

NEW YORK STATE

# CONSERVATIONIST

OCTOBER 2018



## ARE NEW YORK'S FALL COLORS AT RISK?

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HUNTING | ARTIFICIAL REEFS | WHALES

Humpback whale breaching



NEW YORK STATE  
**CONSERVATIONIST**

Volume 73, Number 2 | October 2018  
Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of New York State

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION  
Basil Seggos, *Commissioner*  
Sean Mahar, *Asst. Commissioner for Public Affairs*  
Harold Evans, *Director of Office of Communication Services*

THE CONSERVATIONIST STAFF  
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Peter Constantakes, *Assistant Editor*  
Megan Ciotti, *Business Manager*  
Jeremy J. Taylor, *Conservationist for Kids*  
Ellen Bidell, *Contributing Editor*

DESIGN TEAM  
Andy Breedlove, *Photographer/Designer*  
Jim Clayton, *Chief, Multimedia Services*  
Mark Kerwin, *Graphic Designer*  
Robin-Lucie Kuiper, *Photographer/Designer*  
Mary Elizabeth Maguire, *Graphic Designer*  
Jennifer Peyser, *Graphic Designer*  
Maria VanWit, *Graphic Designer*

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Dear Reader,

Outdoor traditions like hunting, hiking and fishing have defined our state for many generations, yet, as most of you are aware, our natural resources and way of life are being threatened by climate change. In this issue we take a look at the impacts on some of New York's key species and habitats from our forests to our marine waters (see pg. 6). DEC is tackling this problem on many fronts, including responding to destructive storms like Superstorm Sandy and

damaging flooding like we recently saw in the Finger Lakes region (see pg. 19). Our goal is to preserve vital natural resources and wildlife habitats, protect people from the impacts of a warming climate, and preserve the quality of life we enjoy in New York. I encourage you be an active partner in the crucial effort.

Fall heralds the exciting return of deer and bear hunting seasons, New York has a long and proud hunting tradition, which is captured in articles on the unique camaraderie of hunting camps and a father-son hunting experience (see pgs. 2 and 36). I wish the best of luck to the more than half a million hunters in the state.

Autumn is also a great time to head outside for a hike with friends or family, and there are many great options across the state. If you are visiting the Adirondacks, you have a wide range of opportunities, including some less-traveled hiking trails (see pg. 20).

At DEC, we strive not only to protect our resources, but expand them as well. For those of you who love fishing, check out the article on how New York is creating artificial reefs off Long Island to enhance marine habitats and provide new opportunities for anglers and divers. Also, learn about the whales in New York waters and efforts to protect these mighty sea mammals (see pgs. 12 and 16).

*Conservationist* readers have always been great environmental stewards and valuable partners in preserving our magnificent outdoor resources. Let's continue to work together to keep our environment healthy, accessible and beautiful.

All the best,  
Basil Seggos, Commissioner



Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation



## HUNTERS:

### Want Older Bucks in New York?

### It's Your Choice

Many deer hunters dream of seeing and shooting a large buck. But there is great temptation for a hunter to take the first buck he sees, often a young buck, when the opportunity presents itself.

New York hunters can increase the likelihood they will harvest an older, larger buck simply by choosing to pass up shots at young, small-antlered bucks. Older bucks create more rubs and scrapes. They are more challenging to hunt, and they yield more meat—all things that may enhance the deer hunting experience.

Many New York hunters are already voluntarily choosing to pass on young bucks. As a result, the availability and harvest of older, larger-antlered bucks has been increasing.

To see and take more older bucks, DEC encourages hunters to work with neighbors and hunting partners to cooperatively reduce harvest of young bucks, improve habitat conditions, and ensure adequate harvest of antlerless deer.

For more information, see [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/27663.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/27663.html)



## Venison Donation Coalition Help End Hunger

Hunters can donate venison to food pantries and soup kitchens throughout the state through the Venison Donation Coalition (VDC). One deer makes 160 servings!

VDC is a nonprofit organization that coordinates the efforts of hunters, deer processors, food banks, individuals and organizations to provide high-protein, low-fat meat to the hungry. If hunters donated one of every 100 deer taken, the program could easily reach 100,000 pounds of venison to feed the hungry.

**It's easy to participate:** simply bring your legally tagged and properly field-dressed deer to a participating processor (see [www.venisondonation.org](http://www.venisondonation.org)). There is **NO COST TO THE HUNTER!**

Hunters can also donate dollars to this program when they buy their license.

And you needn't be a hunter to contribute. Anyone can donate either online or by mailing a check to: The Venison Donation Coalition, 3 Pulteney Square, Bath, NY 14810

For more information, call

**1-866-862-3337**

or visit the website at

[www.venisondonation.org](http://www.venisondonation.org)

**Donate Dollars-Donate Venison**

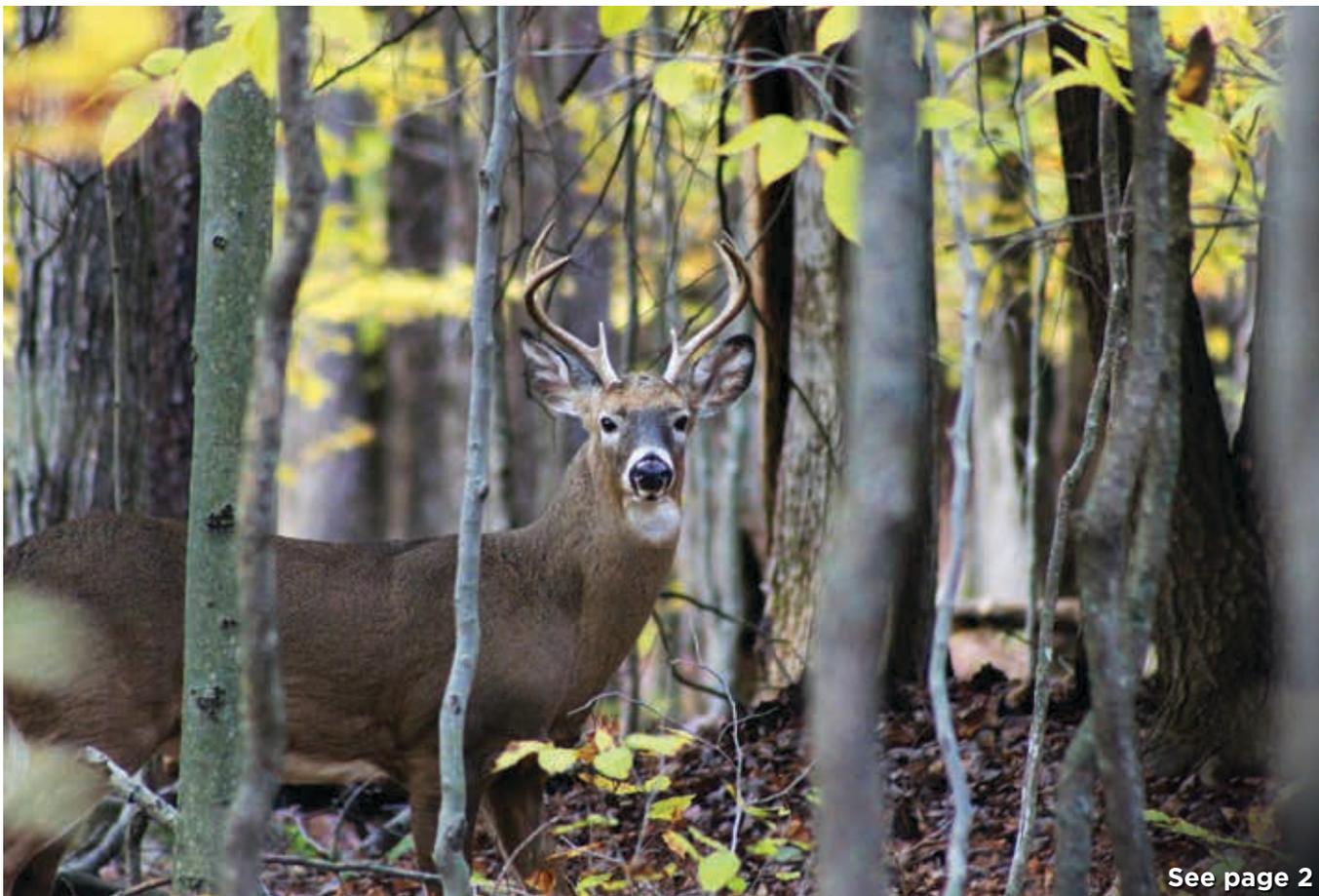
## REPORT YOUR HARVEST



### TAKE IT. TAG IT. REPORT IT.

It's the LAW, and important for wildlife management.

- **Online:** [www.dec.ny.gov](http://www.dec.ny.gov)
- **By phone:** 866-426-3778
- **Mobile App:** NY Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife App can be downloaded from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store



See page 2

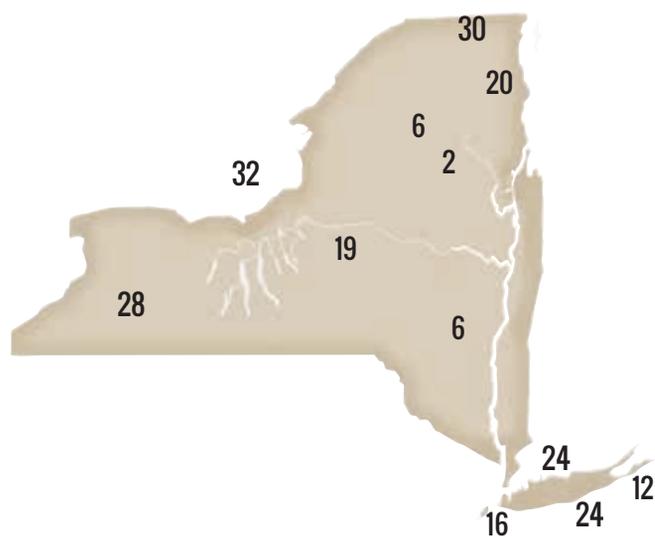
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FRONT COVER: Sugar maple

BACK COVER: Fall hiking by Jim Clayton



# THE JOY OF DEER CAMP

BY DAN LADD | PHOTOS BY AUTHOR UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

Deer hunting has always been a staple in my family. When I was growing up in the southeastern Adirondacks, it seemed like all the men in my family, and a few of the women, were deer hunters. It felt like an eternity back then as I waited to go afield, but when the time finally came for me to join the ranks of the family hunting party and experience that rite of passage, I was more than willing to do so. It just came naturally. But something happened early on in my hunting career that changed my life, not to mention my approach to hunting: I was introduced to Adirondack whitetails.

When I was 14, my father began taking care of a friend's small hunting camp not far from our home. It sat on a small pond, and other than a neighboring vacation home, there were no other buildings around except, of course, the camp woodshed and privy.

That camp came alive each autumn, and the memories I have of my teenage years there are priceless. On either Thursday or Friday night, my dad and I would head to the camp to open it up for the weekend. This involved me fetching firewood and water while my father tended to things like the wood stove and gas lights. The owner would be arriving soon, and we'd have all this stuff ready for him and his guests.

The best times at the camp were when we stayed there ourselves. Even though it was close to home, a night at deer camp was an adventure all its own. From staring at the autumn night sky to visiting that privy on a frosty November morning, those experiences defined deer camp for me then, and they still do.

The key attribute about being at a hunting camp hasn't changed since those days—the fact that the deer woods are (usually) right at your back door. They're waiting for you at sunrise, just as the camp awaits you at sunset. The deer camp experience is hard to beat.

## **Tradition**

Hunting camps have been around pretty much as long as hunting has. The Adirondack region is a prime example of what transpired across many northern states during the latter part of the nineteenth century. "Sports," as they were called, from big cities visited the mountains and often stayed at back-country cabins with their guides as hosts. By the early twentieth century, many game laws were in place, and deer hunting continued to become quite popular as a recreational activity, with the reward often being a winter's supply of venison.

The deer camp as we know it today evolved steadily in the post-WWII era. Big landowners, such as timber companies, were already offering recreational leases, and they became much more popular after the war. Deer hunting became a ritual, and some hunters sought out private land where they could build their own deer shack. Some had more property than others, but many were located very close to public lands.

The Baby Boomer generation would see deer hunting reach its peak in popularity. But times change. Today, that generation continues to age-out of hunting, which, along with other factors, has resulted in some changes in the hunting industry that are reflected in the deer camps.

