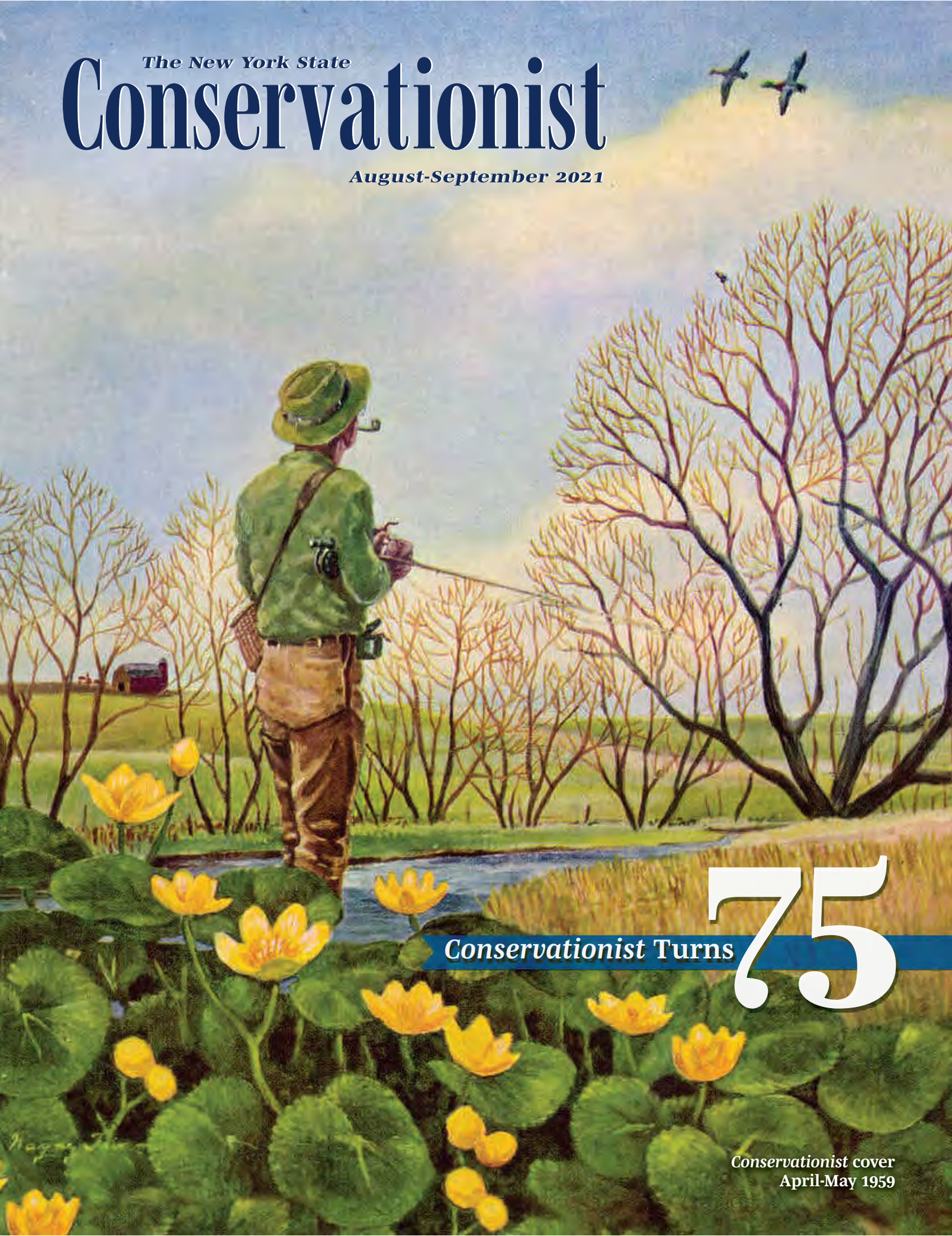
The New York State

Conservationist

August-September 2021



Conservationist Turns 75

Conservationist cover
April-May 1959

Dear Reader,

New York is a special place, offering myriad opportunities to get outside and enjoy our unmatched natural resources. From our world-class fishing destinations to lush forest lands and spectacular high peaks, New York's magnificent outdoors have something for adventurers and nature lovers of all ages, interests, and abilities.

For the past 75 years, and even before there was a Department of Environmental Conservation, *Conservationist* magazine has helped connect people to nature and, along the way, inspire countless readers to become stewards of our environment. This iconic magazine has also served as a reliable and respected source of information covering the most pressing environmental issues of the day, ranging from combatting climate change to innovative ways to tackle emerging contaminants. Each issue of the *Conservationist* shares critical information about efforts to protect and conserve our shared environment, inspiring future generations of environmentalists.

The magazine's founders understood and appreciated New York's abundant natural wonders and believed in a shared responsibility to protect them. The New York State Conservation Department (DEC's predecessor) sought a way to spread this conservation message far and wide, and reaching New Yorkers by means of the magazine was a popular and effective way to do just that. The goal was to create a magazine that would appeal to a variety of readers by providing outdoor adventurers—both novice and expert—with the tips of the trade. Seventy-five years later, our efforts continue.

The magazine has evolved since the first issue was published in August 1946, just as the DEC itself has evolved to meet the many significant and emerging environmental challenges confronting the State, from climate change to contaminants in our air and water to the reckoning of environmental justice.

As we celebrate the magazine's 75th anniversary, DEC will continue the tradition of educating and inspiring current and future generations of conservationists by showcasing outdoor adventures, as well as practical ideas on how we can enjoy and protect our world and live more sustainably.

As the original founders of the *Conservationist* noted, "It's your magazine." I hope you continue to enjoy it for many years to come.

Best wishes,
Basil Seggos, Commissioner

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER. PLEASE RECYCLE THIS ISSUE.

NEW YORK STATE
CONSERVATIONIST

Volume 76, Number 1 | August/September 2021
Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of New York State

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The *Conservationist* (ISSN0010-650X), © 2021 by NYSDEC, is an official publication of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation published bimonthly at 625 Broadway, 4th Floor, Albany, NY 12233-4502. Telephone: (518) 402-8047

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

TO SUBSCRIBE:

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

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

Send check or money order payable to:
Conservationist
NYSDEC
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233-4502

or call: **1-800-678-6399**
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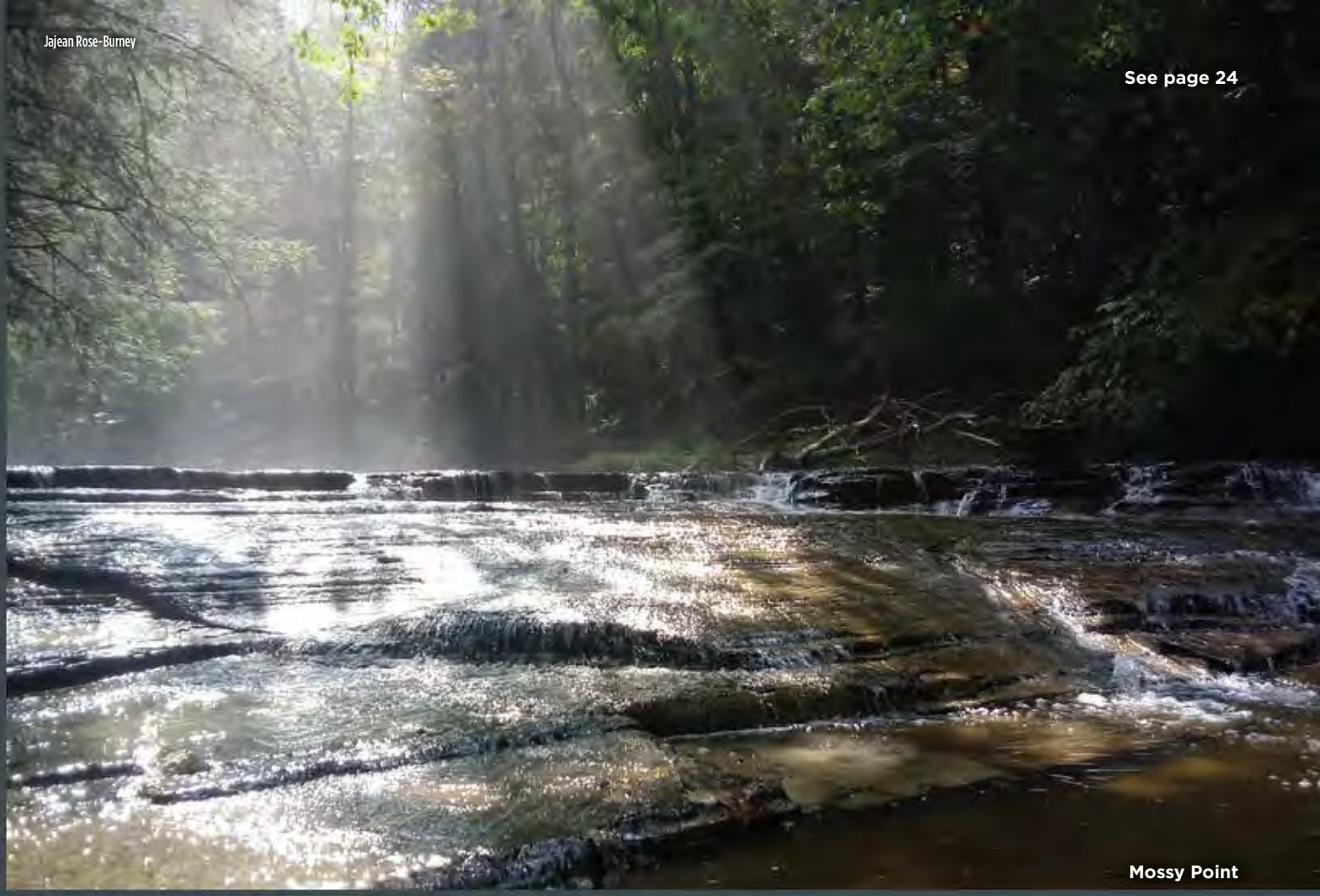
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
Conservationist
NYSDEC
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233-4502



Jajean Rose-Burney

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Mossy Point

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AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2021 | VOLUME 76, NUMBER 1

FRONT COVER: Reprint from *Conservationist* April-May 1959, Wayne Trimm;
BACK COVER: The Staghorn Cliffs on Skaneateles Lake, Finger Lakes Land Trust

THE FOUNDER'S STORY

BY STEVEN L. ARBAUGH

As the *Conservationist* celebrates 75 years of continuous publication, its staff thought it appropriate that I share the story of my grandfather, the man whose vision is responsible for the magazine's very existence. Even though the name Clayton Seagears no longer appears on the masthead, his legacy is worthy of recognition, and I am honored to contribute to this milestone 75th anniversary issue with the founder's story.

Clayt, as he was known, was born in Bloomingburg (Sullivan County), and studied zoology and journalism at the University of Michigan. After graduating in 1924, he remained on campus as an instructor in Economic Conservation and Vertebrate Zoology. Shortly after his stint at Michigan, he joined the Orange Independent Corporation, a newspaper publishing firm. He wrote sports and outdoor columns and did general illustrating; at one point, he was syndicated in 127 newspapers with a cartoon feature called *The Inside on the Outdoors*. Clayt left that job in 1937 to join the New York State Conservation Department (a predecessor to DEC) as a Game Research Investigator.

Clayt was a special and highly talented man—a gifted writer, artist, and naturalist. A few years after joining the Conservation Department, he was promoted to the position of Director of the Division of Conservation Education, and in 1946, he founded the *Conservationist* magazine.

I'm sure Clayt was proud of his work, as he kept every single issue of the *Conservationist* at his house at the North Woods Club in the Adirondacks. That collection still exists to this day, completely intact. I remember entertaining myself by thumbing through many pages when I was lucky enough to visit him and my grandmother when I was young.

A self-taught artist, Clayt did much commercial work, and later specialized in wildlife and outdoor subjects. His writing and illustrations can be found throughout the *Conservationist*, from its founding until his retirement in 1962. He also did many illustrations for the Department, including a promotional poster for Mt. Van Hovenberg and a map of New York State that highlighted the "world's largest state system for public recreation and conservation."

