Celebrating the 125th Anniversary of the Adirondack Park
Dear Reader,

When it comes to protecting our environment, you can’t focus solely on the present—you must consider the future to determine the steps necessary to preserve critical natural resources, provide exciting outdoor recreation opportunities, and manage the environment in a manner that supports local economies. It takes vision.

In this issue, we highlight how the vision of New Yorkers 125 years ago created one of our nation’s largest, oldest and most storied environmental legacies—the six-million-acre Adirondack Park. Anyone who has visited the Park is impressed by its massive size and the endless array of activities and experiences it offers, including unparalleled wilds, 46 peaks above 4,000 feet, thousands of lakes, and 1,181 miles of rivers that have outstanding scenic, ecological, recreational, historic, and scientific values.

Whenever someone camps within the “Blue Line,” hikes the peaks, or casts a line from a canoe on one of the Park’s pristine lakes or streams, they pay homage to visionary New Yorkers like famed cartographer Verplanck Colvin and Governor Roswell Flower, who foresaw the importance of preserving the natural resources and character of the Adirondacks.

Governor Cuomo’s leadership in safeguarding the Adirondack Park and revitalizing its communities is unprecedented. DEC is working tirelessly to bolster the Park’s economy and quality of life, and strengthen community resilience. I encourage you to visit the Adirondack Park, canoe its waters, camp under the stars, hike one of its peaks, explore its towns and villages, and become part of the rich, enduring history of this unique place.

This issue’s Adirondack Park feature, like many of the articles and pictures in the Conservationist, is designed to spark your curiosity and inspire you to explore our natural world. The tale of “A Family Fishing Affair” (pg. 10) may rekindle old memories of your first fishing experience, and how much fun it was—and still is—to have a fish on your line. Or perhaps you’ve noticed several insects that look alike, and now can learn why this might be the case (pg. 14). And the story on the discovery of a forgotten canal schooner (pg. 18) will take you back in time and encourage you to celebrate the history of the Erie Canal, an engineering marvel that transformed our state and nation.

Whether it’s visiting the Adirondacks or enjoying the outdoors closer to home, I urge you to take advantage of all the exciting outdoor opportunities available in New York for people young and old, novice or expert. They may become lasting memories.

All the best,
Basil Seggos, Commissioner
Contents

2 Celebrating Adirondack Park’s 125th Anniversary
   By Peter Constantakes and Eileen Stegemann

7 Chomping at Nature’s Bit
   Waiting (im)patiently for a bird to reveal its identity
   By Eli Knapp

10 A Family Fishing Affair
   Carrying on the family fishing tradition
   By Tom Hughes

14 A Bee or Not a Bee, That is the Question
   Mimicry helps insects survive
   By Gerry Lemmo

18 Revisiting New York’s Historic Canals
   On the sailing schooner Lois McClure
   By Erick Tichonuk

22 The Circle of Life: Spawning Behaviors of Smallmouth Bass
   By Robert Michelson

26 Environmental Justice—Right For All
   DEC’s Environmental Justice Office
   By Rosa Méndez

Departments

25 On Patrol | 28 Briefly | 30 Letters | 32 Back Trails

Front cover: Adirondack Mountains by Carl Heilman II
Back cover: Hughes family, 1932; Courtesy Tom Hughes
By Peter Constantakes and Eileen Stegemann

Few of us can fathom the magnitude of a land parcel totaling 6 million acres. When New York established the Adirondack Park 125 years ago, bounded by the “blue line,” it created the largest state park in the nation—one that has grown to nearly one-fifth of New York’s total acreage, an area greater in size than some New England states.

At the time, there was a growing concern over commercial logging in the Adirondacks and its impact on local watersheds. A state forest commission was created in 1884 to address these public concerns and noted “…the protection of a great portion of the forest from wanton destruction is absolutely and immediately required.”

New York Governor David B. Hill signed a law on May 15, 1885 requiring that all state lands in eleven Adirondack and three Catskill counties “be forever kept as wild forest lands,” thereby creating the Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserve.

On May 20, 1892, Governor Roswell P. Flower signed a law creating the Adirondack Park, and three years later, the State Constitution was amended to provide the highest level of protection for state lands within the park: the Forest Preserve.

The Adirondack Park is a unique blend of public and private land. Historically, logging and extractive industries drove the region’s economic engine; today, tourism is the main industry.

The Park has always been a popular spot for outdoor recreation, with residents and visitors enjoying great hunting and fishing, boating, paddling, camping, amazing hiking trails, skiing and snowmobiling, and breathtaking scenery year-round. People from around the world came to the region for the Olympic Games in Lake Placid in 1932 and 1980, and still visit to rekindle those memories, take a bobsled ride, and enjoy great skiing at Whiteface and other nearby resorts, or on cross-country ski trails through tranquil forests. The State continues to work closely
with Adirondack communities to preserve key land parcels like OK Slip Falls, the Essex Chain of Lakes, and Boreas Ponds to expand recreation opportunities and enhance the regional economy.

For those with a penchant for history, opportunities abound. Sites like Fort William Henry, Fort Ticonderoga and Valcour Lighthouse lead you back in time to battles that shaped our state and nation. A trip to John Brown’s Farm or the Adirondack Experience, The Museum on Blue Mountain Lake connects visitors to the vital history of the region.

As we celebrate the great diversity of the region, protection of the Adirondacks—the impetus for the Park’s creation—remains a primary goal. New York has successfully addressed several major environmental threats, including acid rain, which severely impaired water quality, fish and aquatic life, and forests. And we are currently working to curtail the threat of invasive species, which, if left unchecked, could severely damage water bodies and other environmental resources, and have economic repercussions as well.

More than a century ago, New York leaders realized the Adirondack Park was a unique treasure deserving of protection. Today, we continue those efforts, while also promoting new plans, projects and investments to improve and enhance the Park. Such plans include upgrading many of the 46 state-operated campgrounds under Governor Cuomo’s new Adventure NY program, and redevelopment of the former Frontier Town park property into a gateway hub to world-class recreation in the Adirondacks.

In these pages, we highlight important sites, people and actions that have made the Adirondack Park a great place to live, work or visit. As we look back on the history of the Adirondacks, we also look to the future. And like early pioneers’ views of this mountainous region, the opportunities seem boundless.

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The Adirondack Park’s land area is larger than Yosemite, Yellowstone, Glacier, Grand Canyon and the Great Smoky Mountain National Parks combined. It encompasses more than six million acres, nearly half of which belongs to all the people of New York State and is constitutionally protected as a "forever wild" forest preserve. There are no gates or admission fees; the public is welcome to hike, camp, hunt, fish and enjoy the outdoors for free on all this land. The remaining half of the park is private land including settlements, farms, timberlands, businesses, homes and camps, upon which about 120,000 year-round residents call home. The state holds “working forest conservation easements” on about 800,000 acres of private lands within the Park. These easements allow the public to access some remote picturesque areas while still keeping the lands on local tax rolls, promoting sustainable forestry, and restricting non-forestry land uses in the future.
An early proponent of the creation of the Adirondack Forest Preserve was surveyor Verplanck Colvin. Beginning in 1872, Colvin supervised a state survey of the area, spending nearly the next 30 years crisscrossing the Adirondack wilderness. In the 1874 Annual Report to the Legislature, Colvin wrote: “Unless the region be preserved essentially in its present wilderness condition, the ruthless burning and destruction of the forest will slowly, year after year, creep onward … and vast areas of naked rock, arid sand and gravel will alone remain to receive the bounty of the clouds, unable to retain it.” The Legislature then established the Forest Preserve in 1885, saying Preserve lands “shall be forever kept as wild forest lands.”