While many large recreational leases still remain, several have gone by the wayside. This is especially the case when timber company lands become former timber company lands, and are added to the Forest Preserve ranks. On one hand, such places are there for all to use, including hunters. But for the hunting club or camp, it can mean the end of its era.

Public lands themselves offer an opportunity to establish a temporary fall hunting camp, and hunters continue to capitalize on this option in the form of backwoods tent camps, an Adirondack lean-to, or even parking an RV on one of many roadside campsites for a weekend. Some even obtain a permit from the local Forest Ranger to spend more time there.

Just as they always have, deer camps come in many shapes and sizes. For some, a deer camp is a vacation home, with running



**A Family Affair** - The 1959 camp crew adults include (l-r) the author's uncles, Duff, Jim and Ed, their hunting camp partner, Corky, great grandfather Warren, and cousins, Veronica and Emily

water and satellite TV. But for most, a small shack with a wood stove, or a tent or RV tucked away near good hunting ground, more than serves the purpose.

### **Hunting from Camp**

Being able to hunt within close proximity of a camp is perhaps the biggest luxury of being there. That, and of course, the comforts of a hot meal, a warm bed, and a good place to gather at the end of the day.

Although hunting trends are changing, there are still many deer camps that rely on the time-trusted deer drive as the chosen hunting method. Having the hunter or a group of hunters move through the forest in an attempt to push or "drive" deer towards fellow hunters seems simple enough. But in the big timber, such as the Adirondacks, it requires woodsmanship. I was taught early on how to use landmarks as defining features and eventually found the map and compass to be my best friends.

The one thing that is plainly obvious in group hunting is the camaraderie. Our family-based hunting party, known today as the Iron Sight Gang, still enjoys this aspect. It is something we inherited from our fathers and uncles. Everyone plays a role on a well-planned deer drive, where safety is always a focus. When we are successful, everyone is to be congratulated because it's a team effort.

That is not to say there aren't other hunting tactics. Some hunters prefer to still-hunt for their deer by moving slowly and strategically through an area where they expect to encounter deer. Others are very good at tracking bucks in the snow. And still others prefer to take a seat and wait for their deer to come to them. This tactic is very common today, especially in the farm country, and I know a number of "stump sitters," as I call them, who are routinely successful.



**Our simple deer camp provides shelter, camaraderie, and lasting memories.**

## Deer Camp Life

The key elements of a good deer camp are a roof over your head to stay dry, and a reliable heat source. Aside from hunting itself, most of the hunter's efforts are geared towards these two amenities.

Owning or being part of a camp comes with responsibilities. Structures need to be cared for in the off-season. Often, the heat source is a wood stove, so firewood must be cut. Most organized camps have work days in the off-season just for these purposes.

When deer season finally comes, the fruits of their labors are realized. As hunters arrive for the first weekend, old friendships are rekindled and plans are made over an evening meal for the next day's hunt. Some camps have an official camp cook, but most share cooking duties as well other camp chores. All are equal in deer camp.

After a hearty morning breakfast, it's off to the woods. Our group usually hunts the entire day, or at least most of it, and unless we're hunting in the vicinity of the camp, we won't return until the day's hunting is done. Alternatively, some camp groups will return for lunch and go back out in the afternoon.

When the sun goes down, the hunting camp becomes the center of activity. This is when stories are told at the dinner table or around the wood stove. Perhaps a poker game is undertaken. To many hunters, this is the best

part of the entire camp experience, and although some stories have been told many times before, they never get old. A camp log or journal is one place such stories can be preserved for the next generation of hunters, or where they can be referred to in a moment's notice.

## Full Circle

Shortly after I graduated from college, the gentleman who owned the camp where I spent my teenage years built a home and retired there. However, our deer camp

**Top:** Deer camp is the center of activity in the hunting experience. **Bottom:** A successful season getting the elusive Adirondack buck.



remains one of only two residences on the pond, and the surrounding mountains are still roamed each autumn by the Iron Sight Gang and other hunters.

We've also discovered some new hunting grounds and made new hunting acquaintances. One veteran deer hunter who joined our ranks owns a small, rustic camp that was in much need of repair. We were grateful when he suggested we could fix up the old camp to provide the deer camp experience to the younger hunters in our group.

The camp is as basic as it gets. The main camp is 16' x 16' and contains a wood stove, dining table and a long counter. We use Coleman lanterns and stoves for light and cooking, and sleep on cots on an extended porch. It can comfortably accommodate six to eight hunters, and we spend our share of time there each autumn.

After a day's hunting, we come back to the camp, have a warm meal and relax around the wood stove. Many nights I step outside and look at the stars, just as I did when I was

young. The only sound we hear is the wind or the rain on the tin roof. Before breaking camp at the end of the hunt, I always make a journal entry.

Not all of today's hunters are as lucky as I have been; not only to have the deer hunting heritage passed on to me, but also to be able to enjoy the life in a deer camp. I sincerely hope that every hunter who takes to the woods to chase the crafty white-tailed deer has the opportunity to one day have the deer camp experience.

**Dan Ladd** is a weekly outdoor columnist for *The Chronicle* in Glens Falls. He is currently working on a third edition of his book *Deer Hunting in the Adirondacks*, and is the web author of [ADKHunter.com](http://ADKHunter.com).



Left: The ultimate goal for all camp hunters.  
Right: Tim and Bill Ladd, and Uncle Buck have a great day to hunt.

# CLIMATE CHANGE

AFFECTS

# NEW YORK'S SPECIES

ARE FALL  
COLORS AT  
RISK?

BY RENEE CHO

*Editor's Note: Most New Yorkers are familiar with the term "climate change," but many may not be fully aware of how it could affect them and the world around them, including forests, wildlife, weather, and other aspects of their daily lives. Author Renee Cho addresses these topics, and we have also included some information at the end of her article on the steps New York has taken to address this important issue.*

Climate change, which is already affecting New York, will have profound effects on the state's ecosystems, plants and animals.

## Warming Temperatures

The average temperature in New York State has risen 2.4° F since 1970, with winters warming more than 4.4° F. If this trend continues, by the 2080s, temperatures will likely go up 10°F, and heat waves will be more frequent, intense and longer lasting. Already, New York is experiencing more summer days over 90°F, and fewer winter days below 32°F. By the end of this century, New York will probably feel like the Southeast does today.

For many species, temperature is the trigger for key lifecycle events. Because spring in New York now arrives a week earlier than it did several decades ago, long-established symbiotic and synchronized relationships between food sources and migrating species, and interactions between plants and pollinators or predators and prey, may become out of sync.

Species adapted for warm temperatures are extending their ranges, as habitat for species favoring cooler temperatures shrinks. New environments are often less hospitable for the species entering them, however, as there might be less space or more competition for food. Some species could be hemmed in if they are on a mountain or blocked by some obstruction. One study found that almost half the species that move to a cooler environment end up going extinct.

Of 119 species studied by the New York Natural Heritage Program, 70 were found to be vulnerable to climate change, with 17 species designated as extremely vulnerable and 9 as highly vulnerable. Some of the species most at risk include: the eastern tiger salamander; spruce grouse; shortnose, lake and Atlantic sturgeon; and bog turtle.

New York City Audubon reported that more than 100 of the 350 bird species that depend on New York City are currently species of concern, while across the state, bohemian waxwings, black-throated green warblers, evening grosbeaks and others are at risk because they are losing their summer and/or winter range.



Evening grosbeak

## Forests in Flux

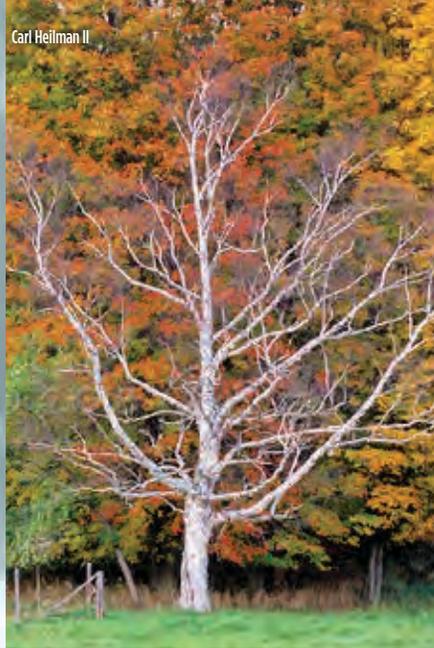
About 65 percent of New York is forested, but the forests are changing. To remain in their optimal climate parameters through the year 2100, trees will need to shift their ranges 9,800 to 16,400 feet yearly, much farther and faster than they have moved in response to changes in climate over the last 10,000 years. Their inability to keep up could result in degraded forests that are more vulnerable to invasive species.

As tree species move north or to higher elevations, New York is expected to lose its spruce-balsam fir forests in the Catskills and Adirondack Mountains by 2100. Sugar maples, beech, birch, elm, ash and cottonwoods are also moving north, while hardwoods like oak and hickory, and invasive plants are moving in. The new mix of species will affect our fall color composition and could alter the productivity of forests and the crucial ecosystem services they provide, such as regulating water or retaining nitrogen in the soil.

## Which Species Benefit

Some species will benefit from warmer winters and longer growing seasons, including invasive plants that disrupt ecosystems and agriculture. Many weeds thrive with more CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere, and in response to warmer temperatures, invasive plants are flowering 11 days earlier than native plants. Invasive species such as the common reed, Eurasian watermilfoil, and Japanese knotweed spread quickly and can displace native plants.

“Some southern species are much more common here than they were 50 years ago,” said Matthew Palmer, senior lecturer in Columbia University’s Ecology, Evolution and Environmental Biology Department.



“The new mix of species will affect our fall color composition and could alter the productivity of forests and the crucial ecosystem services they provide...”

“Two invasive species that were a big problem in the southeast U.S.—mile-a-minute vine and kudzu—are now expanding rapidly in the New York area.”

Warmer temperatures also result in the proliferation of pathogens and pests, such as mosquitoes and ticks, and the diseases they spread—West Nile virus, encephalitis, Lyme disease and ehrlichiosis. More warmth means more insect generations per year, more migratory insects arriving earlier as spring comes earlier, and more insects and pathogens moving north and surviving the winters. This profusion of pests can affect the productivity, health and survivability of trees.

The hemlock woolly adelgid, an aphid-like insect native to Asia, now infests 43 New York counties. “The woolly adelgid, which destroys hemlock trees, continues to expand its range northward and westward, partly because the milder winters

allow them to survive,” said Palmer. “Warmer temperatures also accelerate insect biology, and warmer seasons cause insects to grow faster, produce larger individuals, which produce more eggs and more babies, and give them a longer feeding season.”

Moreover, because New York is a port of entry, it’s vulnerable to invasive species that hitchhike in on ships’ hulls or in ballast water. Zebra mussels, which thrive in warmer waters, first entered the Great Lakes in ballast water. They are now present in the Hudson River, Lake Champlain, Chautauqua Lake and many New York waters, where they compete with fish for food, clog pipes and kill native mussels.

## Changes in Oceans and Fish

Because the oceans have absorbed most of the heat trapped by greenhouse gases, sea surface temperatures over the last 30 years have been higher than last century’s average each year. In the Mid-Atlantic, ocean acidity and precipitation are also increasing, and salinity is decreasing.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) studied how 82 species of marine fish and invertebrates of the Northeast will respond to changes in sea surface temperatures, salinity, air temperature, precipitation, surface acidity, currents, and sea-level rise. It found that 42 would be affected negatively, including Atlantic sea scallops, Atlantic cod, and Atlantic mackerel; 14 will benefit from climate change, including anchovies, black sea bass, and bluefish.

More than half the species studied also showed high potential to change their distribution patterns. Some regional species are already doing so. Red hake, which used to be fished in New York, have moved 119 miles north.

Anglers in Long Island Sound are now catching scup, black sea bass, summer flounder and northern kingfish, species that were uncommon years ago. Lobsters, which used to be plentiful around New York, have contracted their range 200 miles north towards the Gulf of Maine, with the result being that New York's lobster catch dropped 97.7 percent from 1996 to 2014. Warmer waters are also responsible for a shell disease attacking lobsters, and ocean acidification, which hampers shell formation, will likely eventually affect lobsters, scallops and blue crab.

As marine species move north, the disparity between species that now flourish and fishing regulations based on fish populations of the past is growing. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, which regulates many state fisheries, is beginning to look at how catch quotas are allocated, recognizing that some formerly southern species have moved north.

### Major Storms

In the last 50 years, New York had 10 major storms (including hurricanes and tropical storms) that racked up \$11 billion in damages. Because of rising atmospheric and ocean temperatures, the strength and frequency of severe storms are expected to intensify, and with sea level rise, they will bring more coastal flooding and higher storm surges.