Clayt's reputation as a writer and conservationist was widespread, and his expertise was sought by other organizations. I found an article that he wrote and illustrated, *So You Want To Trap a Fox*, published in the November 1945 issue of the Iowa *Conservationist*. The article was an excerpt from his book, *The Fox in New York*,

Clayt Seagears, a gifted artist who created *Conservationist* magazine in 1946.

which was published by the New York State Conservation Department in 1944.

His illustrations and writings on wildlife and conservation appeared in a variety of publications famous in their day: *Collier's, The Saturday Evening Post, American Gun, The Hunter's Encyclopedia, Field and Stream,* and *Outdoors Unlimited.* One of the highlights of Clayt's career occurred in 1953, when his artwork won the national competition for the annual Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp. Over two million stamps featuring his ink wash drawing of five Blue-Winged Teals taking wing (which he called, "Early Express") were produced.

Clayt also contributed many illustrations for a 900+ page book titled, *The Ruffed Grouse: Life History, Propagation and Management*. First published in 1947 by the New York State Conservation Department, it is still considered the "Grouse Bible" by many hunters, as no other publication is as completely thorough on a single species as this book.

My early visits to the North Woods Club in the 1960s were very enlightening. Clayt was so smart, and the educator in him couldn't be restrained. I realize now how much his guidance and enthusiasm impacted my life. He taught me how to cast a fly rod for trout on Mink Pond when I was 10 years old, and about the differences between Grey Wulff and Royal Coachman dry fly patterns. To this day, saltwater flyfishing for tarpon, snook, and redfish is my passion. One of my most cherished possessions was given to me by Clayt many years ago: a 1953 Orvis Battenkill 7-foot bamboo fly rod with a Hardy St. George reel, which has seen much use over the years as I chased trout on the rivers and streams of New York, Michigan, and Idaho.

In the heart of the Adirondacks, we were surrounded by all kinds of wildlife at the Club. Clayt kept a large container of corn kernels to feed the resident deer that enjoyed a placid and carefree life around the Club grounds, and one doe in particular stood out. Her name was Princess. She was not shy, and would come around almost every day looking for a handout. We fed her corn by hand, which always delighted and amazed me.

Around the time of Thanksgiving one year, Clayt asked me if I would like to try my hand at deer hunting. I thought, "what the heck," and bundled up for a trek through the snow in search of my first deer. After a short walk, I happened upon fresh tracks in the snow, and like any first-time deer hunter, my heart rate increased and I found the moment exhilarating. With eyes fixed upon the trail and heart pounding, I trudged through the snow, following the tracks. Finally, I looked up from the tracks, and there stood my quarry, only a few yards away staring at me.

However, this deer had a huge red ribbon tied around her neck. It was Princess! Apparently, someone tied the ribbon on her every hunting season to keep her safe. I chuckled, shook my head in disappointment and disbelief, and walked solemnly back to the house.

Sometime during the late 1930s, as a Game Research Investigator, Clayt made a hobby out of his work with whitetail deer—finding the big bucks of New York State. With help from his friend Grancel Fritz (who developed the Boone & Crockett game scoring system), Clayt started measuring and writing about the big bucks he located during the 1930s and 1940s. He published a pamphlet that was

included with the 1941 New York State Deer Hunting License, which explained to hunters how to measure their buck, and requested they contact the Conservation Department if the buck was unusually large. This was the beginning of the New York State Big Buck Club, an entity that exists to this day.

Following his retirement from the New York State Conservation Department in 1962, Clayt and his wife, Marian, moved from their home in Cherry Plain (east of Albany) to Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. I'm sure he missed his native New York, as it wasn't long after that he and Marian bought property in the North Woods Club and built a small home among the ponds and forested mountains of the Adirondacks. He certainly didn't retire from painting, as he produced some of the best work of his life. Specializing in watercolors, his detailed wildlife scenes were nothing short of breathtaking.

He and Marian also traveled the world, and there were many paintings that reflected those travels. From Bananaquits (small birds) in Tobago to beach and boat scenes in Martinique, his watercolors became sort of a travelogue for our family. My grandparents especially loved East Africa, where they were frequent visitors. They took my two cousins and me there in 1970—they wanted us to experience the Africa they knew, before it was "too late." I was only 13 years old at the time, but I will never forget what they showed me and why, and I will forever be grateful for that opportunity.

Clayt and Marian moved to Naples, Florida in 1972. He died in 1983 at the age of 81, but his legacy lives on in so many ways—in his writings, his paintings and sketches, and in this wonderful magazine.

Congratulations to the staff of the *Conservationist*, past and present, for nurturing this magazine for so many years and helping to ensure its continued success. And to its readers, your continued support of this publication is admirable. I can only imagine how impressed and proud Clayt would be today, to know that his vision of an education-based conservation publication had such staying power.

I feel so lucky that Clayton B. Seagears was a part of my life, and I can't help but feel that, as you're reading the 75th anniversary issue of the *Conservationist*, he's a part of your lives too.

Steven L. Arbaugh is a retired Wholesale Distributor from Harbor Springs, Michigan, and the grandson of Clayt Seagears.

Conservationist *staff also extend our admiration and gratitude for Clayt Seagears' work, and are proud to carry on the amazing legacy he created 75 years ago.*

NEW YORK STATE

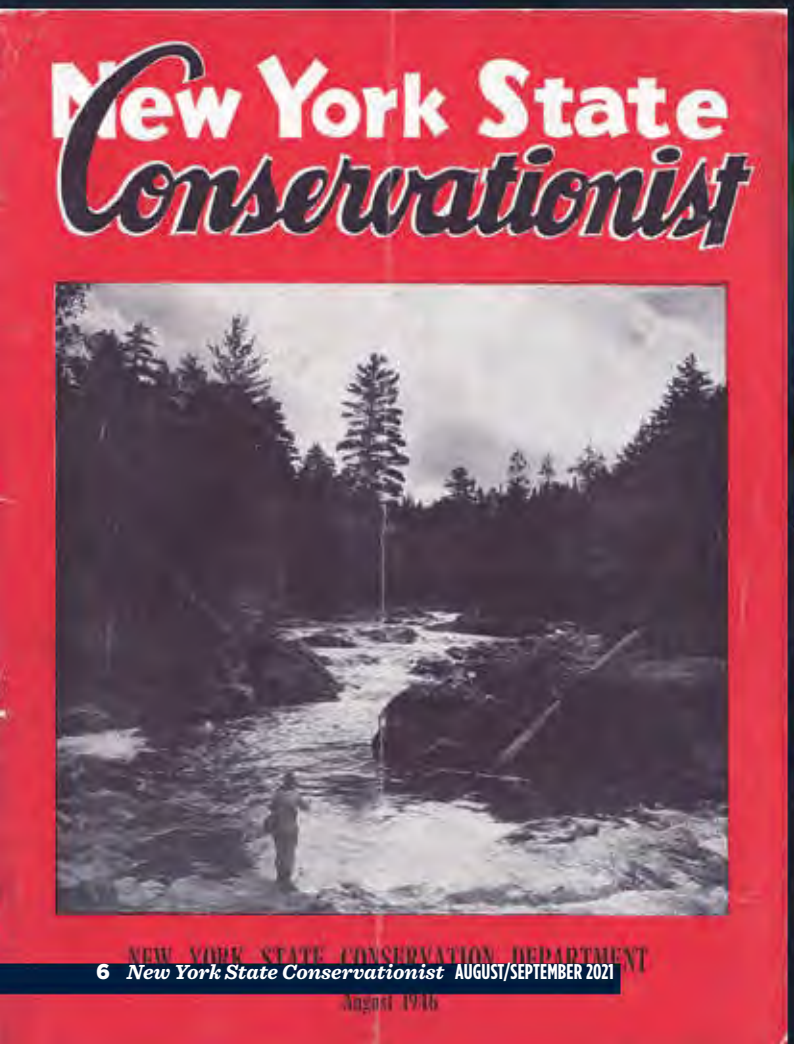
CONSERVATIONIST

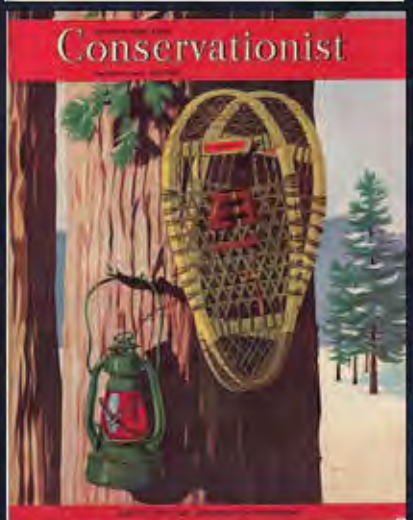
75

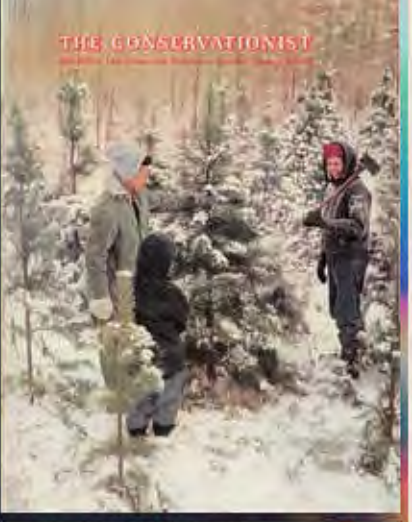
BY RICK GEORGESON

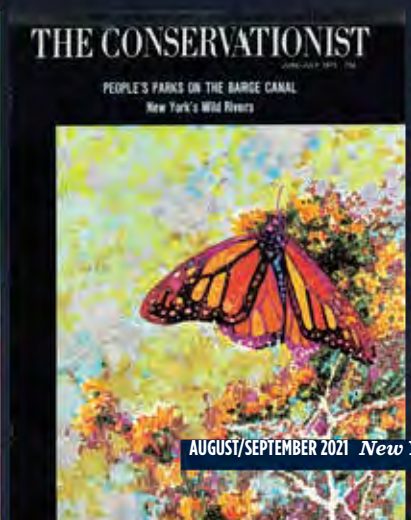
It's hard to believe, but the *Conservationist* magazine turns 75 this year.

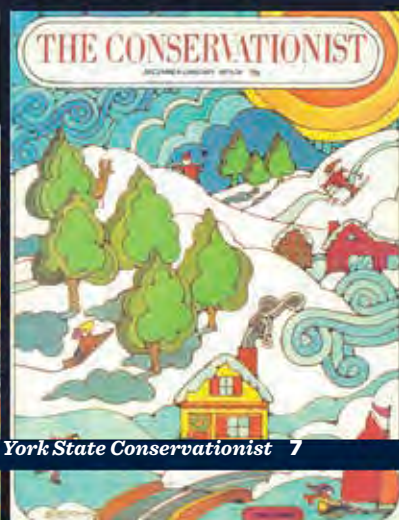
The first issue of the magazine was published in August of 1946 and had some familiar themes, including an article about a new law called the Forest Practice Standards Act. This law provided free technical assistance to forest property owners to help them conserve their lands. Other articles promoted the many recreational opportunities found at Cranberry Lake in St. Lawrence County, and the challenges faced by the Conservation Department (DEC's predecessor) in constructing fire towers in the Adirondack and Catskill backcountry. Another article described the Conservation Department's fish stocking program and its many benefits for postwar America, stating, "Research has proven that the relaxation provided by fishing is good treatment for many types of physical and nervous disorders of convalescent GIs in veterans' hospitals."











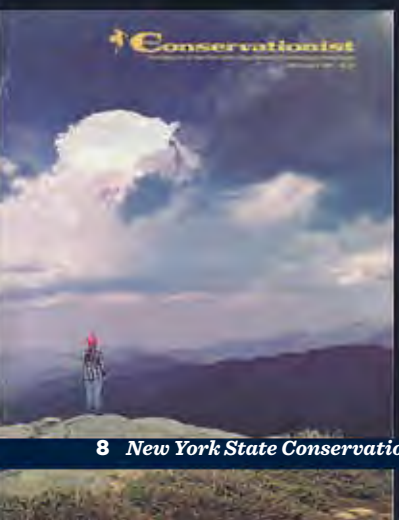
Staff reviews thousands of letters recieived about the new magazine.

