

Hiking | Coyotes | Wilderness

NEW YORK STATE

Conservationist

JUNE 2014



Call of the Wild:
the Common Loon



Dear Reader,

You must admit, today's technology is pretty impressive.

With the new NY Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife app, the world of outdoor recreation is at your fingertips. Using a smart phone, you can find everything you need for a perfect adventure. Find a place to fish near you, get information on access and advice on what fish are biting and what the limit is, obtain step-by-step directions and current weather conditions and forecasts. You can even find out about outdoor

recreation and sporting events in your area. This is just a sampling of what you can do from the palm of your hand with today's technology.

Yes, times have changed, but some things remain constant, like the restorative power of nature-based recreation. Research has shown that access to parks and open space improves health and enhances one's quality of life. Time spent together outdoors builds family bonds and lasting memories. And you can't beat the price!

Another constant through time is the importance of environmental stewardship. An ad for the *Conservationist* from 40 years ago this month depicted six magazines, containing history, wildlife, the environment, outdoor recreation and conservation; nothing artificial added, and contents recyclable.

The same is true today. In this issue, you'll be reminded of the Adirondack's influence on our nation's Wilderness Act, revel in the exquisite beauty of a family of loons, and go for a bike trip through central New York in all its summer glory.

New York has some of the best hiking trails, campgrounds, mountains, lakes and scenery to be found anywhere. And Governor Cuomo recently announced that 50 access projects are underway to improve outdoor recreation on public lands and waters; projects to improve access for hunting, fishing, boat launches, hiking, and nature appreciation. Whether you choose to hike a new section of the Northville-Placid trail, fly fish Esopus Creek, or listen to the melancholy wail of a loon on a remote Adirondack pond, you'll find it all in a New York summer, in the pages of *Conservationist* magazine and on the new App.

So use your smart phone to help find a special outdoor recreation place, and to mark the spot for future reference. Spend some family time fishing your favorite water, or sleeping under the stars, watching fireflies, and listening to the sounds of summer. If you like, share your adventures with friends and family via social media on the new App. NY is truly Open for Fishing and Hunting adventures.

Create your own family memories in the new, New York.

Regards,

Commissioner Joe Martens

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Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of New York State

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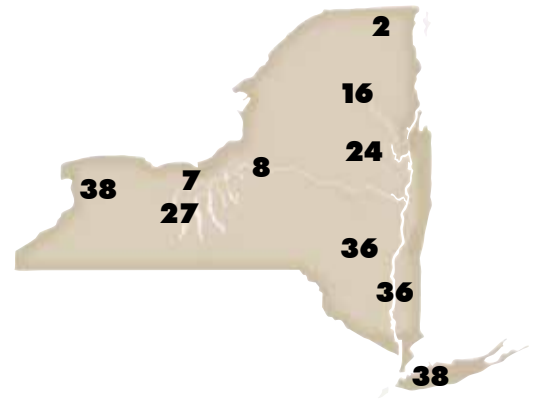
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Front cover: Common loon and chick by Howard Jennings | **Back cover:** Adirondack High Peaks by Carl Heilmann II

Spirit of Our Northern Waters



The Common Loon

*Photos by Howard Jennings
Text by David Nelson*

Loon chicks are able to swim within a day or two of hatching.



Taking advantage of the early morning solitude, I eased my canoe into the water as quietly as possible. Thick fog rose gently in columns from the lake's surface. I paddled silently, daring not to let the wooden blade of my paddle surface, lest even the sound of dripping water shatter the stillness.

Suddenly, a soft splash came from my left. Instinctively, I turned, but couldn't see anything through the shrouded mist. The sound came from just a few feet away, yet I didn't know what made it. First, a soft "hoot," and then a louder tremolo belied the loon's presence, and its unease at surfacing so near my canoe. With a knowing smile, I relaxed, and held perfectly still, allowing the loon and me to go our separate ways without further ado.

Second only, perhaps, to a wolf's howl, the wailing calls of common loons have come to symbolize unspoiled wilderness more than any other sound in nature. Reminiscent of something deep down within our souls, the cry of a loon is something to behold.

Our only resident loon, the iconic common loon is often described as the spirit of northern waters. With legs found extremely far back on the body, and with dense bones unlike most birds, loons' bodies are well-adapted to swimming and diving. In fact, they can dive to depths of 200 feet below the water surface and remain underwater for more than a minute.

But these same adaptations to a successful watery existence make life on land difficult. For a loon, walking on land is nearly impossible. Instead, they must push and shuffle themselves along. Heavy birds, loons need a long "runway" on a



Loons lay one to two eggs in a nest at water's edge.



Heavy birds with legs located far back on their bodies, loons need a runway on a large lake or pond to build up enough speed for flight.

lake or large pond to build up enough speed for flight. In fact, if they land on too small a pond, they may not be able to take off again. As a result, loons are seldom found on ponds smaller than a dozen acres in size.

Loons return to the same water body each spring. Soon after ice out, a mated pair immediately gets down to business, renewing pair bonds and beginning nesting duties. The nest is built at the water's edge by both the male and female, often on a point of land or preferably a small island, difficult for a four-legged predator to reach.

Female loons usually lay a clutch of two eggs, between mid-May and June. After about a month, the young hatch; chicks are covered in dark fuzzy down, and enter the water within a day or so. Recently hatched chicks often ride partially hidden on their parents' backs tucked snugly under folded



Chicks will often ride on their parents' backs. (Note the fish in the bill of the adult loon on the left.) These two chicks are fighting to determine dominance.

wings for warmth and protection. For the first few weeks of life, young are entirely dependent on the adults, which feed them insects and tiny fish. After a few weeks, young are able to make short dives and catch small fish on their own.

As summer progresses, the young grow, swimming further from the parents and honing their diving skills. After about three months, young “fledge” and are on their own. Juveniles may spend several years on the ocean before returning inland to breed.

Loons were once more common than they are today. Lake acidification, bio-accumulation of pollutants, human disturbance and other factors affected loon populations. In addition, fluctuating



Adult loons feed their chicks insects and tiny fish.



Loons form strong pair bonds and will return to the same water each spring to nest.

water levels can further reduce loons' already low reproductive potential, because their nests are located at the water's edge. More recently, however, loons appear to be holding their own and may be learning to adapt to man's presence.

Biologists in Vermont and New Hampshire have experimented successfully with placing small floating nest platforms that rise and fall with the water level. Small enough for a loon to defend, they are always accessible from the water's surface. For the most part, suitable nesting habitat in NY make rafts unnecessary. Loon populations are on the increase in our part of the world. That is not to say these denizens of the deep northern lakes are "out of the woods;" oceanic pollution, carelessly discarded fishing line, mercury, accidents and weather all take their toll on loon populations.

Common loons nest in lakes and ponds throughout northern North America. In New York, loons can be found throughout the Adirondacks, the St. Lawrence River Valley, on Lake Champlain, and a couple of Finger Lakes. Especially vulnerable to human disturbance during the breeding season, nesting loons and loon families should be given a wide berth.

Enjoy loons from a distance, and teach others to respect them as well. Lend a helping hand, and given an improving environment in which to thrive, the common loon is here to stay. May their haunting calls reverberate throughout the Adirondacks for generations to come.

Retired from teaching, photographer **Howard Jennings** devotes his time to creative photography. His work has been featured in *Adirondack Life*, *Darkroom Photography*, and *New York Teacher*, among others. In the summer of 1982, he had the honor of studying with Ansel Adams.

Conservationist Editor **Dave Nelson** was a Loon Ranger for the Loon Preservation Committee in central New Hampshire in his college days, and still has a soft spot for loons.



By late summer a juvenile loon is almost the size of an adult.



An adult loon has bright red eyes, a black head and a checkered back.

Loon Basics

Large diving birds; two to three feet in length. Wingspan of four to five feet; weigh 8-10 lbs.

Summer: striking works of art, adults' backs are brilliantly checkered black-and-white. Black head with bright red eyes, long, pointed black bill. Black collar with a white "necklace."

Winter: mostly grayish-brown, with white throat and belly, gray bill and brown eyes. Males and females similar. Juveniles similar to adult winter plumage.

For more information on loons, see the April and June 2001 and April and June 2007 issues of *Conservationist*, visit DEC's website, or the Biodiversity Research Institute's Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation's website at www.briloon.org/adkloon.



Access for Outdoor Recreation

— Fifty new projects bring outdoor opportunities within reach

In March, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo unveiled 50 new land and water access projects to connect outdoor enthusiasts of all ilk to more than 380,000 acres of existing state and easement lands across New York State that have not reached their full potential. More than \$6 million in funding will support projects to improve access for hunting, fishing, boat launches, hiking, and nature appreciation.

At specific locations throughout the state, the projects will enhance outdoor recreation, improve the quality of life in our communities, and further position New York State as an outdoor recreation destination. The universally designed projects will provide access for people of all ages and varying abilities to a variety of beautiful natural areas and a range of activities and experiences. In addition to hunting access, boat launches, fishing platforms and hiking trails, there will be improved access to existing recreational trails, additional parking areas, trail maps, signage and kiosks. Many projects will make trails and launches available to people with disabilities for the first time.

These projects are in support of the NY Open for Fishing and Hunting Initiative, which aims to boost recreation-based tourism opportunities throughout the state.

Here are just a few examples of the kinds of projects being supported by this initiative:

Lower Esopus Fishing Access

(Ulster Co.): Two properties (donated to the state by Ulster County) will be developed, including 200 feet of frontage on the Lower Esopus Creek, a warmwater fishery, and a popular canoe/kayak stream. This will be the first DEC access on the Lower Esopus. The project also includes parking facilities, a path from the parking lot down to a bulkhead, and an accessible fishing platform with floating docks running parallel to shore. The site is easily accessed from the City of Kingston and the NY State Thruway.

Three Rivers Wildlife Management Area

(Onondaga Co.): A popular hunting area, Three Rivers is also treasured for hiking and bird watching. It boasts a nesting pair of bald eagles. The project includes installation of an accessible wildlife observation blind, parking areas, a trail system, and improvements to boat launches.

Braddock Bay Fish and Wildlife Management Area

(Monroe Co.): A very popular area for fishing, paddling, hunting and wildlife/nature viewing, Braddock Bay is largely open water and marsh, making access challenging for those with mobility issues. Installation of new launch ramps will improve access to popular paddling spots and allow for safer entry/exit and launching/retrieval of canoes and kayaks. This will make Braddock Bay the only universally accessible launch site in the Rochester metropolitan area.

For a complete list of all fifty projects, visit the Governor's website at www.governor.ny.gov and search for the Press Release dated March 7, 2014.



Biking ^{to the} *Boilermaker*

By David G. Pratt
photos provided by author

In early July 2008, east of Baldwinsville, torrential rain did its best to dampen my spirits. We were biking 50 miles that day, and my rain gear was not keeping pace with the deluge. Still, with wet socks on my feet and cold water running down my back, I was like a stubborn child refusing to come in out of the rain.

Why?

The rewards. There are the immediate rewards, like rides when I can actually feel a flowered, airy, open field yield to the dense humidity of thick swamplands.

Or when I scare up a fox from a roadside bush. (Who is more shocked: he or me?) But then there are the larger rewards, like the feeling of physical communion with the great outdoors that you can only experience on a bicycle. Ernest Hemingway said, "It is by riding a bicycle that you learn the contours of a country best, since you have to sweat up the hills and coast down them. Thus you remember them as they actually are, while in a motorcar only a high hill impresses you...."

New York has a unique variety of great outdoors to experience by bicycle: from the mountains of the Adirondacks, through the majesty of the Hudson Valley, and out to the Atlantic Ocean on the tip of Long Island; from the glory of Niagara Falls, past the beauty of the Finger Lakes, and down through the hills of the Southern Tier; and on and on. Best of all, New York has a mapped system of bicycle routes crisscrossing the state that touches all of these. If you've driven much in the state, you may have

I have seen, smelled, heard, felt, and, yes, even tasted much of what New York has to offer...

noticed the signs—small and green, they simply have a bicycle depicted on the top and a number on the bottom. The NYS Department of Transportation maintains a website (www.dot.ny.gov/bicycle) that has valuable information about these bicycle routes.

On that 2008 bicycle trip, Todd Caffoe, Pat Concannon (two DEC coworkers), and I followed NYS Bicycle Route 5 for 130 miles over a period of two and a half days from Rochester to Utica, where we then ran the Boilermaker 15k Road Race—one of the largest 15k races in the country. Memories of that adventure prompted Pat and me to repeat the ride in 2013.