“Because of rising atmospheric and ocean temperatures, the strength and frequency of severe storms are expected to intensify...”

Heavy precipitation rose more than 70 percent between 1958 and 2010 and is expected to continue to increase. By the 2080s, every part of the state will likely have at least one day a year with more than two inches of precipitation.

Winter storms, which hit the Great Lakes and Adirondacks regions hardest, with cold spells, high winds and heavy snowfall, could become more severe because winter precipitation is expected to increase.

Intense storms can impact ecosystems through flooding and strong winds. Hurricane Sandy caused massive flooding and erosion, damaging coastal wildlife refuges

and breeding areas of coastal birds. Storms that wreak havoc on forests can displace animals and birds, and leave trees more vulnerable to wildfires, insect infestations and invasive plants. By disrupting ecosystems, extreme weather can also push at-risk wildlife species over the edge.

### Protective Strategies

A 2014 report, “Responding to Climate Change in New York State,” recommended strategies to protect ecosystems and species from the impacts of climate change. To improve the resilience of ecosystems, stresses such as insect infestations, invasive species, and nitrogen pollution or acid rain should be minimized. Ecosystem function and biodiversity should be priorities, instead of attempts to maintain today's specific mix of species, since biodiversity increases resiliency to disturbances. And to enable species to easily migrate and shift their ranges, connectivity between habitats must be established and protected.

New York continues to make strategic investments to combat climate change and protect communities from its destructive impacts, including extreme weather events. The State's 10 year/\$5 billion Clean Energy Fund advances energy innovation and accelerates projects like wind and solar that reduce New York's carbon footprint, improve energy efficiency, reduce harmful emissions, and enhance resiliency. You can read about some of New York's innovative climate efforts on the following page.

**Renee Cho** is an environmental writer and staff blogger for the Earth Institute's *State of the Planet*. Her work has been featured on [www.insideclimatenews.com](http://www.insideclimatenews.com), *E Magazine* and *On Earth Magazine*.

(Note: A previous version of Renee's article appeared on *State of the Planet*, a website of the Earth Institute at Columbia University.)



# New York Tackles Climate Change

BY DEC STAFF

Climate change is a global problem, yet its impacts are felt locally. In New York, we have seen an increase in average temperatures and precipitation, more destructive storms, more invasive species, a rise in sea level, and a northern shift in some species' ranges. Although a national and international response is necessary to effectively combat climate change, New York has taken vital steps to reduce its carbon emissions, which are the root of climate change.



## RGGI—INNOVATIVE EMISSIONS PROGRAM STILL GOING STRONG

New York was one of the founders of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), recognizing that states must work together to limit and reduce power plant emissions. Under RGGI, each participating state is given emissions allowances that cap the annual amount of carbon dioxide emissions from power plants in that state. The states sell these allowances in joint, quarterly auctions and powerplant operators must secure an allowance for each ton of CO<sub>2</sub> they emit. Over time, the total number of allowances decreases.

New York uses more than 90 percent of its auction proceeds to support energy efficiency improvements, development and deployment of renewable energy sources, and other greenhouse gas reduction programs. These programs work in tandem with market forces to achieve emissions decreases while total electricity costs remain stable. Carbon dioxide emissions from power plants in the area covered by RGGI have decreased more than 45 percent since 2005, without affecting electricity reliability or costs for consumers. In addition, other harmful air pollutants have decreased more than 90 percent, providing additional public health benefits. RGGI continues to be a positive tool to protect our atmosphere and reduce harmful impacts to our air, water, and land.



## REV—A CLEAN ENERGY VISION FOR A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

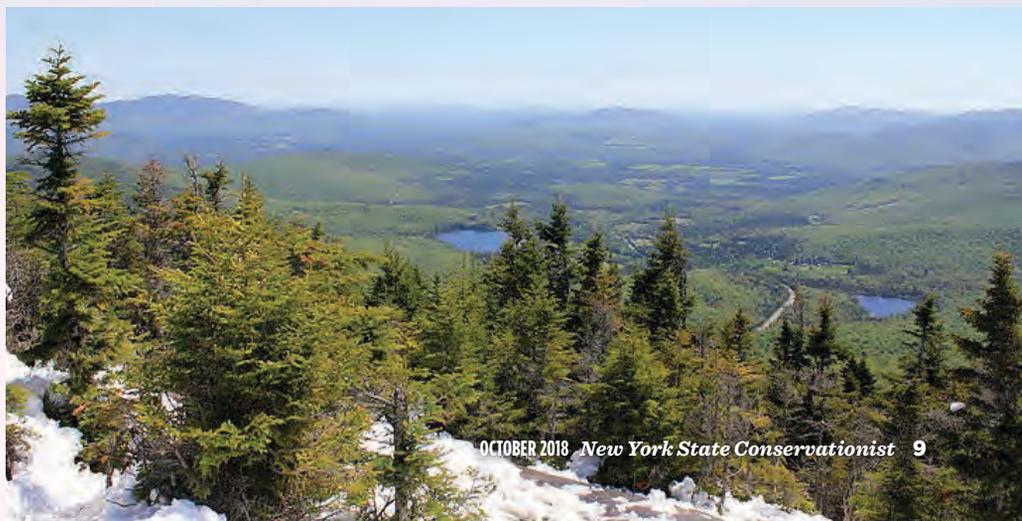
Under the Reforming the Energy Vision (REV) strategy, launched in 2014, New York is reducing emissions of global warming pollution, with a goal of lowering greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent by 2030 and 80 percent by 2050. Generating 50 percent of the state's electricity needs from renewable sources such as solar and wind, and improving energy efficiency are critical to meeting the state's nation-leading emissions reduction goals. New York is also working closely with other Northeast states and California to develop programs and promote actions that will limit the increase in the earth's average temperature, and work toward the common goal of creating a healthier, more sustainable climate. Learn more about REV and how you can be part of the climate solution at <https://rev.ny.gov/>.



## CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITIES—BUILDING A HEALTHIER FUTURE

Currently, 240 New York communities—home to more than 7.5 million people—have registered as Climate Smart Communities (CSCs), pledging to work to reduce local greenhouse emissions, increase their use of renewable sources of energy, build and strengthen resiliency against climate change impacts, support a green energy/innovation economy, and increase energy security and reliability. Eighteen of these communities have earned designation as Certified CSCs by documenting completion of specific actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

New York's Environmental Protection Fund provides CSC grants to help municipalities and protect the health of local citizens. Find out how your community can become climate smart by visiting <https://climatesmart.ny.gov/>.





# NEW YORK'S AUTUMN DISPLAY



**AUTUMN IN NEW YORK** is a special time, when cooler nights and shorter days cause the trees to become ablaze with color. Visitors travel from faraway places to enjoy the reds of sugar maples, bright orange oak trees, and the beautiful yellows and golds of beech and hickory trees—vibrant, natural colors you can only find in the Northeast this time of year. Bus tours ferry thousands of folks to witness and photograph the beauty of fall across New York, with a range of wonderful sites, from the Catskill and Adirondack Parks to the Finger Lakes and Hudson Valley; Montauk Point to the east and Letchworth and Allegany Parks to the west; as well as DEC forests in all areas of the state.

Here we showcase just a few pictures from our readers that capture the wonders of autumn in the Empire State. We encourage you to connect with nature and the autumn beauty all around you—and don't forget to bring a camera or phone to capture the experience.



Joe Lefevre



Robert Cook



Howard Jennings



Brendan Wilcox



# Battle for Survival

## —The Plight of North Atlantic Right Whales

BY MEGHAN RICKARD

Finding a North Atlantic right whale from the air is a little like searching for a needle in a haystack. Once sighted, however, a right whale is easily distinguishable from other large whales by its characteristic V-shaped blow, long arching mouth, broad back with no dorsal fin, and slow movements.

“Knowing their numbers are so low, it’s always exciting when we are able to document a North Atlantic right whale,” says Kate Lomac-MacNair, project manager and co-lead observer at Smultea Environmental Sciences, a subcontractor for DEC’s large whale aerial survey. A truly majestic animal, the species has become a poster child for the uphill battle against biodiversity loss.

Recently, the story of the plight of North Atlantic right whales has been circulating in newspapers, social media, and television news stories. Beginning last January, these gentle giants have been found dead at an alarming rate. Nineteen whales, about 4% of the remaining population, have been killed by ship strikes, entanglements, or other causes. In the Gulf of St. Lawrence in Canada, 12 whales were killed from June through September alone, and 7 were found dead in the United States. There are now only an estimated 430 North Atlantic right whales left. Every year, scientists track them, count them, and estimate their population size,

which has been declining during the past decade. A total of 5 calves were born in 2017, but with an average of 17 calves produced per year for the past couple of decades, the lack of *any* calves this year is cause for added concern.

The North Atlantic right whale, *Eubalaena glacialis*, weighs approximately 70 tons and averages 50 feet in length. They are about 14-feet long when born and typically live for 70 years, sometimes longer. They are one of fifteen species of baleen whales—known as mysticetes—which filter feed small prey items like fish and plankton like copepods—a right whale’s favorite meal. The whales swim with their mouths open just under the surface of the water through huge patches of copepods, catching the tiny, two- millimeter crustaceans in their baleen (large plates of keratin in the upper jaw) as the water runs through it, much like running a strainer through a pot of rice. Right whales communicate using low frequency sounds—typically groans and pulses—that travel for hundreds of miles through the ocean. Their calls are highly recognizable.

North Atlantic right whales differ from their North Pacific and South Pacific counterparts, considered separate species, primarily based on geographic location. Traditionally, North Atlantic right whale



distribution was very predictable: winter in the warm waters of the south, summer in the cold productive waters of the north. Females were commonly found on the calving grounds off the coasts of Georgia and Florida during the winter, and all age classes met off the coasts of New England and Canada in the summer to feed. Recently, however, there has been a shift in distribution. Right whales are not as common in these places as they once were.

Right whales got their name because they were the “right” whale to hunt: they are slow, come close to shore, and float when they are dead. Humans became so good at killing them, and whales in general,

“Recognizing the need for better data on large whales, DEC commenced the New York Bight Whale Monitoring Program last year.”

that their numbers dramatically decreased, resulting in an effort to conserve populations through an international whaling moratorium. For right whales, this protection came into effect when hunting them was banned in 1937. The shift away from products containing whale oil and blubber also worked in their favor. But even after their exploitation ended, North Atlantic right whales were still in danger. In 1990, the population was hovering somewhere around 250 individuals, still recovering from near annihilation by

whalers. Thanks to environmental laws and the moratorium, the population was on the rise until 2010.

Today, ship strikes and entanglements in fishing gear are the biggest threats to this whale's survival. In fact, 80 percent of right whale deaths are human-caused. Eighty-three percent of right whales will be entangled at least once in their lifetime, and around 50 percent of those individuals will be entangled again, some as many as seven times. Whales that get entangled in fishing gear—particularly pregnant, nursing,

or reproductive-age females—get stressed, making it harder to survive and reproduce, even if they get disentangled. As an example, following the high number of deaths, and resulting biological stress in 2017, there were zero calves during this year's 2018 calving season, which ended in March.

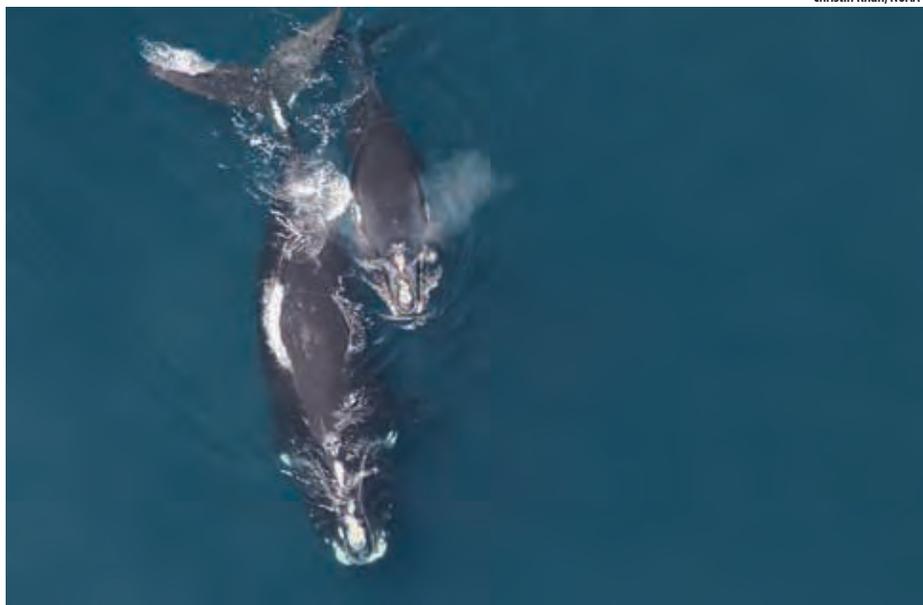
Adult female North Atlantic right whales are also dying sooner, experiencing almost double the calving interval, and producing their first calf later in life, at around 10 years old. Today, there are only 100



breeding females estimated to be living. While shipping and fishing have tangible impacts on right whales, the largely immeasurable effect of cumulative impacts is also taking its toll. The whales contend with a very busy ocean, facing pollution in the form of noise, debris, and chemicals, shifting food distributions as a result of climate change, and effects of possible oil and gas exploration. The best estimate from the scientific community that has been studying these whales for decades is that the current decline, if unchecked, will end in extinction by 2040.