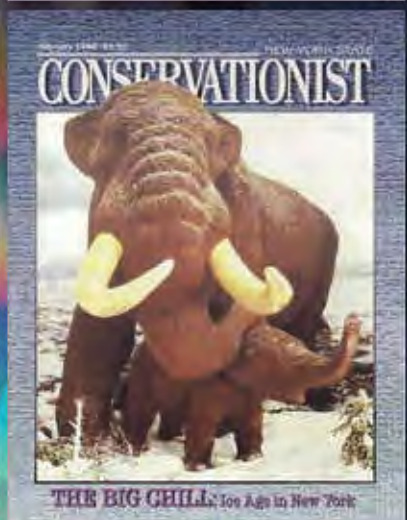
That first issue of the *Conservationist* generated more than 9,000 reader letters, swamping the mailroom with subscription requests, suggestions, and questions.

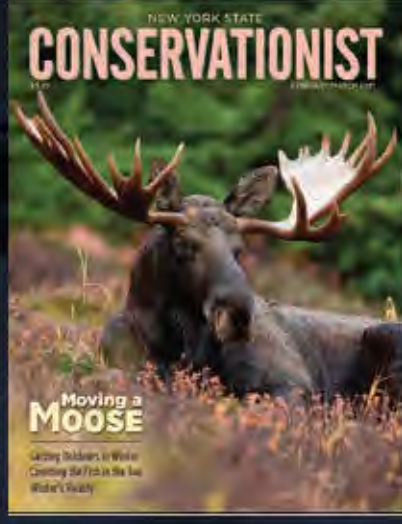
In addition to the bread-and-butter natural resource articles of its early days (e.g., hunting, fishing, forestry), the magazine grew to include more articles about environmental quality (e.g., air, water, and land pollution control) as the nation's environmental consciousness grew after the first Earth Day in 1970. That was also the day the Conservation Department became the Department of Environmental Conservation.

In addition to traditional environmental themes, the magazine has covered a wide range of far-reaching subjects. For example, it's not unusual to find articles on cultural history, natural history, astronomy, and archeology in the pages of the magazine. Over the years, readers have also enjoyed articles about dinosaurs, animals of the ice age, Native Americans, earthquakes, and the Lake Placid bobsled run, among many others. The magazine has also featured interviews with experts in their fields, such as world-renowned astronomer Carl Sagan discussing possible life on Mars.

Throughout our 75-year history, the *Conservationist* has sought to entertain and educate, and to motivate people to make a positive difference in our world. To reference a concept that has been used to describe the cumulative impacts of water pollution runoff: while each of us may not think our individual actions make a difference, taken together, our voices and actions are magnified, and our collective efforts can bring about important environmental change for our local communities, which often benefits our state and nation, and our future.





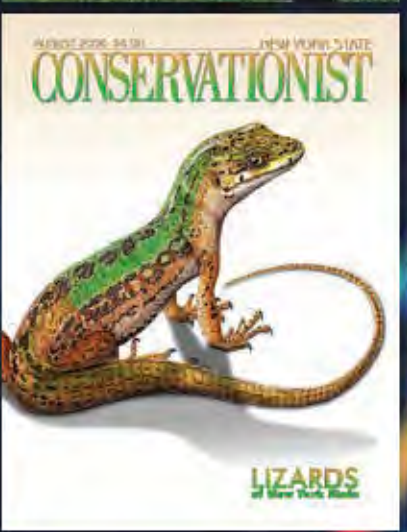


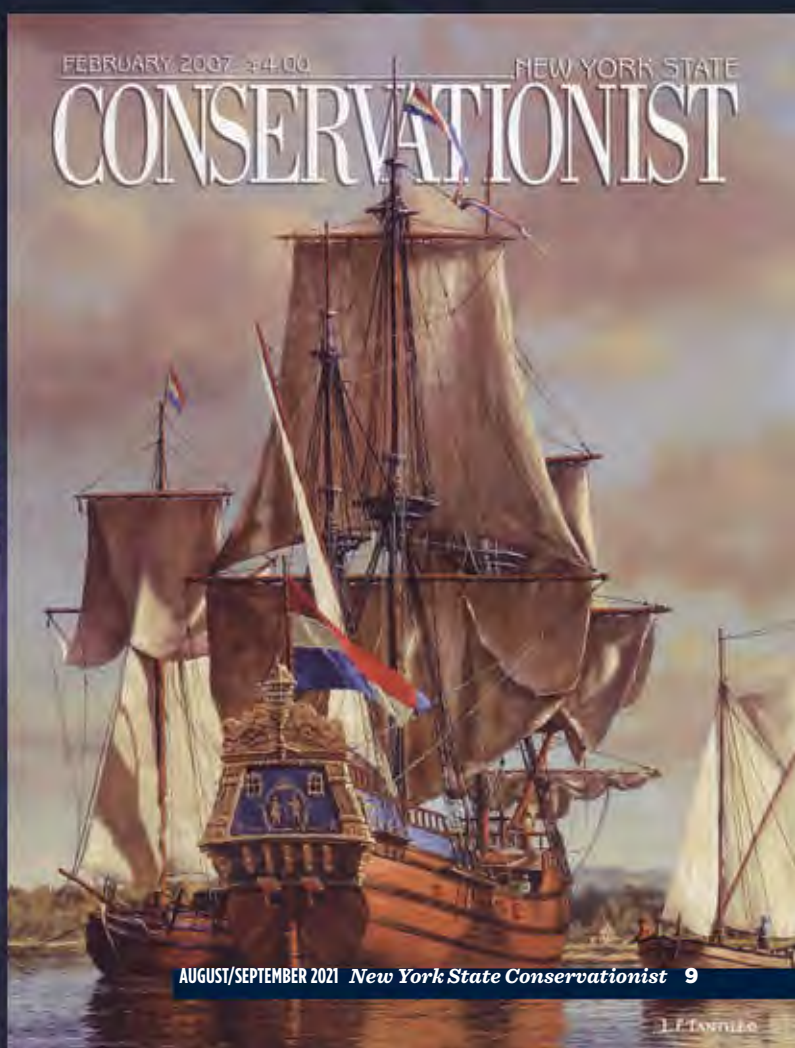
On the occasion of the magazine's 30th birthday in 1976, an editorial fittingly summed up the *Conservationist*'s continuing mission:

...our goals are well marked -- to entertain, inform and serve. To this we add another: to strive as well as we know how to broaden the environmental movement to include beside the hunter and fisherman, the backpacker and birdwatcher, the gardener and husbandman, every sector of society which we can reach. The protection and enhancement of the environment is a task for all. We of the Conservationist*...rededicate ourselves to this high purpose.*

As the magazine celebrates its diamond anniversary this year, our commitment remains as strong as ever to broaden our reach to illustrate and educate how environmental protection benefits so many aspects of our lives, and to demonstrate how we all can play a role in conserving and even improving the world we share.

Rick Georgeson is a Contributing Editor for the *Conservationist*.





REPRINTED FROM:
THE FIRST CONSERVATIONIST MAGAZINE **1946**

IT'S YOUR MAGAZINE

This is the first issue of the first real magazine published for the people of New York State by the Conservation Department. Its aim is to fill a long-felt need for our medium, which will bring the vital story of conservation to your front door, and report with candor on our mutual problems and on State and local efforts to solve them.

The Conservationist comes to you as an official publication. But it's YOUR book. Its pages are open to the public--for orchids or onions or just plain letting off steam. And we want the public to use them. We feel that here, at last, is something we have all been waiting for—a trail that can lead us all to common ground where, by mutual assistance, we can do a better job for our forests, our fish and game, and our other resources.

We're going to try to make this magazine as well-rounded and feature-full as is possible, within our means. Special efforts will be made to have each issue carry at least one major feature by some prominent wildlife authority outside the State itself. This first issue is honored by a contribution from Ira N. Gabrielson, dean of the nation's fish and wildlife authorities. The Conservationist will carry no advertising. It is not in competition with commercial publications. It's strictly a home organ for home folks, and low subscription rates require that all possible economies be practiced in its publication.

So, here we go. Let us have your comments and constructive criticism. As we said before, it's YOUR baby. We hope you like it.

• *The (Original) Editors - August 1946* •

AN UPDATE FROM
CONSERVATIONIST MAGAZINE STAFF **AUGUST 2021**

IT'S STILL YOUR MAGAZINE

As we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the *Conservationist* magazine, we have looked back at the early days and subsequent evolution of the magazine. Reading the inaugural issue from 1946 highlighted the magazine's mission, and its value in informing the public about environmental issues, challenges, and opportunities. We continue to strive to maintain this mission, while also seeking new ways to help connect our readers with the outdoors and encourage them to enjoy and protect New York's natural resources.

The magazine has certainly changed and evolved over the years, but our commitment remains the same. We appreciate our subscribers—they are the foundation of the *Conservationist* and its future.

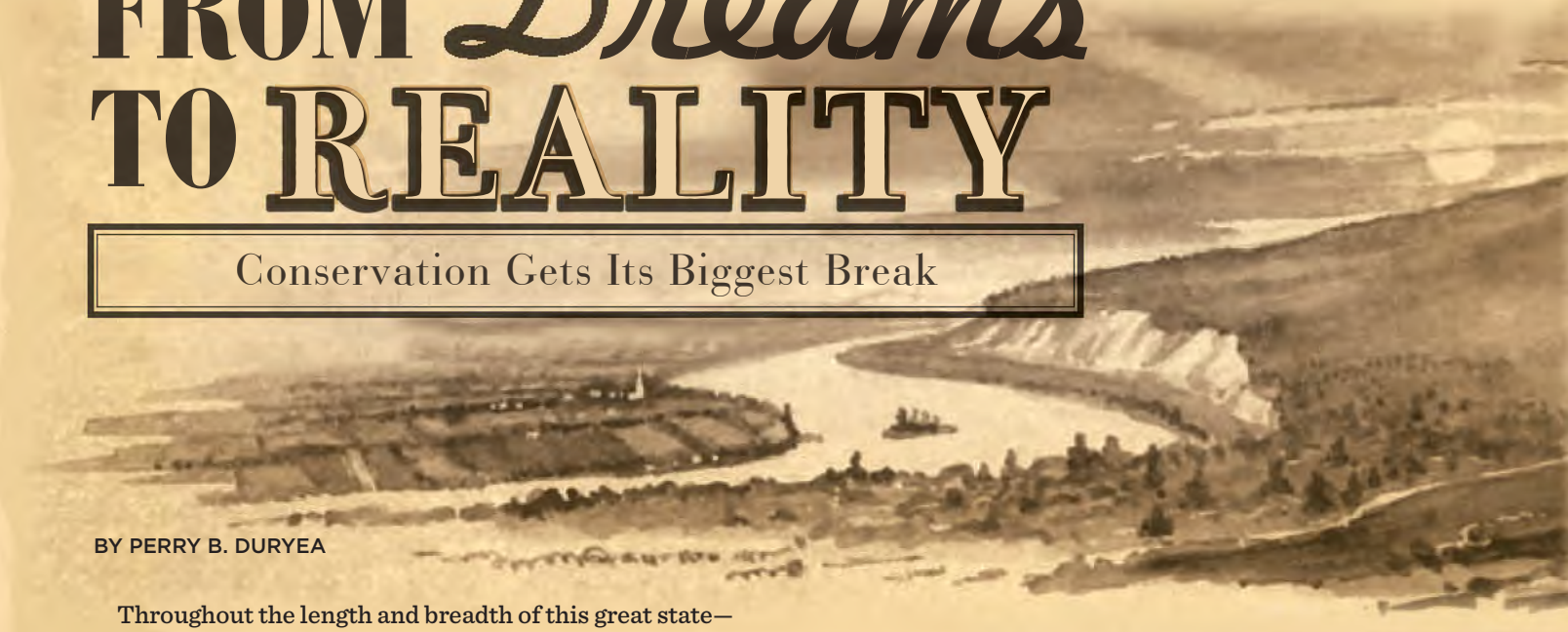
A lot has happened in our world since the *Conservationist* launched back in 1946. We thank you for supporting the magazine, and hope you will continue to enjoy the *Conservationist* for many years to come.

