, we hung out at the summit a while, before deciding to head down the *back side* of Marcy.

It was true, the descent didn’t seem that bad. At Four Corners (the junction between Mt. Skylight and

I did this for perhaps five hours or so, cutting birch bark with my penknife and hoofing it to the sandbar when I heard helicopters, until I realized I needed to wrap my psyche around the idea I might not be found for days and needed to ration a little less than a liter of water for an unknown length of time. Looking at the cloud cover, it seemed like it might rain that night. I couldn’t survive an unprotected windy night in the rain at sub-50 degrees, and had to make a lean-to.

When trying to imagine how I would build a lean-to, I heard another chopper. I ran out to the sandbar, waving my hands and yelled “HELLO!” As the chopper crested the ridge, moments after my yell, a voice 30 feet to my left says “Philip Morris?” “Yes! It’s me!”

Pat, a DEC Forest Ranger, emerged from the woods and radioed the chopper, now directly overhead. Since my fire accumulated 5 hours of embers, the chopper’s descent turned the sandbar into a wild glowing ball of flame and we had to head to the banks.

I had intentionally picked the only sandbar large enough for a chopper to land, but hadn’t anticipated the wind from the choppers. Pat and I used stream water to douse the fire. The chopper set down again.

They buttoned me in one of the four seats and off we went. The entire trip back to the station there wasn’t a single sign of human habitation.

They brought me straight back to my parents, who had stayed up all night and driven up at the crack of dawn. After my parents hugged me, the entire DEC team took turns giving me a bear hug. I had neglected to prepare a single thing for my hike, but, according to my rescuers, I did every single thing right once I realized I wasn’t making it out the prior night. I thought they would ream me out for my lack of preparation, but they were just glad I came out alive.

I realize how irresponsible I had been. There had been many people out looking for me, and my family and friends were terrified for me. I vowed to do future outside activities only with a lot more preparation and foresight—especially when solo.

There is a difference between hiking—which I’ve done tons of—and planning a route, which I had never done before. That said, it was one of the most awesome, humbling, wild experiences of my entire life.

Editor’s note: *Lecco’s complete adventure was posted on Facebook, then covered by WNYT in Albany and goeast.ems.com.*



Morris with several of his rescuers.

Always bring a map and plan your route.

Mt. Marcy), I looked at the trail map and saw two possible routes: one would take us out of here, the other headed to Panther Gorge. Fortunately, some hikers showed up and told us to head toward the Feldspar Brook lean-to. On the way, we passed by Lake Tear of the Clouds—headwaters of the Hudson River. I was quite tired and noticed we were headed back uphill again. “I thought this was going to be all downhill back to the Loj,” I said to Mark. Boy was I wrong.

It was getting close to 6 p.m.—our main goal now was to reach Marcy Dam and get assistance. On our way down from Feldspar, another hiker we came across used his phone to show us where we were, and gave Mark excellent instructions for staying on the right trails. I was facing utter exhaustion, and really thought I was going to reach the physical limits of what my legs could do. But somehow, we pressed on.

I noticed we were on the yellow trail and going uphill again; I was worried we were headed back up Marcy. The mind plays tricks when you’re exhausted. I got to the point where I was singing marching cadences, thinking about plebe year at the Merchant Marine Academy. Mark ran out of water and stopped sweating, a possible sign of heatstroke.

Anytime we met someone on the trail, we asked them to walk with us. A father and son duo were very helpful and gave Mark a bottle of water.

It was starting to get dark when Mark asked, “Did you bring a flashlight?” “No,” I replied. Big oops. I was getting more worried.

A little past 8 p.m., the sun was disappearing, but we finally arrived at some campsites. Mark stopped to ask for help; I pressed on a little farther and arrived at the Marcy Dam sign-in. A few minutes later, Mark showed up with a hiker and a headlamp one of the hikers had given him. (Whoever that was, we cannot thank you enough.)

I quickly sent a text message to my daughter, letting her know we had made Marcy Dam and were headed out. Then the phone died. Another helpful hiker got us oriented in the right direction and gave us four Clif Bars (the energy was much needed).

I couldn’t believe how dark the woods were—the headlamp was an absolute necessity. At one point we heard rustling, and Mark looked back and said, “I see eyes.” I asked him what it was, and he just said, “Never mind, keep walking,” which we did.

Meanwhile, our family was getting worried, so they called one of our neighbors who is very familiar with hiking in the Adirondacks. He quickly

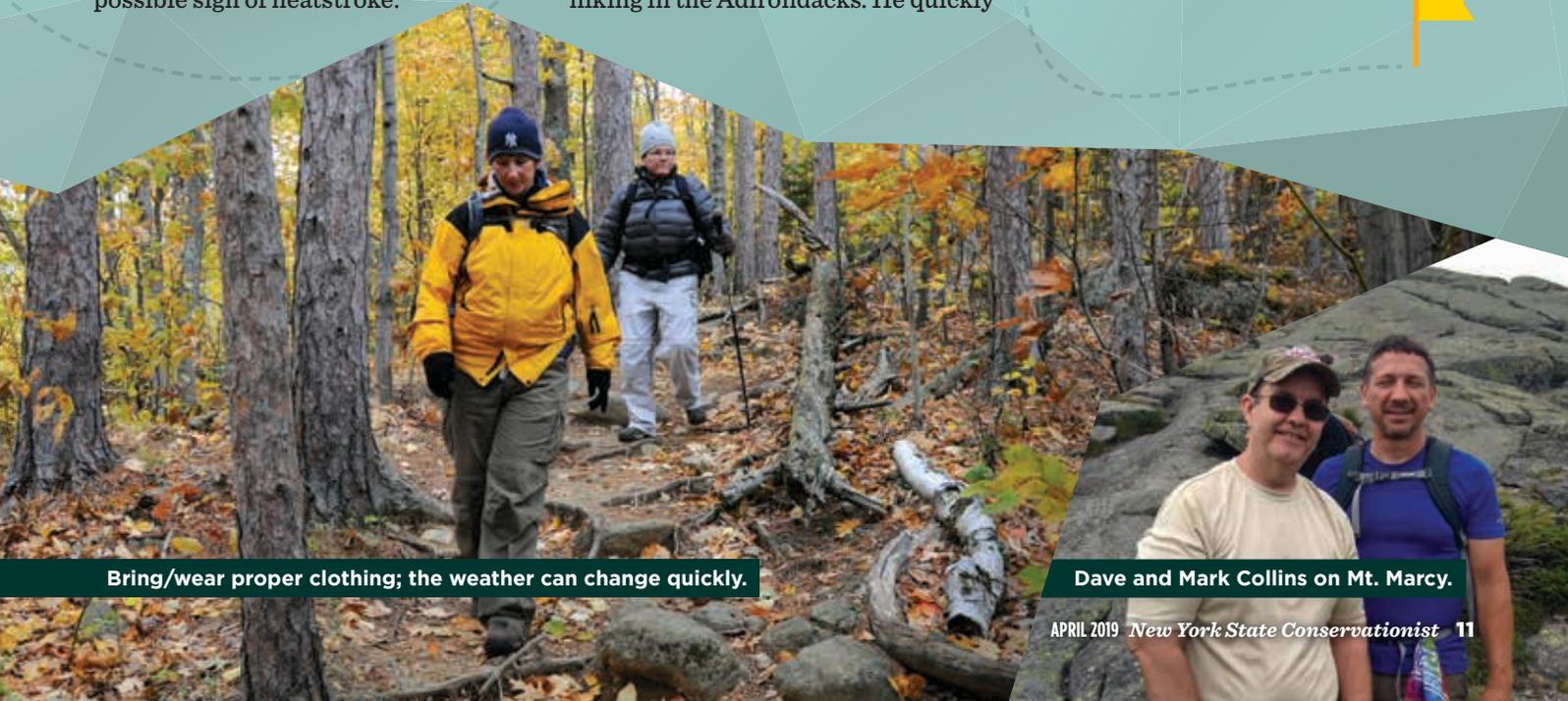
estimated that we should have been out of the woods by now; he called a Ranger, who in turn called our family to find out details of our trip and gear. Unfortunately, we really hadn’t shared much with them, other than what mountain we were climbing; another mistake on our part. The Ranger set out to find us.

As we continued walking down the trail, we heard a rustling again and saw a light. It was one of the hikers we had met earlier. You can’t imagine how exciting it is to see another hiker when you are stumbling in the dark with just one headlamp. He told us we only had half a mile to go—just think two laps around a track. Then he disappeared.