North Atlantic right whales have been listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) since 1970. They are also protected under the 1972 Marine Mammal Protection Act. Because of the high number of mortalities last year, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)—the federal agency responsible for managing marine mammals like whales—declared an Unusual Mortality Event (UME) in August 2017. This declaration bolsters the investigation of the cause of death and any management actions needed. Critical habitat was already designated under the ESA, and expanded in 2016. When right whales are typically in the area, seasonal speed restrictions are employed around large ports on the East Coast to decrease the number of ship strikes. When a significant number of right whales is seen in a specific area for a continual time, NOAA will designate Dynamic Management Areas, wherein mariners are encouraged to avoid these areas or reduce speeds to 10 knots or less.

In 1996, the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team was established to bring stakeholders—



North Atlantic right whale female and calf

including state and federal entities, non-governmental organizations, fishing associations, and scientists—together to address the topic of fishing gear entanglements. Given the recent mortalities, counterparts in Canada joined the discussion to work together to prevent further deaths.

Despite their large size, whales can be hard to track and study, especially given the vastness of the ocean. Locally, whales occur in the New York Bight, an area of more than 12,000 square miles. Since whales are only at the surface a small percentage of their lives, a plane could be right over one that is deep in the water column and never know it. For noise-dependent surveys, such as passive acoustics, an animal has to be vocalizing. No survey method is perfect, but the combination of methods can help fill in those availability gaps and limitations.

Recognizing the need for better data on large whales, DEC commenced the New York Bight Whale Monitoring Program last year. The program was created to employ both visual and acoustic data collection over a three-year period

via monthly aerial surveys and a year-round passive acoustic survey. Data is being collected on six priority large whale species: fin, blue, sperm, sei, humpback, and North Atlantic right whale.

The aerial survey flies 15 line transects essentially perpendicular to the southern coast of Long Island out to the continental shelf break—approximately 110 nautical miles. Typically, the survey takes two to three days to complete, with two observers, two pilots, a still camera, and a video camera onboard. The passive acoustic survey uses 15 acoustic receivers placed adjacent to the Nantucket and Hudson Canyon shipping lanes. The receivers record data year-round and are swapped for downloading every four months.

During the first year of aerial surveys (March 2017 to February 2018), right whales were sighted in five of the twelve months. Researchers recorded eight sightings of 13 individuals; the highest sighting rate occurred in spring. This year has followed the same trend, with right whale sightings in March and April. Individual whales seen in March,

## WORKING TOGETHER TO PREVENT SHIP STRIKES

In 2007, a shift in shipping lanes off the coast of Massachusetts helped ships avoid collisions with right whales. Researchers looking at the locations of right whale sightings in Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary discovered that moving the shipping lanes slightly north would avoid highly concentrated whale

areas. After the adjustment was made, the ship strike risk for whales in this area was reduced by 81 percent.

Following this action, in January 2008, a network of ten acoustic buoys was added along the 55 miles of shipping lanes. With a listening radius of five nautical miles each, these buoys listen for right whale

vocalizations and relay them on to the Lab of Ornithology at Cornell University, which then verifies the acoustic recording and confirms right whale presence at that buoy. Ships are then notified. This process can take as little as 20 minutes, and allows captains to slow to 10 knots to avoid collisions.

January, and February in year one were confirmed by the New England Aquarium in Boston, which manages the right whale catalog. Each right whale has its own unique pattern of callosities—patches of white whale lice—on top of its head. Visual surveys, like DEC’s aerial surveys, photograph these patterns and use them to match individuals in the photo-identification database.

The two whales seen in March 2017 were identified as Palmetto and #3020. Palmetto is a reproductive female first sighted in 1989, making her at least 28 years old. She’s had four calves and has a large scar on the left side of her head. #3020 is also a reproductive female. She was first sighted in 2000 and has had two calves. A whale spotted in January 2018 was identified as #2160. It is of unknown gender, but has major scars on its peduncle, or tail stock, making this whale easy to identify.

Our sighting was only the second sighting of this whale with those scars; the first was recorded in 2013. The whale spotted in February 2018 is essentially unknown, but is likely two to three years old. This sighting might be the first recording of this individual, highlighting the importance of quality data collection for North Atlantic right whales.

Saving the North Atlantic right whale is a daunting task, but you can help. Small everyday actions can make a big difference if enough people do them. You can opt for reusable items, recycle everything you can, participate in local beach clean-ups, and support local and national conservation groups through volunteering time and/or donations. Stranding and disentanglement organizations on the East Coast are very busy responding to reports of right whales, and always looking for a little extra help.

When asked about the hope she feels for the future, Kate said, “Locating these endangered animals in their offshore habitat makes the long hours in a small airplane, scanning miles and miles of endless ocean, meaningful. This is why I became a marine biologist: to contribute something that makes a difference and conserves biodiversity.”

Hopefully, getting the word out about the plight of the North Atlantic right whale will raise awareness and save this important species. With the unwavering dedication of countless individuals across decades of time, this whale’s story is far from over.

**Meghan Rickard** is a marine biologist with the New York Natural Heritage Program & DEC’s Division of Marine Resources in East Setauket.

# WHALES AND THE CITY

## HOW CITIZEN SCIENCE IS HELPING SAVE WHALES

BY PAUL L. SIESWERDA | PHOTOS BY ARTIE RASLICH/GOTHAM WHALE

“ We see them all the time, right off the boardwalk.”

“ I have a photo somewhere on my phone of a humpback right near the boat when I was fishing off Staten Island.”

Quotes like these are being heard more often, as whales, dolphins and seals are becoming regular visitors to the waters around New York City. Most people would not have thought they'd ever have the chance to take a photo of these marine mammals in New York, but smart phones make it easy to snap a picture to record such encounters, and document the date and time of the sighting.

Gotham Whale, a whale research and advocacy organization in New York City, is studying the return of marine mammals to this area and is enlisting citizen scientists to help. Since 2011, the return of humpbacks to the New York Bight (located offshore of New York City) has been exponential. Gotham Whale documented these numbers primarily from observations aboard the whale watch vessel, the *American Princess*, but is currently expanding the reach through citizen science, asking citizens to report sightings to a central database called GWdata. The information will be retained to help analyze where these animals are present and what factors influence their behavior. This is especially critical as whales and shipping lanes overlap near the entrance to New York Harbor, creating potential threats to the whales.



Citizen science is not new. Audubon's Christmas Bird Count has been collecting backyard observations since 1900, and DEC has several projects underway, including wild turkey and New England cottontail surveys. Professional scientists cannot be in all places at once, so the many eyes of the general public can expand the scope in practical and cost-effective ways. Organizations like Gotham Whale can manage and direct the data collection to build maps and statistics that would otherwise cost millions through directed surveys. The basic information of what species, when and where they are found, and what they are doing, can all be documented on a smart phone. Gotham Whale is developing a phone app, MOBY CLICK, to make data entry simple and easy.

Through a new WANTED program, Gotham Whale can channel citizen observations into a standardized database. The program uses a "wanted poster"—like the Post Office's version of the FBI's Most Wanted—that shows the whale's fluke IDs (i.e., patterns on their tails) as a way of identifying individuals. This poster encourages citizens to report marine mammal sightings via an online form, and, like the FBI, provides a reward for reliable sighting information. If the report is documented with a photograph and the sender provides his/her contact info, date, time, location, species and number of whales that can be verified, Gotham Whale returns a voucher that can be redeemed for a free beer at any of a number of participating bars or breweries. The validated data is entered in GWDdata and used for research and conservation.

Gotham Whale also offers education programs to yacht clubs, fishing groups, kayak clubs and others who may encounter whales, dolphins, and seals. The goal is to educate the public about these magnificent animals, and prevent folks from inadvertently or knowingly disturbing the animal's natural behavior. A recent focus is to teach jet skiers about their negative impacts on these marine mammals.

Whales, dolphins, and seals are all protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. It is unlawful to harass them in any way that has the potential to injure them, or disrupts their behavioral patterns, such as migration, breathing, nursing, breeding, feeding, or sheltering. For example, boaters, beachgoers and other recreationists need to make sure their actions don't scare seals back into the water from their haul-out location, or alter the direction of swimming dolphins or whales, or disrupt their feeding.

Gotham Whale teaches its citizen scientists about these rules, and gives them recommendations for safe distances to approach and observe. We want the volunteers to enjoy their encounters, but to do so in a way that is safe

for both the animals and the human observers. Through the WANTED program, participants become concerned citizens and feel part of the science and conservation effort.

A perfect example of the effectiveness of citizen science in action is the story of Gotham the whale. In November 2016, a humpback whale entered NY Harbor inside the Verrazano Narrows and remained close to Manhattan for 10 days. Gotham Whale was able to track this animal from more than 20 WANTED reports from riders on the Staten Island Ferry, a jogger along Battery Park, a woman in her Upper West Side apartment, and a sightseeing boat up the Hudson. The whale, named Gotham, was tracked around the busy waterways of the harbor and up the Hudson River beyond the George Washington Bridge.

From our data collection (reports and photos), we were able to make some simple, yet important conclusions.



Whales are becoming regular visitors to waters around New York City.



First, because we photographed its fluke and entered it into our catalog, we could verify it was a single whale based on repeated sightings that noted its fluke identification. We could also deduce that the whale was in good health based on photos of it actively lunge feeding on the abundant menhaden in waters near the Statue of Liberty and other locations. Ten days after it first appeared in the harbor, we learned that the whale made it back to the ocean safely, as it was observed (documented with the fluke ID) three miles off the shore of Rockaway, behaving normally. It was the participation of citizen scientists that made this possible—volunteers who were first on the scene and kept tabs on the animal.

Participation in science and conservation by volunteer citizens is a growing movement worldwide. Private citizens become passionate campaigners that can direct conservation efforts locally and guide legislation on the state and federal levels. New York is becoming a hotspot for whales, and while this is exciting news, there is a downside. As a major U.S. port, shipping is a fact of life, and Gotham Whale's research shows that the whales are "playing in traffic." Some have collided with ships moving in or out of the harbor. Identifying where the whales are and what they are doing could help mitigate the potential danger to these large mammals.

This past year, an "unusual mortality event" has been declared for both humpback whales and the highly endangered North Atlantic right whale (see article page 12). Notable numbers of whales have washed up along the Atlantic Coast, including the New York shoreline. Necropsies confirmed that a majority of these animals had injuries from being ship-struck. Determining where and how these collisions occur can provide important information on how we can better protect whales. But we will need the cooperation of many "eyes on the water," including volunteer citizen scientists.

Keep in mind, you don't need to be a boater or angler to spot whales. Beachgoers and folks riding the ferry can report sightings. Photos are encouraged; they don't have to be suitable for framing, just clear enough to identify the species and document the report.

So, if you spot a whale, report it. You'll be contributing real data points that will further the science and conservation of NY's wonderful ocean giants.

After retiring in 2009 from a long career as curator at both the New England and New York Aquariums, **Paul L. Sieswerda** was drawn to studying the whales in the waters around NY City. Sieswerda founded Gotham Whale to study, educate, and advocate for the marine mammals found there.

## Reporting Sightings

If you encounter an injured, sick, or dead marine mammal or sea turtle in New York's waters, call the NYS Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Stranding Hotline at **631-369-9829**. This hotline directs all calls to the appropriate organizations that are authorized to respond.

(Note: Do not intervene—even good intentions by the general public are prohibited. Please remember to always remain 500 yards away from North Atlantic right whales, and 100 yards away from all other whale species.)