While we stayed in motels in 2008, Pat and I decided to “rough it” in 2013, packing everything we needed on our bicycles and camping at state parks along the way. My bike weighed more than 80 pounds after I had loaded a tent, sleeping bag, clothing, and anything else I could think of (note to self: next time don’t forget the bug spray). We rode just under 100 miles in two days.

Early the first day, we grabbed sandwiches from a sub shop for lunch. Later,

we sat on the lawn near Oneida Lake’s south shore boat launch site, eating our sandwiches and watching a bald eagle soar over the lake. It brought back memories of when I was a kid in western New York and there was a pair of bald eagles nesting at the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge. My father and I made special trips to catch a glimpse of what was, at that time, a rare and special event. So when the bald eagle casually flew overhead at Oneida Lake—so close we could see where he was looking—I was overjoyed that the event was no longer rare...but there is no way it will ever stop being special.

I’ve camped in New York’s state parks my whole life (I practically grew up in Allegany State Park), but I’d never pulled into one on a bicycle with all my camping equipment hanging precariously from hooks and bungee cords. In fact, on many camping trips, my bicycle arrived as luggage itself, hooked and bungeed to my car. I must admit, I enjoyed looking “hard-core” as we cruised along the coarse road to the campsite. (That is what the other campers were thinking, isn’t it? Hard-core? Or crazy?)

The Boilermaker

Runners from all over the world are cheered on by friends, family and community members, through miles of panoramic Central New York views. This is the Boilermaker 15k Road Race, one of the most challenging and competitive races in the world.

Established in 1978 by Earle C. Reede as a way to give back to his community, the Boilermaker attracts more than 17,000 participants each year, of every age and skill level. The 8:00 a.m. Boilermaker 15k Road Race remains the crown jewel race, though events have expanded to include a 5k Race, a 3 Mile Walk, a Kids’ Run, Youth Olympics, a Health and Fitness Expo, and much more.

Sponsored by Price Chopper and hosted by the Matt Brewing Company, the Post Race Party caps off the day’s events with live music, food, Saranac™ drinks, and more.

Visit www.boilermaker.com for more information.



Getting a true taste of the local cuisine.



Camping can be an enjoyable part of the experience.

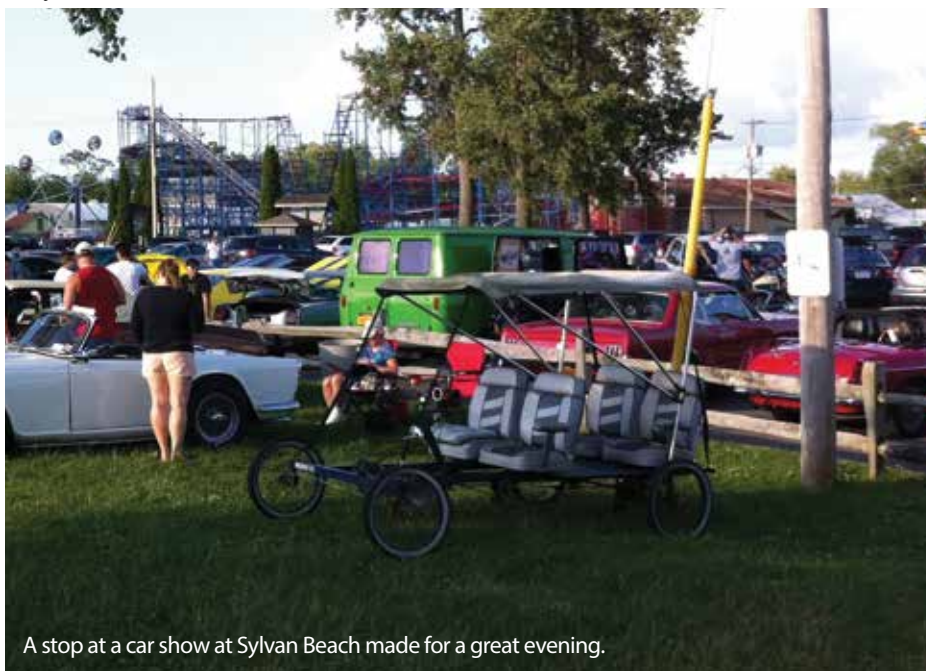
After our first day's 45-mile ride, we arrived at a beautiful campsite in Verona Beach State Park on the east shore of Oneida Lake. I leaned my bike against one of the trees, (which are perfectly spaced to provide shade to the campsites while still allowing a lake view), and pitched my backpacking tent, making sure to angle it to deflect the westerly breeze off the lake. We had no car or RV, so our two tents, two bicycles, and one picnic table looked meager in our spacious spot. We spent time enjoying the view of the lake from the park's beach before bicycling to nearby Sylvan Beach in search of dinner.

Sylvan Beach is a quaint beach community with a small amusement park and a few restaurants. We filled up on a Central New York specialty: Chicken Riggies. This dish—which includes rigatoni pasta, chicken and a sauce reminiscent of my hometown's Buffalo wing sauce—deliciously replenished needed carbohydrate stores. We ate without guilt. We had earned it. After a walk around a vintage car show, we bicycled back to the campground in the dark with headlights on and taillights flashing.

The next morning we abandoned Bicycle Route 5 and took back roads.



The Erie Canalway Trail takes you along a section of the Erie Canal ruins.



A stop at a car show at Sylvan Beach made for a great evening.

This was when we realized that Bicycle Route 5 is relatively flat—it parallels the Erie Canal after all. When we got away from it, we found all the hills that the canal builders managed to snake through with admirable efficiency. As Hemingway said, the hills I wouldn't have noticed in a car, I noticed on my bike—and certainly on my 80-pound bike. Our destination was Delta Lake State Park in Rome. Pat and I had been making an annual trek to Delta Lake for more than a decade. It has been home base for our Boilermaker weekends since we started running that world-famous race in the late 1990s.

In all the years we camped at Delta Lake, mosquitoes had never been a

Bicycling is an excellent way to experience a New York summer.



problem. That year, however, something was different—so different, in fact, that I crashed through the woods on my ill-equipped road bike, spitting out mosquitoes, to get to the camp store for some of that bug spray I forgot. The nice lake breeze at Verona Beach kept the mosquitoes at bay, but Delta Lake's campsites are in thick forest with little wind. I never set up a tent so quickly in my life. When the rest of our Boilermaker crew showed up in their cars later that day, one of them actually went into town and bought a screen tent—thus ending my hard-core bragging rights.

Loud, early morning wake-up caws reminded me that a group of crows is called a murder, but since the Boilermaker starting gun goes off at 8:00 a.m., the avian alarm helped get us moving. Since the race is on a Sunday, most of the Delta Lake Boilermaker campers packed up camp on the morning of the race so they could drive home that afternoon in time for their normal lives the next day.

We, however, always took Monday off so we could return to Delta Lake after the huge Boilermaker post-race party and spend the rest of the day playing Frisbee, swimming in the lake, lying on the beach recovering, and playing euchre in a screen tent until all hours of the night.

Monday morning would be for sleeping through the crows' caws, and a leisurely pack-up before we hooked and bungeed our bikes to a car for the ride home. We may be hard-core, but we know when enough is enough.

I've lived in New York for all of my 46 years. In the 24 years I've been at DEC, I've worked on hazardous waste sites, chased petroleum spills, and monitored industrial discharges. I've even had the privilege of getting to know and work with the very people who helped make the bald eagle's New York comeback possible. I'm honored to be part of DEC's efforts to protect and improve New York's natural resources, and I've found my way of experiencing those resources to the fullest: from the seat of a bicycle. I have seen, smelled, heard, felt, and, yes, even tasted much of what New York has to offer, and I look forward to experiencing more. I encourage you to explore the contours of the country from a bicycle seat as well; be it a local, afternoon ride or a weeklong trip through the mountains, New York has it all.

David G. Pratt is an environmental engineer in DEC's Avon office.



Going Green at the Race

By Dave Lupinski

Tens of thousands of runners, volunteers and spectators participate annually in the famous 15k and 5k Boilermaker Race. The Oneida-Herkimer Solid Waste Authority is making great strides in "greening" the Boilermaker through its "Go Green Race" initiative. In 2013, for instance, 21.8% of solid waste was recycled at the Boilermaker.

Boilermaker greening efforts include: organizing a volunteer "Green Team" to oversee recycling and disposal of trash throughout Boilermaker Week events; providing recycling containers at all events; donating all usable clothing discarded at the start line; educating vendors and spectators and requiring them to recycle; using paperless online registrations; using mass transport to move runners; and more.

Participants and spectators willingly participate in the greening effort during Boilermaker Week. They do it naturally because it's a way of life. They recycle at home, they recycle at work and now they can recycle at the Boilermaker.

Dave Lupinski is director of recycling at Oneida-Herkimer Solid Waste Authority, and Waste Disposal Coordinator for the Boilermaker.



START 'EM YOUNG!

Getting Kids Hiking



Madison and William hiking with Mom.

Excerpted from *Get Your Kids Hiking: How to Start Them Young and Keep it Fun!* by Jeff Alt
photos provided by author

When my wife and I embarked on our first lengthy expedition with our daughter and extended family out of the United States, we went all the way to Ireland! We trekked more than 50 miles with our twenty-one-month-old daughter and four-year-old nephew. Our journey was a far cry from a death-defying feat up Everest, but in order to include our child in our adventures, we knew we had to tone down our usual pursuits until our child

I've come to realize that it's our role as parents and caregivers to help our children appreciate the simple things that only nature can provide.

was older. It was worth every step.

We trekked the Burren Way, which had a haunting Lord of the Rings feel, with ancient grass-covered hills speckled with medieval granite, Disneyesque castle ruins, and remains of roofless stone peasant huts overgrown with chest-high

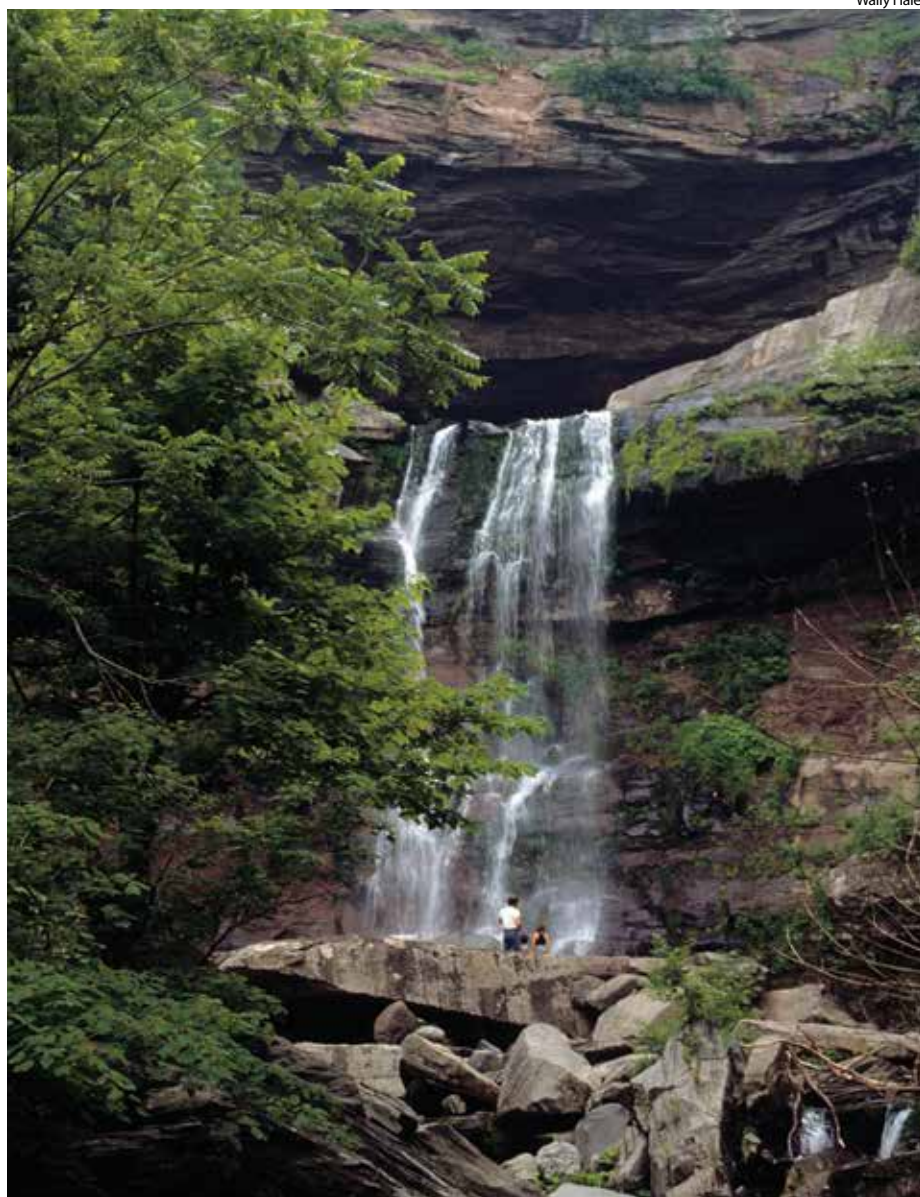
grass. For six days we followed trail markers snaking along farm lanes lined with rock fences, most certainly the same paths the medieval Celts once traveled.