We were spent, and that last half mile felt like three. Mark stubbed his right foot and started limping. Then we saw two super bright headlights—the DEC Ranger’s truck. He was just about to head in looking for us.

We must have looked pretty ragged. It was 10 p.m., but we were safe. We thanked the Ranger for his service and headed home.

I learned a lot from this experience and have a new level of respect for experienced hikers. I’ve already started getting new gear, and yes, two headlamps for a future, much better-planned, excursion.



Bring/wear proper clothing; the weather can change quickly.

Dave and Mark Collins on Mt. Marcy.

Hiking Safety Tips

Each year, hundreds of thousands of people head out to hike and explore New York's vast forests and mountain trails. Whether you're a novice or experienced hiker, or heading out for a short hike or a full-day or multi-day excursion, make sure you are prepared for the expected and unexpected. To educate hikers in the Adirondacks about being prepared, under a new safety initiative, DEC Forest Rangers have teamed up with Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) Summit stewards and Adirondack 46ers volunteer trailhead stewards to conduct direct conversations with hikers at trailheads and on trails to ensure they are properly prepared for their outing.

After all, no one wants to get lost or hurt in the backcountry.



TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR NEXT HIKE A SAFE ONE

- Plan ahead—learn about the area you'll be visiting and your planned route; check trail conditions
- Tell someone your planned route and expected departure and return times
- Be sure to sign in at trail registers—rescuers use these to help locate you should you fail to return on time.
- Wear sturdy, comfortable shoes or boots that are waterproof—footwear that gives ankle support is ideal and may help you avoid an injury such as a sprain
- Dress in layers and wear moisture-wicking clothing (avoid cotton)
- Wear or bring a windproof/waterproof jacket—remember, even in summer, it can be cold and windy on a mountain summit
- Carry a day pack to hold your gear

WHAT TO PACK

- Water—bring plenty, and if you plan on collecting water along the way, use a water filtration system or purification tablets
- Food—high energy snacks are great
- Extra clothing and socks—include a windproof/waterproof outer layer, hat and gloves for the cold
- First aid kit (remember your prescription meds, esp. an Epi-pen if allergic to bee stings)
- Trail map and compass or GPS unit
- Flashlight or headlamp, and extra batteries
- Pocket knife
- Hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, insect repellent, and toilet paper
- Fire starter kit: e.g., matches in a waterproof container, small candle, and cotton balls soaked in petroleum jelly
- Whistle and/or small mirror (to alert searchers)
- Large garbage bag—to carry out garbage or use as shelter
- Emergency Space blanket or bivy sack
- Cell phone—hint: switch to "airplane mode" to conserve the battery
- Optional: trekking poles

IF LOST OR INJURED

Stay with your party—don't split up and take different trails—and remember to STOP:

- S**—Sit down and remain calm
- T**—Think: ask yourself how you got there and how much time is left before it gets dark
- O**—Observe: try to identify landmarks and listen for noises such as traffic, running water, or other hikers
- P**—Plan: can you hike out or should you stay put until morning? If staying, gather firewood (as much as you can)

If you have cell service, call the DEC Dispatch at: (518) 408-5850 (statewide), (518) 891-0235 (Adirondacks). The dispatcher will collect information to help searchers locate you. If you don't have cell service, move to an area where you can be seen by searchers, and if you have something that's brightly colored, be sure to display it.

For more hiking safety information, see: www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/28708.html

On Patrol

Real stories from Conservation Officers and Forest Rangers in the field

CONTRIBUTED BY ECO LT. LIZA BOBSEINE AND FOREST RANGER CAPT. SARAH B. GEESLER

Alligator Feet— Queens County

In February, ECO Jeff Johnston received a call from a NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Inspector regarding six alligator feet found in a walk-in freezer during a routine restaurant inspection in Queens. In New York, it is unlawful to possess and offer for sale alligators or alligator parts without a permit from DEC. ECOs Johnston and Ryan Kelley responded to the restaurant, which had been shut down by City inspectors for unsanitary conditions, and seized the alligator feet as evidence. Three NYC summonses were issued for illegal commercialization of wildlife, possessing alligator parts, and offering alligator parts for sale without a permit.



A Load of Trouble— Ulster and Greene Counties

ECO Lucas Palmateer was patrolling in the town of Saugerties when he observed and stopped a white pickup truck transporting an uncovered load of solid waste, including old cabinets and plastic. The driver, a Cairo resident, told ECO Palmateer he was helping a friend from Kingston by transporting the waste to the Greene County Transfer Station. The driver was issued a ticket for transporting uncovered solid waste. Several days later, ECO Mike Arp received an illegal dumping complaint in the town of Cairo. The evidence led him to compare the debris to the photos taken by ECO Palmateer; it was a positive match. ECO Arp interviewed the man, who admitted to dumping the debris instead of taking it to the transfer station. He was issued another ticket, this time for unlawful disposal of solid waste.

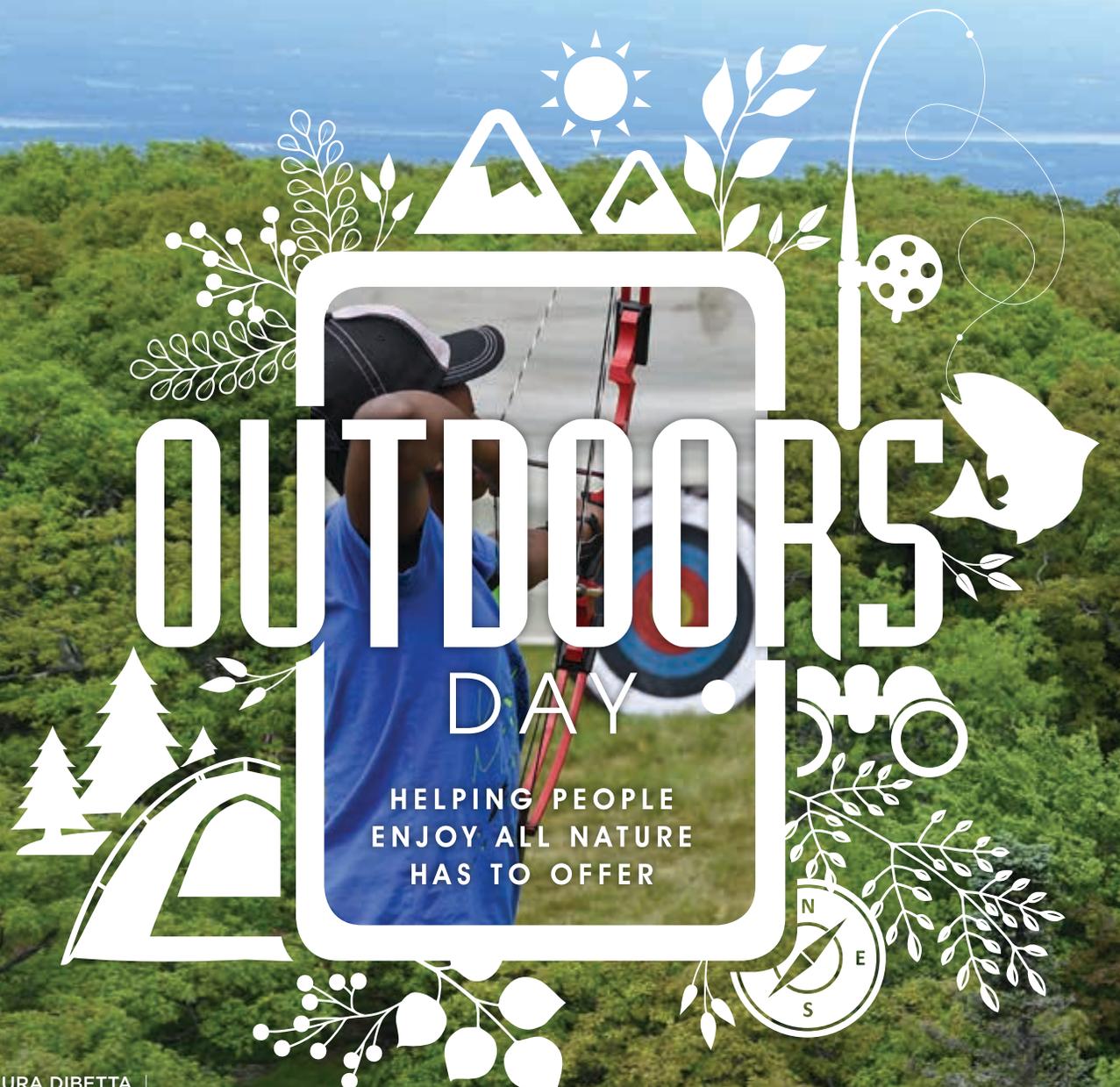
Leg Injury on Devils Path— Greene County

Late afternoon in February, DEC Central Dispatch received a report of an injured backcountry skier on the Devils Path in the Hunter-West Kill Wilderness area of the Catskills. Forest Rangers Bills, DiCintio, Dawson, Fox, McCartney, Seeley, O'Connor, and Slade responded. They hiked nearly a mile to the patient who was with several volunteers, Hunter PD, and NY State Police. The Rangers split their efforts between administering first aid and preparing a steep angle rope system to evacuate the patient. Working through the night in frigid temperatures and steep icy conditions, the group got the patient out before 2:00 a.m. the following morning. Hunter Ambulance then transported him to Columbia Memorial Hospital.