We also offer a standing invitation to you to share your thoughts about the magazine, and any ideas you have about how we can make the *Conservationist* even better. It's still YOUR magazine, and we want it to be a publication you look forward to receiving and readng.

• *The (Current) Editors - August 2021* •

FROM *Dreams* TO REALITY

Conservation Gets Its Biggest Break



BY PERRY B. DURYEA

Throughout the length and breadth of this great state—in every city, village, and hamlet, on the farms and in the hills—there are countless folks who have a deep and abiding interest in our natural resources. They come from every walk of life—the professions, business, industry, agriculture, lumbering, fisheries, and others. Many of them are sportsmen. Most of them have a love for the out-of-doors. And each in his own way... realizes the vital role which our outdoor resources play in his own life.

Many old-timers in this group have, with many misgivings, watched the demands on the resources become ever greater as the resources themselves grew smaller. All too soon, with millions of acres lying idle, the State was growing only a fraction of the forest product, and with 70,000 miles of streams and 3 ½ million acres of lakes and ponds, and with some of the potentially finest game lands in the world – there was not enough fish and game to go around...The people witnessed a tremendous need for a tremendous job in conservation. They began to dream of a State conservation program which would be big enough and comprehensive enough to meet the needs and one they could get behind.

But all these dreams were based on a deep-seated conviction that something had to be done, and in a big way. Proven conservation practices had to be expanded. New practices to deal with new problems had to be found and applied. Old concepts (about) conservation had to be set aside. We had to face the fact that conservation is... deserving of our best efforts, and that a vast amount of plain hard work had to be done...

Conservation is a job which requires manpower and materials. It's a job which must be done in the field, in the woodlot and in the forest—on our streams, our ponds and lakes—in short, out where conservation problems really begin...All thoughtful conservationists know that...our job is in the field...Our trained forces had to be de-centralized and deployed on a far-flung front...

And finally, I mention with considerable pride our new Division of Conservation Education (DEC's current Office of Communication Services) and the highly important job it has undertaken—that of bringing conservation to all our people, and bringing all our people together for conservation. The magazine itself tells a part of the story.

Through our increase in conservation services and our work in education, we feel that at last we are making real progress in bringing some of our conservation dreams into reality.

Although I have no hesitancy in saying that an excellent start has been made, all of us who know conservation know that it is a long and an uphill haul. In getting up and over the hill, we need the help of each of you, and of every influence which can be enlisted in this vitally important cause.

PERRY B. DURYEA served as Commissioner of the New York State Conservation Department from April 1945 to December 1954.

On Patrol

Real stories from Environmental Conservation Police Officers and Forest Rangers in the field

Litter Wheel Wilderness Rescues—Franklin and Washington Counties

On May 19, DEC's Ray Brook Dispatch received a report of a hiker with an ankle injury near the summit of Ampersand Mountain. The hiker, from Rochester, was assisted off the mountain by Rangers with the new litter wheel system, and said she would seek further medical assistance on her own. The new litter wheels are proving to be a critical tool.

On May 22, DEC's Ray Brook Dispatch was contacted about a 28-year-old woman with an ankle injury on the trail for Sleeping Beauty Mountain in the Lake George Wild Forest Area. Forest Ranger Lt. Ganswindt and Rangers St. Claire and Baker packaged the hiker into a litter and transported her utilizing the new litter wheel system to an EMS vehicle for transport to a local hospital for medical treatment.

Fawn Rescue—Schoharie County

On June 17, a park official from Mine Kill State Park in Schoharie County reported an injured fawn at the base of a waterfall. Concerned that the public might attempt to rescue the fawn and injure themselves, the park official contacted DEC for help. ECO Burgess and Ranger Skudlarek responded and made their way to the bottom of the falls with equipment to secure the deer. While Officer Burgess captured the deer and secured it for transport up the bank, Ranger Skudlarek created a rope system to lift the packaged fawn safely to the top. The combination of the ECO's wildlife knowledge and Forest Ranger's rope and rescue training led to a successful rescue. Once safely at the top, the fawn was transported to Friends of the Feathered and Furry Wildlife Center for treatment.

Wilderness Rescue—Essex County

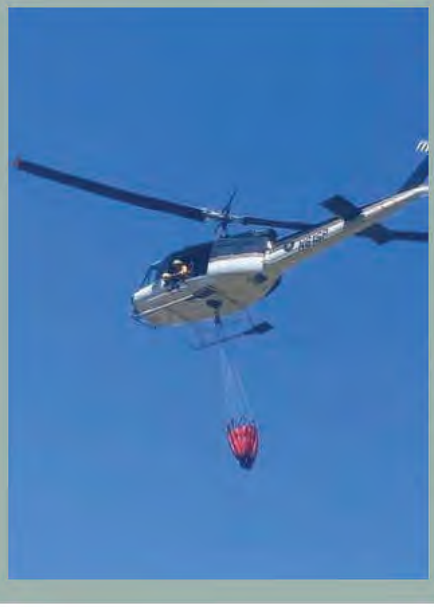
On April 17, DEC received a call regarding a hiker with a possible broken ankle on Blake Mountain in the High Peaks Wilderness Area. Forest Rangers Balerno, O'Connor, and Lewis assisted New York State Police Aviation with a helicopter hoist operation. The Rangers quickly located the 61-year-old woman, who was safely hoisted out and flown to a local hospital for medical treatment. The Rangers also escorted the remaining members of the hiking party out of the wilderness. Be sure to properly prepare and plan before entering the backcountry, by visiting **www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/28708.html**.

Carl Heilman II

Trainings—Across the State

From June 16 to 18, Region 6 Forest Rangers conducted the annual Operations Level Rope Rescue training at Black Bear Mountain. The training focuses on patient packaging for a moderate angle rescue, release hitches, component-based lowers and raises, and "hot change overs."

On June 17, Region 5 Forest Rangers participated in swiftwater rescue training on the Indian River. Rangers learned about self-rescue swimming, wading with belay assist, go-rescue, and "throw bag" techniques. In addition, Region 3 Forest Rangers completed swiftwater rescue training on the use of small inflatable boats for rescues, and a helicopter training course to improve the coordination of wildfire suppression efforts between DEC and NY State Police Aviation.



Eagle Rescue—Schoharie County

On June 13, ECO Burgess received a report of an injured eagle on I-90 westbound near Canajoharie. New York State Department of Transportation workers removing debris from the road noticed the eagle attempting to fly off the highway to no avail. ECO Burgess waded through swampy terrain, with a net, and succeeded in gathering the injured bird. It is believed that the eagle was struck by a vehicle and ended up trapped in the swampy area, off the roadway. ECO Burgess transported the bird to Friends of the Feathered and Furry Wildlife Center, where it is being treated for its injuries.

Operation Low Tide—Queens County

On June 10, after receiving multiple complaints of people keeping protected diamondback terrapins (a species of turtle), ECOs Veloski and Currey partnered with U.S. Park Police in Operation Low Tide, an enforcement initiative, around Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. While patrolling the area, the Officers discovered two individuals leaving the area with large totes that contained 22 diamondback terrapins and 41 undersized blue crabs. Diamondback terrapins are a federally-and state-protected species. The Officers issued multiple summonses for possession of protected wildlife, possession of undersized blue crabs, and possession of overlimit blue crabs. All 22 terrapins and the many illegal blue crabs were safely returned to Jamaica Bay.

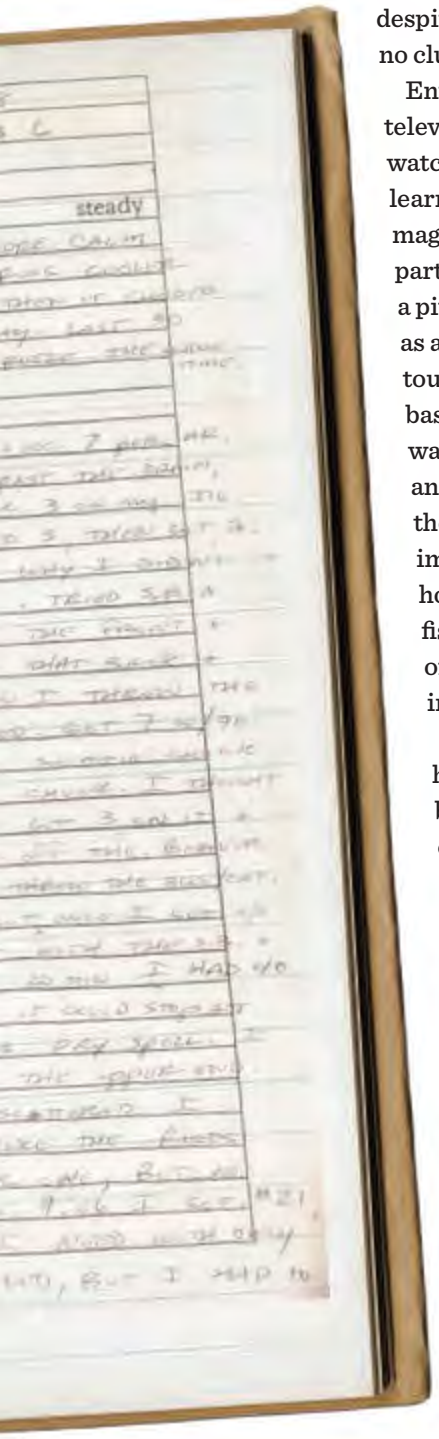
a fishing JOURNAL

—Knowledge Makes a Difference

BY ROY BILBY

I was brought up fishing. My parents had a cane pole in my hands by the time I was three years old, and our whole family would sit on the bank of a local pond and fish in the evenings. Those humble beginnings fostered my lifelong interest in fishing and planted a seed that blossomed, or perhaps more accurately, grew beyond expectations. By the time I was 12, I was being dropped off to fish places on my own, and I began pursuing different species and learning about them by reading books and fishing magazines. I caught my first bass at age 15, and became hooked for life. I fished for bass as often as I could. That first bass truly changed the course of my fishing destiny in a way that I would not realize for decades.

Fast forward 10 years. I had a 12-foot jon (flat-bottomed) boat, maybe 8 rods and reels, and 2 tackle boxes, thinking I knew my stuff. I would catch bass when I fished, but with no degree of regularity. I would target them, but without any real success. I was puzzled because I knew they were present where I fished, but I mostly caught other species. One season I caught 12 largemouth bass from one particular body of water and thought I had done pretty well at that lake. I now realize that despite a little bit of success, I had no clue yet.



Enter the Bassmasters television program in 1985. I watched it faithfully, and also learned from the *Bassmaster* magazine. I will never forget one particular episode that became a pivotal point in my growth as a fisherman. It featured a tournament won by legendary bass angler Rick Clunn. He was interviewed afterward, and said he had won by fishing the back of a creek on a huge impoundment. When asked how he'd found the winning fish, he said he'd known ahead of time that the bass would be in the back of the creek.

When questioned about his statement (aren't fish basically wild, unpredictable creatures that do as they please?), Clunn explained how before becoming a full-time, professional fisherman, he was a computer programmer and had created a program to store information from 300 tournaments, including the patterns used by the top three finishers. This database revealed that 90 percent of the tournaments on Southern impoundments in the fall had been won in the backs of creeks, and that bass followed—and fed on—baitfish that migrated to the backs of those creeks. Having this knowledge going into the tournament, Clunn had already effectively eliminated most of the lake as his fishing ground, and was able to efficiently locate the winning fish.

I was impressed, but knew I couldn't create a computer program to track my progress. So I started keeping a journal. If keeping track of successful data could help Rick Clunn win a major tournament, I figured it could help me become a better bass fisherman.

My journal that first year was very rudimentary, just notes and dates of when and where I fished, and what I caught. My whole reason for doing this was to become a better angler, to figure out how to improve my success and make it more frequent. Simply writing down a few notes wasn't teaching me much. I needed to know if I was actually improving, so I decided to count the bass I caught and released the following year to track my success.

It was an eye-opening experience. In that first year of counting (1986), I caught and released 218 bass (largemouth and smallmouth combined). I released all my bass, a practice I still do today. I thought 218 bass was quite an accomplishment, and it was, for someone in the infancy of self-training.