With the Atlantic Ocean and distant islands in view, we trekked along the massive, breathtaking Cliffs of Moher,

and over rock fences through cow and sheep pastures. We bedded down in cozy family-run B&Bs; dined in pubs, eating beef stew, fresh battered cod, and smoked salmon. The Irish lived up to their hospitable reputation, shuttling us into town for dinner, carting our dirty laundry to the cleaners, and cooking up a very hearty breakfast each morning. Having lodging at the end of the day allowed us to rid our pack of dirty diapers, get out of the unpredictable lashing wind and rain, maintain our child's bath routine, and put her to bed in somewhat-familiar sleeping quarters.

Our daughter Madison enjoyed the entire journey. She was perched high on my back, with a half-circle weather cover propped over her. She was amused by the horses, mules and cows that would stick their heads over the rock fence like Mr. Ed. She learned to play the harmonica as we trekked along, and read a book tied to the side of the child carrier. Our routine hikes prepared us for this adventure, and our entire family had a great time.

Our second child, William, was just six weeks old when we packed him up in a child carrier and took him out for his first hike, a day hike in the Shenandoah National Park (SNP). We took the Mill



The Catskills are an excellent place for families to hike.



William learning to hike with Dad.

Prong Trail from Skyline Drive to the Rapidan Camp (also known as Camp Hoover). Rapidan Camp was the presidential retreat used by President Herbert Hoover before Camp David was built. Most of the buildings have been restored, and in the summer months, the park coordinates guided historical tours. I love hiking and history, making this one of my favorite trails in the SNP. Our round-trip hike was four miles in length, and it was a sunny day with moderate summer temperatures. I carried three-year-old Madison on my back, and Beth carried William.

A Healthy Habit to Last a Lifetime

Much research has emerged in the last decade about the physical and mental health benefits of walking. Walking is increasingly recommended by doctors for cardiovascular health, weight loss, stress relief, and as a supplement for treatment of depression. Take all these good benefits of walking, add in the rejuvenating outdoor views and the escape from the hustle and bustle, and it really becomes clear to me why hiking is one of the healthiest sports in which you can participate. By introducing your kids to hiking, you are helping them take steps,



literally and figuratively, in the right direction.

Research shows that most children will be exposed to some level of computer activity and TV by the age of two. This early exposure to electronic entertainment, as well as the trend of housing and shopping centers replacing undeveloped forest and farmland, has led many children to prefer video and computer games and TV to playing outside. I've come to realize that it's our role as parents and caregivers to help our children appreciate the simple things that only nature can provide.

Make Hiking Fun!

Start 'em Young: Ergonomically designed baby carriers make it easy and

fun to carry your infant or toddler with you wherever you hike. Walk to your favorite park or beach. Bring a friend. Stop often and let your little one explore. Make your hike a routine your kids will look forward to.

Let the Kids Lead!: Hike at your child's pace and distance. Whatever your child takes interest in, stop and explore that bug, leaf or rock with them. Tell them about the animals, rocks, trees and flowers. Getting to the destination is less important than making sure your kids have so much fun, that they will want to go again and again.

Count Down to the Adventure: Psych the kids up with pictures, videos and highlights of the places they will go and the things they will see. Use books, mag-

azines, maps and the Internet—especially park websites and videos showing the spectacular wildlife and locations they will see.

Suit-up in Comfort and the Latest Technology: Take this checklist with you shopping so you cover the bases:

Footwear: Until your kids are walking consistently on their own, fit them with a comfortable pair of water-resistant shoes. Make sure kids ages 3+ are wearing lightweight trail shoes or boots with a sturdy sole. A Vibram® sole with a waterproof breathable liner is preferred. Wear non-cotton, moisture-wicking, synthetic or wool socks.

Clothing: Dress for the weather! Wear non-cotton, synthetic, wool and fleece clothes and dress in layers. Wear mul-



The Alt family taking a break during a hike.

tipurpose clothes like pants that zip off into shorts or shirts with roll-up sleeves. Pack a waterproof, breathable rain parka. Dress for the season with fleece hat and gloves, or a hat with a wide brim for sun protection.

Packs: Get age- and size-appropriate backpacks that fit each hiker comfortably, with hydration hose capability.

Trekking Poles: Get a pair of adjustable, collapsible poles with an ergonomically designed handle for each person.

Fresh, Clean Water: Bring plenty of water. You can get a hydration hose system for your pack or just use bottles. Disinfect wild water using hi-tech portable treatment water systems such as a UV wand or micro-straining filter.

Communication: Bring a smart phone so you can take lots of pictures, and, if there's connectivity, email to family or upload to your online blog or social media site. Carry a GPS unit to keep you located on the trail and for geocaching.

Other "Must-Haves": Pediatrician-recommended suntan lotion and bug repellent containing DEET or Picaridin; first-aid kit that accommodates the whole group, and first-aid knowledge. Bring a

compass and map and brush up on how to use them. Keep matches and a lighter in a dry place, and know how to make a fire to keep warm. Carry a whistle and a signal mirror in case you get lost. Pack a survival knife with a locking blade. Bring a headlamp or flashlight, extra batteries, 50 feet of rope or twine, and always have a small roll of duct tape for that unexpected repair. (It's also helpful to know how to make a shelter to keep you warm and dry. See "Help Me Make it Through the Night" in the April 2012 *Conservationist* at www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/81427.html for other safety information.)

Bring Food Kids Love: Hand out food and water as needed on the trail. Pack kids' favorite snacks. Stop often for a drink and a snack.

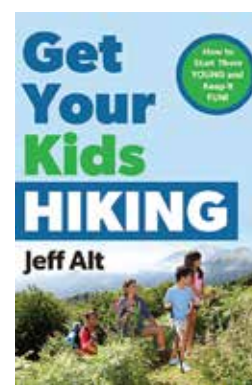
Pack Fun Items: Let young children fill their adventure pack with a bug catcher, magnifying glass, binoculars, a camera, a map and compass, whistle or flashlight. Let your little adventurer take ownership and pack a few items of his own; even if it's not hiking related.

Play Games and Bring a Friend: Play "I Spy" using your surroundings as you

walk along. Create your own scavenger hunt in search of animals, plants and views along the way. Make up rhymes and sing songs as you walk. Pack plant- and animal-identification guides for your older child. Let your social butterfly bring a friend, with parental permission. Intrigue your computer-savvy child with the high-tech hiking gadgets like GPS, headlamp flashlights and pedometers. Use your GPS and take your kids on a geocaching adventure.

Take Advantage of Park Activities and Guided Nature Experiences: Use and enjoy the amazing services and resources offered by our parks, trail and recreational system and associations. This will help ensure that the experience is enjoyable and memorable.

We all want to give our children an edge as they head out into the world. Guiding your kids step-by-step into the wonderful world of hiking will serve them well in the rapidly changing environment in which we live. Introducing your child to a sport that can serve as a relaxation and thinking tool, while providing them with an inexpensive way to stay both mentally and physically healthy, is worth every step.



Traveling speaker and hiking expert **Jeff Alt** has been hiking with his kids since they were infants. He walked the 2,160-mile Appalachian Trail, and the 218-mile John Muir Trail with his wife. Visit www.jeffalt.com to learn

more about Jeff, including information about his seminars and books, which include *Get Your Kids Hiking*; *A Walk For Sunshine*, a 2,160 Mile Expedition for Charity on the Appalachian Trail; and a forthcoming book, *Four Boots, One Journey*. Also see Jeff's article "Walking for Sunshine" in the April 2012 *Conservationist*.



View of Mount Colden from Marcy Dam

HELP—I'M LOST!

The importance of signing trail registers

By Scott VanLaer

It's been more than a decade since I noticed Howard Hughes's name signed in at one of our trailheads. In the late '90s, he regularly registered for hikes in the High Peaks region. His destination? Well, that section of the DEC register sheet was always left blank. Where would I begin my search response if Howard's wife called in to say he was overdue? Was he cruising the upper slopes for timber to build another Spruce Goose? Probably not, as the real Hughes died in 1976.

While seeing Howard Hughes's name probably elicits a chuckle from many

who sign in after him, it sets a bad example and is not amusing to forest rangers like me. Properly signing in at a trailhead helps searchers find you, or others, if lost or injured. And this is true even if *your* trip went smoothly. By properly signing in, you could assist in locating another person if a forest ranger needed to call and ask if you saw someone. The register sheets are a great investigative tool for creating a timeline. While most searches are resolved quickly, some go on for weeks and, sadly, some go on indefinitely.

In the Adirondack High Peaks wilderness, backcountry users are required by law to sign in whenever they pass by a register. The register sheets ask for only basic information: name of group leader, number of people in the group, address, phone number, planned length of stay, and destination. It takes just a few minutes to fill this out, and it can make the difference between life and death. In addition, signing in at trail registers also gives the property manager important information about how many people use a particular trail or area, and when they use it.



John Bulmer

In one case, failing to sign in at trailhead registers caused serious problems for two young men, as well as for the rescuers who searched for them (myself included). It was fall, and the two men had begun an overnight trip to Avalanche Lake. Ten hours later, they made a frantic call to 911 from their cell phone. The caller indicated that (while navigating with the GPS app on their iPhone) the two had attempted to go to the lake, but ended up off the trail in an area with “thousands of downed trees,” and became stuck on a “ledge,” unable to go up or down. Then the call went dead.

Attempts to call the men back were unsuccessful, so we tried to pinpoint their location from the call’s coordinates. These placed them on Avalanche Lake. However, in the Adirondacks, getting an accurate location from a cell phone call has extreme limitations. The phone needs to be in contact with multiple towers, and towers are few and far between in this rugged wilderness. As a result, the coordinates we get from this technology are sometimes spot-on, but at other times they have been off by miles. Unfortunately, the coordinates provided to us that night proved to be wrong.

We began our efforts with only the callers’ names and the few bits of information they provided in the call. When we checked the register at the Loj, we couldn’t find their names. So we looked for their car, and eventually found it, which gave us the location of their starting point.

“Thousands of downed trees” could have been Avalanche Pass, itself; “ledges” could have been any number of slides along Mount Colden or Avalanche Mountain. Consequently, knowing where to look was difficult. Did they take a wrong turn at Avalanche Camps? Did they take the ski trail, or mistakenly turn towards Lake Arnold?

The initial search team consisted of Forest Rangers Chris Kostoss, Sarah



Signing in at trail registers is important for safety.