Icy Hiking at Kaaterskill— Greene County

On March 7, DEC Central Dispatch received a call from a member of a four-person hiking group that needed assistance descending from Kaaterskill Falls. Group members did not have proper traction devices for the icy conditions and were stuck on the middle section of the falls. Forest Rangers Chris DiCintio, Jason Seeley, David Nally, and Katherine Fox responded and provided the group with crampons and microspikes. The fourth individual was stuck on a separate section of the falls, and a Ranger rappelled down to assist the hiker to a safer area. Once the group was together, the Rangers hiked them out to the Laurel House parking lot. All were released in good health upon reaching their vehicles. Remember, make sure you are prepared for any hike you plan to take (see pg. 10).





OUTDOORS DAY

HELPING PEOPLE
ENJOY ALL NATURE
HAS TO OFFER

BY LAURA DIBETTA |
PHOTOS BY DEC UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

Sometimes, we forget what's important. Maybe we are too busy, or too tired, or just not sure what to do or how to do it. It seems natural to sit back, relax, and enjoy some quiet time whenever the opportunity arises, escaping the daily grind and taking a break from the responsibilities that so often seem to weigh us down.

But there's another way to escape our fast-paced world, and that's to explore the opportunities right outside your door. The "great outdoors" offers something for everyone, regardless of age, ability, or experience, and DEC encourages everyone to check it out.

Last June, DEC and NYS Parks sponsored the first Outdoors Day celebration in New York State, featuring events, activities, and assistance for people to explore a range of outdoor recreation options. From free catch-and-release fishing to guided hikes, birdwatching, paddling, and more, participants were invited to enjoy the outdoors. Staff

members were on hand to introduce people to exciting activities like kayaking and archery, and to help teach people how to improve their outdoor skills. It was a day designed around having fun and inspiring people to make the outdoors part of their lives.

The majority of Americans live in urban areas—more than 80 percent according to the 2010 U.S. Census. Sometimes living in an urban environment creates a distance and disconnect from our natural areas. Outdoors Day seeks to bridge this gap.

This year, DEC will again be hosting Outdoors Day events across New York on Saturday, June 8. If you are considering participating this year, but not sure if it's for you, read the following personal accounts from two participants in last year's events. As you read about their experiences—and what it meant to them—we hope you will consider joining in the fun this year.



Courtesy of Susana Montes

Susana Montes
AND HER SON

Ian Aquino
(AGE 11)

HARLEM/MANHATTAN

Susana Montes and her son, Ian Aquino (age 11), Harlem/Manhattan

My son, Ian, and I took a cab through Access a Ride—a door-to-door service for people with disabilities—to reach Mt. Loretto. We were the first to arrive, just before 10 a.m. Soon after, our friends arrived; our group consisted of four adults and three children.

Earlier in the year, I had inquired about programs offered by DEC for children with developmental disabilities. Carole Fraser, DEC's Universal Access Coordinator, informed me that all children and adults are welcome in DEC and State Parks programs. She also mentioned an upcoming initiative I might be interested in—Outdoors Day 2018. I was very happy to learn about this opportunity, and shared the information with more than 300 people by e-mail.

I love nature and want to enjoy it with Ian, who has autism. I know we need to reduce stress and that nature provides many health benefits and is really calming. Outdoors Day was an opportunity for him to enjoy the onset of summer outside in a supportive environment. I was interested in all activities, mainly to allow Ian to try new things in nature—he learns and has a better experience in a calming environment.

Our experience at Outdoors Day was wonderful! Everyone was very kind, helpful, engaging, and happy. We loved hiking and tried fishing. Ian even caught a fish his first time. He also tried kayaking, and we watched birds with a

big standing binocular. We learned about “leave no trace” and fire safety in the outdoors and enjoyed a campfire. Staff made s'mores and put a tent together.

Mt. Loretto Unique Area was like paradise—truly beautiful. We fell in love with it! I emailed Mr. Robert McDonald, DEC's Supervisor of Operations in Region 2 (NYC), the same day to let him know about our amazing experience. He responded, sharing his love and respect for Mt. Loretto as well, and recommended some other great outdoor areas, like the Catskill Visitor Center and Kenneth Wilson Campground in Ulster County. I was also pleased to learn that many of the people presenting the activities at Outdoors Day were volunteers. They were all enthusiastic and extremely helpful.

We have had experiences with the outdoors in the past, but nothing compared to Outdoors Day 2018; everything was perfect—and we appreciated the help of staff and volunteers, including Melissa Cohen—fishing instructor, and Mr. Allen—hiking instructor. We had a lovely day, and this great experience will be with us forever.

We were also inspired by Outdoors Day and recently went canoeing and registered for archery, birdwatching, a campfire event, and an outdoor rope obstacle course. We are planning to go camping and rent a cottage. We live in a very fast world today; nature is an easy way to calm our minds and bodies. Outdoors Day is definitely an opportunity people should try. I'm sure they will love it.

Tyease Levers
AND HER DAUGHTER

Brittany Levers

BEACON,
DUTCHESS COUNTY



Tyease Levers, Beacon, Dutchess County

I have lived in Dutchess County for the last 17 years, but grew up as a “concrete kid” in the Bronx. I have attended DEC free fishing clinics in the past and loved them. Outdoors Day offered fishing, along with many more activities, so I decided to go, and brought my oldest daughter, Brittany, with me.

I was most interested in learning about camping—the last time I tried camping on my own was an epic failure. We first went to the camping area and learned about the types of tents, sleeping bags, accessories, and campground etiquette. This made me feel better prepared for camping, and it gave me a sense of confidence for when I’m ready to try it again.

Next, we tried fishing, and I was very successful at catching a few fish! Then we went canoeing. It was my third time in a canoe and my daughter’s first time. I previously disliked canoeing—but now I realize that having the right partner in a canoe is helpful. My daughter and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience together.

After the water activities, it was time for hiking. We went on a nice hike with our tour guide and learned about different types of trees and foliage and some of the issues that plague them.

Prior to Outdoors Day, I was mildly active in outdoor activities, some years more than others. I liked kayaking and some easy hiking, but didn’t do any of that in 2017. I really wanted that to change for 2018, but was lacking confidence. Outdoors Day not only inspired me, but empowered me to be able to get outside and reconnect with nature. I have done something just about every weekend since, either by myself, with Brittany, or with all my children.

I went canoeing again and took a fly-fishing course. Brittany and I also started going to a free “ladies only” archery clinic and developed a fondness for that sport. I was also able to get my other two children, Nick (22) and Katelynne (17) involved, and all four of us completed our first Insane Inflatable 5k Race held in Rhinebeck last July. We were exhausted at the end, but had a great time.

I have gone on kayaking trips and have taken a series of courses, and my daughter and I plan to learn how to do whitewater kayaking as well. My hope is to one day become a certified kayaking instructor.

In the past, I’ve limited any outdoor activity to the summer months. Now I’m confident enough to try fall activities and look forward to snowshoeing and cross-country skiing in the winter.



Our lives can be hectic and stressful, and confined to four walls in a building—whether at work or home. I craved more in my life than just work and home responsibilities and commitments. Being able to get outdoors and connect with nature gives me a greater sense of purpose. I have become more cognizant of my surroundings and more respectful of my environment—which I hope to translate into more activism for my community.