With its stunning natural beauty and resources, the Adirondacks were a popular site for Great Camps—large, luxurious summer estates owned by successful businessmen in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many of these sprawling compounds featured homes built in the Adirondack rustic style, which helped them blend into their natural surroundings. Camp Santanoni in Essex County (pictured here) is one of the oldest and largest of the early Great Camps. It was originally owned by Albany banker Robert C. Pruyn, who traveled north to the Adirondacks to escape the city and entertain guests, including Theodore Roosevelt and James Fenimore Cooper. At one point, the camp complex was more than 12,900 acres, with numerous buildings and a 4.7-mile carriage road. DEC acquired Camp Santanoni in 1972 and it was added to the Forest Preserve. The site is a National Historic Landmark and the only great camp entirely in public ownership and stewardship.

The Adirondack Park is truly a paradise for nature lovers, recreationists and outdoor enthusiasts. Scenic vistas, majestic peaks, cascading waterfalls, and a bounty of lakes, ponds and streams beckon folks from far and wide to experience its grandeur for themselves. The area is home to a rich variety of flora and fauna, including: more than 70 native tree species; 55 species of mammals—moose, black bear, white-tailed deer, otter, beaver and American marten, to name a few; 218 different kinds of birds including such iconic species as the American bald eagle and the common loon; and 86 species of freshwater fish. Hiking, camping, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, biking, hunting, wildlife viewing, photography, skiing, and snowmobiling can all be enjoyed here.
The Village of Lake Placid has hosted two winter Olympics: in 1932 and 1980. Dr. Godfrey Dewey of the Lake Placid Club led the campaign to bring the Winter Games to the small village in 1932, and his efforts were supported by Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who officially opened the ceremonies. That year, the Games included 252 athletes (231 men, 21 women) from 17 countries competing in 14 events in 8 sports. In 1980, the Games returned to Placid, this time featuring 1,072 athletes from 37 countries, competing in 38 events. A number of facilities were built to accommodate the event’s dramatic growth, including a new 8,500-seat fieldhouse, 70-meter and 90-meter ski jumps, and a luge run on Mt. Van Hoevenberg. Today, visitors can tour these, and other, Olympic facilities.

On May 22 of this year, DEC Commissioner Seggos signed maps that resolved property disputes dating back more than a century regarding ownership of 216 parcels located in the Raquette Lake area, Town of Long Lake, Hamilton County. Under the settlement, known as Township 40, owners of the disputed properties can make a payment to the Town of Long Lake to clear their titles. The State will use these funds to acquire from the Open Space Institute a parcel known as the Marion River Carry. The 300-acre parcel, which includes critical ecological and scenic resources, and an important portage trail, will be added to the Forest Preserve, expanding outdoor recreation opportunities in the Park. New York voters played a vital role in resolving this long-running land dispute by passing a constitutional amendment in 2013 that paved the way to reaching the settlement.

New York State continues to preserve lands and resources in the Adirondacks, consistent with the goals that led to the creation of the Park 125 years ago. Governor Cuomo recently announced the completion of the largest land acquisition in more than a century: 69,000 acres of forested lands formerly owned by the Finch, Pruyn Paper Company and The Nature Conservancy.

The lands are now open to the public for the first time in 150 years, providing outstanding opportunities for outdoor recreation. The acquisition of these properties preserves a significant portion of the Upper Hudson River watershed and helps ensure the region has clean air and water, magnificent forests, spectacular scenery, and vibrant, healthy communities.

Key parcels that are now part of the State Forest Preserve include:

- **The Essex Chain of Lakes (including OK Slip Falls):** With 11 lakes and ponds that are interconnected or easily portaged, the public can easily access exceptional paddling sites, including a seven-mile wilderness canoe route. The tracts also provide incredible fishing opportunities for brook trout and landlocked salmon, and a five-mile stretch of the Hudson River along the east side of the parcel offers premier access for rafting, canoeing, kayaking, fishing and overnight trips.

- **Boreas Ponds:** Bordering the High Peaks, this 20,760-acre tract includes ponds that form a 320-acre water body, one of the largest in the Adirondacks that is completely surrounded by Forest Preserve lands. In addition to providing exceptional camping and paddling experiences, the property offers spectacular views of mountain ranges, including the High Peaks, and is a great place for hiking, biking, fishing, cross-country skiing and horseback riding.
As an inland-dwelling western New Yorker, I rarely get a chance to see a surf scoter—a large, black, diving duck normally found on the Great Lakes or the ocean. So when I heard that one was resting on a water body in Batavia, about an hour away from where I live, I brainstormed some errands to do after a nice “quick” look at my first scoter to justify the trip. “What an easy bird to add to my life list,” I thought, as I pulled into Batavia’s water treatment facility. Usually I chased difficult-to-identify shorebirds, but the surf scoter, colloquially dubbed the skunk-headed coot due to its boldly patterned head, would be a quick slam-dunk. The bird should prove easy to find, easy to quickly ascertain, and I’d be home in a jiffy.

I was right on the first count: the bird was remarkably easy to find. It bobbed like an ebony-colored buoy completely alone in one of the facility’s impoundments. Smiling widely, I lowered my truck window and raised my binoculars. This was fast bird-finding at its finest. I quickly found the scoter through my binoculars. Magnified ten times, it looked big and black and… headless. The bird, either cold or sleepy or both, had its head tucked so tightly under its wing I could barely decipher its breast from its rump.

Either this scoter was stone deaf, had earplugs jammed in its auricular openings, or it hailed from downtown Los Angeles.

Lots of birds are clearly identifiable without a head. Blue jays, cardinals, robins, goldfinches—all these birds have irrelevant heads to a busy birder. But not so with scoters. A headless scoter is as useful as a wheelbarrow without a wheel. It was akin to trying to distinguish a fish crow from an American crow on a moonless night. My scoter, which my Internet listserve had claimed was a surf scoter, could actually be a black or a white-winged scoter. I needed to see the head.
I lowered my binoculars and reclined my seat. This was no reason to panic. I’d simply wait. Sea ducks can’t sleep forever.

But actually, it slowly dawned on me, they can. Especially headless ones. My alleged surf scoter had no respect for the endless items on my to-do list. It remained as inert as a noble gas. After ten minutes of staring and not getting any errands accomplished in Batavia, I grew antsy. So antsy that I broke a code of conduct I’ve long held. Simply put, I don’t interfere with nature unless absolutely necessary. Yes, I immerse myself in it. I enjoy it in many ways. But unless it’s for teaching purposes, I don’t disrupt it. I like to think of myself as respectfully seated in the balcony when witnessing wildlife dramas; not loudly crinkling candy wrappers in the front row.

But this statuesque scoter had me beaten. I was exasperated. Demonstratively, I opened my door and slammed it. Certainly no sleepy scoter could ignore such a gunshot-like sound. This scoter, however, was obviously an exception to the norm. Its head remained buried. I opened and slammed the door several more times. Still nothing. Either this scoter was stone deaf, had earplugs jammed in its auricular openings, or it hailed from downtown Los Angeles.

I looked at my watch. I had to get a vacuum cleaner fixed. I needed to look for a garden fence. And there were several other items on my list. For all I knew, this scoter could sleep like this until nightfall. I couldn’t take it anymore. My code of conduct now in shreds, I climbed out of my truck, slammed my hands on the roof, and, like the scoter, lost my own head. With primeval, hairsplitting yells, I shouted at the scoter and began a series of angry, wild-eyed jumping jacks.

In the midst of my Neanderthalic madness, I missed seeing a blue sedan until it pulled right up behind me. Mortified, I instantly tried to transform my witless histrionics into a well-calculated Yoga stretch. But I wasn’t fooling anyone, so I dove into my truck, slammed the door one final time, and sped away, too embarrassed to even glance in my rearview mirror.

