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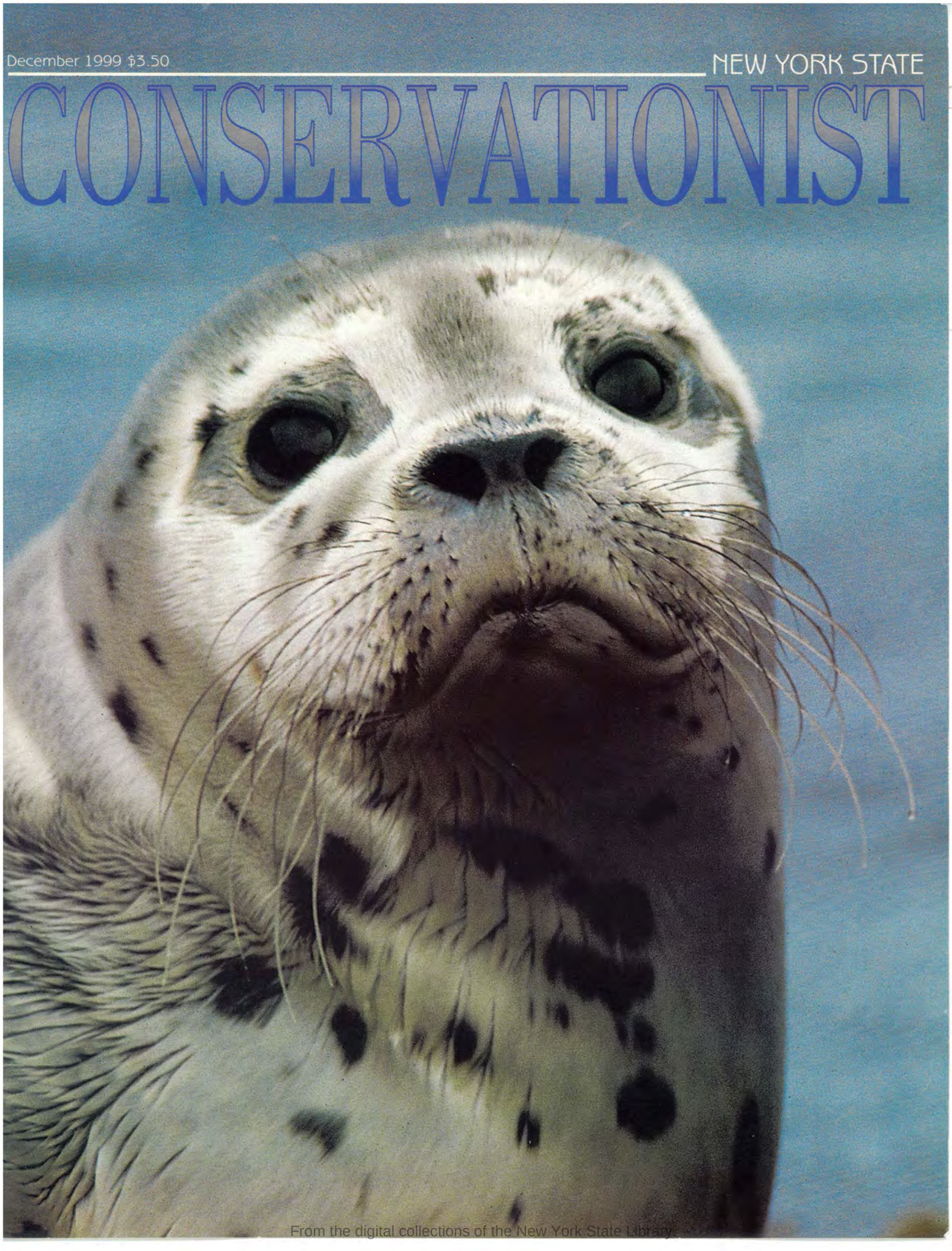
NEW YORK STATE

CONSERVATIONIST



Pheasant in Snow by Robert S. Sleicher

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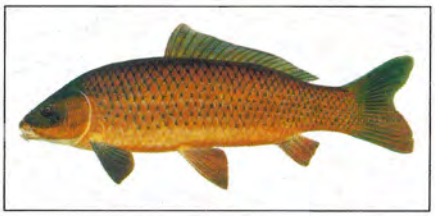

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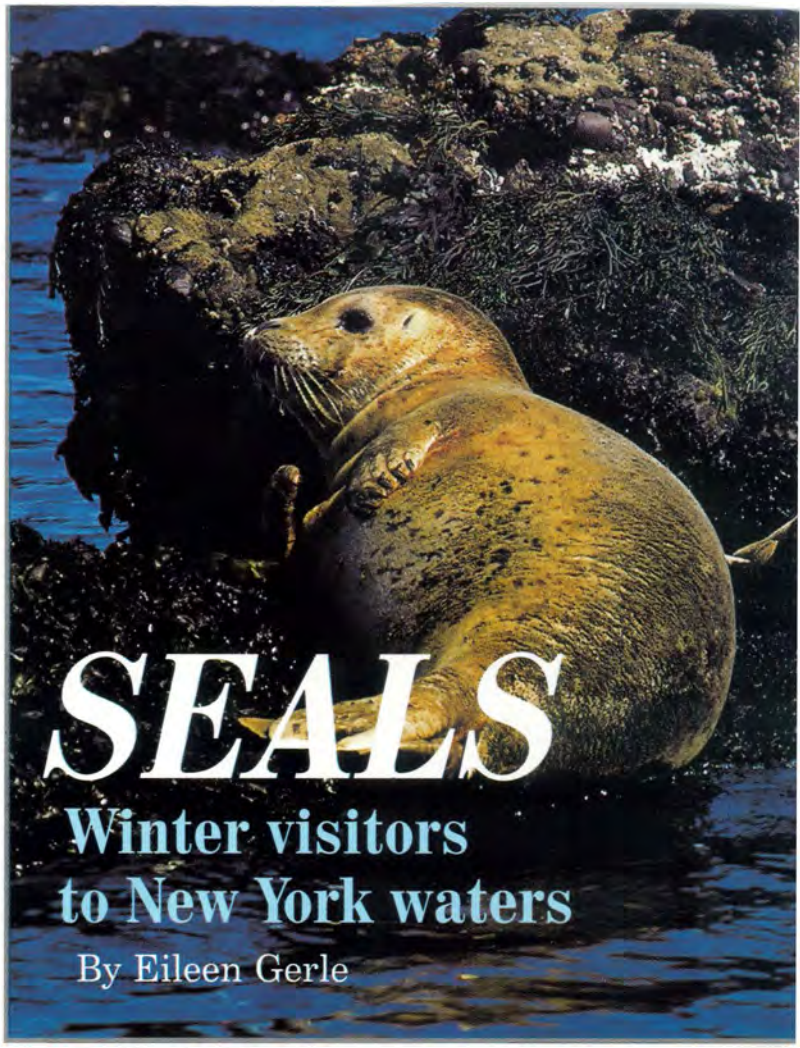
Front cover: Juvenile harp seal (*Phoca groenlandica*) by Michael Anich. See story page 2.
Inside front: *Pheasant in Snow* by Robert S. Sleicher. See portfolio page 22.
Inside back: Wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) by Eric Dresser
Back cover: Chenango County winter by Neil Satterly



A group of hearty individuals gathers on a frigid, sun-drenched morning, anxious to trek several miles over rocky terrain in anticipation of seeing seals in the wild. The coterie sets off toward their destination of several large rocks just offshore; a favorite seal haul out site.

The conditions are perfect. It is sunny, the tide is low, and there is little wind. Once the rocks are in view, I lift my binoculars and focus on plump, sausage shaped forms languishing in the sun that could only be seals. I declare "We have seals." The group picks up its pace. Clad in hooded parkas zipped up to chilly chins and a various assortment of colorful hats and mittens, the ensemble resembles an Arctic expedition rather than a group of seal watchers in Montauk, Suffolk County.