My advice to others is this: I completely understand how a person may be intimidated about the outdoors, but I encourage them to get out there; now is the time to step out of your comfort zone. Organizations like DEC offer wonderful programs for people to explore being outside and learn about the environment. You may discover a new passion—and then stick with it.

**Brittany Levers, Tyase’s daughter,
Beacon, Dutchess County**

My mother told me about Outdoors Day, and we decided to go to try new things and learn more about camping. I was looking forward to trying fishing; otherwise, I wouldn’t have known where to go to learn.

My experience was more than I expected. Although my goal was to learn about fishing, good campgrounds, and

proper camping gear, we decided to try canoeing for the first time. We both had an amazing time, and even saw a huge snapping turtle.

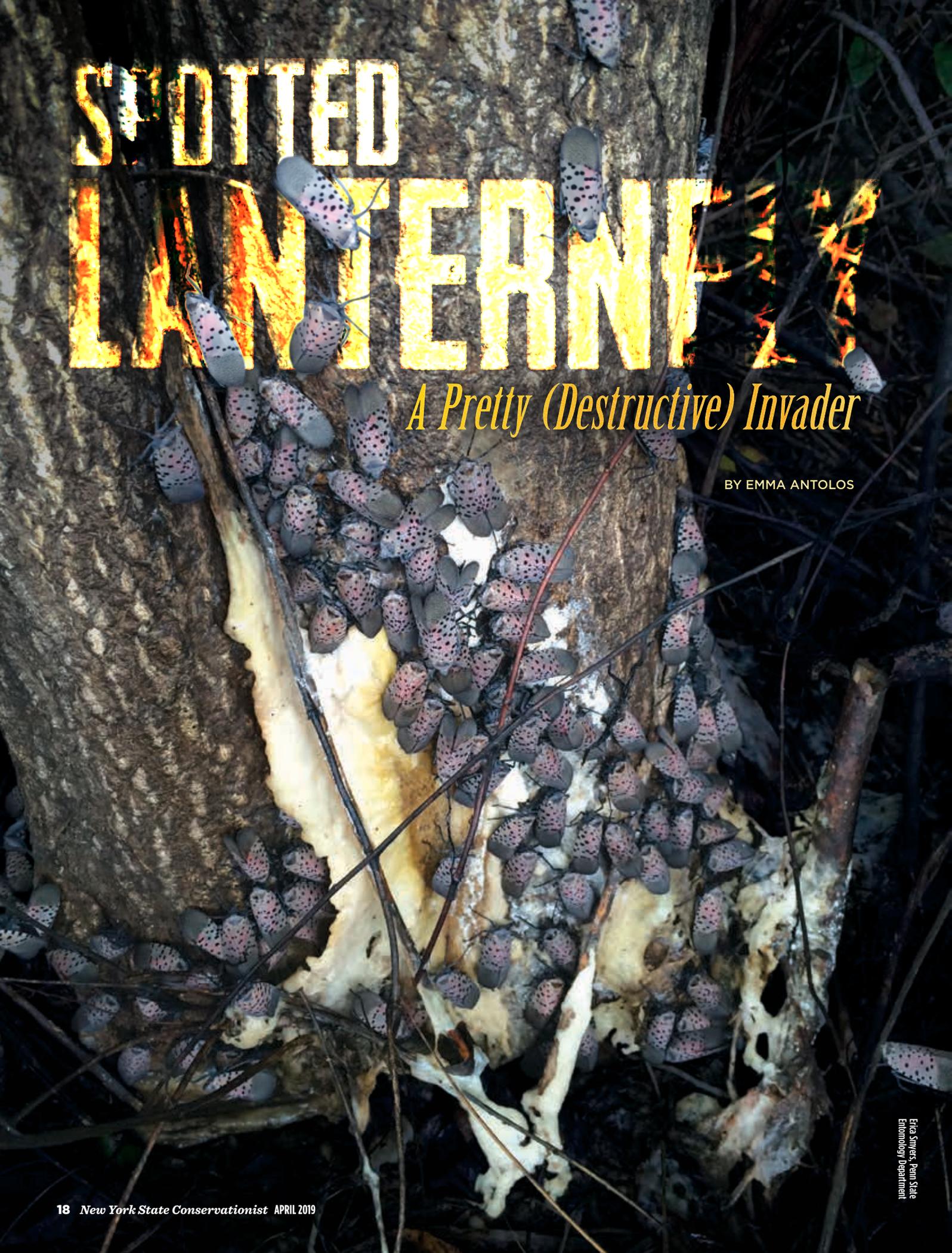
I’d say I have a semi-close relationship with nature. I like to hike and explore parks, but always knew I wanted more. Following our Outdoors Day experience, my mother and I took a self-rescue kayaking course. We also planned to try whitewater river rafting and enrolled in a kayak race. And I have discovered parks and DEC sites I could camp at next year.

My mother grew up in the South Bronx and I grew up in Beacon. We never learned how to appreciate nature until very recently, and it’s important to us that we try new things we’d never thought of doing.

There are so many outdoor opportunities. Don’t be intimidated. Start small and interact with people more experienced than you. We learned a lot from the staff and volunteers at Outdoors Day. It’s a great way to transition into new outdoor activities.

For more information on Outdoors Day and how you can participate, check out: www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/113380.html.

Laura DiBetta is the Director of Outdoor Recreation in DEC’s Albany office.



SPOTTED LANTERNFLY

A Pretty (Destructive) Invader

BY EMMA ANTOLOS

Kenneth R. Law, USDA APHIS PPO, Bugwood.org



Spotted lanternfly new egg clusters.

Kenneth R. Law, USDA APHIS PPO, Bugwood.org



Close-up picture of old egg clusters.

Lawrence Barringer, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Bugwood.org



Spotted lanternfly nymphs emerge in spring as temperatures warm up.

Eric R. Day, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Bugwood.org



Nymphs turn bright red as they approach adulthood.

On a hot and muggy day in August 2018, a crowd gathered at the edge of the woods. All eyes were turned towards the tree canopy in fascination and, frankly, disgust. Raindrops fell steadily upon the crowd, except it wasn't rain. It was bug excrement from thousands of spotted lanternfly (SLF). Sounds like the basis of a horror movie, right? Well, sadly, this wasn't a movie set. I was with some of my fellow DEC biologists on a tour in Berks County, Pennsylvania, the epicenter of the spotted lanternfly infestation.

The spotted lanternfly is an invasive insect native to Asia that uses its sucking mouthparts to feed on the sap of more than 70 different plant species, including tree-of-heaven (SLF's preferred host), grapevine, hops, maple, walnut, fruit trees, and many others. The feeding by sometimes thousands of these insects stresses plants, making them vulnerable to disease, and attacks from other insects. SLF also expel lots of "honeydew," which is just a nicer way of saying bug poop. The honeydew attracts sooty molds that interfere with plant photosynthesis, negatively affecting plant growth and fruit yield. The dripping honeydew can also impact (i.e., ruin) outdoor recreation experiences.

SLF was first discovered near a Pennsylvania quarry in 2014, and has since spread throughout the southeastern portion of that state and into Virginia, Delaware, and New Jersey. The tour we were on was led by Penn State Extension staff, who arranged for us to visit various sites hit hard by SLF and highlighted some of the impressive research work they've done. Local government officials, PA Department of Agriculture staff, reporters, and others joined us on the tour. It was a great opportunity to share information with those who've been dealing with this pesky insect for years.

Adult spotted lanternfly can be quite beautiful when their wings are fully extended—the upper wings are a cool

gray with black spots, while the lower wings display a vibrant reddish-orange. The adults start emerging in July, and females will begin laying one-inch-long egg masses in October. Nymphs start emerging in the spring, when temperatures begin to warm up. At first, the nymphs are black with white dots. When they've almost reached adulthood, they turn a bright red.

One of the most challenging things about managing SLF is the fact they lay their eggs on pretty much anything. They often hitch rides to new areas when they lay their eggs on vehicles, firewood, outdoor furniture, packages, Christmas trees, stone, etc., and are inadvertently transported long distances. These

insects take the term hitchhiker to a new level.



Emma Ambros/ANSPEC

It was surreal to see the insect up close in Pennsylvania. We'd heard so much about it and there it was—right in front of me. One of the things that struck me most while visiting Berks County was the sheer number of insects. No matter where you'd look, you'd spot them—hundreds and thousands of SLF. They'd get caught in your hair, or you'd feel one crawling up your leg. I opened my hotel room curtains and there was one, hanging onto the screen, seemingly awaiting my arrival. By the end of our trip, I started to feel itchy, like I always had one crawling on me. I was also struck by the amount of honeydew these critters expelled. Infested trees and plants looked like they had just been through a rainstorm. Honeydew coated the leaves, the ground—everything surrounding the plant. I heard tales of outdoor school activities in Pennsylvania being cancelled due to swarms of SLF.