Needless to say, I drove home skunked by the skunk-headed coot. And try as I have to forget it, my scoter humiliation has resurfaced time and again whenever I’ve found myself chomping at nature’s bit.

I downright drowned in this memory, for example, when I recently uncovered a quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson. “Adopt the pace of nature,” Emerson penned nearly two centuries ago, “her secret is patience.” It’s palpable irony that makes me grimace. Why? Because patience, I’ve found in my hectic life as a perpetually behind college professor, routinely proves the most elusive of virtues. But I know Emerson had the magic word. Whenever and wherever I’ve been truly patient in nature, I’ve always been rewarded.

Of all the nature partakers out there, perhaps it’s hunters that understand this the most. Especially the ones who sit in a blind each autumn. If you ever take the time to ask a hunter what they saw during their dawn-to-dusk vigils they often spend in the woods, you’ll recognize a recurrent theme. Long bouts of stillness interrupted with wondrous spectacles. Chickadees that land on gun barrels. Cooper’s hawks that capture flickers in split-second flights. Porcupines that nibble shoelaces. I even had one hunter (not known for hyperbole) tell me how a red fox sat on his hand one moment and after realizing its error, vanished like a wraith. Nature moves in punctuated equilibrium. Unlike nature documentaries that compress years of footage into a half-hour, real nature observation has long intermissions between dramatic acts. But if you’re lucky enough—and patient enough—to witness a dramatic act in real time, it will sear the memory like a hot iron.

At my stage of life, I have to cultivate patience with intentionality. It’s far easier not to, of course. But I found an opportunity when the most observant member of my family, my ten-month-old, spied—and then naturally tried to eat—a gorgeous green luna moth that was lying in a dusty corner by the...
sink. All three of my kids gathered around the recently deceased moth and we corporately contemplated a proper burial. The trashcan seemed far too undignified. No, we would scatter the moth to the winds, knowing any number of scavengers would soon delight in this well-preserved, dense package of protein. But first, to sear the spectacle into our own memories, we would paint pictures of it. If any act slows us down and cultivates patience, it is the production of art.

On a little plastic table under a maple tree out front, we ceremoniously spread our supplies around the moth. No masterpiece was going to be produced under these conditions, however. My eight-year-old “accidentally” sprayed us with the hose. My five-year-old kept bumping the table. And my 10-month-old kept trying to eat the paint. But for a few precious moments, we studied the moth and painted our own pictures. And in so doing, we felt the breeze, were still enough to hear an indigo bunting, and repeatedly failed to ever find a shade of green that truly matched the luna’s natural patina.

I’d be lying to say we adopted the pace of nature. But I do believe our corporate compass pointed that way. I’m realistic enough to know that even the cultivation of patience requires patience. Due to our vigil under the maple, maybe my kids will remember the day we found a luna in the house. And what a luna looks like as it blows around an art table.

At the very least, I’m hoping that if any of my kids ever find themselves trying to identify a headless scoter, they’ll be dignified about it. And that they’ll each maintain a well-developed and respectful code of conduct with the natural world, one in which they’ll appreciate seeing a scoter regardless of what species it is. Or enjoy a luna moth without acting loony. For nature does not, as I found out in Batavia, reward the lunatic. Nature’s secret, as Emerson wrote, is patience. Most of the time, it’s the only way to get ahead. And it’s definitely the only way to get a head you desperately need for proper identification.

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Editor’s note: Enjoy wildlife from a distance, and don’t let your viewing behavior disturb them. Move slowly, remain quiet, and let patience reward you with wildlife acting normally.

For more information on best birding practices, visit: http://listing.aba.org/ethics.
“Get the net! Get the net! I hollered from the shore...

“Awhhh Tommy, you got weeds,” my dad shouted back from the tool shed.

I could hardly hear his reply as the vintage 1970’s Zebco spincast reel whined wildly in my hands. I futilely tried to gain line as a ghostly image of an enormous fish passed under me in the depths beneath the dock. My four-year-old legs were trembling. I gasped for breath and once again hollered “get the net!”

With that second, more desperate effort, I must have evoked that Hughes family instinct to respond to “all things fish.” My dad came running towards me with the long handled, cotton mesh net held tightly across his chest, presenting like a soldier charging into battle.

It was a battle indeed. My dad hovered over me at the end of the dock, still with a hint of skepticism, as I tugged and reeled. We anxiously scanned the water below us, waiting for the beast I claimed to have on the end of my line. An eerie quietness settled in. I could hear the creak of the old dock boards and lapping of waves rolling in and out of the rubber tires that hung from the rusted metal dock posts. Then suddenly the fish reappeared, shooting straight up from the water beneath our feet, tail dancing a path right into the net held by my father’s outstretched arms.

At age four, I had just caught a 6½-pound largemouth bass, a personal best that would stand for nearly 30 years.
Fishing Tradition

For my family, fishing has always been a passion and pastime. It provides us with shared experiences of spending valuable time with each other, connecting to the natural world, and appreciating our relationships with the people, places and the environment around us. I am especially thankful for the teachings and life lessons learned from my Grandpa Charlie and my dad, Chuck, as we cozied up together in a small 14-foot fishing boat for countless outings in New York’s vast water wilderness. Foregoing big houses, expensive watches and fancy cars, these two gentle anglers instead invested their fortunes into weekend getaways and annual fishing trips for the entire family.

I have no doubt the most significant and precious place for our family is the Thousand Islands. I’ve been vacationing with my family in Clayton for more than 35 years. This annual trip offers so much for our family to celebrate and enjoy, including the opportunity for me and my dad to dutifully revisit and remember our favorite fishing spots. The St. Lawrence River’s generous offerings have never let us down, and we have many fish tales to tell.

These stories are shared and passed along as part of our family tradition. Fishing stories withstand the test of time. They transcend generations, and bring families and friends together.

Let me share one such fish tale with you. It happened last summer…
Fish of a Lifetime

As was typical, my dad and I fished every day during this annual pilgrimage to the River. One morning, I decided to head out and was able to convince my seven-year-old daughters, Annalya and Isabella, to join me. The allure and promise of an exhilarating ride in our 15-foot aluminum fishing boat was just enough to tear them away from competing interests such as swimming or a trip to Alex Bay for Pirate Days.

Since we set out around noon on a brilliantly sunny day abuzz with boat traffic, I was not real confident the fish would be very active. However, we were determined to get something, so we headed to the biggest stretch of weed beds we could find along the river channel. Once settled, we deployed our trolling spoons. Five to ten minutes later, however, the troops were already getting restless and clamored for more boat-ride time. So, off we went.

As we cruised along the freshwater highway, I seriously pondered whether worm dunking for tiny perch would be our next and final stop.

But suddenly I heard the voice of my late Great Grandpa Hughes say “fish the shoal.” He was an accomplished angler, so I immediately aborted the boat ride idea and headed for the shoal.

Once there, I slowed the boat and we cracked open the lid on our container of Canadian nightcrawlers. The girls deliberated for what seemed like an eternity over which of the wiggly, unsuspecting “wormies” would be worthy enough to grace the throne of our hammered gold worm harness.

I exhaled as I watched the baited worm harness descend into the water with its gold spinner suddenly turning as it captured the rushing currents over the shoal. The bouncing sinker then hit the bottom with a thump. I steadied the boat upriver, following the 25-foot depth contour while the wind, waves and current tried to fight us off. The girls gleefully sang songs to conjure up a fish bite while I fed out line to maintain our desired depth. Ospreys, terns and cormorants all watched us from the rocky outcroppings.

When we hit the twirling eddies and chop at the front of the shoal, I suddenly felt a tremendous force try to separate me from my rod. I knew in that moment we had hooked into something big! The epic battle had begun.