I started adding more information to my journal, including my trip location, the date and times I fished, and what lures worked. I continued to watch fishing programs and videos, and read a lot of books and magazines on the subject. I studied fishing every chance I got and spent more time on the water studying it and applying what I was learning.

My second year of tracking, my bass count yielded 503 bass, more than double my previous year's total. I was seeing progress and knew I was onto something. I expanded my journals to include barometric pressure, the moon phase, air and water temperatures, the pH of the water, water clarity, and prevailing weather conditions, and I caught and released 881 bass the third year.

I was improving and getting the results I was looking for, but still had much to learn. I started to understand how barometric pressure affected the fish and how they responded to its fluctuations; how the moon phase played a role; and how water temperature and a host of other factors positioned fish at different times of the year and dictated how and when they would respond to certain presentations.

By studying the science, I was able to gain a much clearer and better understanding of what would improve my success, and why. I was beginning to connect the dots and started fishing with a purposeful approach rather than a

random one. That, I would later learn, was the true key to success, and another big turning point in my growth as a fisherman.

I set a goal for the next year to try to top 1,000 bass caught and released. I had improved every year, but could I actually accomplish this goal? I may have, but I bought my first bass boat the next year and immediately jumped into tournaments. I was in over my head and my numbers suffered accordingly, largely because I was now traveling to fisheries I knew nothing about and had no experience with. I'd been studying and applying what I'd learned, so I was able to catch fish, but not the quality I needed to win, especially when competing against anglers with decades of experience on waterbodies that were foreign to me. I competed for seven years. I loved it, but I only placed once in all that time. So I took a three-year break from competing to improve my ability with other techniques.

I spent a year working on getting comfortable and successful with a jig and pig, then a year gaining confidence in my ability with a crankbait, and finally, a year learning how to catch bass on a Carolina rig. I gained confidence in these techniques, first on my local bodies of water, and then on the bigger waters where tournaments are held, proving to myself that I could catch fish there too. It was a tremendous confidence boost.

I started entering fishing tournaments again, and won the first one I entered—a huge milestone for me. My hard work and stubborn determination had paid off. I had learned so much from those experiences, and it was all faithfully recorded in my journals. (Note: the three years I worked on those techniques, I topped 1,000 bass caught and released every year, including 1,563 in 2000.)

Once I started fishing in tournaments again, my numbers dropped, accordingly as expected, and I pretty much resigned myself to the fact that if I competed in tournaments, I would not be able to go for 1,000+ a year. I thought I could go for catch numbers or compete in tournaments, but not both.

In 2002, my schedule allowed me to join a club/circuit that had a full schedule of events. I was either competing in a tournament or practicing for the next one every weekend of bass season. My numbers suffered. But in 2006, I surprised myself by catching 1,030 bass while competing in a full tournament schedule. I learned it COULD be done! I recorded more than 1,000 bass in all the following years as well. That's 15 consecutive years, and I hope to add to that total this year.

There have also been some milestones along this journey. From July 4, 2005 to May 30, 2008, I logged 230 trips without getting skunked (not catching a fish). My previous best had been 85 trips. And on October 13, 2010, I caught and released my 20,000th bass since starting my count back in 1986, which earned me a short footnote in *Bassmaster* magazine.

On August 6, 2015, I broke 25,000 and received a full color spread in my local newspaper, as well as a front-page story on the Bassmaster website. The story also got picked up by other media outlets, and I was getting calls from outdoor writers for their own version of my story. And on October 14, 2019, I caught my 30,000th bass.

My success in tournaments has improved as well. To date, I have competed in 199 events, with 13 wins and 55 top 5 finishes. However, I don't take all the credit for this. Most are team tournaments, with two anglers in a boat. From 2004 to 2017, my partner was Ryan Coulter, a DEC aquatic biologist, and together we learned and accomplished a great deal on the tournament circuit.

I'm also blessed to have the opportunity to conduct fishing seminars at stores, sportsman's shows, and other venues throughout the year. I try to condense 35 years of information gained from writing down my experiences—and learning from them—into several 30- to 60-minute seminars. I love to share what I've learned, and the feedback I receive lets me know that it has helped, which pleases me tremendously. There's nothing more satisfying than sharing what you've learned and seeing others benefit from that knowledge.

New York offers some of the greatest outdoor opportunities that exist for sportsmen and sportswomen. It's where I've learned my craft. The greatest part of all of this for me is that I've been given a platform where I can share my passion with others so they too can benefit from what I've learned. The fishing journal made me a better angler, as it made me notice and pay attention to details, and that's what made all the difference.

What started out decades ago as a young man's quest to become a better bass fisherman has become a way of life for me. I feel a commitment to pass along what I've learned. I also remain a student of the game and continue to write in my journal. I still want to learn something new every time out.

Roy Bilby is sponsored by Bass Pro Shops, Mercury Outboards, Iron Skillet Game Seasonings, Grapevine Farms, and Smith Collision. He promotes fishing at Bass Pro Shops in Utica, NY, at sportsman's shows, online, and in person. You can follow his record-setting, ever-increasing bass totals on Instagram: @roybilby.

STRIPED BASS

– NEW YORK STATE'S SALTWATER FISH

BY CAITLIN CRAIG, JUSTIN PELLEGRINO, ANDREW SINCHUK, & STEPHANIE REKEMEYER

PHOTOS BY JUSTIN PELLEGRINO

Striped bass (*Morone saxatilus*) are one of the most sought-after fish along the Atlantic coast. Given their name for their recognizable horizontal stripes, these predatory fish are world famous for their fun and furious fight.

Each spring, striped bass begin their migration up the coast, and their arrival is eagerly awaited by New York anglers, who try their luck in the Hudson River, New York Bight, and western Long Island bays. Throughout the summer and into the fall, these fish continue their migration east along Long Island, and can be found in bays, harbors, inlets, and nearshore ocean waters. The multitude of environments bass inhabit, including salt marshes, shoals, sand beaches, rips, and boulder fields, is just one factor that makes them unique and exciting to pursue, and hopefully catch.

In September, striped bass start preparing for their southern migration down the coast, and begin feeding heavily along the shores. This period, which runs through December, is famously known as the "fall run," an event that all striped bass anglers look forward to. The fish are often in large schools, feeding heavily and aggressively on all types of prey. 'Blitz fishing' occurs when hundreds or even thousands of striped bass feed voraciously on the surface, a common sight during the fall run, and something to be on the lookout for.

During the spring migration, newly born striped bass, known as 'young-of-the-year' (YOY), will typically remain in the Hudson for many months after spawning. Juvenile bass that have been spawned in the river often spend several years maturing in bays and coastal waters surrounding Long Island. These estuaries serve as valuable nursery habitat for small striped bass, where they will feed and grow until they are large enough to compete in the ocean. After a few years, they will become part of the migrating stock, living predominately in the ocean and returning to freshwater spawning grounds annually in the spring.

Young of Year striped bass.

For more than 30 years, DEC has conducted a survey in Long Island's western bays to collect and count the YOY and yearling striped bass. This survey, which begins in early May, is conducted by deploying a 200-foot-long seine net by boat in a horseshoe-like shape. The ends of the seine net are pulled together to close off the net and then pulled into shallower water, where the fish are collected, sorted, counted, measured, and released back into the water unharmed.

For bass larger than 6.5 inches, scale samples are collected to age the fish, and a small tag with a unique identification number is placed in the fish. When found by researchers or anglers, information from the tag can be reported to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to help biologists learn about migration patterns and survival durations.

As soon as the survey kicks off, yearling striped bass, which average between 2 to 6 inches in length, are caught. An early presence and high abundance of yearlings is a good indicator that the previous year's class from the Hudson River was robust, having survived the winter, and these fish are able to make their way south to marine waters. Around mid-July, eager YOY begin arriving in the saltwater estuaries after making the long and laborious journey down the river.

The first YOY recorded in the survey is always an exciting moment because it represents an optimistic spawning season. Not all YOY striped bass will migrate in the same season they were born; most choose to stay in the Hudson. It's easy to identify young striped bass—they look like identical, miniature versions of adult striped bass. These fish have eye-catching silver bodies with defining, darkening stripes developing along their sides, a square-shaped, paddle-like tail, and a large bucket mouth designed for quick bursts to ambush and swallow prey.

Fishery surveys, including DEC's western Long Island seine survey, are conducted by various agencies to capture and compile comprehensive data on the health of fisheries. In addition to these surveys, valuable fishing data is collected from the commercial and recreational fishing industries to account for fish being harvested. Commercial fishing data is collected through landings (catches) submitted to states on vessel trip reports and federal dealer reports.

NOAA Fisheries' Marine Recreational Intercept Program is a state-regional-federal partnership that collects data about saltwater fishing activity, to estimate the recreational catch. DEC's volunteer Striped Bass Cooperative Angler Program also provides valuable information about fish caught in the Hudson River and marine waters. This data, in addition to commercial market-sampling data, provides detailed information on the age and size of the fish being harvested in New York.

All this data is used by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) to evaluate the striped bass coastwide stock. ASMFC manages striped bass along the east coast under an interstate fishery management plan and conducts stock assessments to determine the status of the fishery. These assessments help ensure that management agencies are maintaining a plentiful population to benefit ecosystem health and provide recreational and commercial fishing opportunities.

During the past three decades, ASMFC determined that approximately 90 percent of recreational striped bass caught coastwide each year are released alive. In 2019, an estimated 30.9 million fish were caught by recreational anglers, of which 2.2 million were harvested and 28.8 million were released back to the water. A 9 percent mortality rate is assumed when releasing striped bass, meaning 9 percent of the fish released, a total of 2.59 million fish, did not survive.

Yearling striped bass.

Striped bass can sustain significant stress and physical injury throughout the process of being caught and subsequently released. Stress-related mortality increases as water temperatures exceed 70 degrees, and can have greater negative effects in freshwater than saltwater. Many anglers are unaware that even when a fish is released alive, it doesn't always survive. Anglers should always apply the best catch-and-release practices to give the fish its best chance to survive.

The first step in reducing fish mortality is choosing appropriate gear.

- Use the proper rod, reel, and tackle that will allow you to effectively bring in the fish without adding unnecessary stress.
- Avoid scaling down your gear to "enjoy" the battle; use an appropriately sized rod and reel that will allow you to fight the fish, while minimizing the fight time.
- Increasing the line-breaking strength will allow you to bring in the fish faster.
- If using plugs and lures, remove treble hooks and replace them with single hooks.
- Use single hooks without barbs to reduce handling time and limit injury.
- When using bait, a non-offset circle hook is mandatory, and helps reduce gut hooking.
- When hooked up, land the fish as quickly as possible and handle it with care.
- If possible, keep the fish in the water while dehooking.
- If the fish cannot be kept in the water, minimize handling and return it quickly.
- When lifting a striped bass, hold it horizontally and place one hand under its belly and the other hand holding onto its lower lip or tail.
- Avoid touching the gills, which are extremely sensitive and can be damaged easily.
- When weighing a fish, avoid lifting it with a lip gripping device solely by the jaw. Instead, use a cradle system to help avoid undue pressure on the jaw and internal organs of the fish.
- Larger fish are especially vulnerable to mishandling.
- Avoid using gaffs and soft mesh nets; a better option is a knotless rubber net.
- Avoid dragging the fish in the sand or along the rocks/jetty.

There are three primary methods of targeting striped bass: artificial lures, flyfishing, and bait fishing. Common bait used includes live or dead bunker, clams, sandworms, bloodworms, herring, and squid. It's required that when fishing with any marine or aquatic organism or terrestrial invertebrate, live or dead, anglers use a circle hook to help prevent gut hooking the fish. A non-offset or inline circle hook is a type of hook where the point and barb of the hook are in the same plane as the shank, and the tip of the hook is turned perpendicularly back towards the shank.

- Circle hooks help reduce the incidence of "deep hooking" or "gut hooking," which occurs when a fish bites and swallows a hook.
- Deep hooking dramatically decreases the probability of the fish's survival.
- Circle hooks are designed to slide out of the throat if swallowed and hook the lip or mouth of a fish, resulting in fewer fish injuries.