Seals in New York? If asked to list common local mammals, most Long Islanders would think of white-tailed deer, cottontails, raccoons, opossum and the ubiquitous gray squirrel. Seals though, would probably not come to mind.

Yet seals are quite common in New York waters, typically between November and May. Indeed, harbor seals grace the cover of the 1971 publication "The Mammals of Long Island New York," a New York State Museum and Science Service bulletin written by Paul F. Connor. This same publication cites a 1670 reference to "innumerable multitudes of seals" present all winter on the south shore of Long Island, by Daniel Denton in "A Brief Description of New York; Formerly Called New Netherlands," printed for John Hancock.

In more recent history, local populations of seals decreased dramatically, as was reflected in reports from the early part of this century which refer to single sightings of animals or merely small groups of seals. Within the last two decades, however, large numbers of seals are again visiting Long Island, conceivably as a result of the enactment in 1972 of the federal Marine Mammal Protection Act which reduced the number of seals that can be harvested.

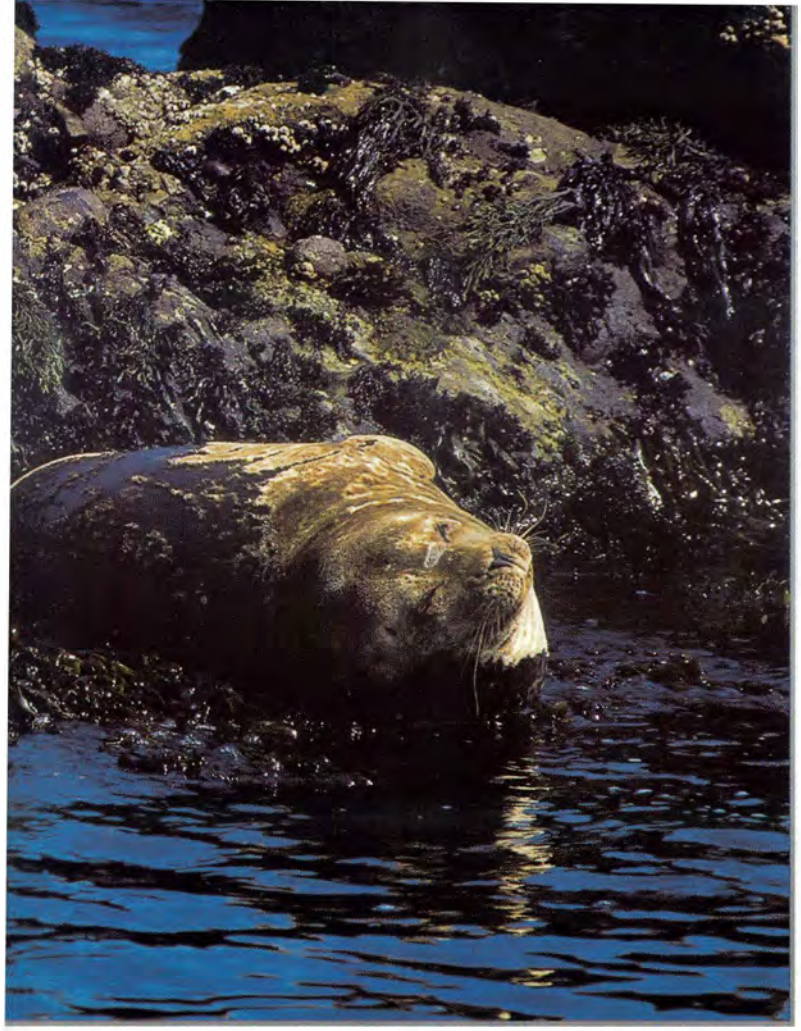
Four species of seals regularly utilize New York waters and in winter months can be seen hauled out on rocks, deserted beaches, and in salt marshes. Harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*), gray seals (*Halichoerus grypus*), harp seals (*Phoca groenlandica*), and hooded seals (*Cystophora cristata*) are all "true seals" of the family Phocidae, and should not be confused with the sea lions commonly seen at zoos or in aquarium shows.

All seals and walruses are classified as pinnipeds, which means "wing or fin-footed," yet true seals differ from their more well-known cousins. True seals lack the small, external ears exhibited by sea lions and fur seals which earn them the common designation of "eared seals."

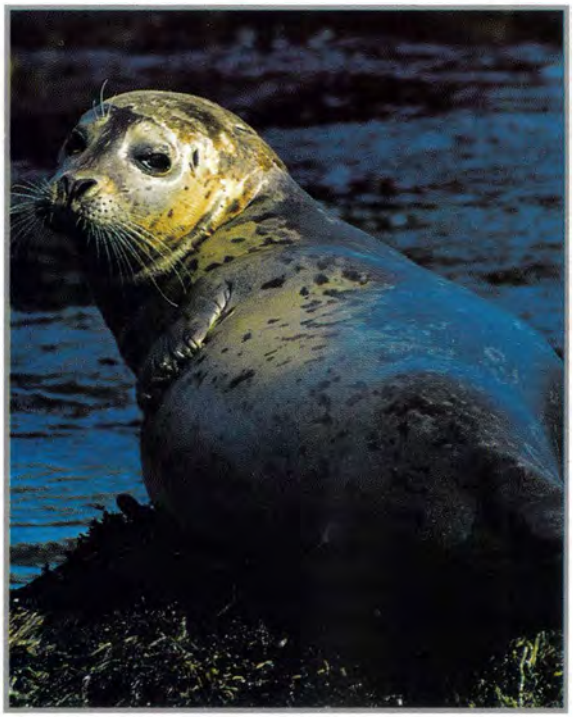
In addition, the flippers of each group differ greatly. True seals have small, furred flippers. When swimming, the front flippers are used for steering whereas the rear flippers, which extend backwards, are used for propulsion through the water. On land, true seals are quite clumsy, appearing like giant slugs as they hump along on their front flippers while dragging their limp rear flippers behind.

By contrast, eared seals are much better adapted for terrestrial locomotion, as they can rotate their hind flippers forward, prop themselves up on four hairless limbs, and actually "walk" on land. The large fore flippers of eared seals are used to propel them through the water when swimming.

As we approach the seals at closer range, oohs and aahs arise from the group. I focus my scope on the chubby torpedo shapes and the group enjoys watching



photos by Mike Anich



the seals sleeping in the sun. Late comers to the haul out area spar for precious napping spots, growling and swatting at those lucky enough to have already claimed a piece of the rock. Several seals bob in the water and a few swim energetically, occasionally porpoising over the waves.

I will never forget the first time I saw seals in the wild. I was surprised to see just how plump they are. My only experience with seals prior to that was with sickly individuals that had been rescued by the New York State Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Stranding Program. Each year stranding personnel respond to hundreds of calls to rescue or retrieve sick, injured or dead seals. To complete this task, dedicated biologists are dispatched from one end of Long Island to the other, often in a single day, and occasionally are even sent up the Hudson River. To date, the stranding program has successfully rehabilitated and released hundreds of seals.

The coat of harbor seals ranges from light gray to brown, dark gray or black, with contrasting spots or rings. When dry they appear silver or white as the seal at bottom right.

Contributions to Return a Gift to Wildlife help fund the stranding program. Anyone who sees a seal that they believe is sick or injured should call the stranding hotline at (631) 369-9829. Be advised that seals are wild animals and if approached too closely will defend themselves with a nasty bite from formidable canine teeth.

The best location to see seals is at Montauk State Park. Many local environmental and conservation groups lead guided walks to the seal haul out site throughout the winter. For information and schedules, contact The Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation at (631) 369-9840, www.riverheadfoundation.org, or check out the website for the Coastal Research Society of Long Island at www.cresli.org.

Zachary deVilleneuve

Seals off Oyster Pond about a mile west of Montauk Point, Suffolk County. The seal in the center background exhibits the typical banana posture.

Eileen Gerle is a marine educator with Cornell Cooperative Extension in Suffolk County.