The girls and I had practiced for this exact scenario. The rod exchange went surprisingly well, and they quickly set to task fighting what could certainly be the fish of their lifetimes. Chaos slowly crept in as I frantically tried to keep the boat from crashing into the rocks while taking video. The girls held their own, gaining line on the enormous fish. But as the situation grew more intense, they called to me to “roll it in.” I think they feared the fish would get off, but somehow I knew that losing this fish was not in the script.

I agreed to take over the “rolling” (reeling) and we got our first look at our catch as it emerged from the depths...a giant walleye. Chaos escalated to mayhem. I asked the girls to net the fish while I continued to struggle with navigating the boat, landing the fish, and taking video. I was both ridiculously amused and dreadfully scared as the walleye floated just inches beyond the net in the girls’ outstretched arms. Then, in an instant, the fish seemed to magically glide right into the center of the net. I think Great Grandpa Hughes gave it a spirited assist.

The girls puffed and grunted as they heaved the massive walleye into the boat. We did it—high-fiving and dancing in celebration.
Although the epic battle had come to its dramatic conclusion, the storytelling had just begun. When I focused the video camera back on the girls for their final remarks, I realized it was not recording when I thought it was. I had mistakenly turned the camera off when it should have been on and vice versa. As a result, only our voices could be heard during the heat of the battle. No worries though...the images of that glorious adventure and our walleye capture are forever engrained in our memories. And, we do have the sounds to tell our story if someone wants to hear it!

We captured our walleye and its story with our landing net 40 years removed from the summer when my dad and I swung that glorious patchwork of cotton underneath the largemouth bass. I can only wonder what amazing fish my girls will be netting for their kids 40 years from now…

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Create Your Own Fishing Stories and Family Adventures!

It’s easy to get started fishing. Simply visit DEC’s “Learn to Fish” webpage at www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/44804.html for information about fishing basics, where to fish, New York’s Free Fishing Days, Family Fishing Clinics, and the I FISH NY program.

DEC’s I FISH NY program introduces people to the sport of angling through a variety of different approaches. Check out www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/89362.html for more information, including details of DEC’s fishing rod loaner programs.

GOOD LUCK AND HAPPY FISHING!
To many casual observers, the insect world consists of nothing more than a varied collection of both pretty, as well as bothersome, creatures, simple in design and often not worth a close inspection. Anyone who has taken the time, however, to explore this miniature world quickly realizes there is often more than first meets the eye. This is especially true of the mimics.

The occurrence of mimics in nature was first described by naturalists during the nineteenth century, when it was observed that certain species of insects that were unpleasant tasting to predators were imitated in appearance by some edible species. By mimicking the undesirable species, these insects were, in effect, somewhat protected from predation too. It’s actually a brilliant survival adaptation.

A number of insects have evolved to imitate species belonging to the scientific order Hymenoptera, which includes bees, wasps, hornets and ants. Since members of this group are well-equipped with stinging organs, plus an array of potent chemical defenses, predators will often avoid these insects. In addition, most of these species also bite, another good reason to leave them alone.

Many of these inedible creatures are patterned with bold stripes and bands of flashy colors that serve as a warning to would-be predators. A woods-wise bird will generally avoid brightly marked insects that sport yellow and black (possible yellow-jacket), or red and black (possible wasp), or black and white (possible bald-faced hornet), particularly if that bird has sampled a similar nasty snack in the past. Consequently, those unarmed insects imitating these traits frequently live out their lives, like most Hymenopterans, unmolested by intelligent predators.

An Array of Adaptations

Perhaps the most well-known example of an effective mimic pair is the monarch and viceroy butterflies. Known for its beautiful black and orange wings studded with white, the monarch is highly toxic and is avoided by birds that recognize the warning colors. The equally beautiful, but less toxic viceroy butterfly evolved to mimic the adult monarch, and so benefits by also being similarly avoided.

Another Lepidopteran cousin, a small moth, survives in plain sight in its adult stage by resembling a bird dropping. (Yes, I did say a bird dropping.) So too does the caterpillar of the giant swallowtail butterfly, which even appears to be fresh, wet, and therefore disgustingly unappealing. Then there’s a species of weevil that resembles feces and plays dead. It’s not likely predators would target any of these species given their unappetizing appearances.

A different form of mimicry commonly deployed by insects is to pretend to be an altogether different animal, such as a snake or large-eyed bird. For instance, there are many species of moths,
caterpillars and some beetles that display fake eye spots on their wings or body segments. Large Polyphemus and Io moths will deliberately reveal impressive, owl-like fake eye markings as a means of scaring off intruders.

Perhaps the most amazing example of insect mimicry found in New York is the caterpillar of the spicebush swallowtail butterfly. As previously mentioned, during an early growth stage it looks like a fresh bird dropping. But, as the caterpillar matures, it turns green and sports an incredibly realistic set of black-and-white eye spots, which now mimics a smooth green snake (see next page). The markings are real enough to scare avian and human intruders alike. And if its artificial stare isn’t enough, it has another creative tactic that enables it to further imitate a snake: it can instantly thrust an inflatable, orange, double-pronged osmeterium—a foul-smelling organ—outward above its head, which looks uncannily like a forked tongue. At this stage, this one-of-a-kind, harmless native insect resembles the smooth green snake enough that it can deter curious predators.

The giant swallowtail caterpillar looks like a distasteful bird dropping, as do the markings on this weevil.

Some moth species, like the Io moth, have markings that match the large rounded eyes of an owl. This can confuse and deter would-be attackers.
The caterpillar of the spicebush swallowtail butterfly has evolved to mimic the face of a smooth green snake—an effective deterrent to most intruders.

The bold colors of the yellow jacket serve as a warning to potential predators to beware. The flowerfly sports these same colors and a similar pattern which generally enables it to go about its business unbothered.
The eastern-eyed click beetle is another insect species that sports a pair of impressive false peepers on its backside. At up to an inch and a half in length, this larger beetle, whose huge wood-boring larva would make a fine meal for a chisel-beaked bird like a pileated woodpecker, might just as easily frighten away the same predator.

**Protection by Proximity**

It is not unusual to see mimics and the insects they have evolved to look like feeding side by side, and occasionally on one another. The yellow jacket is the perfect example of an undesirable food item for most wildlife predators. It displays its black and yellow warning colorations vividly, in a prominent design of stripes, bands and chevrons. On a nearby plant may be a harmless flowerfly, that neither stings nor bites, but looks amazingly like the well-armed yellow jacket. The flowerfly even has wasp-like motions. A bird that knows the fury of the yellow jacket will leave both insects alone.

Through this sort of visual association of color, shape, and even habits—often the result of prior unpleasant consequences—predators like songbirds will usually ignore harmless look-alikes. And dining right next to the real deal doesn’t hurt.

**Finding Mimics**

The next time you go out for a walk, try looking for some local mimics. Wildflowers such as goldenrod are particularly attractive to several kinds of flowerflies, or hoverflies as they are often referred to. These true flies, in the family Syrphidae, host the greatest variety of species displaying mimicry.

But be forewarned. Keep a safe distance from those things you can’t identify. Even a seasoned naturalist might be fooled by some of the best insect mimics, such as the flowerfly *Spilomyia fusca*, a near dead ringer for the large, aggressive bald-faced hornet.

In any case, when in the field and making observations, be cautious. It is always wise to assume that one should never judge a bug by its color.

Photographer Gerry Lemmo specializes in wildlife photography from around the globe! Gerry’s photographs have been published in dozens of books, magazines, calendars and promotional flyers, and have been seen in more than 20 countries. He resides in the Adirondacks. Visit his website at [www.gerrylemmo.com](http://www.gerrylemmo.com) to view his work.
In the summer of 2004, history was reborn on Lake Champlain, as the newly built canal schooner *Lois McClure* set her sails for the first time.