In the fall of 2017, a single dead adult spotted lanternfly was found at a pharmaceutical facility in Delaware County, NY. The NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets (DAM) immediately searched for additional signs of the invasive, but fortunately, after extensive surveying, no live insects were found in the surrounding area. In the summer of 2018, DEC

received multiple reports of SLF sightings from Albany, Yates, Monroe, Suffolk, Westchester, Chemung, Broome, and Kings counties, but following surveying, no active SLF populations were discovered. It is believed that all these reported insects had hitched a ride from PA to NY on either nursery stock, a package, the grille of a vehicle, or some other form of transport.

There's a lot at stake and important reasons for being vigilant. For instance, New York's annual yield of apples and grapes, with a combined value of \$358.4 million, could be impacted if this destructive insect becomes established here. SLF also has the potential to severely affect the forest and tourism industries. The full extent of economic damage this insect could cause is unknown, but it clearly carries a high risk. We need to be watchful and keep this pest out of our state.

The good news is that DEC, DAM, and various partners are working tirelessly to prevent the spread of this

“ No matter where you'd look, you'd spot them—hundreds and thousands of SLF.”

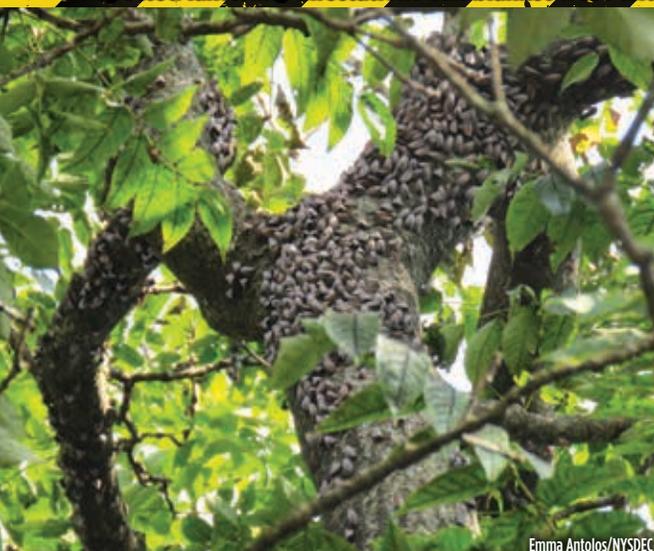
invader. As an example, DAM issued a quarantine

that restricts the movement of goods brought into New York from quarantined areas in Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. The quarantine requires regulated articles, such as packing materials, landscaping and construction equipment, and nursery stock, to have certificates of inspection issued from the SLF-impacted states. DEC and DAM, along with other partners, are also continuing surveying efforts, focusing in high risk areas such as travel corridors near the PA/NJ border and areas with heavy tree-of-heaven infestations. Surveyors also will follow up on reports from the public, who are our eyes and ears on the ground.

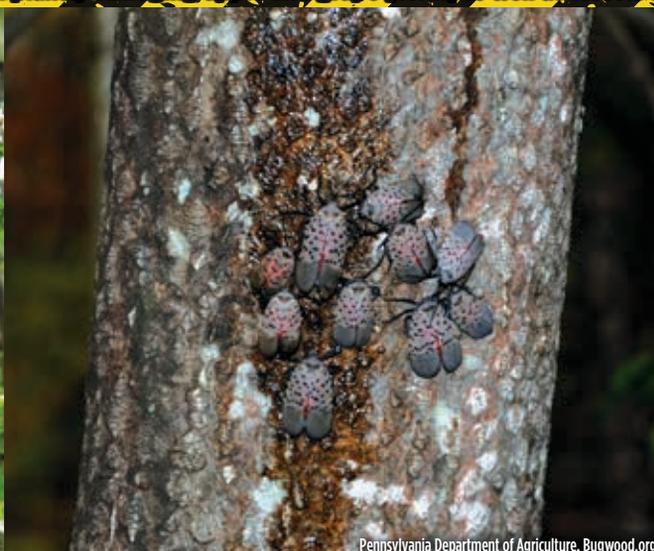


Emma Antolos/NYSDEC

Spotted lanternfly infestations can blanket trees and plants, damaging apple and grape yields, as well as forests and tourism.



Emma Antolos/NYSDEC



Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Bugwood.org



You can help in the fight against spotted lanternfly by inspecting your property and surrounding areas for any of the following signs that could indicate an SLF infestation:

- Sap oozing or weeping from tiny open wounds on tree trunks; the sap may give off a fermented odor.
- One-inch-long egg masses that are brownish-gray, waxy, and mud-like when new. Old egg masses are brown and scaly.
- Massive honeydew build-up under plants, sometimes with black sooty mold.

If you find insects or egg masses, place them in a dry container and put it in the freezer, or place them in alcohol/hand sanitizer. Take a photo of the specimens (or of signs of infestation) and send them, along with the location of where you found them, to spottedlanternfly@dec.ny.gov. To help our entomologists identify the specimens, please avoid squishing the samples.

If you visit states with spotted lanternfly, be sure to check all equipment and gear before leaving and remove any hitchhikers.

For more information, visit www.dec.ny.gov/animals/113303.html.

Emma Antolos is DEC's Invasive Species Education and Outreach Coordinator in the Division of Lands and Forests in Albany.

Interesting Fact

Despite its name, the spotted lanternfly is not a fly, but belongs to the planthopper family Fulgoridae.



Emma Antolos/NYSDEC



Erica Smyers, Penn State Entomology Department

RANDOLPH FISH HATCHERY

BY RICHARD BORNER | DEC PHOTOS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

Originally the site of a sawmill, in 1868, John B. Eddy purchased the grounds that would become home to DEC's Randolph Fish Hatchery and put in 16 ponds for fish production. He established the Trout Grove Hatchery, and in 1873, started propagating trout stocks from his own fish. Many of Eddy's original old stone ponds can still be seen across from the current hatchery.

New York State purchased the lands for the Randolph Hatchery in 1932, and construction began in 1934. During the digging of one of the ponds, the remains of the Randolph Columbian mammoth were discovered. The remains of the mammoth are on display at the NY State Museum in Albany, and a sign telling the story of the mammoth was donated by the Randolph Historical Society and installed at the hatchery in spring 2018.

The Randolph Hatchery is located on 56 acres in the Town of Cold Spring. Pond renovations were completed in the 1950s to expand production, but the other original infrastructure remains to this day. Staff rear brown trout (*Salmo trutta*), rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), and brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*)—New York's official state fish. Between 250,000 to 300,000 yearling trout are stocked each spring in five Western NY counties: Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, and Wyoming.

Randolph Hatchery is the primary source of domestic trout eggs for DEC fish hatcheries. Each fall (Sept-Oct), staff take nearly 5.5 million eggs and ship them to other

hatcheries. Three successive year-classes (fish hatched during one annual spawning period) of adult fish are kept as broodstock for egg production.

Brown and brook trout are on *light control*, a method that allows a fish culturist to use timers and lights to control the amount of daylight fish receive during a 24-hour period, which affects the time of year when they spawn. As summer progresses, the amount of light is shortened so that by the first week of September, browns and brookies are ready to spawn and the egg-taking process begins. (In the wild, these trout typically spawn in mid- to late November.) Because rainbow trout usually spawn by early October, they are not on light control.

Once the eggs are stripped from the fish, the eggs are then weighed, rinsed, and put in 16-tray, basket-style incubators. Each stack receives five gallons of water per minute, which flows down over the eggs. After approximately 21 days (depending on water temperature), the eggs become eyed—the eyes become visible. At this stage, the eggs can be handled and shocked, a process in which they are poured from one container into another from a height of 2-3 feet. This turns the unfertilized eggs white, which allows them to be picked from the trays.

Unfertilized trout eggs were originally picked by hand using a pair of long-handled, wooden tweezers and siphoning jars, but that was a lengthy, time-consuming process. Today, the Randolph Hatchery uses an electronic egg sorter with



The hatchery was constructed in the mid-1930s.



Visitors can tour the grounds to watch hatchery operations in action.