Seal Wrestling

By Eileen Gerle

I struggle to hike the bright orange survival suit over my knee-high rubber boots and then up over the many layers of clothes needed to keep warm in the unheated seal holding area of the New York State Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Stranding facility at the Atlantis Marine World in Riverhead, Suffolk County. I am careful to tuck all of the zipper pulls beneath the fabric so that no rough edges are exposed that might be harmful to the awaiting patient. Elbow length suede gloves complete my ensemble. I waddle toward the nearby cage, feeling a bit like a toddler in a snowsuit. I may look funny and I feel a bit awkward, but I'm ready to "wrestle seals."

I steel up my nerve as I scoop the fleeing seal from his tank. After working the net off, I quickly straddle the wet, wriggling pinniped. The first rule of restraining seals is never hesitate, and immediately take firm hold of the head, that intimidating, tooth-filled "business-end" of a seal. Although often perceived as cute and cuddly, wild seals can be quite aggressive and will attempt to bite you at every opportunity. Even the sickest seal may put up a fight.

This particular patient is being treated for a respiratory infection. It will be fed through a tube inserted into the esophagus and will be dining on a fish slurry containing blended herring or mackerel, dextrose and an antibiotic. Other ailments suffered by seals include pest infestations, ingestion of debris including rocks and pebbles, and viral infections such as seal pox, similar to the common childhood disease chicken pox, lesions and all.

Joseph Dlhopolsky

Volunteer Doug DeFeo restrains a harp seal for examination after the marine animal was found stranded on Long Island.

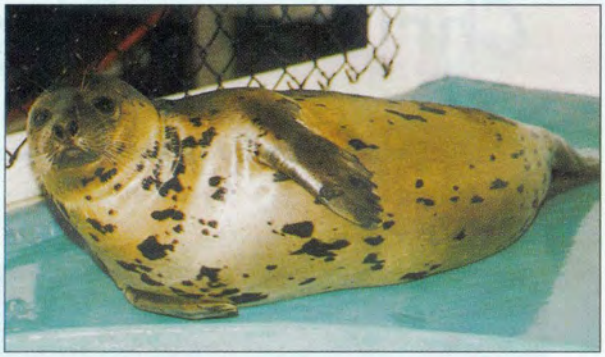
Caring for sick and injured seals requires much dedication, extensive financial resources, and many hours of hard work and preparation by the staff and volunteers who labor each winter "seal season" to rehabilitate and release dozens of stranded seals. The average stay for the patients is about six weeks, at a cost of about $2,000 per animal.

Since its inception in 1996, the Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation, which operates the stranding program, has witnessed a steady increase in the percentage of seals successfully rehabilitated, said director Kimberly Durham. The stranding program, supported in part by taxpayer donations to Return A Gift to Wildlife, benefits from the voluntary veterinary services of Dr. Robert Pisciotta of North Fork Animal Hospital and Dr. Richard Hanusch of Aquebogue Animal Hospital.

Common Winter Seals of Long Island

HARBOR SEAL — Dog-like in appearance, with a small, rounded head with upturned snout and V-shaped nostrils. Light gray with dark spots or dark gray or brown with white rings. Males to 5 feet long and 300 pounds, females smaller, reaching lengths of 4.75 feet and weights of 175 pounds. Pups are approximately 2.8 feet long and weigh about 20 pounds.

GRAY SEAL — Males to 7.5 feet long, 770 pounds. Females to 6.5 feet long, 440 pounds. At birth, males are approximately 3.6 feet long and 44 pounds in weight. Females are approximately 3 feet long and 24 pounds. Sexes also differ in shape and color. Males, dark with light blotches, have a distinctive hooked-nose, hence their common name of horse-head. Females are light with dark blotches and have shorter, narrower heads.



HARP SEAL — Up to 5.5 feet in length, 290 pounds. Males slightly larger than females. Pups, known as whitecoats due to fluffy white fur, are approximately 2.8 feet at birth. White birth coat is molted at 3 weeks. Thereafter coat is silvery gray with dark spots until seals mature at 7 (males) to 12 (females). Adult seals exhibit dark harp pattern (actually horseshoe-shaped saddle) on silvery coat, with dark face and tail. Pattern is more distinct on males.

HOODED SEAL — Adult males attain lengths from 8 to nearly 10 feet, can weigh between 660 and 880 pounds. The smaller females are approximately 7 feet long and weigh 500 to 660 pounds. Pups are quite large at birth, weighing 44 to 66 pounds and measuring 3 to 3 ½ feet long. Known as blue-backs, young are blue-gray above, creamy white below. At about two years of age, these seals obtain a mottled coat of bluish gray with dark splotches but retain their dark head and flippers. Adult males have a pronounced nasal appendage (hood) which can be inflated when in courtship or when disturbed.

Photos by Joseph Dlhopolsky
Photographed at rehabilitation center

Christmas Bird Count

A New York Tradition Turns 100

Photos courtesy of National Audubon Society

By John Bianchi

Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*)

Every year since 1900, Audubon Society members in New York State and across the continent have taken part in a ritual perhaps mysterious to the uninitiated. On one winter evening a year (at least one, since there are some who do this sort of thing regularly), they set their alarm clocks for the middle of the night. These committed individuals rouse from sleep, dress clumsily in the dark, gather binoculars, scope and tripod, camera, field guide, a change of clothes, long johns, hat, water and trail mix (in my case, a bologna sandwich), and head out into the dark, cold night. They drive silently to the appointed spot, and there, meet with other bundled, ghostly forms for the commencement of this seemingly clandestine operation. They are about to begin a Christmas Bird Count.

What is it that drives these dedicated, sleepy people from the comfort of a warm bed on a cold night? The Christmas Bird Count is the story of a protest that became a 100-year-old institution. The tale of how 27 people became 50,000. It is the account of how an effort to mobilize the early conservation movement culminated in a vast, on-line database that sheds light on how human activity has impacted the environment.

The first Christmas Bird Count, held in 1900, was the brainchild of Frank Chapman, head of the bird department at the American Museum of Natural History in Manhattan for many years. Chapman was a remarkably enterprising individual, having, among many other accomplishments, laid much groundwork for the founding of the National Association of Audubon Societies (the present-day National Audubon Society) and launched and published the bimonthly magazine *Bird-Lore* (which we now know as *Audubon*). The respected ornithologist began the count to protest a tradition called the "side hunt," a custom of the Gilded Age in which hunters gathered on the holiest of days in the Christian calendar, chose up sides, and fired at every species of animal or bird they encountered.

Chapman chose Christmas Day as the time to try a "hunt" that would actually benefit birds by drawing attention to them. He assembled 26 other counters to record all the birds they saw for 24-hours on Christmas Day. These counters took to the fields and forests in locations like Tinicum, Pa.; Englewood, N.J.; Monterey, Calif.; Central Park in New York City; Pueblo, Colo.; New Brunswick, Canada and Owasco Lake in New York.

"Christmas Bird Count has served many

50,000 participate in Christmas Bird Counts

purposes since it was first conceived by Frank Chapman in 1900," says David J. Miller, executive director of the National Audubon Society of New York State. "Christmas Count has promoted bird-watching and conservation in unforeseen ways, and in the last year, it has made a century of invaluable data available, free to the general public, through the BirdSource Website." BirdSource, a joint project of Audubon and Cornell University's venerable Laboratory of Ornithology, provides a vast database of information on bird movements and tracks bird status and health through Christmas Count and other sources.

Now, as Christmas Count hits the centennial mark and celebrations are held in many of the count locations, the popularity of the census and its utility to conservationists in New York and throughout North America is obvious. More than 50,000 participants are expected to brave the weather to participate in one of the 1,700 individual counts held from Prudhoe Bay, Alaska to Isla Chiloe, Chile, during the two-and-a-half week census period.

Why are so many attracted to this sometimes-frigid enterprise? Simply put, birding has become big in the last two decades. An ongoing study commissioned by the U.S. Forest Service finds birdwatching is currently the fastest growing outdoor activity, showing an increase since 1983 of 155 percent. Birdwatching has outstripped the growth rate of gardening. There are currently more than 54 million birders in the U.S.