Circle hooks are not required when fishing with an artificial lure. Some examples of artificial lure exemptions include pork rinds on bucktail jigs, eel skin plugs, tube and worm, and any manmade flies. Common artificial lures include poppers, darters, minnow plugs, metal lipped swimmers, tins, soft plastics, and bucktails. When fishing

from a boat or kayak, trolling, casting, and jigging are popular methods used. Shore-bound anglers can cast or jig if they find deeper water to fish.

When releasing the fish back into the water, ensure that it's able to swim away strongly on its own. If the fish is lively and in good condition, return it to the water and release it immediately. If the fish is not able to swim away, reviving may be necessary. This is achieved by holding the fish by its tail and lower jaw while facing the current. If the fish is still lethargic, gently hold the mouth open and move the fish forward very slowly (note: moving the fish back and forth too fast can cause more stress). Once the fish feels like it is attempting to swim away, let it go. For more tips on safe and responsible fish handling, visit **https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoors/8377.html.**

Striped Bass Cooperative Angler Program

Anglers who fish for striped bass are encouraged to participate in DEC's Striped Bass Cooperative Angler Program (SBCA) and be part of an effort to manage and maintain a healthy striped bass population. ASMFC requires New York State to provide catch information from its recreational fishery to manage this species. Volunteer anglers in the Hudson River and marine waters play a crucial role in helping record information about their fishing trips, and can provide scales for ageing striped bass. This data helps determine the catch per unit effort (number of fish caught per hours spent fishing) or fishing success for striped bass in New York waters. Learn how to get involved by visiting **https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7899.html.**

Marine Recreational Information Program

When out on the water, keep an eye out for NOAA Fisheries Marine Recreational Information Program field interviewers. They collect information on saltwater fishing activity at fishing access sites, such as boat ramps, docks, piers, bridges, and jetties. These shoreside interviews are part of the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey, which collects vital data used to produce estimates of total recreational catch. During the interview, you will be asked about your day of fishing and any fish you may have kept or released. The fish you caught will also be weighed and measured—important information needed for fisheries stock assessments. All interviews are confidential and interviewers play no role in law enforcement.

Caitlin Craig, DEC Division of Marine Resources Diadromous Fish Unit

Justin Pellegrino, DEC Division of Marine Resources Diadromous Fish Unit

Andrew Sinchuk, DEC Division of Marine Resources Diadromous Fish Unit

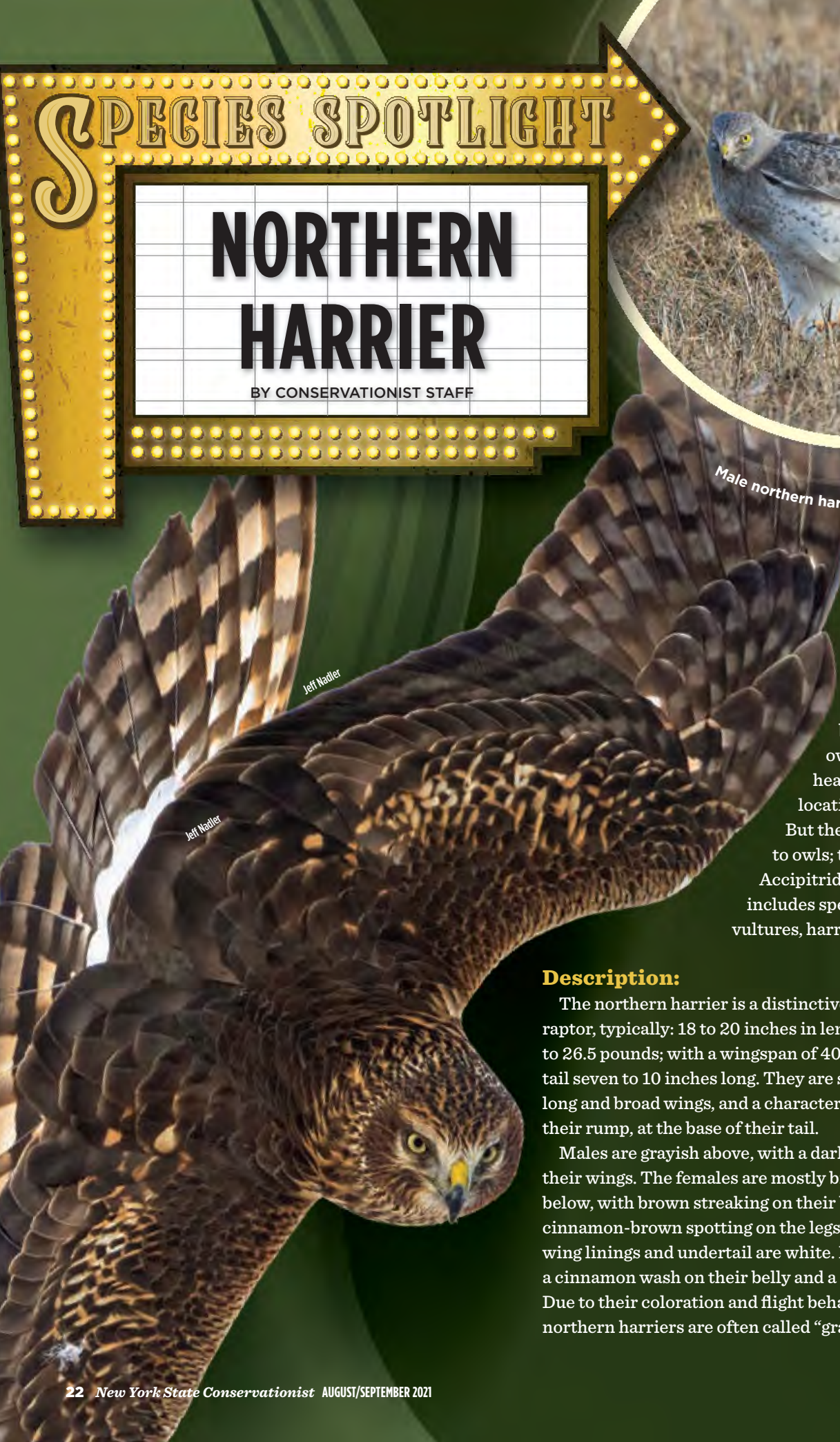
Stephanie Rekemeyer, DEC Division of Marine Resources Public Participation Specialist

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

NORTHERN HARRIER

BY CONSERVATIONIST STAFF

Male northern harrier above, female on left



Is it a hawk or an owl?

The northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) looks like an owl, because of its round face. These birds even hunt like owls, using their acute hearing to pinpoint the location of their prey. But they are not related to owls; they are part of the Accipitridae family, which includes species of hawks, eagles, vultures, harriers, and kites.

Description:

The northern harrier is a distinctive medium-sized raptor, typically: 18 to 20 inches in length; weighing 10.5 to 26.5 pounds; with a wingspan of 40 to 46.5 inches; and a tail seven to 10 inches long. They are slim, with yellow legs, long and broad wings, and a characteristic white patch on their rump, at the base of their tail.

Males are grayish above, with a dark trailing edge on their wings. The females are mostly brown; larger and pale below, with brown streaking on their breast. They have cinnamon-brown spotting on the legs and flanks, and their wing linings and undertail are white. Immature birds have a cinnamon wash on their belly and a darker brown head. Due to their coloration and flight behavior, adult male northern harriers are often called "gray ghosts."

You are most likely to notice northern harriers when they are flying. Their flight feathers and tail are banded with six to eight gray-brown bars. In flight, the wings are held in a shallow "V" to help stabilize them.

Habitat, Diet, and Behavior:

Northern harriers are active during the day and spend most of their time hunting for food or resting. They often flap their wings intermittently and make sharp turns when flying; they usually fly slow and low over the ground, with their wings held in that V-shape as they glide. These unusual raptors are considered agile and acrobatic, and have a broad distribution across North America. They are most common in large, open areas, such as wetlands and fields with low, thick vegetation.

Northern harriers sometimes feed while in flight, soaring and gliding low over the ground in search of small prey. Unlike other hawks, they have stiff facial feathers that help direct sound to their ears; they detect prey by sound and rely on their vision to capture their targeted animal. They feed almost exclusively on meadow voles, but will also eat mice, rats, shrews, rabbits, large insects (especially grasshoppers), snakes, lizards, frogs, toads, ducks, and other birds; they may feed on carrion (the decaying flesh of dead animals) in winter.

They often perch on low trees and shrubs, as well as fence posts. northern harriers will hover above prospective prey, attempting to drive it out into the open, before plunging feet-first to capture their quarry. They will sometimes subdue larger animals by drowning them.

In North America, they always migrate separate from other birds, in both spring and fall. During migration, you may see harriers high in the sky, over mountain ridges and coastlines. In New York, northern harriers are year-round residents, and can often be found congregating in open grassland areas with higher rodent populations, along with other species such as short-eared owls and rough-legged hawks.

Life History:

Northern harriers typically breed in freshwater and brackish marshes, lightly grazed meadows, and old fields. Both males and females will vigorously defend the nest—nesting females will chase away other females and males will chase other males.

Females usually lay four to six eggs, which are pale and bluish-white, and sometimes have light brown spots. Their eggs are incubated by the females only, typically for 30 to 32 days. Once the eggs hatch, the male will bring food to the female, who then feeds the young. The young vary in size and can fly and leave the nest after 30 to 40 days, but they usually stay close to the nest and return to feed, dependent on their parents.

Adults rarely live more than eight years. Short-eared owls are natural competitors of this species; they favor the same prey and habitat, and have a similar broad distribution. Historically, populations of harriers were considered abundant and widespread. However, habitat loss has contributed to reduced harrier populations as wetlands have been drained, open lands have been developed, and fields have been converted for agriculture or allowed to become reforested. In New York, harriers are listed as a threatened species due to this decline in their appropriate habitat.

Some of the best locations in the state to see northern harriers include the Fort Edward Grasslands (Washington County), Point Peninsula (Jefferson County), and the Shawangunk Grasslands National Wildlife Refuge (Orange and Ulster counties), but they can be found wherever there is suitable habitat. They are less frequently seen than more common hawks like red-tails and broad-wings.

The next time you see a medium-sized bird gliding low over an open field, and you aren't sure if it's a hawk or an owl, look at its tail and check what shape its wings make. If it has a white rump patch and its wings make a V, chances are it's a northern harrier.

For more information on northern harriers, visit: **https://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7090.html.**

Fun Facts

- Northern harrier fossils dating back 11,000 to 40,000 years ago have been found in northern Mexico.
- The oldest northern harrier on record was at least 15 years and 4 months old.
- Parts of Europe and Asia have several kinds of harriers, but North America has only one, the northern harrier.
- Also known as the marsh hawk, American harrier, hen hawk, and harrier hawk.
- May cover up to 100 miles per day searching for prey.
- Speeds of 38 mph have been reported in pursuit of prey.

DEC Partners with Land Trusts

to Protect Public Drinking Water

BY KRISTIN MARTINEZ

It has been a tough year. You wake up one morning and realize that you appreciate so many more things in life that you used to take for granted. With this realization, you turn on your tap or go to the refrigerator for a glass of water and wonder "Where exactly does my water come from?"

You do some research and soon learn that it can come from any number of places: a lake or a river, a source nearby or one that's miles away, or maybe an aquifer deep below ground. With a multitude of rivers, streams, lakes, reservoirs, and abundant groundwater, New Yorkers are fortunate to have a vast array of water sources that sustain our daily lives.

Since water is vital to life, you might then wonder "Who helps protect the source of my drinking water?" You may think of New York State, and DEC in particular, but who else? The answer may include a group you've never thought of—land trusts. But what exactly is a land trust and how does it help protect our public drinking water sources?

Using their expertise in land conservation and natural resource protection, land trusts have been working with DEC to acquire property and conservation easements (see callout box) that are vital to source water protection. They have become an important partner in New York's efforts to protect public drinking water.

But why is this necessary? Isn't drinking water already treated and, therefore, protected? Well, not necessarily. Water treatment and source water protection are two different things.