LOCATED OFF RTE. 394, TWO MILES EAST OF THE VILLAGE OF RANDOLPH AT 10943 HATCHERY ROAD IN CATTARAUGUS COUNTY



If You Go

Randolph Fish Hatchery is a great place to visit. There are informative kiosks and picnic areas, and adult fish can be seen year-round. Visitors are welcome to come watch egg takes, which are held the second week of September thru mid-October. Call ahead to check if eggs will be taken the day of your visit.



LOCATION: 10943 Hatchery Rd., one-half mile west of Rt.394. Follow signs from the Rt. 86 Steamburg or Randolph exits.



VISITOR HOURS: Open 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. daily throughout the year. There is no fee for admission. Group tours are available upon request by calling the hatchery at (716) 358-4755.



SPECIES RAISED: Brook trout, brown trout, and rainbow trout.



PHONE: (716) 358-4755; Stocking Hotline: (716) 358-2050, updated weekly, March-June and Sept-Oct.

an electric eye to separate fertilized eggs from those that are not. When trout eggs are passed in front of the eye, it uses the transparency of the eggs to separate them. Light does not pass through the white, unfertilized eggs.

The machine at Randolph Hatchery can pick up to 380,000 eggs per hour. The viable eggs are remeasured, then wrapped in wet cheesecloth and placed in insulated shipping containers for transport to other hatcheries. Ice is placed above the eggs to keep them moist and cool during shipping. Bottled oxygen and plastic bags with water are another way to ship eggs.

After they arrive at their destination, the eggs are disinfected in an iodine bath and are then ready for incubation. It takes roughly 60 days for trout eggs to hatch, depending on water temperature. The entire fall egg take involves nearly two months of spawning, picking, and shipping of the eggs.

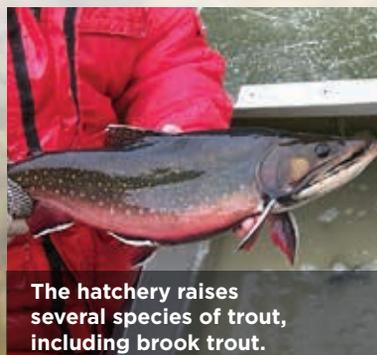
Once broodstock have provided the required egg quotas, they are stocked out. Each fall, staff stock between 3,000 to 5,000 adult broodstock, ranging in length from 15 to 28 inches. Most go into inland lakes in western New York, and provide a unique fall fishing opportunity for anglers.

Randolph Hatchery also has three, one-third-acre earthen ponds that are currently being used for northern sunfish (*Lepomis peltastes*) production. These fish are being maintained here for possible future stocking support for recovery of this endangered species in western New York.

Richard Borner is the manager at DEC's Randolph Fish Hatchery.



Staff take more than 5.5 million eggs each fall.



The hatchery raises several species of trout, including brook trout.

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Brook Trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*)

- New York's official State fish.
- A colorful native of NY waters.
- Found in small- to moderate-sized streams, lakes, and ponds, wherever clean water is available.
- Brookies are highly popular game fish. They can be caught on small spinners, worms, and artificial flier.





Leeks

A Homegrown Delicacy

BY SUSAN P. GATELEY | PHOTOS BY AUTHOR UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

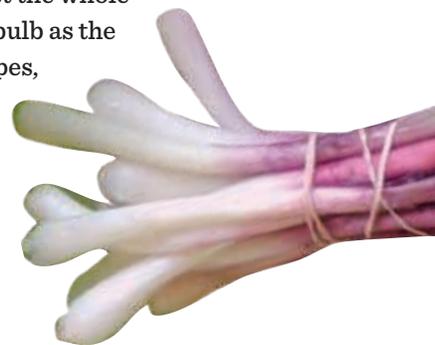
Each spring, before the tree canopy closes in and shades the ground, I search the sunlit forest on my property for wildflowers. I delight in dainty toothwort, glorious trillium, verdant mayapple leaves, and the brief early flowers of bloodroot. And I look for leeks.

The smooth, lance-shaped leaves of the plants known as leeks, wild garlic, or ramps have their own beauty. They form dense patches that spring forth like flickers of green flame across the forest floor. (See the April 2012 *Conservationist* for a good description of the plant.)

After a long winter of eating bagged spinach and plastic-wrapped lettuce from Yuma, Arizona, homegrown leeks are a welcome treat. Add a few raw leaves for some zip to your salad, steam them as a cooked veggie, make some leek soup, or add the leaves to an omelet—cooking transforms their pungency into a delicate, slightly sweet delight. I rank them right up there with nettles, goosefoot, and fern fiddleheads as among the best of the wild foods.

I'm not alone in this feeling, which is why for years leek pickers have scoured the woodlands of the state during the brief season from late April to early May. Some sell their harvest to upscale restaurants in New York City. During annual spring celebrations, hundreds of pounds of leeks are grilled, steamed, pickled, or fried, and happily consumed amidst music and sunlight. But this popularity comes at a price, as wild leeks seem to be getting scarcer. In fact, a huge roadside patch near my house suddenly vanished a couple of years ago. And once picked, leeks are very slow to regenerate.

Leek pickers usually harvest the whole plant and use its small white bulb as the main ingredient in many recipes, such as leek soup or bread. However, leeks spread mainly by division of their bulbs, and a patch decimated





A leek is a welcome sign for outdoor lovers, with the stalks emerging in spring and flowers blooming in summer.

by digging can take years or even decades to recover. Just disturbing the soil can open a leek patch to other competing plants, including invasives like aggressive garlic mustard. Based on these factors, leeks are now protected in Quebec, and seem to be at risk in New York State.

Being naturally lazy, as well as conservation-minded, I decided some years ago to start a wild leek patch by my house. I took half-a-dozen clumps from a friend's property and established them at various locations around the shaded edges of my yard. Some thrived and some didn't, but a clump under ash and black cherry trees expanded to a decent-sized patch in about five years.

To promote sustainability, only pick the leaves of wild leeks, and leave the bulbs in the ground. Also, don't overharvest patches. Leeks are slow to regenerate, so leaving some alone will help them thrive.



I discovered that leeks do not compete well with weeds or grass, and seem to thrive in a shady spot under deciduous trees where the grass is thin or non-existent. They need the early spring sun and seem to enjoy being under maples and beeches. They'll tolerate moist soil and are said to thrive in calcium-rich, slightly acidic soil. Some gardeners suggest mulching them in the fall with hardwood tree leaves if your plants don't get a leaf cover naturally; avoid commercial mulches that may contain dyes or other material potentially harmful to leeks.

While I have harvested dried leek flowers and scattered them around leek-less areas of our woodlot, I have no idea how many actually grew. I've read that it's a bit of a job to start them from seed and takes three to five years before you get a plant big enough to harvest. It's best to plant the seeds in late summer or early fall, and cover them with leaves to retain moisture. They may sprout either the following spring or after a second winter in the ground. But the easiest and fastest way to start leeks on your property is to start them from a transplanted clump.

After their short season of growth, the plants die down. Later in the summer, a round, globe-like flower appears and sets seed. Then the leek, like other forest ephemerals, disappears for another year.

As with asparagus, it takes a while to get a leek patch going, but once you've tasted them, you might find them worth the wait!

A biologist, sailor, and educator, **Susan P. Gateley** writes on a variety of topics, including history, nature, and the environment.

Editor's note: DEC reminds you to only harvest plants that can be taken sustainably, and be sure to positively identify any plant before ingesting it—there are poisonous look-alikes to wild leeks, such as the false hellebore.

A Tasty Treat

There are dozens of recipes for cooked ramp bulbs and leaves. I like to make a white sauce with a few chunks of cheddar cheese melted down, and then add steamed leaves and serve with or on buttered toast. A couple of good handfuls of leaves steam down to a decent-sized serving.

Keep in mind that leek leaves will keep for a couple days in the refrigerator, but like most vegetables, they're at their best when fresh-picked.

YOUNGS ISLAND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

*A manmade island featuring shoreline
and migratory birds, and hunting & fishing*

BY CHIP HAMILTON

In the middle of Porpoise Channel, in the Three Village area of Long Island (Setauket, Stony Brook, and Old Field), lies a 21-acre dredge spoil island that has become a haven for local and migratory birds. The Youngs Island Wildlife Management Area (WMA) provides an escape from the bustle of a busy downtown— a place where people can enjoy wildlife-related activities such as fishing and waterfowl hunting.