Add to that results from an ongoing U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service study; 63 million Americans spent over $31 billion on watching, feeding and photographing birds and other wildlife in 1996. This number is up over 30 percent from 1991, when $21 billion was spent. The conclusion: birdwatching is booming.

This explains *how many*, but not *why*. It could be that birdwatching allows us the chance to see wild nature, up close, without spending the thousands of dollars required for a trip to the Serengeti. It could be that birding is easier and more fun than non-birders would imagine — that was a revelation for my family. It might also be that life is a little faster and more complex and nature is farther away than it used to be. Birds provide that simplicity we all need in our lives. Birds allow us to see something wild, and in one small, perfect moment, all other considerations fall away and we experience the real world.

Stephen W. Kress

(top) Common tern (*Sterna hirundo*)

(left) Bird counts help determine which species need special protection.

"Christmas Bird Count is the world's longest-running ornithological database," says Cornell Lab of Ornithology Director John Fitzpatrick. "Weather trends, habitat destruction, population and urban sprawl may be affecting birds with increasing impact. As a result, Christmas Bird Count is now an indispensable tool for accessing vital information on the status of North America's birds and our environment."

Chapman's count is no longer a protest, but it is much more than a highly anticipated holiday event for birders. The results are vital in assessing the status and health of continental

birds as well as the general state of the environment. "Christmas Count is vital in telling us about local conservation issues and bird population trends within New York State," adds Jeff Wells, Audubon's director of bird conservation. "Like the proverbial canary in a coal mine, birds are among the first groups of animals affected by threats like pollution and habitat destruction, and Christmas Bird Count, the original citizen-science project, has been the first place to spot trends that signal more complex conservation problems in a specific location."

Decades ago, Christmas Count's 100-percent volunteer-generated database became a crucial part of U·S. Government natural history monitoring programs. CBC data marked the decline in several birds in key locations where they were formerly plentiful, including peregrine falcons, trumpeter swans and bald eagles, which were subsequently listed as endangered. The count also helped the U·S. Government chart the rebound of these same species.

"These counts played a vital role in identifying and supporting the establishment of New York State's Important Bird Areas," Wells says. "Continued monitoring of these areas through the Christmas Counts also determines if populations of New York State's birds are healthy and whether recovery efforts are working."

The original citizen-science project, Christmas Count makes other cooperative projects possible. Results from the count continue to be integral in assembling WatchList, a record of 115 birds in danger or decline due to threats such as habitat loss.

As Wells notes, this type of count has changed the way scientists monitor the environment. The New York Breeding Bird Atlas Project, a collaboration of the state Department of Environmental Conservation, the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs and Audubon, is an outgrowth of the count and uses similar methodology in its effort to chart the bird population of this state.

Red-throated loon (*Gavia stellata*)

It doesn't end there. Fish are now counted in this way off the Pacific Coast. Butterflies are also scrutinized in a similar manner during their migrations. However, Christmas Count methods continue to work very well for bird conservation. Audubon and Cornell conduct FeederWatch; during migrations in spring and fall, Audubon and partners also conduct vulture watches, hawk watches, a WarblerWatch and a count of winter finches. In February, Audubon and Cornell will conduct the Great Backyard Bird Count, which combines the thrills of birding with the skills of the Internet to help take a virtual snapshot of where birds are the weekend of February 18-21. This information takes its place alongside Christmas Count on the BirdSource website.

John Bianchi, the communications director of the National Audubon Society, is a native of Westchester County.

Count me in

How might someone with little or no birding skills take part in the Christmas Bird Count? Contact your local Audubon chapter through the state organization by phoning (518) 869-9731 or through the Internet at www.audubon.org. Experienced birders generally go with novices to help make the new experience a good one. Teams work within a designated circle 15 miles in diameter. Compilers enter their data on-line to www.birdsource.org. This streamlines a process that in the past has taken months.

Volunteer birders of all skills also are sought for a statewide survey for the New York State Breeding Bird Atlas, a five-year project that will begin in January 2000. The project is sponsored by the Department of Environmental Conservation and the federation of New York State Bird Clubs. For more information, check the Website www.birds.cornell.edu/fnysbc/atlas_2000.htm or write to Breeding Bird Atlas, NYS DEC, Wildlife Resources Center, Delmar, NY 2054.

GAME FARE

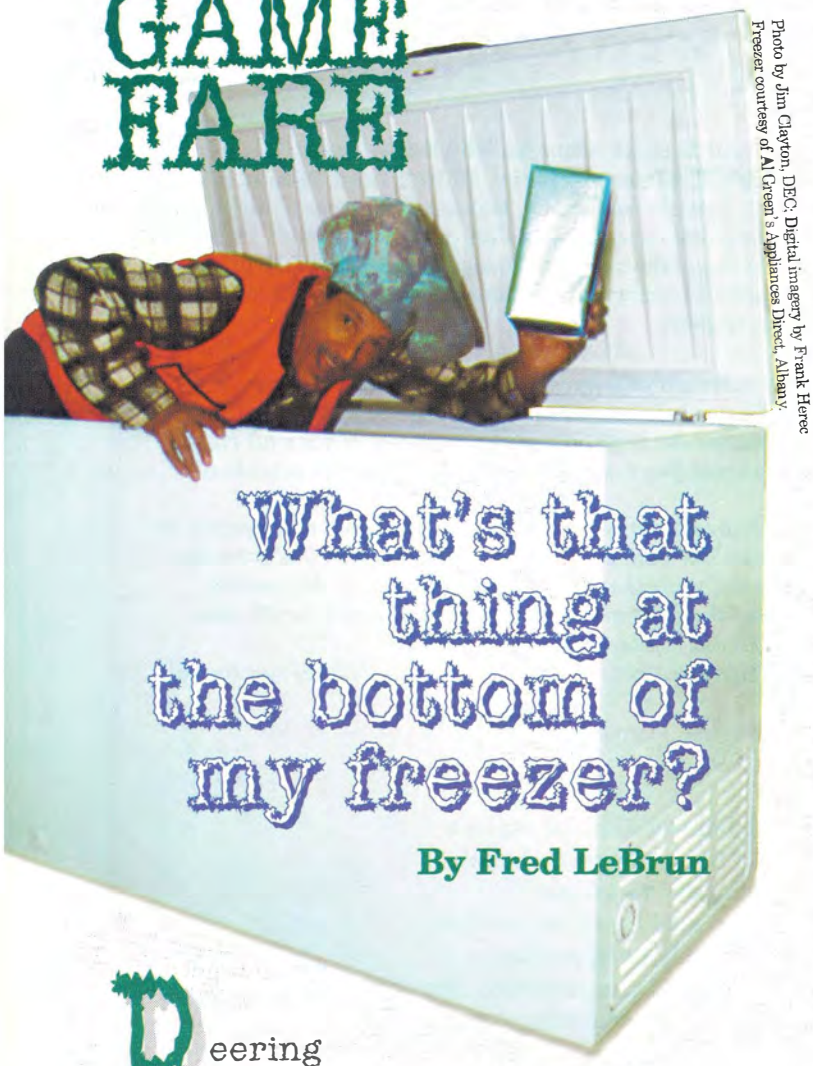


Photo by Jim Clayton, DEC; Digital imagery by Frank Herce
Freezer courtesy of Al Green's Appliances Direct, Albany.

What's that thing at the bottom of my freezer?

By Fred LeBrun

Peering into the ominous abyss of a sportsman's chest freezer this time of year is like lifting up a manhole cover on some forgotten street. You can't be quite sure what will rise up to greet you.

Is that a duck? Or is it some oddly frozen bit of venison? Or is it the stuff Uncle Harry wasn't sure about and cleaned out of his freezer last year and you stuck away to avoid hurting his feelings? No matter, with the promise of a deer hunt and maybe a wild turkey or two on the horizon, there's an increasing imperative to wring out the old to make room for the anticipated.