Carl Heilman II

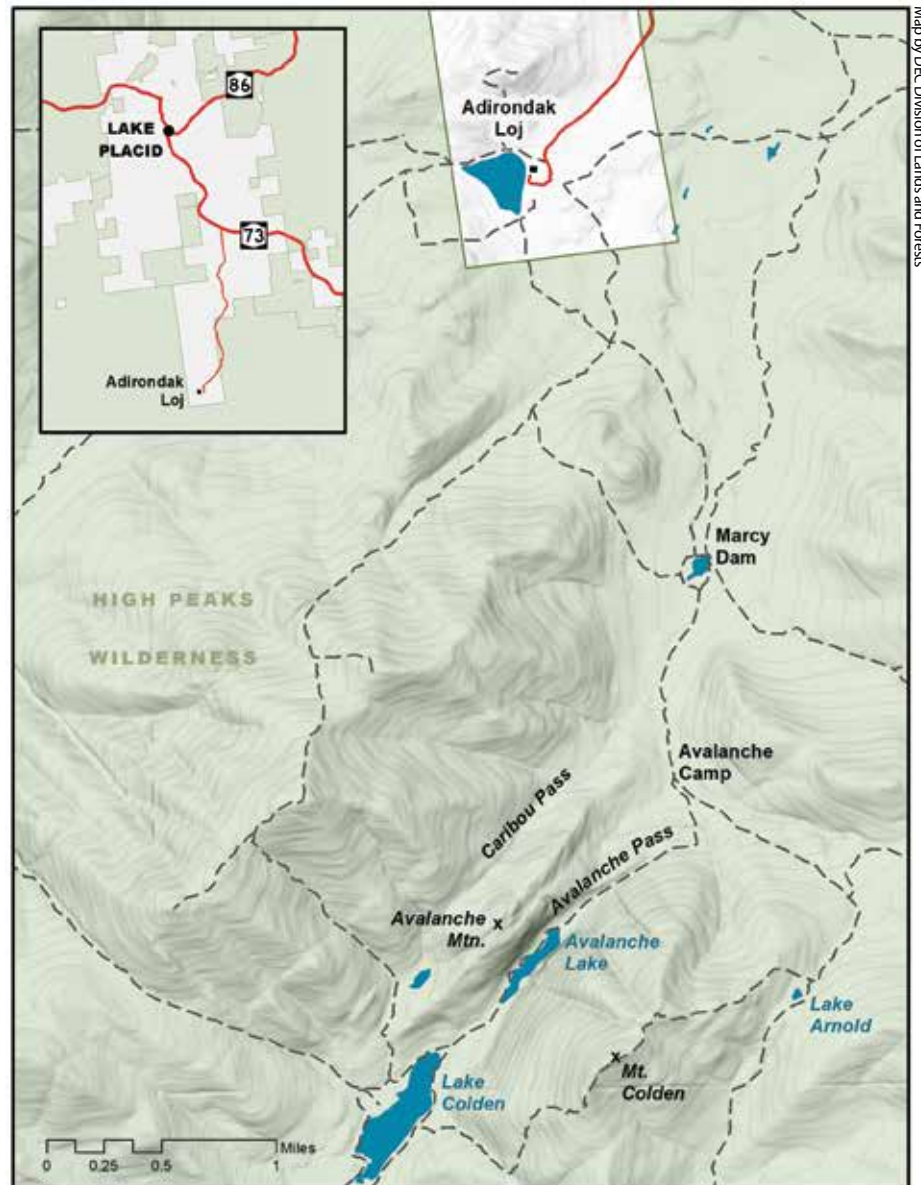
Bode, and me. We quickly made our way to Avalanche Camp, checking the trail to Lake Arnold for tracks. We then covered the ski trail and the hiking trail to the top of the pass, and looked for tracks around Avalanche Pass, but found nothing. Every few minutes we yelled out the subjects' names; we never got a response.

We decided to check out a new slide on Mt. Colden that was created when Hurricane Irene came through. It was hard to imagine someone could mistake it for a hiking trail, but in the mud, right at the base, was a fresh set of footprints. There weren't many people hiking through there that day, so we felt confident these were the missing hikers' prints.

Chris and I continued up the slide, while Sarah followed the trail. She planned to hike the entire length of Avalanche Lake, looking for lights on the various slides and ledges. Neither Chris nor I had been on the new slide before, so we didn't relish doing it for the first time in the dark, but the tracks kept going. It was windy and snowing, so our sense of urgency was high. We believed the subjects were planning on camping, and hoped they had a tent and sleeping bags with them.

After donning safety equipment, we headed up the slide, taking care to avoid a narrow drainage gully along the side. After a few minutes we lost the tracks, but it was dark, so we kept going from one pitch to the next, trying to get a view farther up the slide. We really expected to see the twinkle of LED lights, but it was not to be.

When our elevation indicated we were more than halfway up the slide, we determined the men were not in that location. Rather than continue to the top and fight the spruce-fir trees we knew to be between us and the false summit of Colden, we decided to rappel down, and then meet up with Sarah. At one point our rope got stuck, and Chris had to climb back up to change the set-up so we could recover the rope by pulling it down when we reached the bottom.



It was 10:30 p.m. when we hiked to the Marcy Dam outpost to get some rest. On our way, we checked the camping areas around Marcy Dam, looking for empty sleeping bags in a lean-to or an unoccupied tent. We didn't find any, which was good news and meant our lost hikers probably still had their gear.

As we opened the outpost, we realized that it had just been winterized. This meant no running water for us. Instead, we had to filter water from the brook, which was more effort than we wanted to muster at that point. However, the woodstove was ready for lighting, and the fire quickly warmed the outpost. As we ate some emergency rations stored there,

we made plans for the next phase of the search. Day Two would bring considerably more resources, including a helicopter.

We took a quick, three-hour nap to refresh, and woke at 4 a.m., ready to resume the search. We attempted a hasty version of coffee. What it lacked for in taste—namely any flavor—it made up for in caffeine and particulate matter! Our gear was dry and slightly toasted from the woodstove, and it actually felt good to put it on.

Chris and I took the hiking trail up Mt. Colden; we planned to explore another slide off the trail. Sarah took the outpost's UTV (a small all-terrain vehicle) to South

Meadows Road and began shuttling in more rangers for their assignments. There was fresh snow, which steadily increased in depth with our ascent.

It was a very different climate at the false summit. The 20 mph winds battered us, and five inches of snow blanketed the ground. While it was still autumn below, up there it was winter. When there was a break in the clouds, we could see into, and down, the full length of the various gullies and slides. We yelled when the wind eased; still no response. We then bushwhacked down toward the top of the same slide as the previous night, and moved on to the “rabbit hole,” a local name for the entrance to another slide we wanted to check. Then we got the call: the subjects were at the Loj. They were at the Loj? Didn’t they know a dozen or so rangers, plus a helicopter, were looking for them?

Happy to call it a day and not head into another slide, Chris and I speculated the whole way out about what had happened, and where the hikers had been. When we reached Marcy Dam, we warmed up and learned the details from the other rangers. The hikers had never crossed the new bridge at Marcy Dam. Instead, they stayed on the west side, walking past the lean-to, following old trails and deer paths that clutter the banks of Marcy Brook. Exactly where they camped was unknown, but it was someplace along that drainage towards Caribou Pass. The subjects had a terrifying night. They both thought they were going to die. The next morning, they headed out early, eventually finding the Whales Tail ski trail and then the hiking trail.

These hikers were lucky. It could just have easily turned out differently. If they had signed in at the Loj when they began their trip, but not signed in at the register on the east side of the bridge at Marcy Dam (indicating they did not go this way), we would have known where to



Hiking a slide (rock, devoid of vegetation) is difficult in good conditions, let alone at night in snow.

concentrate our search efforts. I have no doubt we would have found them, and gotten them out in time to get a first-rate room in Lake Placid.

Bottom line: Always sign in and out when you pass a DEC trail register. It could save your life. Or that of another hiker.

Forest Ranger **Scott VanLaer** works out of DEC’s Ray Brook office in the Adirondacks.

For more information on hiking and hiking safety, visit DEC’s website at www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/351.html.



The author, after reaching the top of Cruciflyer slide on Mt. Colden.



Eric Dresser

RISE OF THE EASTERN COYOTE

— *Understanding coyote ecology will allow us to coexist*

By Dan Bogan, Ph.D.

A coyote walked unhurriedly into a field. Pacing slowly, it moved forward, turned, and took two more steps. It focused its attention downward, seemingly seeking something shielded from observation, then moved on. The coyote, a female, squatted and marked a particular tuft of unmown grass with urine. She continued back and forth through the field of green grass tipped with golden seed heads of late summer. Twice the coyote sat and remained relatively motionless, directing her ears, eyes and nose to the ground before moving on. At times she lifted her head, looked around, and seemed unaffected by vehicles motoring along the county route. Drivers failed to notice, too; at least none seemed to brake and watch as the coyote hunted for mice and voles inhabiting the open field along the suburban road.

Suddenly, the coyote pounced, arching into the air, reaching out with her front feet extended and striking the ground repeatedly. That mouse or vole got away, but others were not so fortunate. Pinning one to the ground, the coyote bit, then chomped three times before swallowing it whole. After consuming three unidentified rodents in mid afternoon, the coyote moved out of sight, back into the cover of the forest...



Roy Breslawski

In recent years, coyotes have become more conspicuous; at times they are seen hunting in full view during daytime, or crisscrossing roads and neighborhoods, or observed near people and pets. This is partly due to coyotes' increasing populations during the past few decades, and also because of their ability to adapt to their environment, including areas of human development.

Coyotes are explorers and opportunists. They are also survivors, having overcome decades of persecution at the hands of ranchers, landowners, farmers and government agents. Learning more about the natural history of coyotes can help people understand their ecological role and the likely outcome of encounters with them. But first, it is important to consider how coyotes became New York's "top dog."

Coyotes in NY

Historically, wolves inhabited the heavily forested lands of New York. However, as increased logging and farming claimed more habitat, and unregulated hunting and trapping took more wolves (bounties were paid for wolves into the early 1800s), wolf numbers dropped until they were no longer found in the Northeast. Such drastic changes to the state's habitat and wildlife community primed the stage for an unexpected animal—the coyote—to fill the niche left vacant by wolves.

Coyotes were once limited to Midwestern prairies and the arid southwest. However, today, they can be found from the boreal forests of North America to nearly the Panama Canal and from coast to coast. Throughout their range, they inhabit numerous biomes (or ecological communities), including deserts, grasslands and forests—no small feat for any animal. This remarkable range expansion is an increase of 40% from their historic range, and is primarily in response to anthropogenic (manmade) changes. No other carnivore has experienced as large a range expansion.

While coyotes are now widespread in New York, they only recently became established here. Interestingly, they did not enter from the west as one might expect, but instead passed through Canada north of the Great Lakes before turning south into northern New York. By the late 1930s and '40s, coyotes were established in Franklin County, and by the 1980s, coyotes were found throughout the state except in New York City and on Long Island (see map).



Eastern coyotes spread throughout most of New York in less than six decades and are now showing up in New York City and on Long Island. (Map reprinted from October 1974 *Conservationist*.)

Evolving Ecology of Eastern Coyotes

Not long after coyotes appeared in New York, researchers noticed that these arrivals differed slightly from western coyotes in size and appearance. Using genetic analyses, researchers found that eastern coyotes are roughly 64% western coyote, 26% wolf ancestry and 10% domestic dog.

Weighing approximately 24 to 45 lbs., adult eastern coyotes are heavier than western coyotes (20 to 25 lbs.), yet much smaller than wolves (50 to 100 lbs.). Eastern coyotes have long ears and slender bodies. They have broader heads and larger teeth than western coyotes. These factors may contribute to coyotes' success filling the niche formerly occupied by wolves.

Once dominated by rodents, diets of New York coyotes are now dominated by deer. Although people suspect coyotes kill lots of deer, recent research conducted by SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry biologists has shown that the majority of adult deer coyotes eat are scavenged. Tracking coyotes with GPS collars, researchers located 62 deer carcasses visited by coyotes. Cause of death was determined in 39 of the carcasses: 36 were scavenged, and only 3 were killed by coyotes.

In fact, less than 10% of adult deer mortalities are caused by coyotes. Further, deer killed by coyotes had previous injuries, perhaps making it easier for coyotes to kill them. Coyotes did kill fawns during spring and summer; around one-third of coyotes' summer diet consists of fawns. However, coyotes in the Adirondacks currently consume more beaver than fawns.

These results are preliminary; researchers are finalizing their study of the impacts of coyote predation on adult white-tailed deer and fawn recruitment.



A Cornell graduate student examines a coyote.

In the 1990s, coyotes continued spreading, quietly back-filling suburban areas passed over during their initial surge. Today, sightings of coyotes make headlines in many cities and suburbs. Coyotes even inhabit the Bronx; the only New York City borough attached to upstate and the mainland. On occasion, these stealthy explorers permeate other island boroughs, and when detected in places such as Central Park or the campus of Columbia University, their presence garners a hail of media and police attention. In 2011, someone photographed a coyote in Queens, and in 2013, black-and-white photographic evidence showed a solitary coyote as far east as Bridgehampton, Long Island. Hustling to keep pace with this elusive canid, biologists are preparing to study the implications of a new carnivore on Long Island: the last frontier for coyotes in New York, and the last large landmass unoccupied by coyotes in the east.

Coyote Behavior

While coyotes are classified as carnivores, they actually eat omnivorous diets including a wide variety of animal and plant materials. They are also opportunistic, feeding on whatever food sources are abundant and easily consumed (see “Evolving Ecology of Eastern Coyotes” on page 21).