Set her sails? Wait. Everyone knows that canal boats were towed, not sailed. Yet with the discovery of a strange shipwreck near Burlington, Vermont in 1980, the forgotten story of Lake Champlain’s sailing canal boats began to unfold.

The wreck was clearly a canal boat, but obviously had been designed to sail. In the ensuing years, the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum (LCMM) located and identified twelve additional shipwrecks of canal sloops and schooners, and uncovered their origins: Sailing canal boats were regional watercraft designed to sail on the broad lake, and then, with their masts lowered, be towed on the canal.

The rediscovery of this unique chapter in canal history inspired an ambitious project by the Maritime Museum to construct a fully operational replica canal schooner, using information gathered from the historic shipwrecks. This educational mission involved a four-year, collaborative process of boat builders, nautical archaeologists, and community volunteers. The Museum established a shipyard at the Lake Champlain Transportation Company’s King Street dock. Two historic shipwrecks in Burlington Bay—the *General Butler* and *O. J. Walker*—served as prototypes.
Sailing canal boats featured the same box-shaped hulls as ordinary canal boats, but they were also equipped with masts, sails, and a centerboard keel so they could sail on open water. Upon reaching the canal, their masts could be lowered and their centerboards raised, transforming them into a standard canal boat moved by horse or mule in the canal, or by a steam towboat on the lake or river. Sailing canal boats were never as numerous as standard (towed) canal boats; by the 1870s, many captains had removed the masts from their canal schooners to make room for more cargo, and very few new sailing canal boats were being built. During the canal era, an estimated 250 sailing canal boats and some 4,000 standard canal boats were built in the Champlain Valley.

The replica schooner, like the historic originals on which she was based, is 88 feet long, with a 14.5-foot beam. These dimensions identify the vessel as an 1862-class canal boat. Designed specifically to fit inside the standardized locks of the Champlain Canal, the earliest vessels were 79-feet long. After the 1858 locks expansion, canal boats could be up to 88-feet long, and by 1873, boats up to 97-feet long could fit into the locks of the Champlain Canal system.

Since its construction, the *Lois McClure* has been the Museum’s most successful educational outreach program. In ten years of touring, it has travelled approximately 5,000 miles to reconnect a quarter of a million people in waterfront communities stretching from Quebec to New York City to Buffalo with their amazing shared heritage of history, archaeology and ecology. On tour, the schooner stops at selected communities along the canal, and its crew puts out exhibits and welcomes visitors aboard to explore the vessel at their own pace and ask questions. Thanks to support from partners like the New York State Canal Corporation, admission is free of charge.

The early twenty-first century was not an obvious choice to revisit the canal era; however, maritime historians are well aware that the Erie and Champlain canals were America’s first great works of civil engineering, and canal boats played a major role in shaping the American economy between the War of 1812 and the Civil War.

The commercial success of the Champlain and Erie canals exceeded all expectations. Before the 1823 opening of the Champlain Canal, Lake Champlain’s trade was carried by a fleet of sloops, schooners and steamboats. The potential for a canal system to connect the inland waterways of Lake Champlain, the Hudson River, the Mohawk River and the Great Lakes was recognized in the 1700s, but a building attempt that began in 1792 failed.
In 1817, New York State initiated the massive project of constructing the Western (Erie) and Northern (Champlain) canals, which together would reshape the economy, demographics and environment of our region and nation. Two years later, when the first section of the Erie Canal linked Rome to Utica, the one-horse canal boat Chief Engineer awed the public by making the 16-mile journey in four hours.

Construction of the canal, growing settlements along its banks, and waterborne trade together promised to bring unprecedented prosperity to the region. The 63-mile long Champlain Canal opened in 1823, and the 360-mile long Erie Canal was completed two years later, linking the communities of western New York and the Great Lakes by a unified system of waterways.

The opening of the Chambly Canal in 1843, which allowed vessels to bypass the Richelieu Rapids north of Lake Champlain, further enhanced the economic boom along the waterways. Before the canals, much of the Champlain Valley’s trade flowed north into Canada. The canal opened a floodgate of trade between the Champlain Valley and ports along the Hudson River and the Atlantic Seaboard.

Almost overnight, natural resources too bulky to ship overland became valuable commodities. Southbound canal boats were packed with lumber, iron and iron ore, marble, and agricultural products. Northbound canal boats brought manufactured goods, spirits, coffee, coal and sugar to the Champlain Valley. Line boats on the Erie Canal carried passengers and manufactured goods west to build new settlements and establish farms. Wheat, flour, butter and cheese, potatoes, apples, and cider from new farms, and lumber and furs from the newly accessible interior of the continent were rapidly shipped east.

One of the greatest impacts of New York’s canal system was the increased ease of extracting natural resources. The timber industry was among the most profoundly affected. In hindsight, we realize that along with the eagerly anticipated economic boom came tremendous environmental impacts and unintended ecosystem damage on a massive scale. The canal itself required a pathway 60-feet wide, much of it traversing through forested lands. Crews of men and oxen used cables to snap the trees, and massive “stump pullers” with wheels 16-feet in diameter removed the stumps and roots of up to 40 trees a day.

The completed canal was used by loggers to float rafts of timber to mills, and milled lumber traveled by canal boat to further markets. Likewise, the shipbuilding boom of the canal era required vast amounts of lumber. The hull of Lois McClure was constructed with more than 20,000 feet of sustainably harvested white oak and pine from the Champlain Valley and New York’s Catskill Mountains. White pine was also used for her decks, while her masts, booms and gaffs were hewn from white spruce.
Lake Champlain Maritime Museum’s Replica 1862 canal schooner Lois McClure will visit more than 30 ports of call on the Champlain and Erie Canals, and Lake Champlain from July through mid-October 2017, including the World Canals Conference in Syracuse, September 24-28. View her itinerary at www.lcmm.org. School programs and group visits are available by appointment. Contact info@lcmm.org.

Lake Champlain Maritime Museum and Research Institute is an all-year hub for Maritime Education. The museum uses the active discovery and care of Lake Champlain’s maritime heritage and environment as a launching pad to inspire life-long learning through hands-on, minds-on experiences. LCMM brings Lake Champlain’s storied past to life through replica ships, active boat building, on-water ecology programs, nautical archaeology, collections and exhibits to expand learning opportunities for people of all ages. Located at 4472 Basin Harbor Road, Vergennes, VT, the Museum’s four-acre waterfront campus is open to the public from May 27 through Oct. 15, 2017. For more information, visit www.lcmm.org or call 802-475-2022.

In September of 2017, the beginning of canal construction will be spotlighted at the World Canals Conference in Syracuse, with the theme “Our Vital Waterways: Agents of Transformation.” Canal schooner Lois McClure will be presenting the Legacy Tour, commemorating both the legacy of the canals and the legacy trees of our Northern Forests (white pine and white oak).

Throughout 2017, the Maritime Museum will share a maritime perspective with students and community members through an initiative called Stem to Stern that focuses on the relationship between waterways and trees, canal boats and forests. As the Lois McClure tours the region’s historic waterways, Stem to Stern educational programs and exhibits will inform students and the public about the important role forests play in cleaning water, improving soils, and providing habitat to a wide range of species. Marking the transition to an era of sustainable forestry and environmental stewardship, the schooner will transport a cargo of white oak and white pine seedlings, which will be symbolically presented to host communities and planted along New York’s historic waterways.

Erick Tichonuk is Co-Director of Lake Champlain Maritime Museum and Captain of replica 1862 canal schooner Lois McClure.
Hugging the shoreline, I spot several large craters in the lake’s sandy bottom. Turning my canoe around to get a closer look, I see a large fish dart under my boat. It’s a smallmouth bass and I’ve scared it off its nest. Gliding a little further, I count another six or seven craters—clearly it’s a bass spawning area.
In early to mid-spring in the Northeast—mid-April through mid-May—male smallmouth bass venture into shallow rocky coves and shorelines to make a nest in preparation for spawning. The bright spring sunshine has warmed the water into the low- to mid-50°F Fahrenheit range, and the males vie for the best sites with just the right mix of clean sand and cobblestones; usually in six feet or less of water, with a large rock, sunken tree, or ledge nearby.