Which leads us to the eternal question: what do we do with all these leavings? As sportsmen, we've made an implicit compact with the natural world of which we are very much a part. If we kill game, it is our eternal obligation to go the extra mile to make sure it is properly consumed or utilized in some fruitful way. Using last year's striped bass fillets in a hill of dirt to grow maize barely qualifies.

There are ways to make that mystery meat not just barely edible, but a lot better than that. Or at least worthy of the game's sacrifice.

Let's pretend you were really dumb and did not label that strangely frozen item hacked out of the frosty corner of the freezer. Steve Loder, whose self-published cookbook *Quality Venison*, is a favorite of mine (*Quality Venison II* is just out), stresses the first thing you need to do is thaw it out in the refrigerator without removing any of the wrappings, poor as the wrappings might be. The need is to keep as much natural moisture with whatever is inside that mystery package

And that brings us immediately to that arch fiend: freezer burn. The great enemy of frozen game is not the frost you see covering the package like a fur coat. It's air. Proper freezing entails eliminating all air from contact with the fish or game. That's why the best system is to first wrap with a sturdy, stretchy plastic film, forcing out all the air as you do, then double wrap with heavy freezer paper that again acts as an air barrier, or placing the item in one of those new super-sealing freezer bags.

Kathy Greenwood, program assistant with the Cooperative Extension of Albany County says that air dehydrates the tissue and imparts the characteristic staleness. "Oxygen, air, in general is a big spoiler for food — look what it does for ripening fruits and vegetables," she notes.

The bad news is, there is no effective way to reverse freezer burn, as there is for reviving wilted lettuce and some vegetables with lemon and water, for example. Once that thing at the bottom of your freezer is thawed and more or less identified, chances are there will be freezer burn along thin edges. If that's the case, should you toss it? Absolutely not. Freezer burn doesn't make the meat unfit to eat, merely unpalatable. Nor at this point does the off taste travel into the untainted flesh. So the thing to do is to carve out completely any freezer burn, or any hint of it. Steve Loder says this is no time to be chintzy.

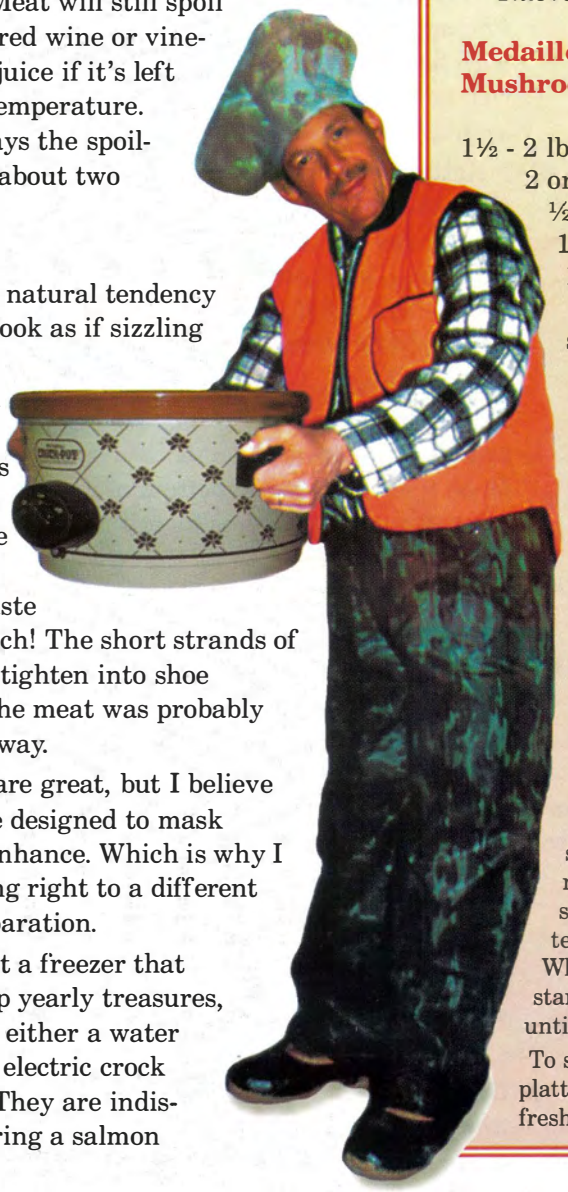
"If you skimp and don't trim off enough, you'll ruin the whole thing in the cooking process. Because then the freezer burn taste will come through the rest," Loder advises. Be ruthless. Trim not just the freezer burn, but any fat or tallow. It's in the fatty tissue that staleness seems to linger, even when the game is well-wrapped.

Now comes the moment of truth. How to prepare that mystery meat. There are a couple of reliable routes to take, depending on how stressed, or mysteri-

ous it is. Certainly a first consideration for relatively healthy looking stuff is a marinade, and there are enough of those around to fill a library. Volume II of Loder's venison cookbook features more than 20 widely varied marinades for venison alone.

Patti Farrell, whose wild game recipe page in the New York Ducks Unlimited news bulletins is always a treat and a revelation, concurs with Loder that the random old duck breast or complete beast benefits greatly from marinating overnight or longer. She uses good old olive oil, dried tarragon, red onion, cracked pepper and sweet vermouth. Now, that's a new combo to me, which is why I mention it here. Farrell also has a cookbook coming out this fall. Must be catching.

Two warnings at this point for the intrepid freezer hound. First, always marinate in the refrigerator. Meat will still spoil in a hurry in red wine or vinegar or lemon juice if it's left out at room temperature. Greenwood says the spoiling begins in about two hours.



There's a natural tendency to overcook as if sizzling to a fare-thee-well will make all the bad things go away. Those delicate teal breasts overcooked taste like liver. Yuuch! The short strands of venison flesh tighten into shoe leather, and the meat was probably dried out anyway.

Marinades are great, but I believe in general are designed to mask rather than enhance. Which is why I suggest cutting right to a different chase on preparation.

If you've got a freezer that might yield up yearly treasures, then also buy either a water smoker or an electric crock pot, or both. They are indispensable. During a salmon

GOT GAME?

Send us your favorite recipe for wild fish or game: Game Fare, *The Conservationist*, 50 Wolf Road, Albany, NY 12233-4502. Include your name, address, telephone number and — if you have one — a photo or slide of the table-ready treat. If you want the photo returned, include an SASE. We'll pick the best to share with our readers. This one is from Robert W. Waltke of Bayside, Queens.

"I'm 70 years old and have been hunting deer successfully for 40 years. Early on I thought venison had to be marinated, so I dutifully soaked the meat in wine and vinegar. That's all right if you like hasenpfeffer, but who wants to eat 50 or 60 pounds of that stuff.

"After a few seasons of marinating, I discovered that venison is best if treated like beef, provided it is properly handled from the time of the kill until the time it is refrigerated. If the venison tastes gamey the meat may be soaked in salt water for 20 minutes, then rinsed before cooking.

"This recipe produces the finest venison dish I have ever tasted."

Medaillons of Venison Bordelaise with Wild Mushrooms

1½ - 2 lbs. boneless loin of venison
2 or 3 finely chopped shallots
½ cup dry red wine
1 cup beef broth or bouillon
1 tsp. chopped parsley
2 cups wild mushrooms, (any combination of shiitake, portabella, chanterelles, morels or others)
1 cup water
2 tbs olive oil
2 tbs butter
1 tb. cornstarch
salt and pepper

To prepare the meat: Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Season venison with salt and pepper. In a large, ovenproof skillet heat the olive oil and one tablespoon butter and saute the meat until lightly browned, 2 or 3 minutes on each side. Place the skillet in the preheated oven and roast the meat for 5 to 10 minutes (it should be medium rare). Keep the meat warm and set aside.

To make the sauce: In a small saucepan, simmer slowly for 20 minutes the mushrooms and one cup of water. Set aside, reserving the mushrooms and the juice. In another saucepan, saute shallots in ½ cup of red wine until it is reduced by 3/4. Add one cup of beef broth and simmer sauce gently for 10 minutes. Stir in one tablespoon of butter. Add the meat juices, the mushrooms and their juices. While the sauce is simmering stir in one tablespoon of cornstarch mixed with two tablespoons of water. Stir the sauce until it thickens, remove from heat. Stir in parsley.