Eastern coyotes mate for life. While they do not form highly organized packs like wolves, adult coyotes display similar behavior by forming family units of closely related individuals. Adult males and females are the core of the family group. Often, the family group will include young of the year, and may occasionally include yearling coyotes from previous litters. Other coyotes live outside of packs as solitary transients and float between resident coyote families, biding their time until a vacant territory opens.

Jim Yates



While coyotes do kill white-tailed deer, as witnessed by this photographer, many of the deer coyotes feed on were killed by other causes or had previous injuries.



Eastern coyotes are medium-size canines that average 24 to 45 pounds in weight.

Coyotes communicate by scent-marking and group-howling. Scat (feces) and urine are deposited in prominent spots along trails to mark territories. When coyotes howl, it often sounds like many individuals, but it is really just a few. Perhaps this is due to echoes off hillsides or the reverberation of the resonant voices through the woods, or simply the hyperactive chorus of yips, yip-howls and yee-haws. It is not uncommon for residents in suburban neighborhoods to awaken to the sound of coyotes howling in a nearby woodlot—a sound formerly associated only with faraway wilderness. For some, this sound is invigorating and a pleasant reminder of nearby wildlife, while others find it eerie and nerve-wracking.

Coexisting with Coyotes

Coyotes inhabiting residential and suburban areas occasionally slink through backyards and across streets, moving from one natural area to another. Most observations of coyotes are simply sightings, providing the observer an opportunity to watch and enjoy the state’s largest wild dog. However, when coyotes live near people, there is the potential for problems, and occasionally issues do arise. Being aware of nearby coyotes and taking appropriate action can reduce the likelihood of problems (see “Reduce Risks” sidebar).

The best approach to keep people and pets safe from coyotes is to avoid contact and not attract them to an area. If possible, people should avoid areas known to have coyotes, especially at times when coyotes are most active (from dusk until dawn). Do not leave food outside, including pet food and birdseed, and keep compost and trash in secure containers. Fortunately, studies conducted in New York showed that nearly all food items of coyotes in suburban habitats were of natural origins; white-tailed deer, small mammals, plant materials, and cottontail rabbits were among the most common. Few traces of birdseed, trash, or pets were detected.

Catching a glimpse of a coyote can be exciting and memorable. However, beware of coyotes that are reluctant to flee from you, and chase away coyotes if they are near you, particularly in neighborhoods or developed areas. Clap your hands, wave your arms, and make some noise to keep them moving away. This encourages coyotes to avoid people. Also, watch out for coyotes that focus on or follow people or pets, as the coyote may approach or attack.

If you encounter a nuisance coyote that you feel may cause property damage, or is perceived to threaten human health or safety, contact your regional DEC biologist who can provide technical assistance and issue any necessary permits. Coyotes actually observed causing property damage, threatening people or pets can be taken without a permit if done in accordance with local rules or ordinances. In New York, liberal hunting and

trapping seasons provide ample opportunities for sportsmen to go afield and take coyotes when pelts are valued.

It is important that we keep coyotes wild and prevent them from seeking human food sources or becoming accustomed to people. Loved or loathed, this incredibly adaptable animal is here to stay.

Dan Bogan, Ph.D. studied eastern coyote ecology and management at Cornell University. He is currently a Lecturer of Environmental Science at Siena College and works for DEC, assisting with coyote and other wildlife management issues.

For further reading:

Coyotes: How Close is Too Close? by Mike Cavanaugh in the April 2005 Conservationist

A Howling Success: The eastern coyote, by Robert E. Chambers in the August 2000 Conservationist

REDUCE RISKS

Bill Banaszewski

People and coyotes can coexist. Conflicts between coyotes and people can occur year round, but are most likely to occur in spring when coyotes are denning, feeding their young, and are exhibiting territorial behavior against other coyotes and domestic dogs. Here are some recommended steps you can take to reduce the likelihood of conflicts from occurring:

- **Don't feed coyotes.** Discourage others from doing so. Unintentional food sources attract coyotes and other wildlife and increase risks to people and pets: don't feed pets outside; make garbage inaccessible; fence or enclose compost piles.
- **Don't feed birds.** Concentrations of birds and rodents that come to feeders can attract coyotes.
- **Don't allow coyotes to approach people or pets.** Teach children to appreciate coyotes from a distance.
- **If you see a coyote, be aggressive.** Stand tall and hold arms out to look large. If a coyote lingers, make loud noises, wave your arms, and throw sticks and stones.
- **Don't allow pets to run free.** Supervise all outdoor pets to keep them safe from coyotes and other wildlife, especially at sunset and at night.
- **Contact your local police department and DEC regional office for assistance** if you notice that coyotes are exhibiting "bold" behavior or have little or no fear of people. (Simple occasional sightings are not necessarily evidence of bold behavior.)

For more information, see:

Eastern coyote—www.dec.ny.gov/animals/6971.html

Tips to eliminate wildlife conflicts—www.dec.ny.gov/animals/89522.html

Feeding wildlife: a wrong choice—www.dec.ny.gov/animals/74763.html



Celebrating an Adirondack Hiking Tradition

—The Northville-Placid Trail turns 90

*By Wes Lampman,
photos courtesy Adirondack Mt. Club and DEC*

Hiking the Northville-Placid Trail (NPT) has been an Adirondack tradition for many a backpacker. Described as passing through some of the wildest and most remote areas of the Adirondack Park, the 133-mile trail has an appeal that lures thousands of people each year. Whether you hike short sections over a number of years, or thru-hike it in one trip, the satisfaction you get from completing the trail is something that stays with you.

I can attest to the lure of this trail as I hiked it in 1997. It was April and a friend and I decided we'd thru-hike the trail. Over the course of two weeks, we slogged through rain storms, circumvented beaver ponds, listened to loons, and watched some amazing sunsets. It was fantastic. When we reached the end, we were physically stronger. We were also hesitant to leave the pleasant pace of life we enjoyed while walking through the Adirondack wilderness. The memory still evokes smiles on both our faces.

During its 90-year history, the NPT has undergone several changes. In some cases, the trail was rerouted; in other cases, sections had to be reworked to address flooded areas and stream crossings. This is not surprising since the trail traverses north-south through the center of the Adirondack Park, and the Park itself has gone through considerable changes, such as the addition of large parcels of land to the Forest Preserve and natural changes to the landscape due to events like blow-downs, slides and flooding.



Susan Shafer

While the [new section of] trail does make use of some old logging haul roads, more than 80% had to be newly constructed.



A trail crew member working on a new section of the Northville-Placid Trail.

Construction of the NPT first began in 1922 as a cooperative venture between DEC's predecessor, the Conservation Commission, and the newly created Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK). Charged with rallying public support for the creation of more trails and shelters in the Adirondacks, ADK helped pay to locate and establish the route, and constructed five lean-tos at various locations on the trail. At that time, the trail crew that completed the work used game trails, logging haul roads, and secondary highways as the trail's main corridor. Led by Edwin "Doc" Noyes and Howard Rowe, the trail crew (Bob Hughes, Walt Scott, Chris Henderson, and Bill Wasserman) finished blazing the NPT Trail by 1924.

For the next 80 years or so, the trail saw little change, with a few exceptions. The biggest change occurred in the Blue Mountain Lake region. Originally, the trail followed the dirt highway for 12.5 miles between Blue Mountain and Long Lake. When that road was paved, the trail was moved to its current location in the Blue Mountain Wild Forest. The work was completed by the Boy Scouts of the Schenectady Council under supervision of the Conservation Department.

Other small adjustments were made to the original route, largely due to beavers flooding the trail, private land issues, and the abandonment of sections containing excessive bridge crossings. All of these reroutes were improvements that created better trail conditions and a wilder character that enhanced the hiking experience. In spite of these improvements, large sections of the trail still remained on blacktop or improved dirt roads.

During my time on the NPT, I found that the least appealing parts were the road walks. I skipped the 10-plus-mile section between Northville and the Godfrey Road parking lot north of Benson. Another road section that was particularly tedious was the 6.6 miles between Wakely Dam and the former McCane's camping resort on the Cedar River Road.

For decades, ADK and DEC explored various routes that would bypass road sections, but two obstacles stood in the way: the proposed reroutes needed to go through private land; and a Unit Management Plan, or UMP (a detailed document outlining everything from the existing cultural and natural resources to the recreational activities allowed in a particular forest unit, written by DEC and vetted by the public and the Adirondack

Park Agency) needed to be created that included these proposed reroutes. Fortunately, the state was able to acquire the necessary land, and the UMP was completed. So in 2009 the first modern reroute of the NPT began.

The first section to be rerouted was the Cedar River Road walk. The majority of the new trail was placed in the Blue Ridge Wilderness Area with a small portion on the southeastern border of the Moose River Plains Wild Forest. I was entrusted with completing the layout and design work for the new trail section, so I spent that May scouting possible routes. I finally settled on a route that follows the existing contour of the landscape and traverses primarily through hardwood forest. While the trail does make use of some old logging haul roads, more than 80% of the trail had to be newly constructed. DEC funded the construction, and it took an ADK professional trail crew 12 weeks to excavate the tread (trail surface) and build the necessary foot bridges. The result: more than seven miles of picturesque trail that keeps hikers in the woods and off the road.

Last year, work began on rerouting the most southern road walk that runs between Northville and Benson. This reroute will be much longer and take several summer seasons to complete. In 2013, work focused on the northern end, in the Silver Lake Wilderness Area, where new trail was constructed along the southwestern slope of Little Cathead Mountain. Seven miles in length, the route joins the existing NPT just north of the bridge over the North Branch of West Stony Creek.

The next phase of this major project is currently in the works. The plan is to continue the reroute south of Woods Lake into the Shaker Mountain Wild Forest. Eventually, the trail will cross West Stony Creek and then head east towards Mud Lake and Gifford Valley Road, for a total added length of approximately twelve miles. One challenge will be con-



One of many bridge crossings on the trail.

structing a bridge over West Stony Creek which is fairly shallow throughout most of the year, but maintains a wide channel very far upstream. Finding a reasonable place to cross will be the crux of this trail section.

Once this section of the trail is complete, hikers and backpackers will have access to another spot in the Adirondacks. So, whether you've already hiked the NPT, or you've been thinking about it for a while, why not come out and try it this year? Because to me, there's no place better to experience the wild outdoors than in the Adirondacks.

North Country operations director for the Adirondack Mountain Club, **Wes Lampman** feels privileged to have assisted in the design of the NPT's newest sections.

Many lean-tos can be found along the NPT.



Celebrate and Support the NPT on June 7th

To celebrate the 90th anniversary of the completion of the NPT and the new southern reroutes, ADK will host a National Trails Day event in (and near) Northville. There will be plenty of opportunity to help, including working on the new reroute in the Silver Lake Wilderness as well on the trail south into Shaker Mountain Wild Forest. There will also be a host of other activities, plus a number of vendors on site in Northville at the Waterfront Town Park. DEC will unveil a new sign at the terminus of the trail near the park. All are encouraged to join the ADK and DEC on June 7 to either help out on the NPT or visit Waterfront Park and show your support.

If you can't attend the June celebration, you can still help support the iconic Northville-Placid Trail: become a trail steward or adopt a lean-to. ADK, in cooperation with DEC, organizes backcountry stewards to complete basic trail maintenance and general upkeep of lean-tos throughout the Adirondack Park, including the NPT. Also, consider joining the NPT ADK Chapter where you can meet like-minded people who enjoy outdoor recreation and support the NPT. To learn more about the NPT, pick up the latest edition of the NPT guidebook, published by ADK, and visit **www.adk.org**.

For further reading, see "Eight Days: thru-hiking the Northville-Placid Trail" in the October 2011 *Conservationist*.

On Patrol

Real stories from Conservation Officers and Forest Rangers in the field

Carl Heilman II



DEC photo

Red-tailed Hawk Recovers— New York County

Maintenance workers at a housing project in Manhattan discovered a red-tailed hawk struggling to fly. After receiving a call about it, ECO Dustin Dainack took the hawk to the Wild Bird Fund for evaluation and treatment. The hawk had an injured foot, possibly from a window strike. Three days later, Wild Bird Fund told ECO Dainack the hawk had fully recovered and could be released back into the wild urban environment of New York City. He returned the hawk to the same pocket park where it had been found and watched as the hawk flew effortlessly to the tree tops. Several minutes later, it swept down to the grass and then up again, grasping a large rat in its talons.