Access to the island is by boat only (typically kayaks) and should be limited to the fall and winter seasons when local birds are not breeding on the island. Though relatively small, this WMA expands to nearly 100 acres when its adjacent mudflats are exposed at low tide, providing excellent wildlife foraging opportunities. Youngs Island WMA is part of an Audubon Important Bird Area (Nissequogue River Watershed and Smithtown Bay), and is a great location to spot long-legged waders, shorebirds, and most gull species. Seals have also been known to forage in the waters just off the shore.

Youngs Island was originally formed in the late 1950s when a channel was dredged out on the east side of the island to allow a second opening to Stony Brook Harbor. Because it was created through years of dredge placement,

the New York State Office of General Services (OGS) initially had ownership and jurisdiction of the island. In 2010, after many years of monitoring bird activity there, DEC approached OGS to request a transfer of jurisdiction to ensure the protection of the species that utilize the island throughout the year. In 2011, the transfer was completed. This also allowed DEC staff to make habitat improvements, and Stony Brook University to initiate scientific research projects here.

The island consists of approximately 15 acres of woody vegetation, such as native red cedar and the invasive tree-of-heaven. The remaining 6 acres are broken up into open sand dunes with seaside goldenrod and low coastal shrubs, such as poison ivy and beach rose. DEC has taken an active role in improving the habitat by cutting and removing invasive woody species and providing more open sandy habitat for shore-nesting birds that use the island during the breeding season.

The island's proximity to Stony Brook Village and a local boat ramp makes it an ideal location for quality birding. The use of a good spotting scope can reveal a large array of bird species that utilize the island and associated bays throughout the year.



The island features 15 acres of woody vegetation and six acres of sand dunes.



Lesser Scaup



Bufflehead

**LOCATED OFF THE NORTH COAST
OF SUFFOLK COUNTY, LONG ISLAND;
SIZE: 21 ACRES**



If You Visit

Youngs Island WMA is only accessible by boat (primarily kayak). There are no amenities, but visitors can observe a number of wildlife species, including the piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*), which is endangered in New York and federally listed as threatened.

The piping plover is one of Long Island's most important shore-nesting birds. Spread out on coastal beaches and bay front areas, there are approximately 380 breeding pairs each year on Long Island, and their iconic call is a harbinger of the summer months. In the past, Youngs Island and the associated beaches and mud flats have provided productive foraging and nesting habitat for piping plovers. Two nesting pairs have consistently called Youngs Island home.

On warm summer days, kayakers can expect to see piping plovers and other shorebirds foraging out on the open mudflats that surround the island. DEC staff has taken on the management goal of increasing the open sandy areas where the piping plovers nest on the northeastern part of the island, which will improve nesting success. For more information on piping plovers, check out www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7086.html.

And for more information about Youngs Island, call DEC's wildlife office at (631) 444-0310.

In winter, Youngs Island is an important resting stop for migrating waterfowl, particularly several species of special interest, including American black duck, lesser and greater scaup, mallard, canvasback, Canada goose, long-tailed duck, bufflehead, common goldeneye, American wigeon, and red-breasted merganser. Ice cover in the bays can influence the number of waterfowl species that use the bay complex.

During spring, the federally-listed piping plover (see sidebar) can be found using the significant nesting habitat located on the island. Youngs Island also provides habitat for nesting colonies of state-listed least and common terns, as well as hosting large nesting colonies of herring gulls, great black-backed gulls, great egrets, snowy egrets, and black- and yellow-crowned night-herons.

Youngs Island WMA is small in area, but big in diversity, and it's a great example of what a coastal dredge island can become with strong management and stewardship. This WMA will be providing quality opportunities for the public to view some of the island's iconic coastal species for years to come, and, if you love to watch piping plovers and other birds, it's well worth a trip.

Chip Hamilton is a Wildlife Biologist in DEC's Stony Brook office.



Yellow-crowned night-heron



Endangered piping plover

Sue Phillips



A visit to Youngs Island is an opportunity to see a variety of shorebirds and waterfowl species.



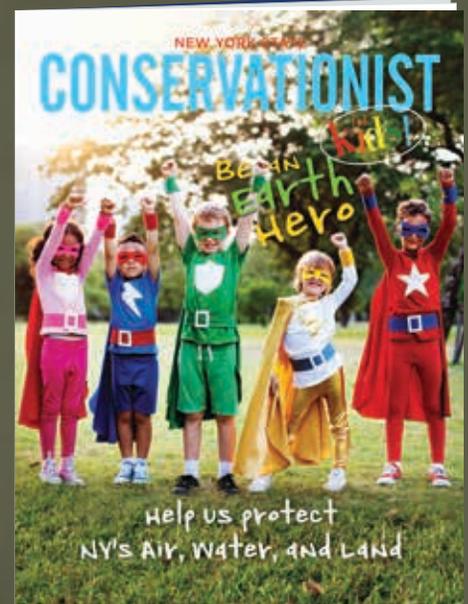
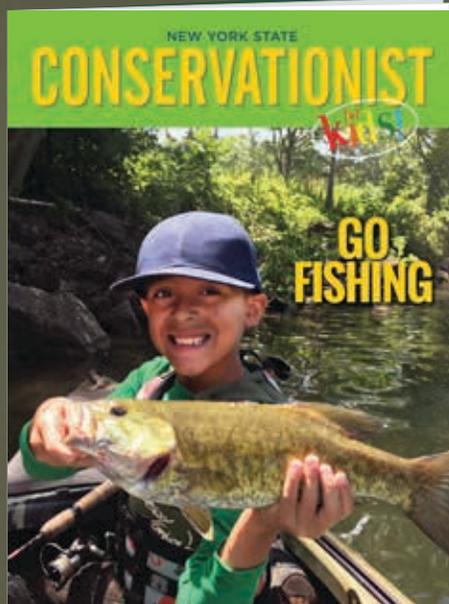
Celebrating NY's Women Hunters

Women are the fastest growing segment of adult hunters in New York, with nearly 50,000 licensed in the state. As part of an effort to recognize them, DEC sponsored a first-ever statewide photo contest. The response was amazing; the agency received more than 2,000 photos, along with hundreds of inspiring stories from women who love to hunt. The winning photo for each of six categories will be featured in this year's New York State Hunting and Trapping Regulations Guide, as well as on DEC's website, social media posts, and other outreach efforts, including in *Conservationist*. To view the winning photos and other contest entries, visit www.dec.ny.gov/press/116419.html.



Pilot Pharmaceutical Take-Back Program

Pharmaceutical drugs can improve a person's health, but when they are discarded, they can harm the environment and public health. DEC's Pilot Pharmaceutical Take-Back Program is helping address this problem by placing 250 collection boxes in retail pharmacies, hospitals, and long-term care facilities across New York to encourage the safe disposal of unused and expired medications. To date, more than 7 tons of unwanted medications have been collected, preventing them from being misused or polluting our waterways. This year, DEC will be adding another 230 boxes across the state, including one in the lobby of DEC's Albany headquarters. For more information or to find a medication collection box near you, visit <https://on.ny.gov/rxdropbox>.



C4Ks on the Web

The two latest issues of Conservationist for Kids (C4K) are now available on DEC's website at www.dec.ny.gov/education/100637.html. The Winter 2019 issue, *Go Fishing*, introduces children to freshwater fishing in New York State, giving an overview of some of the common sportfish, as well as the basics of how to fish. The Spring 2019 issue, *Be an Earth Hero*, discusses actions that can be taken to help protect New York's air, water, and land. Check them out.



State Acquires 50 Acres in the Catskills

The site of the historic Rip Van Winkle House in Greene County is part of a 50-acre land parcel in the Catskills that New York State acquired in late March. The entire parcel was added to the Catskill Forest Preserve, expanding recreation access and opportunities for visitors as part of the Windham Blackhead Ranger Wilderness Area. Recreation opportunities include hiking, hunting, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. DEC maintains about 1,400 feet of frontage on the Old Catskill Mountain Turnpike as a hiking trail that leads to the former Catskill Mountain House site at North-South Lake campground. Foundations of the Rip Van Winkle House can be found along the trail.