To serve: Slice the meat into 3/4 inch pieces and arrange on a platter. Spoon sauce over them and garnish copiously with fresh watercress.

fishing trip up north a couple of years ago, my partner brought along some mystery roasts and neck cuts which we steeped all day in a slow-cooking crock pot with potatoes, carrots and onion. The result was fantastic.

Again, most cookbooks these days, including Loder's, have long sections on crock pot and smoker preparations. One advantage of the smoker, says Greenwood, is that the water pan can be filled with fruit juices instead of water. She recommends cider for venison, which excites the taste buds just to think about it. Beer isn't bad either.

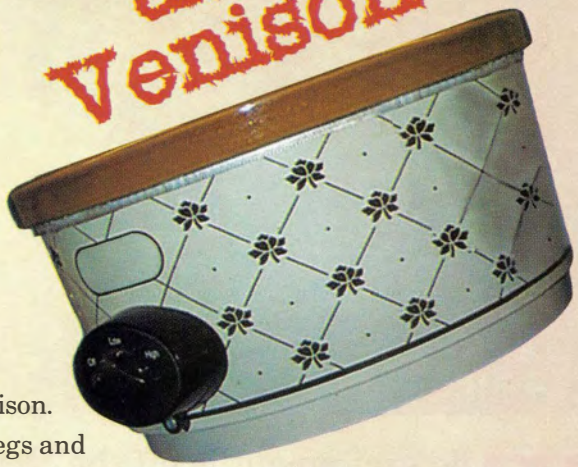
The object, whether with a crock pot, smoker or even a Dutch oven on the stove, is to bring moisture back to probably dehydrated meat. Remember, though, that these self-contained, slow-cooking, recirculating moisture systems don't need a lot of liquid in the first place, or much spicing. Pay attention.

The downside is that these slow-cooking methods produce more often than not, the equivalence of pot roast, even from choice cuts, such as breasts or fillets. A big plus balancing that is that the crock pot is the perfect place to mix and match the unknowns, fish, game and fowl, as Loder does in a fine recipe we've included here.

Besides, tender, delicious pot roast is an American favorite, and only a snob would see it otherwise. It's a fitting end to pot luck and a furry freezer collar.

Fred LeBrun, an outdoor writer for the Albany *Times Union*, is a renowned hunter and gatherer with discriminating tastes.

Crock Pot Duck and Venison



1 large wild mallard duck*
1½ pounds venison roast
1 cup beef broth
2 celery stalks, chopped
2 cloves garlic, chopped
1 teaspoon black pepper
1 teaspoon parsley
1 cup fresh mushrooms, chopped
2 carrots, chopped
1 onion, sliced
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
1 cup red wine

*If you don't have a duck, use 3 to 4 pounds of venison.

With game shears or knife, cut duck into breasts, legs and wings. Cut venison into chunks. Place venison and duck in crock pot or Dutch oven with other ingredients, except red wine. Cook 3 hours with crock pot set on high or Dutch oven at simmering temperature.

Add 1 cup red wine and turn crock pot to low or Dutch oven to slow simmer and cook for 2 to 3 hours, or until tender. Serve with your favorite rice, potatoes, vegetables and hot bread or biscuits.

From *Quality Venison II*, By Steve and Gale Loder, $18.50, includes shipping and handling. Loders' Game Publications, P.O. Box 1615, Cranberry Township, PA 16066. Phone (724) 779-9641.

Empire State WINTER GAMES

Celebrate 20th Year

1999 Nancie Battaglia

More than 1,100 of New York's finest athletes will compete at Lake Placid.

The excitement is off the charts in Lake Placid as more than 1,100 Empire State Winter Games athletes flood into the outdoor Olympic arena and parade into the center, music and laughter churning heartily with the cheers of the spectators in the stands. Brilliantly colored flags wave in the winter wind and the athletes, bundled in matching running suits, lift their heads to the frosty night to let out a collective roar.

On February 25 those opening ceremonies will launch the 20th anniversary of the largest state-run amateur winter athletic competition in America. The Empire State Winter Games continue through February 27. Lake Placid also will be the venue for the first-ever Winter Goodwill Games February 17-20, 2000.

"Every year, hundreds of the finest athletes in New York gather at the Empire State Winter Games in Lake Placid to compete for today's winter glory and tomorrow's Olympic dreams," said Governor George E. Pataki. "New Yorkers appreciate the fact that our state has the resources and facilities that enable us to host these annual winter games, the outcome of which has been New York's strong athletic representation on the U.S. Winter Olympic teams for decades."

Biathalon combines target shooting and cross-country skiing

In addition to the athletic competitions, the 2000 Empire State Winter Games will include a breathtaking aerial skiing and snowborading exhibition a spectacular fireworks display and an activity-packed winter festival that features food from Lake Placid's most popular restaurants.

Thanks to the commitment of Governor Pataki to the maintenance, expansion and development of Lake Placid's Olympic facilities, some of the fastest, most challenging events in February will take place on a brand new combined track for bobsled, luge and skeleton (another sled-like device). "The State's $12.5-million commitment to improving the Olympic facilities has reestablished Lake Placid as a premier international sports venue and is the reason Olympic hopefuls return to the Games in Lake Placid each year," Governor Pataki said. "Our continued support will help attract other winter events, promote tourism and boost the North Country's growing economy."

The story of the Empire State Winter Games began in the winter of 1981, following the sensational energy generated by the Lake Placid Olympic Winter Games the year before. The Empire State Winter Games were established to take advantage of Lake Placid's world-class Winter Olympic sports facilities tucked in amid matchless Adirondack beauty. Many alumni of the Empire State Winter Games have followed their dreams all the way to the top, using the Empire Games as a springboard into the Olympics. New York Olympians include Duncan Kennedy in the luge, and gold medalists Diann Roffe-Steinrotter (alpine skiing) and Cathy Turner (speed skating).

Today the Empire State Games are administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and are sponsored by the New York State Lottery with assistance from the Olympic Regional Development Authority.

"The Empire State Games provide an opportunity for New York's finest athletes to compete for the gold and create memories of achievement that will last a lifetime," said New York Lottery Director Margaret R. DeFrancisco. "Through Lottery's active support of the Games, we emphasize our sole mission is to generate revenue to support education in New York and recognize the important role athletics play in the lives of children, encouraging cooperation, leadership, responsibility and the pursuit of excellence."

New York State continues to ensure that people the world over take advantage of its Lake Placid winter playground. Through promotion and support of the Empire State Winter Games, New York's athletes will pursue their first dreams of gold at Lake Placid's extraordinary winter sports venue.

"For 20 years, the Empire State Winter games have provided New York's finest athletes with exciting opportunities and experiences in the wonderful winter sports village of Lake Placid, " said New York State Parks Commissioner Bernadette Castro. "We at State Parks are thankful for Governor Pataki's unwavering support of this program that has seen so many of our athletes go on to Olympic greatness. And we expect that to continue."

The thrilling athletic competition at the 2000 Empire State Winter Games will include alpine skiing, bobsled, skeleton, luge, biathlon, figure skating, cross country skiing, ski jumping, ski orienteering, women's ice hockey and snowshoe racing.

Lake Placid Hosts Inaugural Winter GOODWILL GAMES

1999 Nancie Battaglia, above and center

ing, freestyle skiing, luge, nordic combined, skeleton, ski jumping, short track speedskating and snowboarding.

With the strong backing of Governor Pataki and New York State, and in conjunction with the federal government, nearly $12.5 million were appropriated for the venue's new combined track for bobsled, luge and skeleton (another sled-like device). The track replaces the separate bobsled and luge tracks used for the 1980 Olympic Winter Games.

1999 Nathan Bilow Photography

Goodwill Games competitors are scheduled to include from left, Lake Placid's own Jimmy Shea on the skeleton, free-style skier Ann Battelle and alpine skier Chad Fleisher.