Crabbers Get Grabby— Suffolk County

One foggy night, Lt. Dallas Bengel and ECO Mark Simmons were patrolling the shoreline around Shinnecock Bay when they spotted a vessel with two people harvesting horseshoe crabs. Because there was a 30-crab limit per trip, Lt. Bengel and ECO Simmons decided to check the crabbers. Not

knowing where the crabbers might come ashore, the officers began a game of cat and mouse that was complicated by the poor visibility. They finally intercepted the vessel at Molnar's Landing in Hampton Bays. The operator was found to be in possession of 209 horseshoe crabs—179 crabs over the limit. Accompanying him was the owner of the vessel, who did not have a horseshoe crab permit. The violators were issued summonses and paid fines.

Decoy Deception— Livingston County

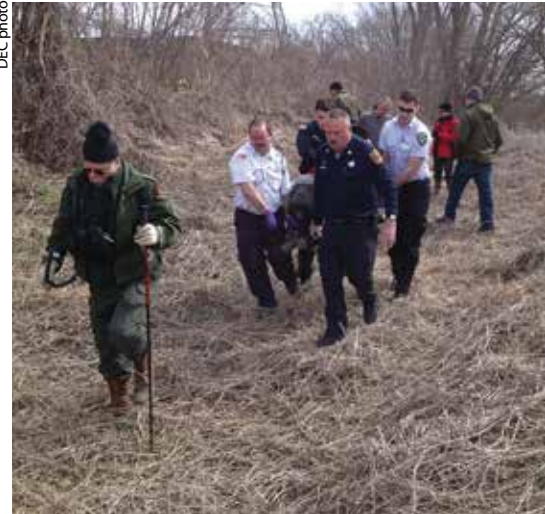
Within minutes of setting up "Tom the Turkey" decoys, ECOs Brian Wade and Chris Ward and Lt. Josh VerHague observed a person loading a turkey round into his shotgun while inside his vehicle. The man left the vehicle, intending to shoot the "turkeys," and was flabbergasted when ECO Wade quickly intervened. Later that day, three people were apprehended when one of them, while seated on an ATV anchored in the bed of a pickup truck, discharged a round toward the decoys. All parties were issued summonses and paid a total of more than \$1,215 in penalties.

Missing Underfoot— Schenectady County

The Schenectady Police Department (PD) contacted Forest Ranger Captain Pat Kilpeck, requesting assistance with finding a 60-year-old female who had been missing since the week before, when a taxi dropped her off outside a house in the Village of Scotia. Rangers Jeff Breigle and Sarah Geesler met with a detective to assess the situation and plan a search. Rangers and officers from the Scotia and Schenectady PDs then searched the area east of Collins Park to the Mohawk River. About two hours later, Rangers Joseph Bink and Bill Henry and two detectives found the woman alive approximately 100 yards

Contributed by ECO Lt. Liza Bobseine and Forest Ranger Capt. Stephen Scherry

DEC photo



Police and DEC forest rangers carry a lost elderly woman to safety.

from where she had last been seen. The woman, who reportedly has dementia, told authorities she had been seeking "solitude and rest" but became weak and took shelter under overgrown brush, which concealed her. She did not leave this spot, nor did she have any food or water the entire time. The Scotia Fire Department treated the woman at the scene, after which Mohawk Ambulance took her to the hospital for evaluation.

Ask the ECO:

Q: A woodchuck is eating my garden. What am I allowed to do?

A: Unprotected wildlife (other than birds) may be taken by any means or in any manner (in accordance with your local ordinances) by the landowner or lessee, or by members of their immediate family occupying a property when such wildlife is injuring that property. Examples of unprotected wildlife include chipmunks, red squirrels and woodchucks.



Robert Beyfuss

American Ginseng

Each fall, hundreds of people venture into New York's forests to look for an elusive plant. Armed with digging sticks, shovels, trowels and screwdrivers, these explorers scour the hillsides for the telltale bunch of brilliant red berries that give away the location of one of the most valuable plants of the woods: ginseng.

American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolium*) is a perennial herbaceous plant in the ivy family. It is similar to the Asian species (*Panax ginseng*), which is reported to have been first discovered in the Manchurian Mountains of China more than 5,000 years ago.

Chinese medicine recognizes ginseng as one of the most diverse plants prescribed by herbal practitioners. It has been called an "adaptogen" due to its perceived ability to increase the body's

ability to "adapt" to or resist physical and mental stress. It has been used as an aid in gastrointestinal ailments, alcohol detoxification, blood pressure and cholesterol control, diabetes, reproductive health, stress and endurance, and longevity.

Evidence of ginseng as a medical herb can be found in Shen Nong's (a legendary emperor reported to have existed as far back as 2500 or 2700 B.C.) medical journal. Archival documents note that the plant was revered by many emperors and affluent peoples of China. This high demand virtually wiped out ginseng and China turned elsewhere to meet its need.

In North America, ginseng was first "discovered" in the early 1700s by Joseph Francois Lafitau, a French missionary living with Canadian Native Americans. Lafitau recognized the plant growing in

the woods near his village. Gradually, Native Americans as well as French fur traders were digging up the valuable commodity. Records indicate Native Americans used the root for medicinal purposes; French traders exported it to China. By the mid 1700s, early American settlers in western New England and central New York had also discovered ginseng's value as a cash crop.

Many fortunes—and perhaps legends—were made in the ginseng business during this period. According to third person testimony: while traveling from Kentucky to Philadelphia in the winter of 1787-88, American pioneer Daniel Boone had 12-15 tons of ginseng fall into the Ohio River! After drying as much of the crop as he could, Boone traded the damaged ginseng in Maryland.



Ginseng plant showing four sets of prongs (leaf groups).

Robert Beyfuss

By the mid nineteenth century, more than half a million pounds of ginseng was harvested in the United States and shipped to China. This continued into the early 1900s when overharvesting nearly caused the extinction of the plant—similar to what happened in China. To compensate, people made attempts to cultivate the root, including in western New York. George Stanton of Onondaga is often recognized as the “Father of the Cultivated Ginseng Industry,” and is often credited with growing the ginseng industry in the state. With Stanton’s and NYS Plant Pathologist H.H. Whetzels’s knowledge and assistance, farmers were able to grow more of the plant.

Ginseng again became an important crop with the advancement of modern farming techniques (like the development of artificial shade). By the turn of the twentieth century, ginseng farming was common, but the supplies of wild roots were disappearing due to overharvesting. Between 1906 and 1970 ginseng exports averaged 215,000 pounds per year.

Fortunately, all is not lost. Although wild *Panax ginseng* is nearly extinct in the Asia-Pacific, its North American counterpart has responded fairly well to conservation

practices. In 1973, American ginseng was added to Appendix II under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the agreement between governments designed to protect endangered plants and animals.

New York adopted ginseng regulations in 1987 to establish a harvest season, a dealer permit system, and conservation practices. The following year, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) approved New York’s ginseng program and also lifted a ban on the export of wild American ginseng out of the state.

New York’s ginseng regulations have two main goals: the creation of a ginseng exportation program and the conservation of American ginseng in the wild. The regulations were written to ensure that only mature ginseng plants are harvested and that these plants provide seeds that will propagate future populations of ginseng in New York State. Only mature ginseng plants (those with at least 3 sets of prongs with 5 leaflets each) can be picked and they can only be harvested between September 1 and November 30. Plants must have red berries and the seeds must be replanted immediately.



A ginseng farm

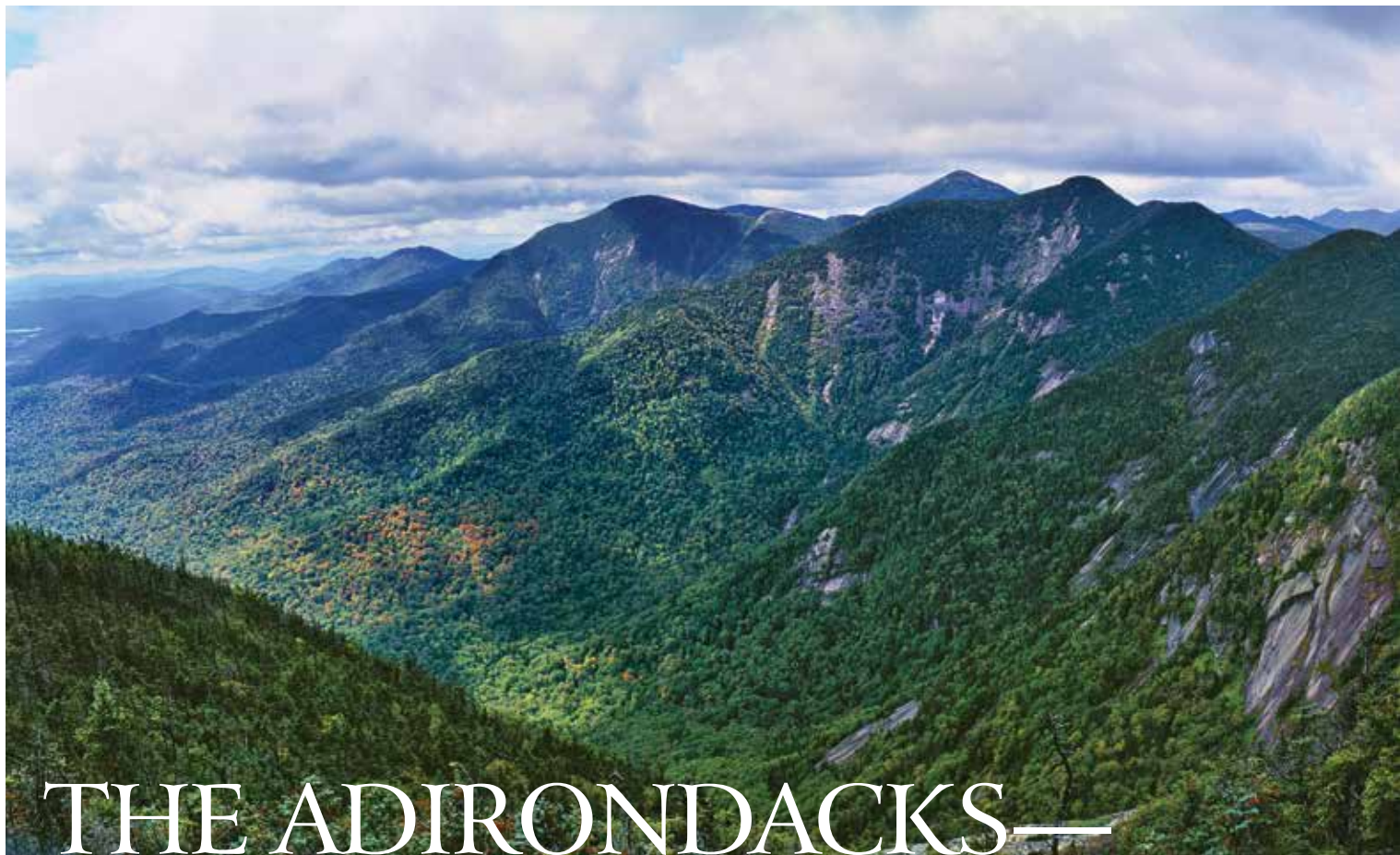
Before harvesting ginseng in New York, you must obtain landowner permission. Ginseng harvesting is not allowed on any lands administered by DEC. For all other public land in the state, you should contact the agency that administers the property.

Every year, the FWS analyzes harvest reports from states with ginseng programs to determine whether continued harvesting may be detrimental to future populations of ginseng in that state. If not, they issue a finding that allows the state to have a ginseng harvest the following year.

Ginseng is a lucrative crop and an important source of income for many people; however, it is also a wild forest plant. With proper conservation and management practices, we can preserve it for future generations and ensure it meets—and exceeds—its potential.

Please visit www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7130.html for more information about American ginseng, including complete ginseng regulations.

Doug Schmid, recently retired from DEC’s Division of Lands and Forests, contributed to this article.



THE ADIRONDACKS— Where Wilderness Preservation Began

By Doug Scott

On a Saturday in July 1923, the irrepressible wilderness enthusiast Bob Marshall was doing what he liked best: tramping through the wild Adirondacks. He camped by a beaver dam, and wrote in his journal: "... it seemed hardly possible that I was in the crowded Empire State of today....The forest outlined against the rising moon, the deer drinking in the rippling brook, the cool wind from the West were all as they had been when the first pioneer trapper spread his blankets in the untrammelled country, termed Couchsachraga, the dismal wilderness."

Bob Marshall led an extraordinary life, tragically foreshortened by his death at age 38 in 1939. In that span, Bob inspired the movement for wilderness preservation that now reaches around the world.