Settling on a spot, the bass uses its caudal (tail) fin to sweep away coarse materials, silt, and debris to create a circular depression two or three feet in diameter and two to four inches deep (#1). The nest needs to be just right, so he may repeat this process in several other locations as well before he is satisfied with his handiwork.

As the water continues to warm between 55 and 58 degrees, female smallmouth bass approach the spawning areas from deeper water. Upon seeing a female, the male rushes toward her and attempts to drive her to the nest. She initially swims rapidly away, only to return later.

Prior to spawning, the male and female circle the nest several times before the female finally swims to the nest, accompanied by the male. When the male and female finally descend to the nest substrate, the male is beneath the female (#2, 3), in close contact with the bottom. Eggs and sperm (called milt) are released at the same time (#4, 5, 6).

After the female has released her eggs, the male chases her away. He will then either attempt to attract more females to the nest for spawning, or begin his guard status over the newly fertilized eggs.
Smallmouth bass eggs are pale gray and yellow, and very sticky. They adhere to each other and any other debris such as stones in the bottom of the nest. Eggs that are white have failed (#7, 8). Incubation takes about 10 days at 54 degrees Fahrenheit.

Males fiercely guard the developing eggs, often attacking onlookers who venture too close for comfort, regardless of their size. Males will not feed again until the young bass leave the nest site several weeks later. They will strike at any object that settles into the nest area, such as a lure, but only in defense of the young. Males quickly remove any foreign matter to areas beyond the nest site.

Newly hatched fry are approximately 1/5 of an inch in length, and are nearly transparent. They remain in the nest bottom while they gradually absorb their yolk sac. As the yolk sac disappears, the young fry begin to feed. At this time they turn jet black in color; hence the term black bass. These fry rise over the nest in a dense swarm and continue to feed under the watchful eye of the guardian male (#9).

The fry typically leave the nest after five to seven days, dispersing into shallow rocky areas that afford protection and food. The fry continue to grow (#10) until they reach spawning age: approximately five years.

Following the dispersal of the green fry, the adult male bass leaves the nest site to begin a period of recovery (last frame). At this point he will return to his preferred home range and feed on crayfish, minnows and other available small fish.

Robert Michelson has been a professional photographer/videographer for more than 30 years. A certified SCUBA diver, he specializes in underwater photography and videography. You can visit his website at www.pbmphoto.com.

In New York, fishing season for black bass (smallmouth and largemouth) runs from the third Saturday in June through November 30 in most waters. Catch-and-release fishing (with artificial lures only) is allowed the rest of the year in most parts of the State. For more information and for special regulations by county, visit DEC’s website at: http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/fishing.html.
On Patrol

Real stories from Conservation Officers and Forest Rangers in the field

Overturned Canoe—Oneida County
On April 10, Ray Brook Dispatch received a call from Oneida County 911 about three individuals who overturned their canoe on Chittning Pond in Tassell Hill State Forest. A fourth person in the party, who had remained on shore, swam out to the canoe, rescued one individual and brought him to shore. Forest Ranger Robert Piersma quickly arrived on scene, suited up in cold water rescue gear, and swam to the other two subjects. He was able to bring them to shore after they had spent nearly 30 minutes in the frigid water, clinging to one another for flotation and warmth. All four subjects were transported by local emergency services to a nearby hospital for further care. The hospital reported that two unresponsive subjects’ core temperatures were 87.4 degrees Fahrenheit. All three subjects were wearing PFDs, which was crucial to their survival in such harsh conditions. All were released from hospital care after spending a night recovering.

The Sky is Falling—Saratoga County
ECO Steven Shaw received a call from a concerned fisherman on Ballston Lake who had witnessed a goose fall dead from the sky right next to his fishing boat. ECO Shaw requested that the fisherman retrieve the dead bird as evidence. The officer interviewed a nearby property owner who eventually admitted to shooting multiple times at two geese to keep them off his lawn. The man was issued tickets for hunting without a license and taking geese out of season.

Gill Net in Murderers Kill—Greene County
In late April of last year, ECO Anthony Glorioso received a tip about suspicious fishing activity in Murderers Creek, a Hudson River tributary in the Town of Athens. ECO Glorioso watched the subjects from a distance and saw they had a commercial gill net strung across the creek while they pretended to fish from a boat with rod and reel. The use of commercial gill nets in these tributaries is illegal. ECO Glorioso contacted ECO James Davey for assistance and the two officers used a patrol vessel to prevent the subjects from escaping by water into the Hudson. When the subjects started to retrieve their net, the officers stopped them. The two men were issued tickets for unlawful use of a gill net in a Hudson River tributary and unlawful use of a gill net during the herring escapement period.

Pine Bush Burn—Albany County
On April 9, Forest Rangers David Nally and Hannah O’Connor participated in a seven-acre prescribed burn at the Albany Pine Bush Preserve, the first prescribed burn at the Preserve in 2017. Prescribed burning is a tool used to manage fire-dependent ecosystems in a manner that develops balanced, desired vegetation and helps accomplish ecological goals. DEC Forest Rangers have participated in prescribed burns for more than 10 years, providing subject matter expertise, tools, pumps, and wildland fire engines to monitor the event and protect public safety.

Ask the ECO:
Q: Wildlife are creating a nuisance around my property. What can I do about it?
A: In some cases, removing food sources and eliminating shelter will solve your troubles. In other cases, you may need the assistance of a licensed professional. For helpful tips, a list of common problem species and suggested solutions, and a list of licensed Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators, visit DEC’s website www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7005.html.
By Rosa Méndez

Every New Yorker should have clean air and water, access to green space, and a healthy environment.

DEC’s Environmental Justice (EJ) program addresses both existing and potential environmental impacts in minority and low-income communities. Historically, such areas were home to a disproportionate number of polluting facilities that affected environmental factors and quality of life.

The concept of environmental justice originated in North Carolina in the late 1970s. Residents and community leaders of a predominantly poor and black community protested the dumping of 6,000 truckloads of PCB-contaminated soil in a county landfill. Their spirited efforts raised national attention.

In the 1980s, Albany resident Aaron Mair (see sidebar) led members of the city’s Arbor Hill neighborhood in a decade-long battle to shut down a garbage incinerator in their community. They were ultimately successful.

The advocates in both these cases were part of a growing group of activists seeking environmental justice for communities of color, and those comprised of poor and working-class residents that did not receive the same level of environmental protection as predominantly white or affluent communities. In the 1990s, EJ advocates demanded action from the federal government and the states to ensure their communities were treated fairly. In New York, activists called for a transformation of the state’s environmental permit review process to give EJ communities an active role in the decision-making process. Their advocacy led to the creation of DEC’s Environmental Justice program in 1999, and adoption of an EJ policy in 2003.

The policy guides the agency on how to consider impacts to EJ communities when reviewing projects that require state permits. Among other priorities, the policy spells out enhanced public participation requirements for proposed projects to ensure community leaders and residents are made aware of these projects and potential impacts, and are included in the permit decision-making process. This will ensure their voices are heard.

Today, DEC’s Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ) actively promotes meaningful community participation in the environmental permit review process. DEC staff work closely with permit applicants to identify key EJ stakeholders and to ensure documents and other key information on the proposed project are easily accessible to community members, including the status of the project.

OEJ also offers grants to support community-based organization projects that will address various environmental and public health concerns. Grant recipients have used these funds to perform water and air quality monitoring, plant trees in their communities, train residents in urban farming, and advance projects to preserve the local environment and protect public health.