When the Goodwill Games expanded into a winter sports format, selecting Lake Placid to play host to the world's best athletes was an easy choice. Games officials knew the Adirondack village was the perfect place for the inaugural Winter Goodwill Games which will be staged February 17-20, 2000, following an opening celebration on February 16.

The Empire State Winter Games, which feature New York State's top amateur athletes, will be staged at Lake Placid February 25-27, 2000.

"As host of both the 1932 and the 1980 Olympic Winter Games, Lake Placid proved that it is one of the best winter sports venues in the world," said Goodwill Games President Mike Plant. New York State and the Goodwill Games are not strangers. The 1998 summer edition of the Goodwill Games took place in New York City, Nassau County and Staten Island.

"In February 2000, Lake Placid once again will showcase and be home to the greatest athletes in the world," said Governor George Pataki. "The Goodwill Games feature the highest level of competition, giving the people of the State and region a remarkable opportunity to personally witness some of the most exciting and cutting-edge winter sports competition on the planet."

The Winter Goodwill Games will feature 11 exciting winter sports: alpine skiing, bobsled, cross country skiing, figure skating, freestyle skiing, luge, nordic combined, skeleton, ski jumping, short track speedskating and snowboarding.

"Lake Placid is the winter sports capital of the world, with a long history of bringing out our best participants and thousands of enthusiasts who once again will flock here from around the globe," Governor Pataki said. "These Games will rekindle the spirit of sportsmanship and excellence from the 1932 and 1980 Olympic Games, sparking a light that will shine long after the Games end."

Lake Placid residents Gordy Sheer and Jimmy Shea will enjoy not only the pleasure of competing at home in front of friends and family, but are featured in the extensive promotional campaign for the Games. Sheer, an Olympic luge silver medalist, and Shea, a skeleton competitor, both will be christening Lake Placid's new state-of-the-art track.

"Obviously, the construction of the new track means a lot to our program," Sheer said. "We're excited to be racing in the Winter Goodwill Games. Being part of the promotional campaign is an added bonus."

The Goodwill Games is partnering with the Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA) to bring the Games to Lake Placid.

"On the 20th anniversary of the 1980 Olympic Winter Games, ORDA is thrilled to partner with the Goodwill Games," said Charles Gargano, chairman of both ORDA and the Empire State Development Corp. "Lake Placid's legacy makes it the ideal location to stage the first Winter Goodwill Games."

PIKE & MUSKELLUNGE

Chain Pickerel

Averages 15-20 inches long. Gets name from dark, chain-link markings on sides and back. Widely distributed in waters south of the Adirondacks and east of the Genesee River. Prefers quiet waters with heavy weed growth. Needle-sharp teeth in their large mouths used for catching fish and some frogs. Favorite gamefish, especially with ice fishing anglers. Fish along weedbeds in shallow water with minnows, worms, spoons, spinners and jigs.

Muskellunge

Largest member of the pike family, grows to be 30-46 inches long. Limited distribution in New York. Found in cool lakes and large rivers, sometimes staying in moderately swift water. In New York, there are two strains— Great Lakes and Ohio. Have large, needle-sharp teeth that are used to grab food of fish, mice and ducks. Because of large size, held in high regard by anglers who mostly practice catch and release fishing. Muskies are taken by trolling large plugs, spinners or baitfish.

Northern Pike

Large fish, grow to be 25-36 inches long. Very adaptable, are one of the most widely distributed freshwater fish in the world. In New York, prefer weedy portions of cool water lakes, ponds and rivers, but large adults often move into deeper offshore waters. Needle-sharp teeth in their large mouths used for catching fish, crayfish, frogs and ducklings. An important sportfish. Fish near or in weedbeds with large spoons, spinners, plugs or baitfish.

Artwork by Ellen Edmonson and Hugh Chrisp from the Conservation Department's biological surveys, and by Wayne Trimm. (Art not to scale). Text by Eileen Stegemann

Return A Gift To WILDLIFE SPONSORED BY Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration
Return A Gift to Wildlife
Division of Fish, Wildlife & Marine Resources
SPORT FISH RESTORATION

Reprinted from The New York State *Conservationist*, December 1999 ny fish/ f&w / 12/99

Freshwater Sportfish of New York

❖ A SAMPLER ❖

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
George E. Pataki, Governor John P. Cahill, Commissioner

often the fishing season is closed to enable the fish to spawn safely. Knowing a fish's spawning time and egg release method can help you understand how regulatory guidelines are determined. Fish, such as yellow perch, that randomly distribute large numbers of eggs, produce more young and may require less strict fishing regulations.

eggs & departs
- ● - spawns late spring-early summer; male digs nest in shallow water; guards eggs & young
- ○ - spring; scatters eggs over vegetation (walleye over gravel bars); no care given
- ❐ - spring; deposits long string of eggs (up to 7ft); no care given
- ❖ - late spring-early summer; scatters eggs over vegetation; no care given

Walleye

Largest member of the perch family, averages 10-25 inches long. Found in every major watershed in New York except on Long Island. Prefers deep water sections of large lakes, streams and rivers. Have large, light-sensitive eyes to locate food in poor light. Large canine teeth used to catch favorite food of fish. Most active at night. Popular sportfish. Drift or troll with live bait, jigs, spinners and plugs. ○

Yellow Perch

Grows 6-12 inches long. Easily distinguished by the 5-9 black vertical bars on their yellow sides. Important panfish, common across New York in a variety of habitats, but prefers shallow, weedy protected sections of rivers, lakes and ponds. Eat variety of organisms including aquatic insects, crayfish and fish. Popular with ice fishing anglers. Relatively easy to catch, often one of first fish caught by anglers. Fish along weedbeds and drop-offs with minnows, worms, grubs and a variety of small lures. ❐

Black Crappie

Grows 8-12 inches long; occasionally larger. With exception of the Adirondacks, common in waters across the state. Prefer clear, quiet areas of lakes, ponds and larger rivers with abundant vegetation. Eat small fish and insects. Popular panfish. Fish along rocky areas and in shallow coves and use minnows, worms and spinners. ●

White Perch

New York's smallest member of the temperate bass family, white perch average 6-12 inches long. Can live in both fresh and saltwater. Are native to brackish water, but now also occur in rivers, lakes and reservoirs. Found in several waters across the state, including the Hudson River, the Great Lakes and the Seneca and Mohawk river systems. Often occur in large schools in turbid, shallow areas. Adults eat fish and insects. Stillfish with worms or grubs or cast small lures. ◆

Brown Bullhead

Averages 8-14 inches long. Easily recognizable by its broad, flat head and dark barbels (whiskers) around face. Has sharp spines on dorsal and pectoral fins. Very adaptable, it is the most common catfish in New York, found in cool Adirondack lakes, but most abundant in warmwater ponds, lakes and larger, slow-moving streams. Nighttime bottom feeder, uses barbels to locate food, including insects, snails, worms and small fish. Popular panfish, especially in the spring. Fish along the bottom in evening using worms, minnows and doughballs. ●

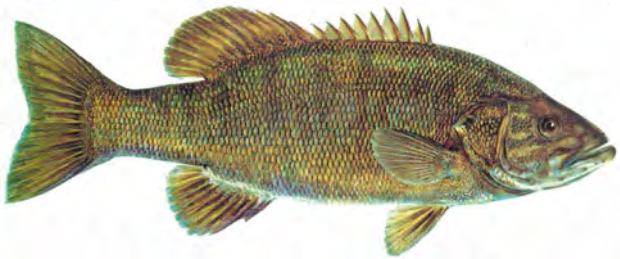
Common Carp

Large fish, carp average 15-20 inches long, but can grow to over 40 pounds in weight. Have large, heavy scales and two short barbels (whiskers). Found across the state except in cold trout streams and lakes. Prefers slow moving water with a soft bottom. Adults eat a variety of plant and animal material, often stirring up a cloud of mud as they feed. First brought here from Asia as a food fish, they offer a different angling experience, and fight hard on light tackle. ◆