Everything he wrote and did reflected the impress of the summers he spent in the Adirondacks. His family summered at Knollwood, their compound on Lower Saranac Lake, but Bob was happiest when out climbing the peaks with his brother George and their guide, Herb Clark.

Bob's adventures in the Adirondacks and in wilderness areas across North America, together with his awareness of the ever-present threats of development, laid the groundwork for his widely influential statement of the case for preserving wilderness areas. Published in 1930 in the country's most important scientific journal, *The Scientific Monthly*, "The Problem of the Wilderness" reviewed the many benefits people gain from wilderness and the threats fast eroding

remaining wild expanses, concluding with a ringing call to action: "There is just one hope of repulsing the tyrannical ambition

The Wilderness Society



Bob Marshall canoeing in the Adirondacks.



Adirondack High Peaks

fight wherever and whenever wilderness is attacked.

At Hanging Spear Falls during a climb of Mount Marcy, Zahnise told Schaefer that he was overwhelmed by the quiet and beauty of the Adirondacks and compared it to the Grand Tetons. Zahnise's love affair with the area deepened, and when Schaefer learned of a 25-acre parcel of land with a cabin that his neighbor wanted to sell, he wrote to Zahnise, who took out a loan for the purchase. Ever playful with words, he combined the first syllables of his four children's names, Mathias, Esther, Karen, and Edward, and the family retreat became "Mateskared."

Testifying before a New York legislative commission in 1953, Zahnise dipped into the 1857 classic, *Wild Northern Scenes*, quoting Samuel H. Hammond's alarm that Rackett Lake would soon be within civilization's ever-extending circle: "When that time shall have arrived, where shall we go to find the woods, the wild things, the old forests, and hear the sounds which belong

...wilderness is where we humans leave the forces of nature to unfold in their own way.

of civilization to conquer every niche on the whole earth. That hope is the organization of spirited people who will fight for the freedom of the wilderness."

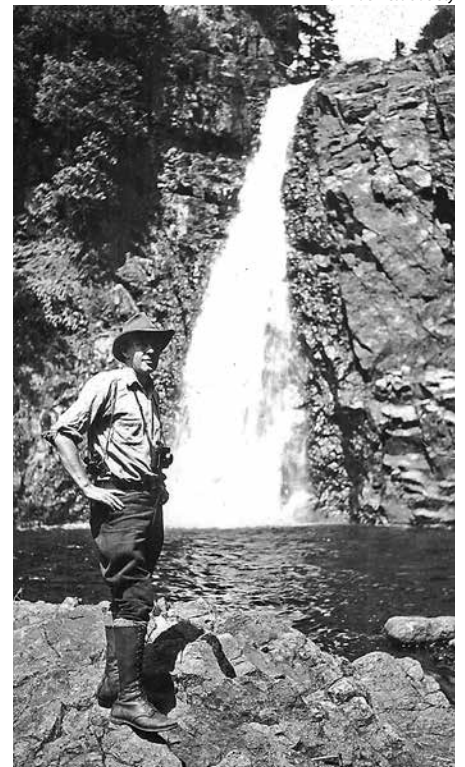
His call galvanized founding of The Wilderness Society in 1935. Thus, from Bob's nurturing in the wild Adirondacks, events were set in motion that would spark action for wilderness preservation from the halls of the U.S. Congress to vast wild sanctuaries in Alaska, South Africa, Malaysia and beyond.

In 1936 The Wilderness Society held a membership meeting in Washington D.C. One who attended was a government editor named Howard Zahnise. A decade later, the Society asked Zahnise to put together an issue of its magazine, *The Living Wilderness*, when their own editor became

ill. Soon the Society asked him to take the job as the executive director and editor.

In his new role, "Zahnise" attended a wildlife conservation conference in New York City in 1946. There he met Paul Schaefer, who was fighting proposed dams on the Moose River. Eager to learn more about the Adirondacks, he and his family took a long vacation that summer, setting up camp outside the Schaefer's cabin near Bakers Mills. The two families became great friends—and discovered an interesting link, for as a young man, Schaefer had encountered Bob Marshall on the summit of Mount Marcy. He related to Zahnise how he had told Bob about logging threats on Mount Adams, and how Bob had said that all of us who love wilderness must band together and

The Wilderness Society



Howard Zahnise at Hanging Spear Falls.



On Mt. Marcy, looking east towards Mount Haystack

Carl Heilman II

to nature in its primeval state?...Had I my way, I would mark out a circle of a hundred miles in diameter, and throw around it the protecting aegis of the constitution...The old woods should stand here always as God made them, growing on until the earthworm ate away their roots, and the strong winds hurled them to the ground, and new woods should be permitted to supply the place of the old so long as the earth remained.”

Yet the threats never seemed to stop coming—and the people of New York always answered with solid defense of the Adirondacks. Faced with a proposal to build the Panther Creek dam—a proposal backed by every prominent mover and shaker in the state—the public voted three to one in November 1955 to keep the Park “forever wild.”

Outstanding things can happen when a person and a mission in life come

together at the perfect moment. At its annual meeting in 1947, The Wilderness Society’s council formally decided to work for protection of a continent-wide system of wilderness areas. Zahnle brought exactly the right aptitudes to the task—an evangelical approach to making converts for wilderness, and endless patience. Patience was essential, for the proposal aroused determined opposition from mining, logging and livestock-grazing interests and their congressional allies. Moving it from concept to bill and through Congress to the president’s desk would take the next 17 years.

From the start, the Adirondacks played a central role in Zahnle’s campaign for the Wilderness Act. Retreats at Mateskared gave him time to reflect and to renew his energies, even before he learned he had serious heart disease. His knowledge of the “forever wild” clause

of the New York State Constitution inspired him to seek the strongest form of protection for wilderness areas on Federal lands. An amendment to the U.S.

Bob Marshall



photo courtesy of Wilderness.net / University Montana

Constitution was not a practical option; next best would be establishment of wilderness areas by Act of Congress protected by exact boundaries mapped in the statutes themselves so that *only* Congress could alter them in the future.

Zahnie spent the first nine years refining his own thinking about the contents of such a law, using his travels to stir conservationists across the country, and deftly taking advantage of each fight against proposed dams and other threats to wilderness areas to broaden the coalition of support he knew would be needed to overcome entrenched opposition. In early 1956, he judged the time right and sat down to draft the legislation. His bill was introduced that summer, but it still required eight years to move it through Congress.

Zahnie did not live to savor his triumph, however, dying on May 5, 1964 of congestive heart failure. He was only fifty-eight years old. Four months later his widow, Alice, stood proudly in the Rose Garden on September 3, 1964 as President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Wilderness Act into law.

As we celebrate the law's 50th anniversary this year, we see that the Wilderness Act, so deeply influenced by the history of wilderness protection in

Howard Zahniser



photo courtesy of Wilderness.net



President Lyndon Johnson congratulates Alice Zahniser after signing the Wilderness Act in 1964.

the Adirondacks, has had extraordinary reach. Today, our National Wilderness Preservation System protects more than 109.5 million acres in 44 states—and Congress is actively considering bipartisan legislation to designate more.

Gaining the protection of the Wilderness Act for additional land requires an act of Congress; more than 170 wilderness designation laws have been passed since 1964. Each of these laws has enjoyed local support, a reminder that the preservation of wilderness begins—as it did in the Adirondacks—with a few people eager to see wild places they love protected as strongly as possible.

The Wilderness Act has been the model for a number of states, such as California, Minnesota and New York, to pass laws protecting wilderness areas on state-owned land. In fact, one-fifth of the Adirondack State Park—20 wilderness areas—are embraced in this strongest-possible legal protection. In addition, the Wilderness Act has been the inspiration for numerous nations around the world to create wilderness protection policies adapted to their own social and legal systems.

While drafting the Wilderness Act, Howard Zahniser kept thinking of Bob Marshall's description of the wild Adirondacks as "untrammelled," feeling no other word conveyed the essential idea. To say, as Congress does in the 1964 law, that wilderness is "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man" is to say that wilderness is where we humans leave the forces of nature to unfold in their own way.

And for the past 50 years, the Wilderness Act has done just that: helped ensure our wild areas remain forever wild; places where, in Zahnie's perfect phrase, we humans should "be guardians, not gardeners."

Doug Scott retired last year after 40 years lobbying Congress to protect more national parks and wilderness areas. He has written *Our Wilderness: America's Common Ground*, foreword by Robert Redford (Fulcrum, 2009) and *The Enduring Wilderness: Protecting Our Natural Heritage Through the Wilderness Act*, foreword by Theodore Roosevelt IV (Fulcrum, 2004).

FOREST HEALTH CORNER:

What's that bug? Common Insects Seen at the Forest Health Lab

By Jessica Cancelliere, photos courtesy of author, unless otherwise noted.

Charged with identifying and monitoring insect pests that threaten the health and vitality of New York's forests, DEC's Forest Health Diagnostic Lab in Delmar routinely receives requests from the public to identify insects. Sometimes people are concerned about damage an insect is causing; other times, they are simply inquisitive about what they've discovered. They send photos, descriptions, and occasionally even the actual insect, to the lab.

Here are a few of the fascinating insects that people commonly ask us about.

If you enjoy fishing, you may be familiar with the huge, sickle-jawed gray dobsonflies often seen fluttering over water or perched along the sides of rivers and streams. These insects belong to the order Megaloptera, which means "big wings." This order includes the smaller fishflies and alderflies. The eastern dobsonfly (*Corydalus cornutus*), with a wingspan of almost 6 inches, is the largest Megalopteran in the northeast. Males have massive, extremely sharp mandibles that can be three times as long as their head. Though they appear menacing, the mandibles are used solely to impress females and to position them during mating. However, the smaller, but fierce, jaws of the female can draw blood, and she may inflict a painful bite if handled carelessly.

Dobsonflies spend most of their 2- to 5-year lives as freshwater larvae called hellgrammites. These voracious underwater predators have strong, pinching jaws to help capture and eat aquatic insects, insect larvae, small fish and amphibians. One of the best baits for catching bass and trout, hellgrammites will bite if given the chance. They require clean, unpolluted water, and are often used as indicators of water quality in rivers and streams.

When the time comes, hellgrammites leave the water for good, crawling onto land, and pupating in a damp area, such as under rocks or logs. In June, they emerge as adult dobsonflies. These adults only live for a week or two, during which time they



dobsonfly



giant water bug
(or giant electric light bug)



dobsonfly



prionid beetle

David Cappaert/Bugwood.org



white-spotted sawyer (*Monochamus scutellatus*)

don't eat and only focus on reproducing. Females lay eggs on branches, sticks or plants that hang over the water, and when the eggs hatch, the larvae drop into the water to begin life as a hellgrammite.

In spring, the lab receives many phone calls from concerned homeowners, inquiring about large, floundering bugs near their porch lights with huge, grasping forelegs and a stout beak. These insects are the giant water bugs, (or giant electric light bug, *Lethocerus americanus*) belonging to the order Hemiptera, the "true bugs."

Although aquatic throughout their lives, adult giant water bugs have wings and are capable of taking an occasional flight. They don't rely on gills to breathe underwater; rather, they take air at the surface using a pair of short flaps at the tip of their abdomen. They are great swimmers and predators. You may spot them with frogs or fish impaled on their long beak, which they use both as a lethal syringe to inject poisonous saliva, and as a drinking straw through which they suck up a prey item's liquefied body contents.

Giant electric light bugs lay egg masses on wet places near water, like stones or logs. Females of some species, however, will glue their eggs onto the back of a male, who protects and ventilates the eggs until they hatch. It's quite a burden to carry, but ensures that only his sperm fertilizes the eggs on his back.

Long-horned beetles (family Cerambycidae) are a group of often brightly colored beetles of all sizes that sport unusually long antennae. If you pick up a Cerambycid to get a closer look, it will "squeak" by rubbing its head on small ridges inside its thorax. Larvae are borers of dead wood, or of living woody or herbaceous plants. Larger species that live in dead wood have extremely long development times, sometimes decades, and contain symbiotic microorganisms that help them digest their woody meals.

Prionid beetles (or tooth-necked longhorns) are the largest of the Cerambycids. They can reach lengths of up to 2.5 inches, and are named for their distinctive spines that run along the sides of their neck. We get many calls from intimidated homeowners after they've spotted one of these big, beefy insects resting on a back porch or marching through a garden. Many people are concerned that these beetles might cause damage to their trees or a garden. Prionid larvae typically develop and feed in rotting wood, especially roots and stumps. Some species, like the broad-necked root borer, are considered pests of fruit and hardwood trees, but typically will only attack weakened ones. The best way to avoid problems with these pests is to keep trees healthy.