Public Drinking Water Treatment

New York State sets standards for public drinking water quality. The State Health Department requires public water suppliers to test and, as needed, treat the water that enters their facility to ensure it meets those standards before it is sent to your home. To learn more about the Department of Health's public water supply program, visit: **https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/water/drinking/drinkingwaterprogram.htm**.

Actions to Protect Public Drinking Water

Runoff and pollution can enter and impair drinking water sources, but natural barriers can help reduce these contaminants. DEC and municipalities often partner with land trusts to acquire lands and easements to reduce runoff and pollution, and to improve riparian buffers by planting native trees and shrubs along the banks. But how do these actions make a difference?

These buffering land areas can filter out harmful pollutants, preventing them from reaching and contaminating the source water. This natural filtering reduces the need for additional treatment—and its associated costs—to ensure the water is safe before it reaches your home. High density or excessive development can lead to increased stormwater runoff that transports contaminants into source waters. Strategic purchases of land and riparian buffers can prevent or mitigate pollutants from entering source waters, helping ensure high water quality for local communities.

New York Taking Action

Since 2017, DEC has provided funding for the acquisition of land and conservation easements for source water protection through its Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) grant program. DEC has awarded more than $37 million in WQIP funds to more than 25 land trusts and municipalities to conserve and protect sources of public drinking water through land acquisition.

Let's take a closer look at some of the organizations and projects that have used WQIP funds to protect New York's drinking water and all the people who depend on it.

Thousand Islands

Since 1985, the Thousand Islands Land Trust (TILT) has worked to protect and steward the regional landscape of the Thousand Islands and St. Lawrence River Valley. The group has protected approximately 11,000 acres and works to establish accessible areas, for public enjoyment, creating over 25 miles of recreational trails. TILT has received WQIP grants for multiple projects to protect more than 900 acres of land near public drinking water supplies. One unique TILT project was a conservation easement acquired from Kenneth Deedy, a founding member of TILT.

Raised on Long Island, Ken Deedy came to know Grindstone Island as a teenager in the early 1950s when his family vacationed there, returning nearly every year to enjoy hiking and fishing. In 1962, Ken acquired some land there in a handshake deal, and in the 1980s, he obtained the rest of what would become the 31-acre Deedy property.

Before his death in 2018, Ken and his nephew Matthew donated a conservation easement on their Grindstone Island property to TILT. The easement protects nearly 26 acres of their 31-acre property, and will help protect the nearby public drinking water sources that draw from the St. Lawrence River. The easement also conserves the forests,

What is a Conservation Easement?

A voluntary, legal agreement that protects the natural resources of a parcel of land by permanently restricting future land use and/or development on the property.

Thousand Islands Land Trust

granite outcrops, and undeveloped shorelines that provide habitat for countless species of native flora and fauna, and contribute to the Thousand Island region's scenic beauty.

The donation of the Deedy conservation easement played a critical role in the conservation of two additional adjacent properties for source water protection: the Ramseier and Foltz properties, totaling 46 acres. Ken had a vision and unique ability to understand how to create the greatest conservation impact.

Source Water Protection

New York has a statewide source water protection effort underway, called the Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2). Protecting water at its source, before it enters a public water supply's treatment facility, is achieved through actions such as acquiring land or conservation easements, installing buffers, and conducting inspections of the source water area. To learn more about source water protection, visit: **https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/115250.html**.

Hudson Valley

Established in 1985, the Dutchess Land Conservancy (DLC) is dedicated to preserving the scenic, agricultural, and environmental resources of the county, for present and future generations. DLC has protected more than 43,700 acres, while also providing assistance to landowners and municipalities that encourages environmentally sound planning. The Conservancy has also received WQIP grant funding to acquire a conservation easement for source water protection.

Conserving critical lands is often vital to protecting drinking water sources.

Thousand Islands Land Trust

In late 2020, DLC acquired a 150+ acre conservation easement that protects source water on the historic Jordan Lane Farm, owned by Betsy Speeter, the eighth-generation owner of the property. The farm has been in the Jordan family for 200 years, and Betsy was dedicated to keeping the property as open land.

In 2017, Betsy spoke with a lifelong friend who had sold an easement on a portion of his farm to DLC. Following this conversation, she voluntarily placed a conservation easement on her farm to help source water protection. The Jordan Lane Farm property comprises approximately 25 percent of an area critical to providing clean drinking water for the Town of Pine Plains. Thanks to Betsy's passion for her family's land, the work of DLC, and funding from New York State, Dutchess County, and the Peter and Carmen Lucia Buck Foundation, this conservation easement protects the Town's drinking water source in perpetuity.

Central New York

Founded in 1989, the Finger Lakes Land Trust (FLLT) works to protect the forests, gorges, shorelines, and unique character of New York's Finger Lakes. As part of its mission, FLLT protects water quality by permanently conserving the surrounding valleys and working with partners to restore natural systems that safeguard watersheds in the region. The Finger Lakes provide drinking water for 1 million residents and countless visitors.

FLLT has received DEC grant funding for several projects to protect public drinking water sources within the region. One of these projects was the Henderson parcel, a 35-acre property featuring 2,300 feet of undeveloped shoreline along the southeastern end of Otisco Lake. The property was identified by FLLT, and approved by the State, as a priority for source water protection.

Mossy Point in the Niagara River watershed

Henderson conservation easement property

FLLT protected the land by working with the estate of William "Bill" Henderson, who bought the property in 1942 at a private auction. He was only 15 years old at the time, and rode his bike after school to purchase what would become the family farm. Henderson maintained the land for 76 years, until his passing in 2018. FLLT purchased a conservation easement on the property that year, maintaining the parcel's large meadows and ponds as open space, continuing Bill's legacy, while also protecting source water.

As part of the efforts to conserve and protect the property's water resources, FLLT planted 650 native trees and shrubs to establish and enhance the vegetative buffer along the lakeshore, wetlands, and streams. These natural features contribute to critical source water protection for the lake—helping to slow runoff after storm events, filtering and absorbing pollutants, and reducing drinking water treatment costs.

Other Conservation Efforts across the State

Additional examples of the great work land trusts and municipalities are doing to protect sources of public drinking water include:

- Peconic Land Trust partnered with several municipalities to create a Regional Aquifer Protection Land Acquisition Program to protect Long Island's Sole Source Aquifer, which supplies 400 million gallons of fresh water each day, serving more than 2.8 million people;
- Western New York Land Conservancy acquired the 216-acre headwater forest, Mossy Point, to protect the Niagara River watershed. Mossy Point will add to a neighboring preserve and park, forming a 1,100-acre protected area, one of the largest patches of protected forests in the Niagara River watershed; and
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC) acquired a 203-acre property consisting of vacant woodland and freshwater forested/shrub wetlands with seasonal streams that will protect Owasco Lake, a drinking water supply for thousands of people. By acquiring this parcel, TNC can protect the land from development and help avoid the potential of harmful runoff and pollutants entering public water supplies.

How Can I Get Involved?

Protecting public drinking water supplies across New York State is often a joint effort that involves a willing landowner, land trust or municipality, and, in some cases, DEC. If you would like to learn how to become involved in such efforts or to protect your land for source water, contact your municipality or local land trust.

If you aren't sure which land trust serves your area, visit the "Find a Land Trust" interactive mapper at **https://www.findalandtrust.org/**. To learn more about DEC's Water Quality Improvement Project Program, visit **https://www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/4774.html** or contact **WQIPsourcewater@dec.ny.gov**.

Kristin Martinez is an Environmental Program Specialist for Watershed Section B in DEC's Division of Water.

New York's Investment in Clean Water

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo continues to increase investments for clean water infrastructure projects, including an unprecedented $4 billion State commitment.

As part of the State's Environmental Protection Fund, the Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program supports projects to improve water quality, reduce the potential for harmful algal blooms (HABs), and protect drinking water across the state.

To date, DEC's WQIP program has awarded 3 rounds of grants to 25 partners for 37 projects and more than $37 million in funding, with another round currently underway.

Earn Camping Rewards with the New Loyalty Program

Each year, millions of visitors enjoy New York State campgrounds. If you're one of them, we encourage you to join the new Camping Loyalty Program to do more of what you love, and earn camping rewards while doing it! Enroll in the new online loyalty program and start earning 10 points for every dollar you spend on overnight accommodations at any New York State campground. For every 100 points earned, campers receive $1 off camping use fees. To register and begin earning points while enjoying great camping in New York State, go to: **https://newyorkstateparks.reserveamerica.com/showPage.do?name=landing&landing=/htm/NY_LoyaltyEnrollment.html&tti=Rewards**.

DEC and Our Environment — View it LIVE

Social media is a great way to connect with DEC, find information on a variety of environmental topics, and learn about numerous ways you can enjoy the outdoors. To stay connected with the public during the pandemic, DEC began hosting live broadcasts on both Facebook and Instagram. The broadcasts featured DEC staff presenting and answering questions from viewers live, on a variety of topics, such as: ice fishing, hunting, composting, backyard birdwatching, recycling, camping, and more. Interested in watching these live broadcasts? To find out the featured topic, just follow DEC on Facebook and Instagram, or check out the calendar of events on DEC's website at **https://www.dec.ny.gov/calendar/**.

DEC Opens Public Archery Range

On June 17, DEC opened its first-ever public archery range, Saratoga Sand Plains Archery Range, located in the town of Wilton, Saratoga County. The range features 16 targets, eight adult lanes, four youth lanes, and four lanes accessed by an elevated platform that simulates shots from a tree stand. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Program, New York State, and the town of Wilton funded the range. DEC worked closely with the town on all phases of the project. For more information on the range, including rules and regulations, visit: **https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/24418.html**.

Jim Clayton

DEC Releases Updated Deer Management Plan

The Management Plan for White-tailed Deer in New York State, 2021-2030 is now available. The Plan is the product of public input, expert review, and sound science that will improve the management of white-tailed deer across New York State. This second-edition Deer Management Plan enhances DEC programs that provide relief to landowners and the public experiencing deer damage and conflicts, seeks to protect New York's deer from Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), and enhances the State's deer hunting traditions. For more information and to download the Plan, visit: **https://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7211.html#DeerPlan**.

a floating boom

Protecting Black Ash Trees

A 30+ year partnership between DEC and the Akwesasne Mohawk community recently conducted improvement cuttings to protect black ash trees at Brasher State Forest. Crews thinned a stand to reduce competition, which will help the remaining trees to grow bigger, stronger, and healthier. Black ash crop trees were left to increase growth and promote seed production. Cut trees became firewood and were donated to the Saint Regis Mohawk Reservation. Black ash is a culturally important tree species used by the Akwesasne Mohawks, and special projects such as this have been undertaken by the Mohawk Tribe to protect this valuable resource.

Bird Banding for Research and Education

The Monitoring Avian Production and Survivorship (MAPS) program helps DEC scientists and volunteers track the status and trends of bird populations. The birds are captured in nearly invisible nets, banded, briefly observed, and then released back into the environment. Bird banders determine species, age, sex, and breeding status of each bird by examining numerous characteristics, including feather shape, color, wear, and replacement. Information from recaptured banded birds is valuable, especially when combined with data from similar banding efforts across North America. For more information about the MAPS program, visit **https://www.birdpop.org**. For more information on birding, visit DEC's I Bird NY webpage: **https://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/109900.html**.

Inlet Boom Helps Fish Passage

Since 2017, a fishway (ladder) on Cayuga Inlet has been installed to allow passage for landlocked Atlantic salmon and brown trout, in hopes of improving fishing opportunities upstream. In the fall of 2020, a floating boom was built that has improved the effectiveness of the fishway. The boom deflects leaves and debris over the dam, keeping the grates in the fishway clear, helping to attract more fish into the fishway. The Cayuga Inlet is a major spawning stream for rainbow trout in Cayuga Lake, and it is a popular destination for anglers. To learn more about Cayuga Lake, and fishing its tributaries, visit: **https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/36544.html**.