If you spot a healthy whale or other marine mammal in New York's waters, report it:

- On-line at WANTED <https://gothamwhale.org/citizen-science/>
- By email to [paul@gothamwhale.org](mailto:paul@gothamwhale.org)
- By phone to 718-938-2067

Note: Complete information outlined on the website form and photo documentation is required.



Some jet skiers disturb the whales by getting too close.



Patterns of the fluke (tail) help identify individual whales.

# 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

## Swift Water Deployments— August Flooding

On August 14, the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions of New York experienced significant flooding due to excessive rains. Two swift water teams comprised of 20 Forest Rangers from across the state were deployed, and responded with four airboats and several rescue kayaks. The Rangers spent four days in the region rescuing local citizens stranded by the flood waters. They also assisted with environmental assessments and bridge damage inspections along the Susquehanna River.



## A Stinky Situation— Oneida County

On the morning of August 24, ECO Jeff Hull received a call from the staff at the Hampton Inn in the City of Utica stating they had a juvenile skunk with a flurry ice cream cup stuck on its head running in circles in their parking lot. When he arrived, ECO Hull found exactly that. The large crowd of guests that had formed was asked to step back as ECO Hull placed a towel over the skunk and slowly removed the cup and plastic lid from the skunk's head. The skunk sprayed as soon as it was freed and ran off unharmed, leaving behind only the foul smell.



## Lightning Strike— Otsego County

On July 17, Lt. Nathan VerHague and ECO Timothy Card investigated a strange case wherein three deer were fatally struck by lightning in the Town of New Lisbon. The farmer who discovered them had been in the field the previous day and could confirm that the three carcasses only appeared following a severe overnight thunderstorm. All three deer were found lying within fifteen yards of each other and showed very little external trauma. The cause of death was confirmed by DEC's pathology lab.



## Golden Beach Campground Bears—Hamilton County

Early morning on August 17, Ranger Jim Waters was patrolling for bears in Golden Beach Campground in response to an increase in black bear activity on Raquette Lake. He observed a large black bear attempting to forage for food in the campground, and was successful in getting the bear to leave the campground. In light of the dangers of human-bear encounters, Forest Rangers continue to work with campground staff in educating campers and day use visitors on how to properly store food and dispose of garbage to prevent bear interactions.

# INSTANT Adirondacks

## —Flume Trail Network offers excellent hiking

BY MICHAEL ZEUGIN

The Adirondacks can be daunting. All that space and distance.

Climbs or treks require preparation and gear to move through miles of changing altitudes, terrain, and weather conditions.

Sometimes you don't have all day for a hike, or the time-consuming preparation for a lengthy excursion. You have hours. A few hours before a weather front moves in. A few hours before or after work, before sunset or after sunrise. A few hours before meeting the family for lunch or dinner. Maybe you've never hiked 14 miles, climbed and descended 8,000 feet during the course of a day, and just want a sense of that experience, but on a smaller scale.

This is when a burst of Adirondacks is just right—a short hike that soothes the spirit and delivers the adventure you crave. You need instant Adirondacks, and the Flume Trail network in Wilmington, just a few miles northeast of Lake Placid and Whiteface Mountain, has what you're looking for.

The Flume Trail network is a conglomeration of hiking paths and mountain biking trails at lower altitudes along the western upslope of the Ausable River's west branch. Uphill of the lower network, two trails lead higher to micro-versions of many longer, iconic Adirondack hikes. One trail leads to the Flume Knob overlook, the other to the false summit of Bear Den Mountain. Despite their sibling-like geography, they offer subtle differences in character and difficulty.

A hike to either destination begins at the Flume Trail network parking lot, at the north corner of the Flume Bridge on Route 86 in Wilmington. Trail signs direct hikers to the Flume Knob Trail, and a map is available on DEC's website at [www.dec.ny.gov/docs/regions\\_pdf/flumemapinfo.pdf](http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/regions_pdf/flumemapinfo.pdf).

While the Flume Knob Trail is marked well enough for beginners to find, the Bear Den Mountain branch is not as easy to locate.



Both hikes begin in open mixed forest. The trail meanders through white pines and deciduous forest, on undulating terrain that begins to steadily rise. This mimics the approaches to longer Adirondack hikes in terms of forest views, trail conditions and character, but here you are hiking a half-mile approach, instead of three miles. As with most Adirondack hikes, the trail becomes rocky, a bit steeper, and moves within earshot and eventual view of a creek that drains from a mountain far above.

Once the trail turns rocky and steepens, hikers come to a three-corner trail split. The right-hand trail stays to the north of the creek and

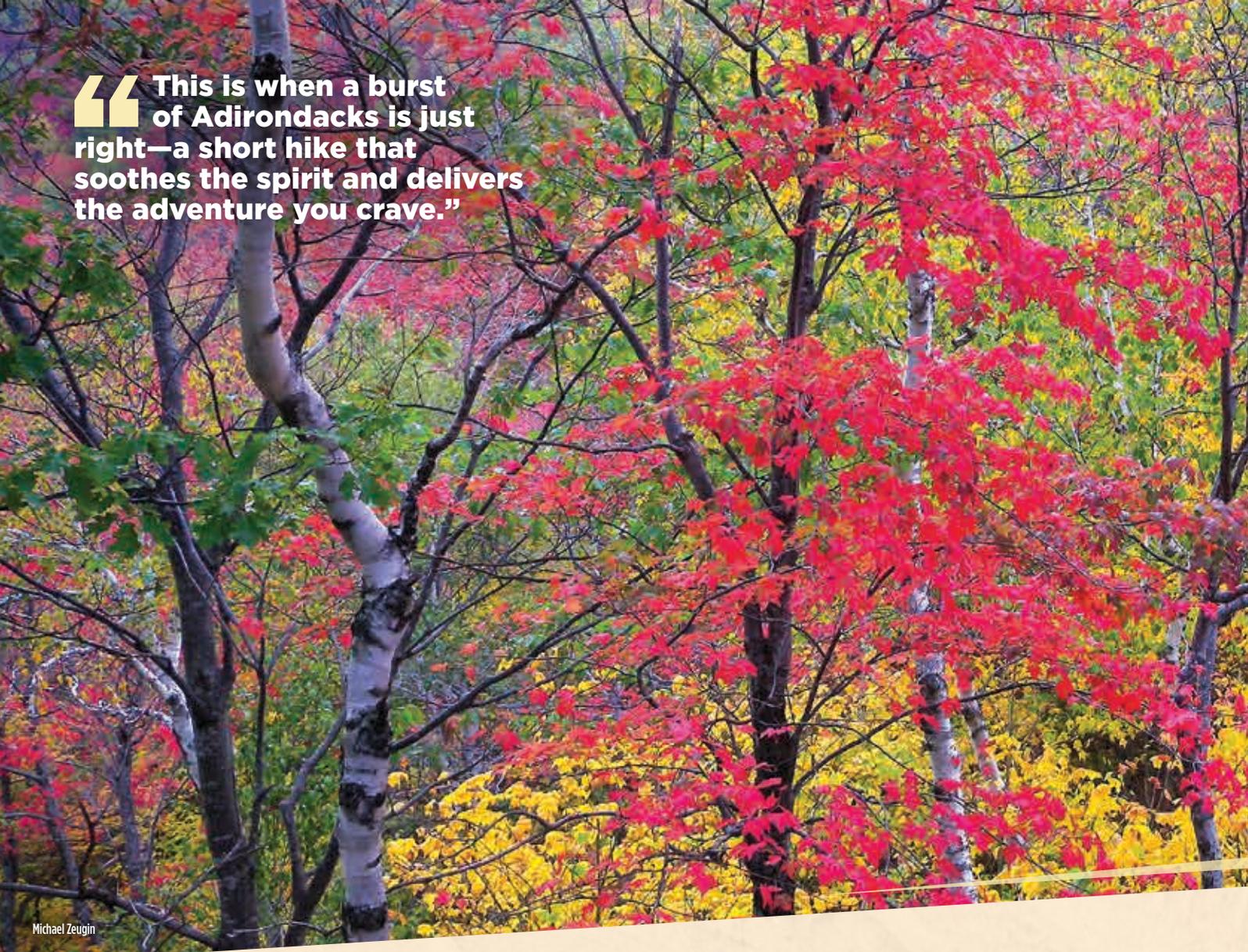
rides a ridge, becoming the Flume Knob Trail. It is important not to veer too much to the north at the fork, as that puts hikers onto the Ridge Trail. A close look at a topographic map will show the ravine, Bear Den Mountain trail on the south slope, and Flume Knob Trail on the north slope.

### **Bear Den Trail**

To find the Bear Den Trail, hikers should fade left at the three-corner split to stay on the Upper Connector Trail, crossing a bridge to access the south side of the creek. At the highest point of the Upper Connector, the trail sign points south (to the left), leading downhill to the base of

Whiteface Mountain and eventually the Lower Connector Trail. Here, you need to look for a trail to the right, which heads west and sharply upward. There is a yellow no-mountain-biking symbol just a few steps farther, a sign that this is the start of the Bear Den Mountain spur.

Many hikers will enjoy how the Bear Den Mountain Trail S-turns back and forth through the forest. But this trail is also steep, and will test less-conditioned hikers. The Bear Den Mountain Trail eventually reaches a saddle notch where an unofficial trail continues, presumably up a series of ridges toward the Whiteface Summit. To gain the Bear Den outcropping,



“ This is when a burst of Adirondacks is just right—a short hike that soothes the spirit and delivers the adventure you crave.”

Michael Zeugin

you bear left and out over an exposed traverse with cliff drop-offs below. This traverse leads to an open series of outcroppings that are more expansive than the terminus of the Flume Knob.

The Bear Den summit is a sort of outcropping playground, with a variety of suitable spots to hang out, snack, or take photos. The views are primarily to the east, south, and west, with expansive views of the Sentinel Range, Whiteface Mountain and its lower ski trails, and out toward the High Peaks to the south. But the views are really 360 degrees, delivering an all-encompassing mountain-top Adirondack experience for a comparatively short climb.

### Flume Knob Trail

While the Flume Knob break-off and the Bear Den Mountain fork are only a short distance from each other, the choice will yield different hikes and types of views. Both hikes become steeper with the climb, but the Flume Knob Trail is more difficult and skirts the edge of a drop in the forest that is steep enough that hikers have installed a helpful rope guardrail at the most critical spot. Some hikers I've recommended these trails to found the steepness of this section a bit disconcerting.

After you traverse this one tricky section of the Flume Knob Trail, the path follows the spine of a ridge, eventually leading up the back of

a boulder onto the Flume Knob outcropping. The climb is well worth the effort, with better than a 180-degree panorama to the north, east, and south. The views are most dramatic in the early morning or late afternoon, and are particularly stunning in October. There is plenty of room on the rocks for a picnic lunch or to simply relax or take photos of the town of Wilmington and the mountain ranges of the northeastern Adirondacks as they stretch to Lake Champlain, Vermont, and north to the St. Lawrence Valley. The Ausable River's winding path through Wilmington is clearly visible, as is the town below and the Jay Mountains beyond to the east.



## Hiking Safety

As with all hikes, you should come prepared. The weather can change quickly in the Adirondacks, so it's best to be prepared for any conditions. Wear sturdy, comfortable shoes or boots and be sure to carry a pack that includes a map, compass, water, high energy snacks, matches (or lighter), first aid kit, whistle, flashlight or headlamp (with extra batteries), and a pocket knife. Depending on the time of year, you might also need to pack sunscreen and/or insect repellent, as well as rain gear or warm clothes.

For more information, check out DEC's "Hiking Safety" webpage at [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/28708.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/28708.html).

## Satisfying Shorter Outings

Of the two hikes, the Flume Knob is the more popular, judging by the wear and tear on the trail. This is perhaps because it is more clearly marked, easier to find, and first on the rise. But the more dramatic and expansive views belong to Bear Den Mountain, along with a less daunting approach. Both hikes require close monitoring of children or pets, drinks to replenish water lost through exertion, and clothing to shield against higher altitude weather conditions. (See *Hiking Safety* sidebar.)

The outcropping positions on the east side of Whiteface and their relatively low altitude mean the Flume Knob and Bear Den overlooks are often *below* the cloud ceiling on

overcast or some rainy days. I've recommended these climbs on such days to hikers who later reported they were quite satisfied by the experience despite cloudy weather. As a bonus, cloudy days also diffuse lighting, providing excellent color saturation in fall foliage photographs.