OEJ also ensures that DEC programs address Native American nations’ concerns throughout the project review process. DEC recognizes the nations’ environmental interest, and consults with Nation representatives about impacts a project may have on cultural and natural resources. OEJ’s Indian Nations Affairs Coordinator facilitates active dialogue between the Indian nations and DEC on a government-to-government basis, which helps maintain positive relations and promote mutual interests.

DEC and OEJ work with New York’s vulnerable communities before an adverse environmental impact occurs. This includes working together to address the likely impacts of climate change, and making sure communities have access to open space.

This year’s state budget dedicates a record $8 million for environmental justice projects. OEJ will use this funding to provide new grant opportunities for community-based groups in EJ communities.

A main goal of OEJ’s new grant initiatives is to help local organizations strengthen their communities by creating green...
space, providing access to healthy foods, and educating residents about environmental and public health risks.

Beginning this year, OEJ will provide a grant opportunity for environmental education centers in urban communities. These grants will help inspire stewardship and discovery of the urban environment, and educate residents about environmental issues and challenges in their neighborhoods.

OEJ also recognizes that New York’s aggressive goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and ramp up renewable energy production will expand the state’s green economy. To ensure EJ communities are poised to benefit from job opportunities created as New York pursues its ambitious clean energy goals, OEJ plans to issue a grant to fund “green jobs” training programs offered by community-based organizations to support local green workforce development.

DEC defines environmental justice as the “fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.” It’s a mouthful, to be sure. Although this definition guides our work, it’s the examples and messages of the campaigns at the local level that drive our efforts. We strive to ensure all communities are empowered to participate in environmental decision-making, pursue economic opportunities, and secure a clean and healthy environment that will improve the well-being of community residents.

As we have learned over the years on issues like air pollution and climate change, environmental challenges often transcend community, state or even national borders. Yet, many EJ communities have shouldered additional and unfair environmental burdens. DEC believes every New Yorker deserves access to clean air and water, green space and a healthy environment, regardless of their race, income, or where they live.

DEC’s Environmental Justice Program is working to ensure that opportunity is available to all.

Rosa Méndez is director of DEC’s Office of Environmental Justice in Albany.

EARLY CONNECTION TO NATURE FUELS PASSION FOR ENVIRONMENT

Many people love the outdoors; some are passionate about protecting it. From a young age, Aaron Mair felt closely connected to nature. This bond fueled his passion, and continues to energize him as an environmental champion.

Mair’s parents, who reared nine children in northern Westchester County, played a vital role in shaping their son’s appreciation of nature by exposing him to the outdoors at a young age. He got his hunting license, learned to swim in the Hudson River, and fished with his father and grandfather for both recreation and sustenance.

It was this exposure to the natural world that helped Mair develop a keen eye for environmental injustice. He became the catalyst for Albany’s nascent environmental justice movement in the 1980s, mobilizing community residents to work towards the closure of a local garbage incinerator.

“I was moved to action after my daughters started getting ill,” he recalls. “Many children in the community suffered from lead poisoning, and people were having respiratory issues, so I began to map where they were getting sick.” His efforts were instrumental in closing the plant, and launching the local EJ movement, which remains active today.

Mair joined the Sierra Club in 1999, was elected to its Board of Directors in 2014, and became president of the national organization the following year. He has witnessed important environmental progress, including the cleanup of the Hudson River in which he fished and swam as a teenager. Now, he’s taking on challenges like climate change, and wants to connect all Americans, regardless of race or background, to our natural resources, which he views as “national treasures.”

When he gets the chance, Mair does what he loves best: connecting with nature by taking a walk along the Oswegatchie River in St. Lawrence County. To him, nature walks restore the soul, and rekindle his passion for the environment.
Tribute to Wayne Trimm

DEC was saddened to learn of the passing of Wayne Trimm on June 2nd at the age of 94. For nearly 30 years, Wayne served first as staff artist and then as art director of Conservationist. A nature lover and gifted artist, his scientifically accurate and beautiful images of the state’s flora and fauna have been featured in many a Conservationist issue—including numerous covers—and continue to be used today. Following his retirement from DEC in 1991, Wayne continued to paint stunning images of New York State’s wildlife.

Wayne was an avid birder from an early age. In the 1950s, he and several other bird enthusiasts created the Alan Devoe Bird Club in Columbia County. Wayne was also a trained biologist and wildlife rehabilitator who loved sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm for nature with others. Together with his wife Melodee (also a biologist and wildlife rehabilitator), Wayne would bring rescue birds to the numerous exhibits and shows he frequently taught at in an effort to connect people with nature.

During his lifetime, Wayne reached millions of people with his artwork and nature teachings, and he leaves a lasting legacy that will continue to affect generations to come.

Invasive Species Awareness Week

As we approach summer, we encourage you to learn about invasive species and steps you can take to help stop their spread. New York’s 4th-annual Invasive Species Week, July 9-15, will feature more than 100 events across the state to highlight the environmental and economic threats invasive species pose. Activities include guided hikes and paddling events, invasive plant identification workshops, field surveys, weed removal, restoration efforts, film screenings, and more. Visit www.dec.ny.gov/animals/105650.html or contact a local Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) coordinator at www.dec.ny.gov/animals/47433.html to learn how you can become involved and help protect our natural environment.

Thacher Park Center Opens

A new 8,240-square-foot facility opened at Thacher State Park in May, providing a central place for visitors to discover all the park on Albany County’s Helderberg Escarpment has to offer. Set next to the trailhead and picnic area for the popular Indian Ladder Trail, the Thacher Park Center will help introduce visitors to the park’s many features, including an expansive trail network and opportunities for hiking, biking, camping, and environmental education. The center includes exhibits highlighting the park’s fossil-rich geological history; multipurpose gathering space that can be reserved for special events; and an outdoor patio where visitors can take in the park’s dramatic views.

“Drive Clean” at a Discount

New Yorkers can now receive a state rebate of up to $2,000 (in addition to a federal tax credit of up to $7,500) if they purchase or lease a new electric vehicle. The Drive Clean rebate program is part of Governor Cuomo’s Charge NY Initiative to increase the number of clean-fueled vehicles on New York roads. The transportation sector is the largest contributor of greenhouse gases in New York State. Electric vehicles reduce harmful carbon emissions, and will help New York achieve its Clean Energy Standard, which requires that 50 percent of electricity come from renewable resources by 2030. For more infor-
information on the Drive Clean program, including a list of eligible vehicles and rebate amounts, visit [https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/Drive-Clean-Rebate](https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/Drive-Clean-Rebate).

**Rescue Reunion and Honors**

On March 30, DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos presented Meritorious Service Awards to NY State Police pilots Technical Lt. Peter Mclain and Technical Sgt. Brian Rumrill for their outstanding work in helping to rescue stranded hikers atop Algonquin Mountain during a brutal snowstorm on Dec. 13, 2016 (see February 2017 *Conservationist*). The hikers (and their families) were on hand to honor the pilots and DEC staff for their heroic rescue efforts, and are pictured in front of the rescue chopper, which was recently renamed “Algonquin Angel.”

**Turtle Crossing**

In spring and early summer, native turtles seek out sandy areas to lay their eggs, which often means crossing a roadway. During this migration, thousands of turtles are struck and killed by vehicles in New York. Be on the lookout for turtles and slow down, especially on roads near rivers and marshy areas. If you see a turtle in the road or shoulder, and you can safely stop your vehicle, consider moving the turtle to the side of the road, placing it in the direction it was traveling. Always take care to drive safely and don’t put yourself and passengers at risk. To handle snapping turtles, slide your hands above their back legs and grab one top of their shell to avoid being bitten.