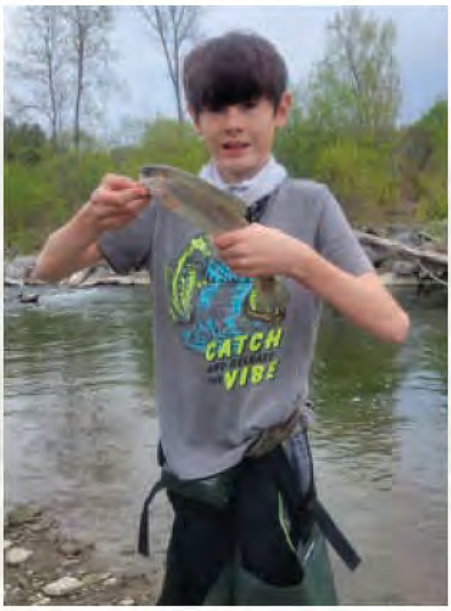
Tagged Fish

While fishing the Cattaraugus Creek (Catt) in Arcade (Wyoming County) this spring, one of the fish my grandson Luke caught was an 11-inch rainbow trout, with this green tag attached to it. The tag had #49 on it, and I was wondering if you could tell me anything more about it?

BOB THARNISH | ELMA

One of our fisheries biologists confirmed that the Arcade Area Chamber of Commerce conducts a trout derby each spring, and this is no doubt from one of those fish. Interestingly, we get a few calls every year about these tagged fish. Sometimes they are from a larger steelhead-sized trout, which would be from a trout that migrated from the Catt into Lake Erie, got big, and then ran back up the stream during the seasonal run. They sometimes show up in other Lake Erie tributaries too.

—JOELLE ERNST | FISHERIES OUTREACH & EDUCATION UNIT LEADER, DIVISION OF FISH & WILDLIFE



When Frogs Get the Blues

This frog has been living in a neighbor's garden pond for a few weeks. It seems just like any of the other frogs, except for its blue color! Can you give me any information on this beautiful creature?

KATHY BAKER | BALDWINSVILLE

While not very common, these do show up from time to time. This is a green frog. Note the lateral fold or lines running along the side of the body towards the posterior end—in bullfrogs, that line wraps around the tympanum (round disc where the ear is). The blue is due to a lack of yellow pigment, resulting in blue areas that can cover the whole body or just appear in sections. Together, the blue and yellow pigments create the normal green coloration.

Unusual Squirrel

We tend to have a lot of black squirrels at our house, but I've never seen one with a red tail before.

STEVE SWENSEN | BALDWINSVILLE

Great photo, thanks for sharing! This is a gray squirrel with a color variation known as melanism. Melanism is the result of a genetic mutation, leading to excessive pigmentation. Although melanistic gray squirrels can be found throughout their normal range, they tend to occur in higher numbers in northern locations—Central New York is known for its black squirrels. The red tail color is likely due to the natural color variation in gray squirrels, and in this squirrel, a case of incomplete melanism.

Ask the Biologist

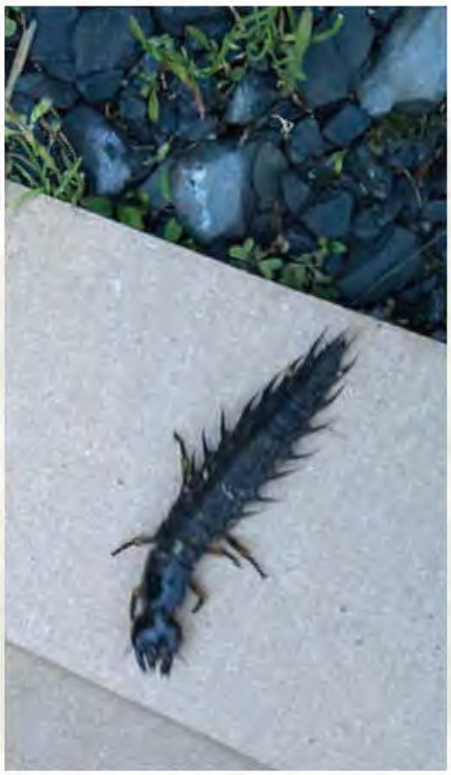
Q: I was hoping you could identify this dragonfly for me, which I found resting on a Caradonna salvia plant in our yard?

ILONA VINKLEROVA | POUGHKEEPSIE

A: *This looks like a female four-spotted skimmer,* Libellula quadrimaculata. *It's a skimmer, because it is big and has a loop of veins near the base of the right hind wing that has the outline of Italy. The four spots are not as strong as I would like to see; nevertheless, I think that's what it is. The stigma spot at the tip of the fore wing is strong, but the spot at the nodus, the kink about halfway along the leading edge of the forewing, is smaller than in some individuals. It is variable and tends to be smaller in females than in males. The males also have an amber stripe along the leading edge of the forewing; females not so much. The hind wing has a small black "saddle bag" at the base. The color pattern of the abdomen is consistent for the four-spotted. Finally, the thorax is hairy. I think this characteristic of the four-spotted skimmer may be unique among New York king skimmers.*

—COLE GILBERT, PROFESSOR OF ENTOMOLOGY | CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Editor's Note – Learn more about the dragonflies and damselflies of New York State in an article by Cole Gilbert in the August/September 2020 issue of *Conservationist*, available on our website at **https://www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/119705.html**.



Driveway Crawler

My wife and I saw this in our driveway recently one evening. I have never seen anything like it before. It was about four inches long. Can you please tell me what it is?

CHRIS HEWISON | COEYMANS HOLLOW

Interesting find! This is a dobsonfly larva, also sometimes called a hellgrammite. The larvae are aquatic, but they will come out onto land prior to transforming into an adult, which are terrestrial.

—JERRY CARLSON | RESEARCH SCIENTIST, DIVISION OF LANDS AND FORESTS

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Back Trails

Perspectives on People and Nature

Rescue Mission

BY ROBERT A. MILLER

When we arrived home from vacation, on a Sunday afternoon, we saw two Canada Geese on our pond. I appreciate most wildlife, but I'm exasperated by geese. They leave messes all over and they are insulting. They also know you can't catch them.

The only way to roust geese from our half-acre pond is to drag out our boat and paddle towards them, while shouting nasty things. Realizing they can't escape, they will eventually fly away, laughing (well quacking), as they make their point. However, on this day our boat wasn't inflated, and I had to cut the grass that had grown while we were away, before I could even think about evicting these two unwelcome visitors.

The next morning, I began my cleanup, and sometime before noon, the male—the larger goose—flew away. I was shocked to see that the female had only one leg. Although she stood straight and tall, she hopped along the shore with difficulty, and strenuously paddled away with her one webbed foot whenever I came near.

I decided not to chase her off because I hoped her mate would return, and I didn't want him to find she was gone. Geese mate for life and I didn't want to break up a lifelong bond. But by the end of the day (Monday), there was no sign of the male. I became anxious. Was he gone for good?

On Tuesday, still no sign of her partner. The injured goose would hop a few feet and settle down to sit on the grass. When I approached, she spread her large wings, flew a short distance, then landed, and watched me warily.

By dusk that evening, there was still no sign of the male; the female bird wandered aimlessly around the large lawn, pecking on the grass.

Late in the day, I texted Wes Laraway, a local Wildlife Rehabilitator. "If we trap this goose, can you give her a home?" I asked. "Yes," he answered, "but, we would have to catch her."

That night, we spread some cracked corn we had been given by Carol Clement of Heather Ridge Farms and began planning the capture. To complicate things, Wes couldn't come to the house until after 4:00 PM on Wednesday, and severe storms, possibly even tornadoes, were forecast for around that time.

I went to sleep Tuesday night torn with worry, planning how we might possibly drop a soft hammock net over her and keep her safe until Wes arrived.

Early Wednesday morning, I walked outside, dreading the prospect of catching the large, injured bird. There on the lawn, were five geese surrounding her. They all started quacking at me. Two minutes later, they all flew away, including the injured goose.

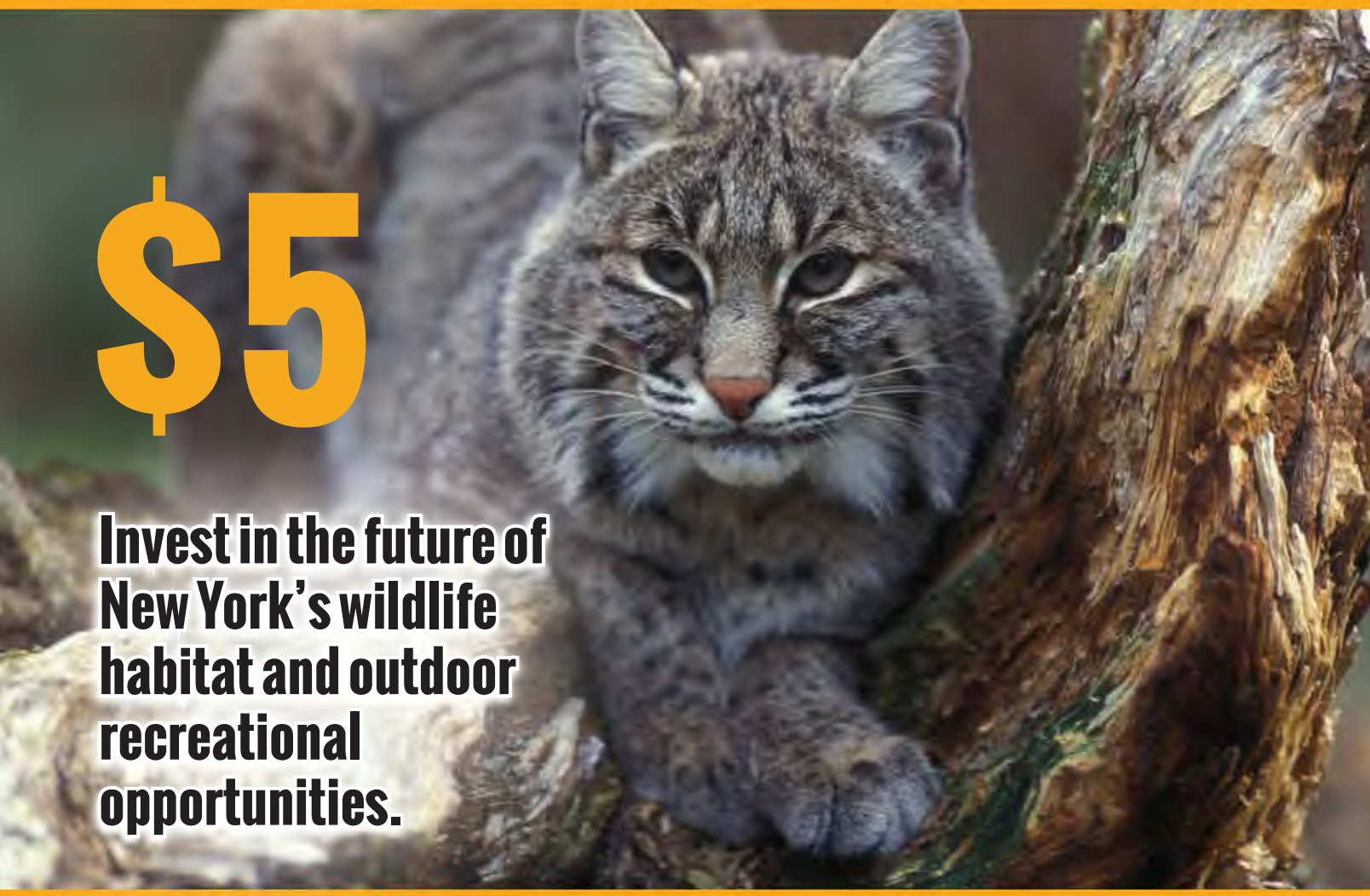
Had the male brought back a rescue party? Were they family?

Our expert advisors were mystified, and, frankly, relieved. To us, it felt like a miracle.

Robert A. Miller is a former director of educational publishing for NYC's public television station, THIRTEEN/WNET. He currently lives in the Catskills.

BE A HABITAT HERO

2021 Habitat & Access Stamp



Artwork by: Angela T. Baron

Whether you are an angler or hunter, birder or photographer, purchasing a $5 Habitat & Access Stamp is the perfect way to preserve New York's wildlife heritage and increase public access for fish- and wildlife-related recreation.

For more information, talk to your NYSDEC license-issuing agent, or visit our website at **www.dec.ny.gov**

NEW YORK STATE | Department of Environmental Conservation

Finger Lakes Land Trust

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