The descent from both trails requires vigilance on the steepest sections, but is mostly a pleasant adventure through the forest on the heights above the creek ravine. The drop from the summits allows closer observation of the three transitions found on longer Adirondack climbs: from rocky tree-free summits to spruce and pine slopes, and finally birch- and maple-lined creek beds. All of this in a two-to-three-hour round trip.

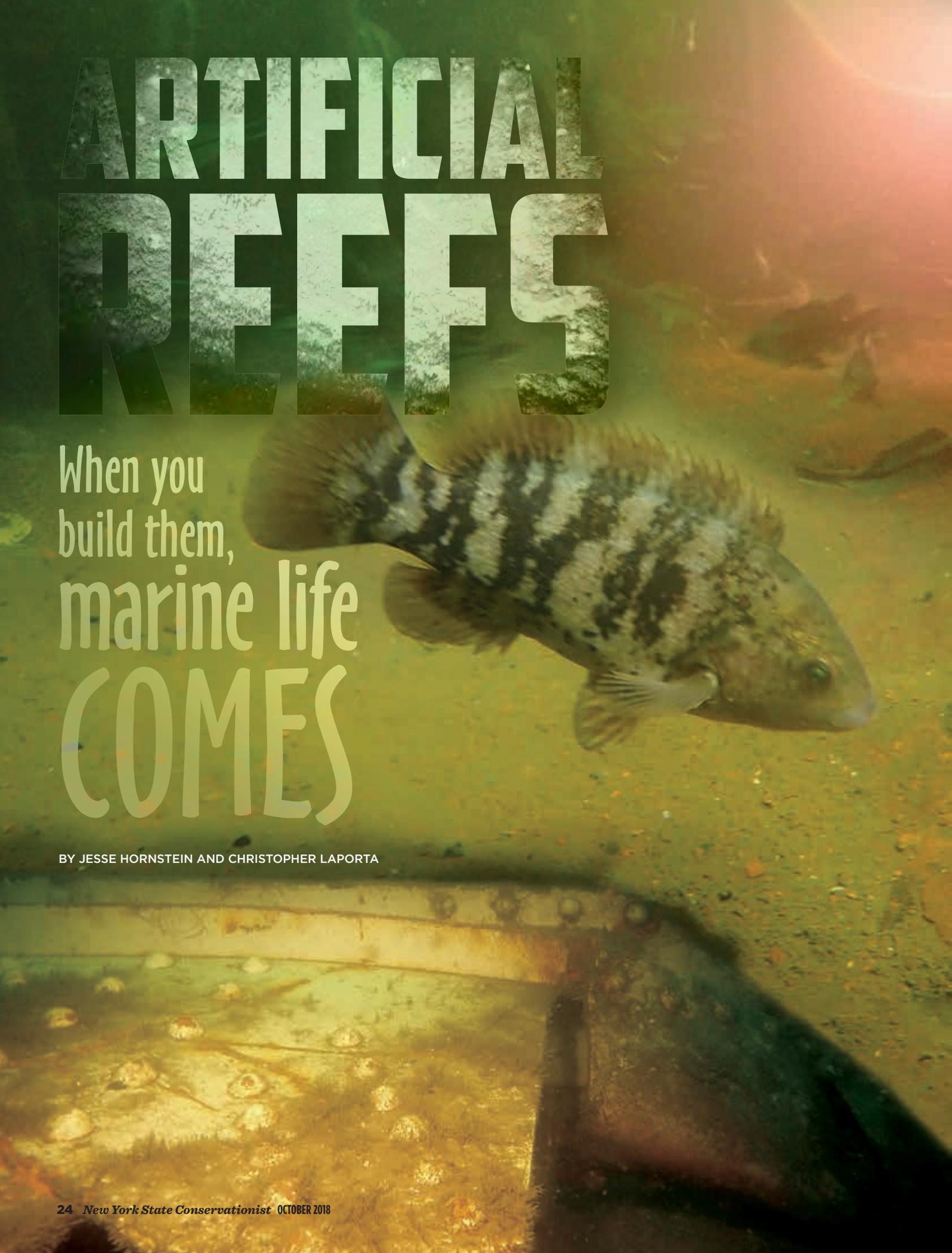
Both the Flume Knob and Bear Den Mountain trails end in a parking lot that's a mile or less from a few local restaurants and sandwich shops, where hungry hikers can relive the glories of their instant Adirondack adventures and plan their next hike.

**Michael Zeugin** has been exploring the Adirondacks since he was a child. He returns from his field explorations and adventures to teach writing and photography at Rutgers University and the New Jersey Institute of Technology.



*Editor's Note: Bear Den Mtn. provides views that are similar to those found on a High Peaks summit with much fewer people on the trail. The Bear Mountain Trail can also be accessed from a parking lot near the kids campus area of the Whiteface Mountain Ski Area via the Upper Connector Trail.*

# ARTIFICIAL REEFS



When you  
build them,  
marine life  
COMES

BY JESSE HORNSTEIN AND CHRISTOPHER LAPORTA

It's every angler's dream—finding a spot that attracts a large number of fish. Well, this year, through a unique state program, New York is helping make that dream come true for marine anglers.

New York's Artificial Reef Program, fueled by unprecedented multi-agency coordination, initiated the largest enhancement of reefs in state history. The effort included recycled and cleaned materials to create new marine habitat at the Fire Island, Hempstead, Moriches, Rockaway, Shinnecock, and Smithtown artificial reef sites off Long Island. During the past few months, barges transported concrete, steel pipe, steel bridge trusses, and floor beams from the former Tappan Zee Bridge north of New York City, along with steel turbines from the New York Power Authority (NYPA), jetty stone, and decommissioned State Canal Corp. vessels, to reef sites to provide new fishing and diving opportunities. With the influx of these newly deployed materials, these reefs will continue to grow in coming years, and attract fish and other marine life.

### Artificial reefs in New York

Construction of New York's first artificial reef on McAllister Grounds dates back to 1949. The Artificial Reef Program was officially created in 1962, and DEC developed a Marine Artificial Reef Development and Management Plan in 1993. Currently, New York has 12 artificial reef sites, including two in Long Island Sound, two in Great South Bay, and eight in the Atlantic Ocean on the south shore of Long Island. The Reef Program uses the "patch reef" method of reef construction, where clean materials are placed in discreet parts of the reef

site, leaving natural bottom habitat in between them for marine life to use. Placing different items in "patches" on each site provides a variety of habitats for marine life, and helps increase species diversity.

### What is an artificial reef and why do we build them?

Artificial reefs are manmade structures that are "aquatically recycled" to provide habitat for fish and other aquatic organisms. They are made with a variety of hard, durable materials, including rock, concrete, and steel, which are

selected based on their function, compatibility, durability, stability, and availability. These characteristics ensure that once deployed, the material will provide suitable habitat for marine life that is safe, effective, and will last a long time.

Artificial reefs are used to create complex habitat in areas that lack intricate hard bottom structure. This is common off the shores of New York, which primarily has a flat sand/silt bottom. Artificial reefs enhance the environment by providing food and shelter to a range of marine organisms. Over time, hard



New York's artificial reef sites





Some materials from the former Tappan Zee Bridge are being used to enhance artificial reefs.



Chris LaPorta



Artificial reefs become valuable habitat for fish and other marine life.



Bradley Peterson

structures on the reefs are covered with algae, mussels, barnacles, sponges, anemones, hydroids, temperate corals, and other types of encrusting organisms. Many fish and crustacean species including black sea bass, tautog (blackfish), scup (porgy), summer flounder (fluke), and lobsters are attracted to reefs and the surrounding area for food and shelter. Artificial reefs have also been used by fish to spawn. As the artificial reef matures, it resembles a natural reef and provides increased fishing and diving opportunities for the public.

New York’s marine resources are critical to the state’s economy, supporting nearly 350,000 jobs and generating billions of dollars through tourism, fishing and other industries. Anglers and divers in the region will reap the benefits of the Artificial Reef Initiative, supporting the region’s growing marine economy, which accounts for approximately 9.7 percent of Long Island’s total GDP.

### Do artificial reefs harm the marine environment?

Some people have wrongly labeled artificial reefs as “ocean dumping.” This is inaccurate for a number of reasons. Ocean dumping is the disposal of trash into the water, which is illegal. All materials placed on reefs are carefully selected and prepared based on federal standards, DEC guidelines, and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) best management practices. This ensures the materials are cleaned properly, will function as intended, and will not harm the environment.

DEC inspects all materials, and works collaboratively with the U.S. Coast Guard to inspect vessels prior to their deployment. Materials must be free of substances that pose harm to the marine environment,

including but not limited to, petroleum products and PCBs. Prior to constructing an artificial reef, DEC must obtain a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers, a New York State water quality certification, and a New York State coastal consistency concurrence. The permit process is reviewed by various state and federal agencies including EPA, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), and others. This ensures all environmental rules and regulations are followed, certifying that nothing harmful will be discharged into our waters.

Materials placed on reefs are primarily secondary use, meaning that they have served their usable lives as originally designed and are no longer useful for their original purpose. In some cases, these materials are recycled as we have come to understand recycling in the traditional sense. Other times, the cost to prepare and/or transport material to be recycled is prohibitive, meaning the object is destined to remain on land while providing no usable function. When this occurs, it may be beneficial to provide these materials a second life by recycling them into marine habitat, giving them a new purpose, and turning them back into productive materials. This aquatic recycling provides many benefits to the marine ecosystem, the fish and other organisms that rely on complex structures for habitat, the fishing and diving communities in the region, and the local economy.

For more information about artificial reefs, visit our website at [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7896.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7896.html).

**Jesse Hornstein** and **Christopher LaPorta** work in DEC’s Division of Marine Resources office in East Setauket.

An underwater photograph showing a close-up of a diver's mask and regulator. The mask is black with a red 'Hovis' logo on the side. The regulator is also black with a red 'Hovis' logo. The background is a clear, blue-green underwater environment. A circular frame is overlaid on the image, containing text.

## Do you fish or dive NY's artificial reefs?

While visiting New York's artificial reefs, you have the opportunity to observe a variety of unique marine habitats, organisms, and environmental conditions. If you visit these sites, please consider sharing your observations with the DEC Artificial Reef Program. The information you share will help us learn more about the marine life on our artificial reefs and how to improve the human experience here. For more information on how you can participate, visit DEC's website at [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/9211.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/9211.html).

# HANGING BOG

## WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

BY EMILIO RENDE

Hanging Bog Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is located in the hills of west central Allegany County, an area with a unique name and diverse environment. In the 1930s, the federal government became interested in the area, acquired it under the Farm Tenant Act, and managed it as a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp. Later that decade, the CCC constructed the 45-acre man-made bog, for which the area is named. After 1940, the federal government leased the land to New York State for use as a game management area. In 1962, it was turned over to the state and has been managed as a wildlife management area ever since.

The WMA is also host to Camp Rushford, the only DEC Camp specifically designed and built as a conservation education camp. The two main buildings are constructed of logs salvaged from the Adirondacks after the blowdown of 1950.

During the CCC period, many of the abandoned farm fields were planted to be conifer and hardwood plantations, while others remained as crops or pastures. From 1948 through the 1960s, more conifers were established along with the thinning and pruning of existing conifer and hardwood stands. This process removes low quality trees to create space for native hardwoods. In the 1970s,

hardwood stands were thinned through commercial firewood sales. Other land management practices included brush cutting, wildlife shrub planting, planting wildlife food strips, and developing wildlife marshes and ponds.

An extensive timber management program has been in place since the mid-1980s, primarily for the management of ruffed grouse. Staff perform patch cuts, whereby small forest blocks are systematically arranged and clear cut. These blocks are arranged in a checkerboard pattern, which benefits ruffed grouse, woodcock, wild turkey and white-tailed deer. Shrubland and grassland management occur as well. In 2015, DEC's Division of Fish and Wildlife created the Young Forest Initiative to increase young forest habitat throughout New York's forested landscape on wildlife management areas. The goal for Hanging Bog WMA is to increase and maintain the amount of young forest to at least 10 percent of the WMA.

With its diverse habitat, the WMA supports a variety of recreational opportunities. The most popular activities are hunting and trapping. Common game species include white-tailed deer, black bear, wild turkey, ruffed grouse, and gray squirrel, as well as ring-necked pheasants stocked on site. A youth trap camp sponsored by the New York

DEC photo



Several ponds provide wetland habitat for a variety of wildlife species.