**Book Review: The Snake and the Salamander**

*By Al Breisch*  
*Published by Johns Hopkins University Press*  
*Review by Mike Matthews*

Full disclosure: Al Breisch has been a colleague, co-worker and friend for more than 30 years. He is also a highly regarded field biologist with a wealth of knowledge. This book covers more than just snakes and salamanders; it is an account of reptiles and amphibians in the Northeast, from Maine to Virginia. Readers will learn about different “habitat” types, including “wicked big puddles,” and enjoy the delightful accompanying illustrations by Matt Patterson.

The well-written and informative text reminded me of the popular Peterson Field guide series, where the authors related their encounters with wildlife. In one example, Al recounts how “. . . the eastern wormsnake, when held in your hand, will use the spine on its tail to push itself forward, trying to bury its pointed head into the cracks between your fingers.”

*The Snake and the Salamander* clearly reflects the author’s extensive knowledge and love of our natural world. Readers will be illuminated by its tales and lessons, and should strongly consider adding this book to their libraries.
LETTERS  Compiled by Eileen Stegemann and Ellen Bidell

Nature up Close
I thought you might enjoy these pictures I took after a bird built a nest in an artificial wreath hanging on our house. It gave us a close-up view of the hatching eggs and the youngsters. I think the birds were dark-eyed juncos.

Sue Boland
Fayetteville, NY

What a fantastic opportunity to view wildlife up close. It’s tough to tell the species without a picture of the adult. The egg coloration does resemble a junco’s, and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology lists hanging plants as nest locations around homes. House finches also nest in plants and wreaths and household decorations. It appears the nest may have been parasitized by a cowbird, as one egg is larger and differently colored.

—Dave Nelson, Editor

Young Wildlife
I was surprised to come across this white fawn. Is this common?

Randy Grantier
Wellsville, NY

Great photo! This skewbald white-tailed fawn has a form of leucism, a condition that causes a partial loss of pigment. It is fairly common, although this fawn has more white than is typically seen.

Jesse Caulkins
Canisius College

I took this photo when some fawns visited my backyard. Thought you might enjoy it and could possibly use it in the magazine!

—Dave Nelson, Editor

How lucky you were to see this fawn. Your photo (and the one bottom left) is a great reminder that at this time of year, people should heed the slogan, “If you care, leave them there.” Many people assume young wildlife, seemingly alone, are abandoned and need our help. But in most cases this is a mistake and our well-meaning actions generally do more harm than good. Often, wild animal parents stay away from their young when people are present, waiting nearby for you to leave. So if you spot young wildlife, enjoy it from a distance. For more information, visit www.dec.ny.gov/animals/6956.html.

Privacy, Please
A few weeks ago I was working in my compost pile with a spade and unearthed this huge prehistoric guy… thankfully I hadn’t injured him! I abandoned my project, and by the next day he had reburred himself.

Melissa Rowell
Apalachin, NY

This is interesting, and generally odd behavior for a snapping turtle. While it’s impossible to tell exactly what this snapper is
doing, there are a few possibilities, based on my field observations of other turtles. Some turtle species bury themselves in leaf litter to stave off temperature extremes and conserve water. Also, while on their way to nesting sites, some turtles don’t always nest immediately. Either they weren’t ready to deposit eggs or hadn’t found the key spot yet. This turtle may have used the compost pile as a suitable “pit stop.”

—Bill Hoffman, DEC Fish and Wildlife Technician
(Read more about snapping turtles in the April 2017 Conservationist.)

Fishing Time

On a recent fishing expedition with my grandchildren, the girls had a lot more success. This is the second fish my granddaughter caught of the same size.

Dave Winchell
Ray Brook

My grandson is so happy with his first fish. The picture is one of my favorites!

Dawn Lussier
Saratoga County

Fishing is a great activity for kids and adults. Read more about family fishing on page 10.

In Plain Sight

When I took this picture I knew there was something wrong with the butterfly but didn’t see the spider until I loaded the pictures on my computer.

Loreta Rumsey

Good eyes. You captured a flower crab spider having a meal. These spiders don’t spin webs, but rather sit on flower blooms, waiting for unsuspecting insects to arrive. Flower crab spiders can change color (very slowly) to blend in with the bloom. When prey arrives, they quickly grab and bite it.

Ask the Biologist

Q: I spotted this watersnake sitting halfway out of Tonawanda Creek near Corfu, NY. It had a live fish in its mouth! Is this a pretty rare sight?

—Justin Gloor, Harrison, Arkansas

A: The snake you saw was a northern watersnake. Northern watersnakes regularly catch fish and other items such as frogs (and possibly small birds and mammals) in any manner possible. Then they remove the prey from the water, and manipulate it into position (typically head first) before swallowing it whole.

—Bill Hoffman, DEC Seasonal Fish and Wildlife Technician
A Farm Forever  By Art Woldt

I was the luckiest kid on Staten Island. My grandfather owned a farm in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York, and instead of spending the summer in the City, I would take the train to the farm overlooking Skaneateles Lake. When the big black locomotive belching steam and smoke dropped me off at the train station, Grandpa was waiting in the 1928 Chevrolet roadster he’d converted into a pickup truck for work on the farm. The aroma of fresh-baked fruit buns greeted us as we entered the kitchen and got hugs from Grandma. I was on the farm with horses, cows, chickens, a couple of pigs, a dog and some cats, and I loved it.

My grandparents came to America from Europe around 1900 and settled in New York City. Grandpa got a job in a shop that built wagons, but he wanted to be his own boss. When a farm next to his step-sister’s farm near Borodino came up for sale around 1920, he bought the place and became a farmer. The farmhouse lacked central heat, electricity and indoor plumbing, but it was home. When the Rural Electrification Program came through in the mid-1930s, life got easier with a sink, running water, a refrigerator, electric lights, indoor plumbing, and a milking machine.

My fondest childhood memories are of life on the farm. There was always lots to do, including a multitude of chores: providing hay for the horses, collecting eggs in the henhouse, driving cows to pasture, and working in the fields. But it was not all work; there was time for walks in the woods and swimming in the nearby lake. As an adult, I was a frequent visitor to the farm, and now live in the house my parents built on the farm property when they retired. I love it here and hope it will always be the way it is now, for my children, my grandchildren, and their children.

Working in the DEC public relations office for almost 25 years, I was well-versed in the values and importance of land conservation and preserving open space. Keeping the farm property intact became a priority for me, and after attending a program sponsored by the Finger Lakes Land Trust (a not-for-profit corporation that works with landowners and local communities to preserve open land), I decided this was the way to go.

Land Trust staff came out, walked the property, and said a conservation easement donated to the trust would allow me and my heirs to retain ownership of the property and still do just about everything I currently do. The only exceptions were that I can’t subdivide the land into building lots or build a paved road down to the woods, neither of which I want to do anyway. I can farm the land, raise horses, build a barn, hunt, or fly kites. The Land Trust will protect the property.

The Land Trust staff was very helpful. They prepared a baseline account of the property, took a lot of photographs, had a new survey done, prepared the easement, arranged for the legal work, and filed the papers in the county court house. We had the closing with my children present in my kitchen on my 89th birthday.

As I look out my kitchen window and see the fields, the lake and the farms across the way, it is comforting to know this land will be preserved in perpetuity. I savor the rural character here and appreciate the friendliness and kindness of the folk who live in this community.

And by the way, I still have the ’28 Chevy roadster, now fully restored, and I drive it around town and to church in Borodino on Sunday mornings.

Life is good.

Art Woldt was Director of DEC’s press office when he retired in 1991.

Editor's note: The Finger Lakes Land Trust is but one of several such institutions working around the state to preserve open land. To locate a land trust near you, visit findalandtrust.org/states/newyork36, and check out www.landtrustalliance.org/ for more information about land trusts.
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