A common long-horned beetle in New York is the white-spotted pine sawyer (*Monochamus scutellatus*). It receives a lot of attention as the most common look-alike of the infamous Asian longhorned beetle, an invasive pest from Asia that threatens our maples and other hardwoods. The white-spotted sawyer is only an inch long, but its strikingly long antennae add another two inches or so. Native pine sawyers are abundant around freshly cut conifer logs, and are often seen by campers at artificial lights at night. The large, club-shaped larvae make a "sawing" sound as they feed inside piles of pine logs.

The Forest Health Diagnostic Lab sees a wide variety of insects, from the common to unusual; from the ordinary to the unexpected. If you need us to identify something, we're here year-round to help; just visit www.dec.ny.gov/lands/79716.html for more information.

Jessica Cancelliere is a diagnostician at the Forest Health Diagnostic Lab in Delmar.



Asian Longhorned Beetle

You Can Help Protect Forests

This summer, DEC is asking pool owners to participate in the Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) Pool Survey. ALB is a serious threat to New York's forests, so if you own a pool, help us monitor ALB by looking in your pool filters. Be sure to check out DEC's website to learn how to recognize signs of ALB in trees, as well. Contact Jessica Cancelliere at foresthealth@gw.dec.state.ny.us or (518) 478-7813 for more information about the survey, and search "Don't Move Firewood" on DEC's website for firewood regulations.



Life Vest Reminder

As the summer season gears up, we want to remind you about Personal Flotation Device (PFD) laws. Boaters and swimmers should practice good water safety and be aware of proper PFD use. For instance, PFDs are required for any youth under the age of 12 on boats 65 feet or less in length, and for people operating personal watercrafts. Boaters should also wear an appropriate life vest in areas with high boat traffic, in severe weather or water conditions, and when boating offshore. Also be sure that you have a U.S. Coast Guard-approved PFD. See NYS Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation's informational brochure on PFD laws in New York (<http://bit.ly/1gEIfv7>) for details on the types of flotation devices and who should wear them.



DEC photo

Fin Trade Banned

Beginning July 1, the trading of shark fins will officially be banned in New York State. Governor Cuomo signed legislation protecting sharks last summer. "Finning" sharks (catching them, cutting off their fins, and then returning them to the water where oftentimes they die) is already illegal in the United States and in

New York's coastal waters. New York also prohibits fishing for many kinds of sharks. The goal of banning trade in shark fins is to help ease the damage caused to shark populations, as well as ocean ecosystems. Visit www.dec.ny.gov/regs/4015.html to read the full regulations.

Tree Cities

DEC recently recognized several New York communities with 2013 Tree City USA designations. Tree City USA is a program sponsored by The National Arbor Day Foundation, in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service and state forestry agencies. It provides initial direction and assistance, as well as national recognition for urban and community forestry programs in thousands of towns and cities across the country. Among the New York communities that received the Tree City USA recognition were Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Albany, Poughkeepsie, New York City and the Town of Babylon. Visit www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5272.html to see a complete list of the 2013 Tree Cities.



Susan Shafer



James Clayton

Giant Hogweed Hotline

Giant hogweed, an invasive plant that can cause painful burns, will be flowering in a few weeks. DEC's Giant Hogweed Hotline (ghogweed@gw.dec.state.ny.us or 845-256-3111) gives observers an opportunity to report new sites, ask questions about the plant and how to control it, and connect with our statewide control project. Search for "giant hogweed" on DEC's website for details on how to identify the plant, DEC's control project, and more. If you notice giant hogweed, please send an email to the hotline with photos of the plant and its specific location. Remember not to touch the plant while taking photos.

Digital Angling Library

The interactive website, www.catskillanglingcollection.org, provides anglers with a comprehensive guide to Catskill trout fishing. The website covers information from a "hatch chart" of the insects the trout are eating; to the artificial flies that best imitate those insects; to when and where to fish. It also offers a rich history of angling on Esopus Creek, information on local trout species, fly-tying, and much more. The website is produced by the Jerry Bartlett Angling Collection housed in the Phoenicia Library, and is accessible on desktops, laptops and all portable devices.

Flower ID Mix-Up

Several astute readers pointed out that we erroneously labeled the flower in the article on the Albany Pine Bush (April issue, page 22). The Karner blue butterfly pictured therein is on butterfly weed, not lupine.



Conservation Calendar: June/July



Looking for something to do over the next few weeks? There are many regional and international events coming up, ranging from promoting environmental awareness to recreational activities. The best part is there are fun ways you can participate in your own community. So plan ahead! Also, see the calendar at www.dec.ny.gov/calendar for DEC-sponsored events on the horizon.



Susan Shafer

June 7: National Trails Day—Celebrate our nation's trails by taking a hike! www.americanhiking.org

June 8: World Oceans Day—Help promote the importance of our oceans. <http://worldoceansday.org>

June 28: Great American Backyard Campout—Inspire kids to get outside, and promote the protection of wildlife. www.backyardcampout.org

June 28-29: DEC's Free Fishing Weekend—Have fun fishing with family and friends. (No license needed!) www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/44804.html

July 19-27: National Moth Week—Gather important data about these unique organisms. www.nationalmothweek.org

July 19-20: Adirondack Loon Census—Help biologists survey local loon populations. <http://bit.ly/1iv0hRB>



LETTERS

Compiled by Eileen Stegemann and Jenna Kerwin



Lazing in the Shade

I thought your readers would enjoy this photo I took of a red fox nursing her pups.

Dennis Tommasulo

Huntington Station, Suffolk County

What a gorgeous capture and a good opportunity to remind readers of the message: "If You Care, Leave Them There." Many people assume that young wildlife found alone are helpless and need assistance for their survival. However, in nearly all cases, this is a mistake, and typically human interaction does more harm than good. If you see newborn wildlife, enjoy the encounter but keep it brief, maintain some distance, and do not attempt to touch the animal. Often, wild animal parents stay away when people are near, and will return when you leave. Visit www.dec.ny.gov/animals/6956.html for more information and FAQs about young wildlife.

—Conservationist staff

Peek-a-Boo

We have an owl and at least three owlets living in a silver maple in front of our house. We believe they are Eastern screech owls. These owlets had initially poked their heads out, and were



frightened by my son's school bus, but then poked their heads out again to investigate after the bus drove away.

Kristina Deyoe

South Bethlehem, Albany County

You're right; it looks like you've photographed two curious gray-phase Eastern screech owlets.

—Jenna Kerwin, Staff Writer

It's a Snake-Eat-Snake World

I took this photo of a milk snake attempting to eat another snake in our yard! They eventually separated and the garter snake lived another day.

Jennifer Harvill

Brownville, Jefferson County



*You have captured something fascinating: a juvenile milksnake (*Lampropeltis triangulum*) trying to consume what appears to be an adult Northern brown or DeKay's snake (*Storeria dekayi*). Ophiophagy (feeding on snakes) is common in our nation's species of kingsnakes (which include milksnakes) and indigo snakes in the Southeast through the Midwest, into the Southwest. However, while milksnakes will consume other snakes, it's not widely recognized, or at least rarely encountered; they are thought of being more of a rodent nest raider. Some species of snake will eat members of their own species.*

—William Hoffman, Fish and Wildlife Technician



All Smiles

Pictured are Isabella and Michael Paragi with Isabella's first largemouth bass. Isabella caught the fish in the St. Lawrence River. The picture was taken by Isabella's grandfather, Frank Cannistra, at his camp in Alexandria Bay.

Gina Paragi

The smile says it all—a great catch for a first largemouth bass!
—Eileen Stegemann, Assistant Editor

Waxwing-ing It

I took this photo and was wondering if you could tell me what kind of bird this is. I may be wrong, but I think I saw this bird eating dragonflies.

Rebecca Pavlick
Lancaster, Erie County



This beautiful bird is an adult cedar waxwing. While they primarily eat berries, they will eat some insects, and the adults do feed insects to their young. It's possible you saw them capturing a dragonfly to feed to their chicks.

—Dave Nelson, Editor



Ask the Biologist

Q: While kayaking on the Hudson River in Easton on September 7, 2013 I saw this great egret with yellow "E12" tags on its wings. Can you tell me about the bird and why it was tagged?

—Jacquie Tinker, Rensselaer County

A: Thanks for reporting your sighting. The egret you photographed was tagged on Elder's Marsh East, Jamaica Bay, Queens on July 8, 2013. Prior to your sighting, it was spotted twice on August 19, 2013, perched along the Hudson River approximately one mile south of Schuylerville.

Audubon scientists in New York City band a small number of birds each spring (20 great egrets were banded in 2013) to learn more about the birds' movements and where they spend their winters. Reports like yours are instrumental in helping us learn more about the state's egrets and have shown that egrets hatched on harbor islands fly as far north as Canada before going south for the winter. To find out more about bird banding, visit www.nycaudubon.org.

—Susan B. Elbin, Ph.D., New York City Audubon

Contact us!

E-mail us at: magazine@gw.dec.state.ny.us

Write to us at: Conservationist Letters
NYSDEC, 625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233-4502

[facebook.com/NYSDECtheconservationist](https://www.facebook.com/NYSDECtheconservationist)



Back Trails

Perspectives on People and Nature

John Bulmer

The Joy of Camping by Eileen Stegemann

I grew up camping. Not the kind of camping you do today, with all the high-tech gear and comfortable equipment, but the kind with the heavy canvas tent that you swore weighed 200 pounds and took four adults almost an hour to set up! The poles alone required an engineering degree to assemble, and the process of setting it up was reminiscent of erecting a circus tent. Needless to say, once our home away from home was up, we'd stay put for awhile, free to explore the wonders of Mother Nature.

It's not that my parents were real outdoorsy people who loved to hike and camp, it's just that with a large family, camping was the affordable way to travel and vacation. And travel we did. Every summer we'd take a two- to three-week vacation to "See America" as my parents called it. We'd travel from campground to campground, exploring national historic sites in between—part of the educational experience according to my folks. But for me, the joy was in exploring the campgrounds: capturing lizards, stalking wildlife (usually chipmunks and squirrels), and collecting rocks to add to my growing collection. It was a child's dream.

One year, we drove to Yellowstone National Park via New Orleans—just a tad out of the way from our starting point in New Jersey, but my father wanted to fit in a visit with my grandparents. Honestly, it's amazing we survived. Imagine 11 people traveling 5,400 miles in one station wagon. Back then you didn't have to wear seat belts, so the six youngest (me included) sat in the "way back." Let's just say, it wasn't always amicable.

When I was in fifth grade, my parents replaced the huge canvas tent with a pop-up. The set-up was a breeze, and it had all the modern conveniences: a stove, sink, refrigerator, table, and beds. As a kid, it was great: a traveling home from which you could still explore campgrounds.

During college, I was introduced to back-country camping. While I found hiking with all my gear a challenge, I loved camping in the wilderness. For the next decade, my husband and I camped a lot. Much of it was done in the Adirondacks, but we also stayed in numerous state and national parks, and even camped above the Arctic Circle.

When kids came along, we traded in our small pup-tent for a six-person dome tent and primarily stayed at campgrounds. Car-camping, where you could bring lots of gear and baby par-



aphernalia (including a porta-crib) became our new norm. Most times we'd go with friends, which made the experience all the more fun. The kids would head off together to explore the surrounding woods, collect frogs, and pick out sticks to toast marshmallows with. If the weather was bad, we'd hop in the car and head into the nearest town to see the sights and catch a meal. (Cooking in the rain is not as much fun as you might think.)

Two of our favorite family camping spots were DEC's Buck Pond and Indian Lake Campgrounds. With its small sandy beach, Buck Pond was especially great when the kids were young. Often we'd bring our canoes along and paddle and fish in the surrounding areas. As the kids got older, we spent more time at Indian Lake, where we'd pack everything into canoes and paddle out to a remote water site. We were often serenaded by loons, and were even treated to the northern lights on one occasion.

Camping was an integral part of our family life, but I have to confess that it's been about ten years since I last camped: older children, busier lives, and if I'm being totally honest, reaching the age where my body protests sleeping on the ground. But I know this is only a temporary hiatus from camping, and in fact my husband and I have plans when we retire to get a small camper, travel from park to park, and "See America."

I guess sometimes life does come full-circle.

Eileen Stegemann is assistant editor of *Conservationist*.



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Carl Heilman II



The Wilderness Act's roots can be traced to the Adirondacks.

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