Ruffed grouse



Black bear

DEC photo



Timber management is practiced on the property

**LOCATED IN THE TOWN OF  
NEW HUDSON, ALLEGANY COUNTY;  
SIZE: 4,560 ACRES**



## Site Features



**NOTES:** Open year-round. Hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, and wildlife viewing are all popular activities. A network of administrative and town roads, along with several parking areas and pull-offs, provide good interior access. Visitors should note that the interior roads are not maintained during the winter months. There is a motorized access trail for people with disabilities off Briggs Road, and individuals with a permit are allowed on the trail with an ATV. A great location to watch wildlife is from the accessible viewing platform on the bog. There is a three-mile trail for hiking and cross-country skiing along the Brown Road area. This wildlife management area is unique, and provides a diversity of plant and animal life for outdoor learning, as well as DEC's Environmental Education Camp Rushford, which offers an exciting outdoor experience for children aged 11-17.



**DIRECTIONS:** From Interstate 86: Take Exit 28; head north on Route 305, then left onto New Hudson Road.



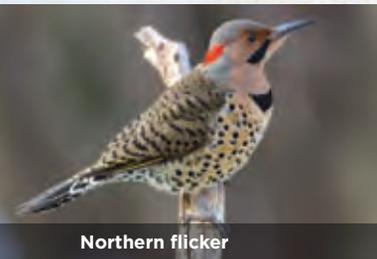
**CONTACT:** For more information, call DEC at (716) 372-0645 or write to NYS DEC, 182 East Union Street, Suite 3, Allegany, NY 14706. Also visit [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/82966.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/82966.html).

State Trappers Association is held every year at Camp Rushford, and some of the fur bearers trapped include red and gray fox, raccoon, muskrat, and beaver.

Wildlife viewing and birdwatching exist throughout the year, and an accessible wildlife viewing platform is located on the bog, serving as a great spot to see Canada geese, mallard, wood duck, hooded merganser, pied-billed grebe, belted kingfisher, killdeer, green heron, and great blue heron. There also are several ponds that provide wetland habitat for beaver, mink, wood ducks, and Canada geese. The site's man-made and natural vernal pools attract woodland amphibians like wood frogs and spotted salamanders.

Bird watchers may encounter yellow-bellied sapsucker, downy woodpecker, hairy woodpecker, northern flicker, pileated woodpecker, and eastern wood-pewee. Several species of warblers such as blue-winged, yellow, chestnut-sided, magnolia, yellow-rumped, and black-throated green can also be found. Visitors also may spot some birds of prey, such as red-tailed hawk, red-shouldered hawk, American kestrel, and barred owl. The area also has a small network of trails for hiking and cross-country skiing.

**Emilio Rende** is a wildlife biologist in DEC's Allegany office.

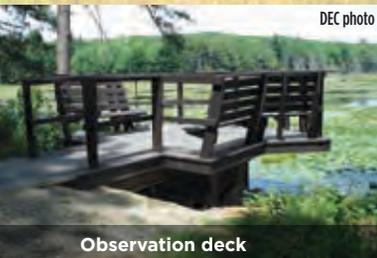


Northern flicker



DEC photo

A youth trap camp is held here every year



DEC photo

Observation deck

# CHATEAUGAY FISH HATCHERY

BY NICOLE E. CAIN

Chateaugay Fish Hatchery is New York's northernmost fish hatchery. It was first constructed in 1924 as a field station off Boardman Brook within the village of Chateaugay to rear brook trout for stocking in local waters. However, due to an unreliable water source at this site, a new property was purchased in 1928, one mile east of the village off the Marble River, where two freshwater springs were known to occur. The present-day hatchery was completed in 1934, and continues to contribute to the great fishing in New York State.

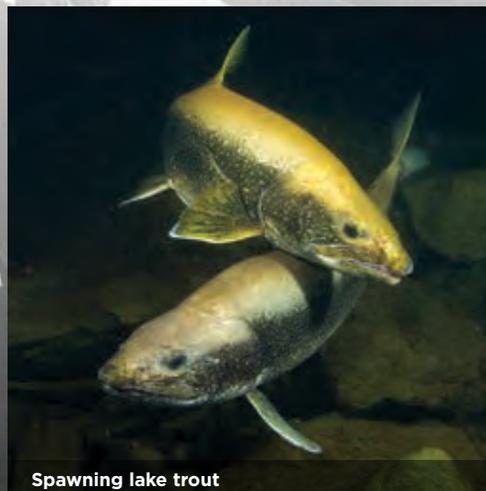
Over the years, major upgrades were made to the hatchery: earthen ponds were redesigned into concrete ponds and additional ponds were constructed. The science of fish culture also advanced, which improved fish rearing techniques and equipment. Most recently, the raceways at the hatchery were upgraded from concrete to fiberglass, providing increased water volume and room for the fish to grow. New water quality monitoring units deliver more accurate readings, and digital logging has improved monitoring efforts. A new fleet of stocking trucks helps ensure the fish released by the hatchery reach their destination waters safely.

The Chateaugay State Fish Hatchery of today is a cold water species grow-out facility; trout are raised with the intent to be stocked into public waters when they reach

catchable size. Chateaugay is one of the more diverse hatcheries in the state, rearing numerous fish species: brook trout (150,000), brown trout (180,000), rainbow trout (300,000), lake trout (100,000), splake (a hybrid cross between brook and lake trout; 25,000), and Temiscamie x domestic hybrid brook trout (250,000). The majority of eggs come from DEC's Bath and Randolph Fish Hatcheries and the private Brandon Park Fish Hatchery. Lake trout eggs are collected by conducting wild egg takes on Raquette Lake.

Fish grown at Chateaugay are stocked into various waters in Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Jefferson, Hamilton, Herkimer and St. Lawrence counties. Fish are stocked and transported in a variety of ways—through the use of two-tank and six-tank trucks, via helicopter and airplane, off ferries and barges, from boats, walked in by bucket, distributed by net, or piped into destination waters.

Each year, Chateaugay collects lake trout eggs to raise and stock out as yearlings. Fish are collected using trap nets set perpendicular to the shoreline in Raquette Lake. The collected fish are sorted by sex on shore. Eggs are taken, fertilized, and disinfected on location, and the fish are then released back to the lake. Collected eggs are transported back to the hatchery, where they are disinfected again



**LOCATED IN NORTHERN FRANKLIN COUNTY, OFF ROUTE 11, ONE MILE EAST OF THE VILLAGE OF CHATEAUGAY**



## If You Go

Chateaugay Fish Hatchery is open year-round, 7 days a week, holidays included. It has a very diverse rearing program, which includes a variety of trout species, including the Temiscamie x domestic hybrid brook trout used extensively in Adirondack Mountain lakes and ponds.



**LOCATION:** 134 Fish Hatchery Road, off US-11. From I-87, take exit 37, turn left onto NY 3W, right onto NY-190W, left onto US 11S. From I-81, take exit 48A for I-781, then exit 4 for US-11, follow US-11 N to Potsdam and continue straight on NY-11B N and back on US-11 N.



**VISITOR HOURS:** Open 8:00 AM – 3:00 PM every day year round



**SPECIES RAISED:** Brook, brown, rainbow, and lake trout



**PHONE:** (518) 497-6151

to prevent the introduction of external diseases before entering the hatchery system. The volume of eggs is used to provide an estimate of the number of eggs taken each day and a running total count is calculated. Raquette Lake egg takes have been conducted as far back as 1933, and the methods used are virtually unchanged since then.

Chateaugay also cooperates with the federal hatchery system in stocking border waters and species of concern. Fish culturists pick up and stock approximately 100,000 landlocked Atlantic salmon into Lake Champlain and 80,000 lake trout into Lake Ontario from Eisenhower National Fish Hatchery in Vermont. Genoa National Fish Hatchery in Wisconsin supplies lake sturgeon to be stocked in northern Adirondack rivers within the St. Lawrence River watershed.

Although well off the beaten path, Chateaugay Hatchery provides valuable services to support New York's fisheries and anglers. The hatchery will continue to provide fish for many years to come, stocking in the northern waters of New York for sportsmen and sportswomen of all ages to enjoy.

For more information, call (518) 497-6151 or visit: [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7742.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7742.html).

Nicole E. Cain is a fish culturist at Chateaugay Fish Hatchery.



Brown trout

### SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

## Lake Trout

- Native to New York; inhabits deep, cold, well-oxygenated lakes, primarily in the Adirondacks, Finger Lakes and the Great Lakes.
- Long-lived; some adults reach more than 20 years old.
- Unlike other trout that build nests, lake trout scatter their eggs over rocky shoals in lakes.
- Prized by anglers for their large size and strength. Often reach 15 pounds or more.





## Deer Harvest Remains Strong

During the 2017-18 hunting season, New York hunters harvested an estimated 203,427 deer, including 95,623 antlerless deer and 107,804 antlered bucks. The buck harvest was nearly identical to the 2016 take, while the antlerless deer total dropped an estimated five percent. Hunters in the Northern Zone took 25,351 deer, including 18,074 adult bucks. In the Southern Zone, hunters took 178,076 deer, including 89,730 adult bucks.

DEC wildlife biologists are encouraged by a trend toward taking older bucks that emerged from the 2017 deer harvest: an estimated 57,494 adult bucks—53.3 percent of the total adult buck harvest—averaged 2.5 years or older, a record in total number and greatest percentage of older bucks in the harvest. DEC also tested 2,402 deer for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) and all tested negative.



## Fishing is Great on Lake Ontario

The famous quote from expert fly fisherman and author, A.K Best—"The fishing was good; it was the catching that was bad"—certainly doesn't apply to Lake Ontario this year. Fishing for trout and salmon in Lake Ontario set records, with veteran anglers reporting some of the best fishing in decades. The catch rate for Chinook salmon during April to August 2018 was 109 percent above the previous five-year average, and the catch rate for all trout and salmon species combined also surpassed the previous record high—more than 34 percent above the previous five-year average. In addition, fishing for brown trout and coho salmon has been excellent this year, with catch rates 43 and 6 percent higher than their respective, previous five-year averages, and the catch rate for Atlantic salmon was 55 percent above the previous five-year average. Salmon will be ascending the tributaries in October to spawn, providing anglers with more opportunities to catch these large gamefish.

## How Old is That Bear?

Attention bear hunters—Are you curious to know the age of your harvested bear? DEC is too, and the info can be found in a tooth. The agency is asking bear hunters for their assistance in helping us better understand and manage our state's black bear population. All you have to do is send us the bear's tooth (a premolar to be exact). In return, we will let you know the age of your bear and send you a Black Bear Management Cooperator patch for your help. Once you report your black bear harvest, DEC will send you a packet with instructions on removing the tooth, and a postage-paid envelope to mail it back. You should remove any flesh attached to the tooth, but do not boil, bleach, or preserve samples, as this can jeopardize the quality of the tooth layers. For more information on our Black Bear Tooth Collection, visit [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/45598.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/45598.html).





DEC photo

## First-time Campers Meet Rangers

Forest Rangers Kevin Slade and Russell Martin visited first-time campers at Kenneth L. Wilson Campground in July. The two Rangers offered a “Meet A Ranger” program, where campers received hands-on experience with some of the tools Rangers use on incidents they encounter on routine patrols. Campers also treated a simulated ankle injury and packaged the patient for a short carry in a stokes basket, and raised Ranger Slade using a 9:1 mechanical advantage system with rope equipment. The big show for the young campers was using a portable pump to extinguish a make-believe fire. It was a fun time for both young and old.



DEC photo

## Major New Investment in Clean Fuel Vehicles

In September, New York State announced plans to use \$127.7 million in funding from the settlement of a multi-state lawsuit against Volkswagen to significantly expand the number of clean fuel vehicles in the state, with 60 percent of the funding targeted for electric buses (transit and school buses) and trucks, and the development of electric vehicle charging stations. New York and other states received settlement funds because Volkswagen had equipped approximately 580,000 VW, Audi and Porsche vehicles with devices to circumvent federal emissions standards for nitrogen oxide (NOx), a major contributor to smog, climate change and respiratory health problems. The State developed a *NY Clean Transportation Plan* to invest the VW settlement funds. NOx emissions reductions under this plan will be equivalent to removing 65,000 automobiles from the road. The VW funds also will decrease emissions of greenhouse gases, particulate matter, and mobile source air toxics; expand clean transportation infrastructure; support clean ground support equipment at airports; and continue research and deployment of Zero Emissions Vehicles (ZEVs).

Trish Hennessy/NYPA





## The Perfect Spot

I took this picture at Letchworth State Park in Mount Morris. This little one knew where to stand.