Watch for Bears and Coyotes

Come spring, temperatures warm up and bears emerge from dens and coyotes begin to raise families. Bears will travel great distances in search of food to replenish their nutrients and body fat lost during the winter. Coyotes are also foraging for food (almost constantly) to feed their young. As such, there is the potential for increased conflicts with humans. To reduce or prevent potential conflicts, DEC recommends: Don't intentionally feed coyotes or bears (it's illegal and dangerous), and prevent access to unintentional food sources such as pet food, garbage, and bird feeders. Also, enclose compost piles, and clean off barbecue grills before nightfall (don't forget the grease trap). Remember, always appreciate wild animals from a distance.



Revolutionary Remains Found

In early February, a Revolutionary War cemetery was unearthed during construction of an apartment building near the Lake George Battlefield Park at the southern end of Lake George in Warren County.

DEC archaeologists joined colleagues from the New York State Museum and the State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to assess the site, which contained the remains of 19 individuals. Uniform buttons found with one skeleton belonged to the First Pennsylvania Battalion, which was only in the area for one year. It is believed the remains were part of a hospital burial site that was located there. The remains were sent to the State Museum for further examination, and will be reinterred in the Lake George area.

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Berry Beautiful

A dozen cedar waxwings visited my crabapple tree last April. They had quite a feast and seemed undisturbed by my presence while I was taking photos.

JOSEPH BELMONT
HERKIMER COUNTY

Cedar waxwings can be seen year-round, eating berries. Very social birds, they are often found in flocks. The mixture of markings—the pale brown head, pale yellow belly, and soft gray tail with a bright yellow tip—make them a beautiful bird to spot. Sometimes, cedar waxwings have red on the tips of their wings.

Spotlight on...

In our “Species Spotlight: The Red Fox” in the February 2019 issue, we asked readers to send their ideas for future spotlights. We are keeping a list of your suggestions, which include: flying squirrel, mink, pileated woodpecker, and bobcat. Keep your ideas coming!



Getting Ready

I took this photo of eagles in their nest a week before a late winter storm last April.

BILL COMBS, JR.
SCHOHARIE COUNTY

Bald eagles mate for life, returning to nest in the general area (within 250 miles) from which they fledged. Once a pair selects a nesting territory, they use it for the rest of their lives. The nest is added to (decorated) each year, often becoming eight or more feet deep, six feet across, and weighing hundreds of pounds.



Spring Sunset

I thought your readers would enjoy this gorgeous sunset. It was taken at the top of a hill where we spotted about 86 deer just before the sunset.

JANIE FERGUSON
STEBEN COUNTY

Thanks for sharing that beautiful sunset with us, Janie.



Ask the Biologist

Q: I found this seal “stranded” on rocks in the Hudson River last April. I watched from a distance, and after the tide came in enough he waddled to deeper water and swam a bit before climbing on some higher rocks to rest some more. It looks like a harp seal, but aren’t they usually found in the Arctic Ocean or North Atlantic?

—KATE SHUTER, ULSTER COUNTY

A: You are correct—this is a harp seal—a highly migratory species. In late September, they begin to migrate south from the far North Atlantic and Arctic Ocean. Their local appearance here in New York usually occurs between January and May when they’re at their southernmost point of migration. There have been twice as many harp seal sightings in 2019 (30) than in 2017 and 2018 combined. Seals are protected; people should not disturb them and should always stay at least 100 yards away.

—MEGHAN RICKARD, DEC MARINE ZOOLOGIST



Home Sweet Home

This squirrel was peeking out of its nest at Reinstein Woods Preserve.

BILL MAJOR

Squirrels nest in leaf nests and in more stable and protected dens in hollow tree trunks. Tree dens are used year-round, but are particularly necessary in winter.

Through a Train Window Correction

Several readers pointed out that in “Through a Train Window” in the February 2019 issue, we identified Fort Montgomery as being located in “the Palisades” with rock climbing opportunities nearby. We were speaking about the Palisades Region (not just the Palisades Ridge), which encompasses both the fort and the Shawangunk Mountain Ridge, a mecca for rock climbers. Rock climbing is prohibited along the Palisades Ridge. Thanks for pointing out that we needed to clarify this for our readers.

Unimpressed?

I love seeing the tom turkeys strut their stuff in the spring for the ladies—taken at the Buckland Park in Brighton last year.

CLAIRE TALBOT
MONROE COUNTY

In the spring, you may be able to see a courtship display near the edges of woodlands, where toms (males) gobble, strut, drag their wings, and spread their tail feathers to attract hens. In this photo, the hens appear unimpressed.



CONTACT US!

@ magazine@dec.ny.gov



Conservationist Letters
NYSDEC, 625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233-4502



facebook.com/NYSDECtheconservationist

Back Trails

Perspectives on People and Nature

Fishing is About the Sighs

BY PETER CONSTANTAKES

When I was young, my best friend and I would often hike up a nearby hill to Oakwood Cemetery in Troy. It was a quiet place with lots of trees and a pond, as well as gravestones and a few mausoleums, which older kids claimed housed the bones of vampires.

One day I met my friend at the pond. He had a fishing pole in hand, along with a bucket and cup full of nightcrawlers. I watched him cast from a spot surrounded by bushes. The line arced gracefully, and the baited worm broke the surface. A few moments later, he reeled in his catch. It was so exciting.

He asked if I wanted to try. I took the pole. He explained the casting technique, but I knew what to do. So, I took the pole, cocked my right arm across my torso and pushed the release button as I swiftly brought the pole forward for an expert cast. But instead of the hook and worm landing in the water, they were tangled in the bushes next to us. I think I recall a heavy sigh from my friend. I definitely recall him spending 15 minutes trying to untangle the line before cutting it. We walked silently home.

My next fishing excursion, a few years later, was at a dock at a private camp on Lake George where even a complete novice could catch a fish (good news for me). We just dropped the line off the dock, waited 10 seconds, and reeled in sunfish. It was fun to actually catch fish.

Maybe that made me overconfident. My next fishing outing, at a nearby canal when I was 12, started with hope, but ended with heavy rains, water rising as the lock gates opened,



Sometimes the most successful anglers are not always the most experienced.

and my friend struggling with an eel on his line. I didn't fish again for nearly 20 years.

I hadn't intended on going fishing again, but my roommate convinced me to get a license. After jogging along the Mohawk River, he took out a couple fishing poles from his car and we sat along the bank in a shady area. I was content to sit and enjoy the beautiful day as he fished. He caught a few and tossed them back.

He encouraged me to cast, so I grabbed the pole. I'm not sure exactly what happened, but I tangled the line (badly) again. We exchanged poles, and as he struggled to untangle my mess, I simply let my line rest in the water. Then I heard him shout. When I looked over, I saw the bottom half of his pole (with reel) disappear in the water, leaving him with just the upper end and line in hand.

I felt bad and handed him my pole, but he refused. He sat there, with half a pole in hand, the hooked line

popped down in the water like a Tom Sawyer scene. Ten minutes later he caught a fish and pulled the line in hand over hand. It was large, but he promptly tossed it back. Then he took the other pole from me and we headed back to the car, not saying a word (though I'm sure I heard a few quiet snickers). An angler with half a pole caught a fish—I caught zilch.

Despite my lack of skill, I had fun when I fished. I may not be bitten by the fishing bug like my friends are, but I understand the joy of fishing; though they may want to give me a wide berth when I cast.

Peter Constantakes is the Assistant Editor for *Conservationist*.

Editor's note: Millions of New Yorkers, young and old, enjoy fishing. Peter might want to attend a free DEC fishing clinic to learn from experts. Check out www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/27123.html to find a clinic near you.

A man with a backpack and a young girl in athletic wear are hiking on a rocky trail through a lush green forest. The man is in the foreground, walking away from the camera, and the girl is further down the trail, also walking away. The scene is bright and sunny, with dappled light on the rocks and foliage.

Arbor Day Can Be Every Day

Arbor Day (April 26, 2019)

is the official day we recognize the importance of trees in our lives. Not only do trees produce oxygen, clean our air and water, and provide wildlife habitat, but spending time among trees and in nature in general also makes us healthier and happier.

Most of us already sense that taking a walk in a forest is good for us. Now, research is showing that visiting a forest has real, quantifiable health benefits, both mental and physical. Spending even just a few minutes in nature as part of your regular schedule can help lower blood pressure, reduce stress, and improve your ability to focus. It's not just a forest's beauty that calms us—exposure to their fresh air boosts our immune systems too.

So whether your nearby nature is a city park, a local forest, or your own backyard, spend some time among the trees this Arbor Day and your body, mind, and soul will thank you. Even better, make it a habit beyond Arbor Day and the benefits could last a lifetime.



See Page 8

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