ANNETTE JESTER  
LEICESTER

*Thanks for making us laugh! That little one is smarter than his/her years.*

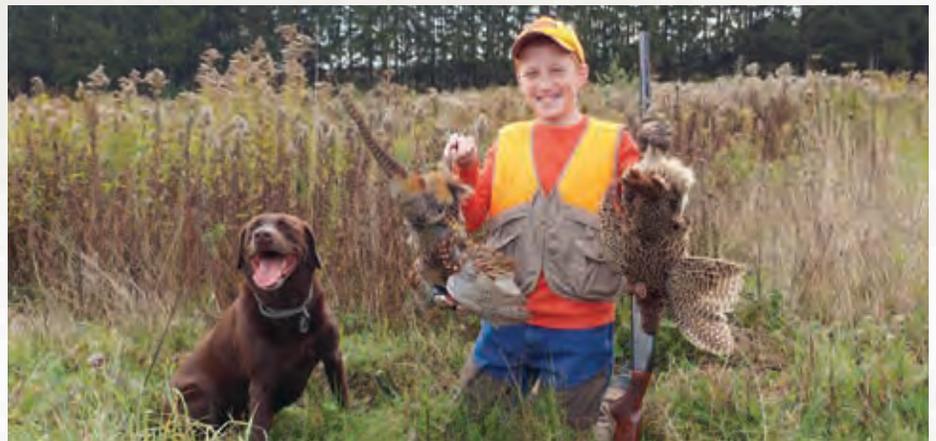


## Fall Fowlage

These wild turkeys were sticking together the week before Thanksgiving last year.

AARON WINTERS  
ROCHESTER

*Great shot, Aaron! Turkeys prefer mixed areas of forest and farmland. If you find their favored foods, acorns and beech nuts, you are likely to find turkeys.*



## Make Mine a Double

Just thought I'd pass on these pictures of my 14-year old son, Sam, with his chocolate lab. He got two birds during the Youth Pheasant Hunt in the Hanging Bog area in New Hudson last fall.

PAUL STEFANICK  
EAST AMHERST

*Pheasant hunting was one of the first hunting experiences for many of today's adult hunters, and each year, DEC holds a two-day Youth Pheasant Hunt to maintain this traditional introduction to hunting.*

*Youth hunters (ages 12-15) must possess a hunting license and must be accompanied by a licensed adult hunter. Only junior hunters are allowed to possess a firearm or harvest birds during the Youth Pheasant Hunt.*



## Ask the Biologist

**Q:** While visiting Buffalo, NY, I was fortunate to be watching this red-tailed hawk when it coughed up a pellet. I knew owls did this, but didn't realize red-tailed hawks did as well. Do all hawks do this?

ELIZABETH MARSHALL, RUSH

**A:** Neither hawks nor owls digest everything they eat. They "cough-up" the indigestible parts as pellets, which are composed of feathers, fur and bones and sometimes invertebrate parts. The acid in hawk stomachs is stronger so there are fewer bones than in owl pellets. The pellets are "coughed up" or ejected prior to their next meal, usually one or two a day.

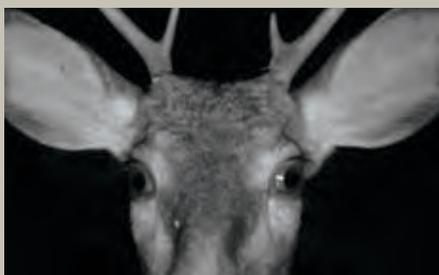
—SCOTT CROCOLL, DEC WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

## With Us Since the Beginning

My parents, Leon and Irene Face, subscribed to the *Conservationist* since its first issue. Leon passed away several years ago and Irene passed away earlier this year at the age of 100! She was a voracious reader and read every issue of the *Conservationist*, for well over 70 years. They instilled the love of the outdoors in their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

THEIR LOVING CHILDREN  
KATHY HOMAN, BILL, MARK AND  
GLEN FACE  
BALLSTON SPA

*We are sorry for your loss, which is also a loss for the Conservationist family. It is encouraging to know we were part of their lives.*



## Eye See You

This picture of a young buck was taken at night with my trail cam. He looks as if he just realized that "deer season is open!"

MARK JAMIESON  
JEFFERSON COUNTY

*That buck has good survival instincts, since many deer seasons are already open. In the Northern Zone, bowhunting runs until October 19<sup>th</sup>, crossbow from October 10<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup>, regular from Oct. 20<sup>th</sup> - Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup> and muzzleloader from Oct. 13<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup>. In the Southern Zone, bowhunting runs from Oct. 1<sup>st</sup> - Nov. 16<sup>th</sup>, crossbow from Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup>, regular from Nov. 17<sup>th</sup> - Dec. 9<sup>th</sup> and muzzleloader from Dec. 10<sup>th</sup> - Dec. 18<sup>th</sup>. Bowhunting in Westchester and Suffolk Counties begins Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>.*



## All in A Day's Work

I was fishing Eighteenmile Creek when I hooked a stringer that a fish was attached to. The bass was hiding under a rock in a deep pool. I tried to retrieve the fish, but I only had hip waders and the water was too deep. I ran into a DEC employee who was conducting a survey, so I told her about the trapped fish. She waded into the water and over the rocks to free the bass. It is very refreshing to see someone do their job with pride and determination. Thanks for a job well done!

TERENCE SZCZUDLIK

*We tracked down the DEC employee, Carrie Babcock, a Fish and Wildlife Technician. Carrie is an integral part of DEC's crew at the Lake Erie Fisheries Research Station. On the day she saved the bass, she was interviewing anglers for our tributary angler survey. Carrie attended SUNY Fredonia, where she majored in Environmental Science. When she isn't working, she enjoys fishing for bass, of course!*

**CONTACT US!**

@ magazine@dec.ny.gov



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# Back Trails

Perspectives on People and Nature

## *Evan Shoots and Scores!*

BY ANDREW LEWAND

My gentle taps on my son's shoulders went unnoticed. A sturdier shake stirred Evan enough for him to murmur, "I'll go this afternoon," before falling back asleep. Not wanting to force him to go, I headed out the door with thoughts of a trophy buck passing by my stand. As I drove, I thought about my son. Like most fathers, the thought of sharing quality time afield with a son or daughter is perhaps some of the most meaningful time we can spend together. On this day, that quality time would have to wait.

My hunt was uneventful, but it didn't matter... I was looking forward to hunting with Evan. After lunch, Evan and I prepared our clothing and other necessary gear. I handed him a Remington Model 700 chambered in .260. I explained that this custom rifle was the last one put together by his grandfather, who had passed away three years prior.

At 3:30 PM, we headed to the farm where I had hunted in the morning. The plan was simple: sit side-by-side and overlook the standing bean field. As we waited for deer to appear, I whispered simple deer ecology to Evan. Our wait was not long as a doe and fawn entered the field to feed. I asked, "Do you want to shoot that doe?" Evan said "No, I want a buck." The deer were now standing within sixty yards of us and I was amazed at Evan's restraint. Some of his friends had posted pictures of doe harvests on social media and I figured Evan would jump at the first opportunity to shoot his first deer. Yet, here he was, holding out for a buck.

Over the course of the next hour, no additional deer were spotted. I asked Evan if he wanted to move to another bean field and watch for deer there during the final hour of light. He was agreeable and we relocated. Side

by side, we waited, but not for long. Within minutes, a deer emerged from the hedgerow and entered the field. Even though the deer stood more than 100 yards away, I could see that it was a buck! He was staring right in our direction and I could only hope that we would go unnoticed.

"It's a buck! Shoot!" I whispered with excitement. In one fluid motion Evan found the buck in the scope of his grandfather's rifle and took the shot. The deer dropped on the spot and Evan blurted out "I got it!" We simultaneously stood up and hugged like never before. Instantly, a flood of emotions came over me. From thinking about my father, and now my son, as a hunter, things had come

full circle. After a photo session, field dressing and dragging the deer to the truck, I thought about how thankful I was to the New York State DEC for providing opportunities like this for today's youth. It was surely a day that neither Evan nor I will ever forget.

**Andrew Lewand** lives in Fairport, NY. A long-time hunter, he looks forward to many years of hunting with his son, Evan.

*Editor's Note: This past year, DEC hosted an essay contest, inviting hunters and trappers to share stories about their first memorable experience afield or an experience during which they introduced a new person to hunting or trapping. Andrew Lewand's essay is one of the submissions in the Adult Hunters/Trappers Category.*



## Hunting Q & A

**Q:** Can anyone hunt?

**A:** No. Hunters must be licensed. To qualify for licenses, all hunters must first pass a Hunter Education course that covers safety, wildlife conservation, responsible use of natural resources, outdoor skills and hunting techniques. Other special courses are required for bowhunting and trapping. Junior Hunters (12- through 15-year-olds) can hunt only under supervision of a licensed parent or guardian, or adult hunter designated in writing by the parent or guardian. Also, 14- and 15-year-olds can now hunt deer and bear. (See rules in Hunting Regulations Guide [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/37136.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/37136.html).)

**Q:** Is hunting dangerous?

**A:** The most dangerous part of a hunting trip is the drive to the hunting area. Safety courses and strict hunting laws have reduced potential dangers. Activities such as bicycling and swimming are many times more likely to result in injuries or death than hunting.

**Q:** Does hunting endanger wildlife?

**A:** No. Hunting is highly regulated. Limited seasons and bag limits ensure proper numbers of overwintering breeding stock. Too many animals in winter, when food is limited, can mean decreased survival for the whole population. Regulated hunting helps manage populations of some species to reduce crop and environmental damage, diseases and road collisions.

Also, the dollars spent by hunters are responsible for the restoration of many species of wildlife (such as bald eagles and peregrine falcons) in New York and the Northeast. Those same dollars support the purchase and management of over 200,000 acres of Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) across the state. WMAs provide wildlife habitat for game and nongame wildlife, as well as recreational areas where all New Yorkers can participate in hunting, fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.

### NYSDEC Sportsman Education

To find a course: Toll-free 1-888-HUNT-ED2  
On the web: [www.dec.ny.gov](http://www.dec.ny.gov)  
(Search "Hunter Education Classes")

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# Home Composting

Fall is a beautiful time of year; trees are dressed in brilliant colors. But once those leaves start falling, what do you do with them?

Try composting them—it's a great way to use your leaves, food scraps, and other organics. When added to your soil, compost provides nutrients, enhances the structure of your soil, adds beneficial microorganisms, and helps retain moisture.

Remember, after adding moist, nitrogen-rich material ('greens') such as food scraps and grass clippings to your compost pile, always cover it with a layer of carbon-rich 'browns' such as leaves, wood chips or straw. To make it easier on yourself, store a pile of 'browns' within easy reach.

To learn more about composting, visit [www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8799.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8799.html).

And for a great poster, visit [www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8801.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8801.html) and click "Easy Home Composting."



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Conservation

## Take the Pledge to Fight Wasted Food

Up to 40% of food is wasted in the United States. What are you willing to do? (Check all appropriate boxes.)

- Eat all leftovers and perishable foods first.
- Check the refrigerator, freezer, and pantry before shopping.
- Make a weekly meal plan and grocery list before shopping.
- Properly store, freeze and can perishable foods.
- Donate extra food from my home and garden.
- Volunteer for a local food pantry or meal center.
- Compost all inedible food scraps.

### HERE ARE THREE WAYS TO USE THIS PLEDGE

- 1) Cut out and post to your refrigerator as a reminder; or
- 2) Cut out and mail it in as a postcard (the address is on the back); or
- 3) Save paper and a stamp; pledge online at <https://goo.gl/forms/J9jj0v2r2JxHUstj2>. Include your email address if you want updates about the NYS Food Recovery Campaign. Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

For more information, visit [NYSAR3.org](http://NYSAR3.org) and click on the "food recovery" tab.

## Check out the **FREE** "NY Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife App"



Visit DEC's website

# 2017 BIG BUCK CLUB AWARDS

The New York State Big Buck Club, Inc. is a private organization that maintains records of large deer and bear taken in New York. Each year since 1972, the Big Buck Club has recognized the hunters who take the largest trophy bucks in the state. The winner for each category receives original art of his or her deer by artist Michael Barr of Corning.



## Largest Gun Deer (muzzleloader)

Taken in: Steuben County

Score: Net 164-4

Gross 175-4

Typical

Points: 13

Taken by Jason W. Joseph

## Largest Bow Deer

Taken in: Erie County

Score: Net 162-5

Gross 171-4

Typical

Points: 11

Taken by James L. Weston

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

NYS BBC, Records Office, 147 Dog Tail Corners Rd., Wingdale, NY 12594

mosbuck@aol.com | [www.nysbigbuckclub.com](http://www.nysbigbuckclub.com)



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