POPULAR WARMWATER SPORTFISH OF NEW YORK

Largemouth Bass

Largest member of the "sunfish" family, averages 8-17 inches long, and has been known to reach weights in excess of 10 pounds. Found among dense aquatic vegetation or close to submerged cover such as stumps, logs or dock pilings in warm, shallow, well-vegetated areas of lakes, ponds and sluggish streams. Eat primarily fish, crayfish and frogs. A popular gamefish. Fish in weedy, stumpy areas—still fishing or casting with live bait or a wide variety of lures including plastic worms and surface plugs. ●

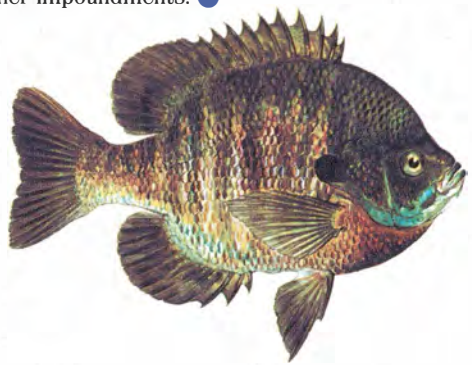


Smallmouth Bass

A large sunfish, averages 8-15 inches long. Smallmouths prefer cool, clear areas of lakes and streams with gravelly or rocky bottoms. Adults usually stay near protection of rocks and submerged logs. Eat primarily fish, crayfish and insects. Important gamefish, famous for their fighting ability when hooked. Still fish near rocks, shoals or other structure with live bait, or cast spinners, plugs or jigs. ●

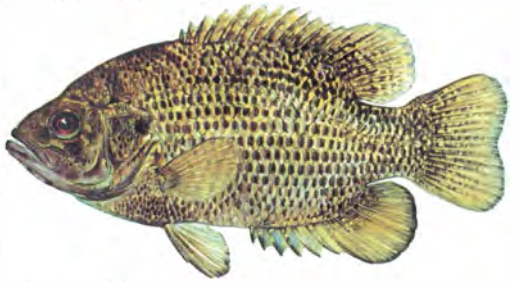
Bluegill

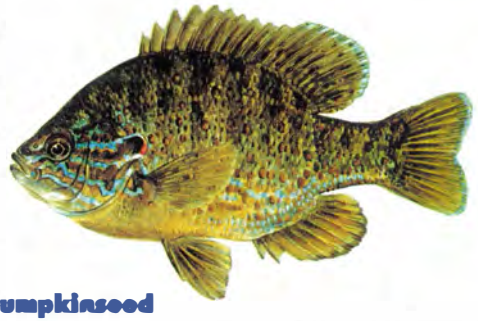
Grows 4-10 inches long. Colorful fish, often mistaken for pumpkinseed, but lacks orange/red spot on gill flap. Found in slow-moving or standing water with plenty of vegetation or other shelter. Eat mostly insects and crustaceans. Popular panfish, caught in shallow water near weedbeds on bait, artificial flies or small lures. Frequently stocked in farm ponds and other impoundments. ●



Rock Bass

Grows 6-10 inches long. Their bright red eyes earn them the nickname "redeyes." Found in waters across the state; most abundant in rocky, gravelly shallow water areas of lakes and ponds, and lower, warm reaches of streams. Often occur with smallmouth bass. Eat mostly aquatic insects, crayfish and small fish. Popular panfish, fish along rocky areas and weeds using live bait, small spinners and plugs. ●





Pumpkinseed

Grows 4-8 inches long. Colorful warmwater fish with a bright orange/red spot on the gill flap. Most abundant and widespread sunfish in New York, occurs in shallow water in a variety of habitats from small lakes and ponds, to shallow, weedy bays of larger lakes and quiet waters of slow-moving streams. Eat wide array of prey such as insects, crustaceans and small fish. Easily caught, it is a favorite of small children. Fish in shallow water in sheltered areas, and use live bait or small spinners and jigs. ●

Redbreast Sunfish

Grows 4-8 inches long. Gets its name from the bright yellow to orange-red breast. Differs from pumpkinseed by its long, narrow black gill cover. Confined to eastern portion of the state. Inhabits lakes and ponds, but prefers clear, slow-moving streams with sandy or rocky bottoms. Eat mostly insects and crustaceans, plus some small fish. Fish near weeds in shallow water using live bait. ●

Fish Spawning and Fishing Seasons — Setting legal fishing seasons for individual fish species is one method of protecting a fish's population. Since fish are frequently congregated and particularly vulnerable during their spawning season

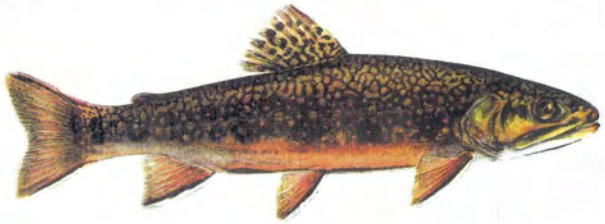
Key:

✚ - spawns in fall; female digs nest on gravelly area; covers eggs & departs

✳ - spawns in fall; scatters eggs over shallow, rocky reefs; no protection given

▲ - spawns late winter-spring; female digs nest on gravelly area; covers

TROUT & SALMON



Brook Trout

Averages 10-12 inches long in ponds and 6-10 inches in streams. Also called speckled trout, brookies have a distinct bright white edging along their lower fins. New York's official state fish, brook trout live in small to moderate-sized clear, cold streams, lakes and ponds. Primarily eat insects. Popular gamefish, they are relatively easy to catch, frequently taken on flies, small artificial lures, minnows and worms. ✚

Rainbow Trout

Colorful, Pacific Coast native, rainbows are quite variable in size, averaging 8-20 inches in inland waters, and 20-34 inches in the Great Lakes. Their name comes from the pink or red band often present on their sides. Prefer cool lakes and large streams. Adults primarily eat fish. Lake-run variety (called steelhead) occurs in lakes Champlain, Ontario and Erie and their tributaries. Prized sportfish, known for leaping, caught on artificial lures or flies, and on worms and minnows. ▲

FOLD #3

Lake Trout

Averages 15-34 inches long, but can reach weights of up to 30 pounds. This silvery or dark gray fish occurs in deep, cold well-oxygenated lakes. A native of New York, lakers are long-lived, some adults reaching 20 years old. Adults primarily eat fish. Prized by anglers for their large size and strength, are taken in early spring by trolling near surface with artificial lures or minnows. In summer, troll deep with downriggers. ✳

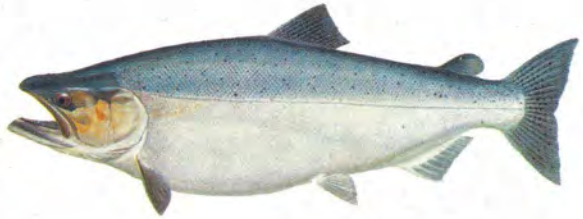
Brown Trout

Originally from Europe, browns are large fish, averaging 8-20 inches in inland waters and 20-32 inches in the Great Lakes. They are more tolerant of warmer water than brook trout, found in waters across New York, but prefer cool streams and lakes. Adults eat aquatic insects and fish. Relatively wary, browns can be difficult to catch and are the primary pursuit of fly fishing anglers. Cast or troll flies, artificial lures, worms and minnows. ✚

FOLD #2

Atlantic Salmon

New York's only native salmon, Atlantics are one of our most highly-regarded sportfish. Adults average 12-30 inches and prefer open deep waters of cold, deep lakes. Primarily eats fish. Also known as "landlocked salmon," New York's Atlantics spend their entire lives in freshwater. Found in about 30 waters across the state. Caught by trolling streamer flies, spoons or plugs in open water areas. ✚



Chinook Salmon

Also called king salmon, chinooks are the largest of the Pacific salmon, averaging 24-44 inches. Found only in lakes Erie and Ontario and their tributaries. Adults eat fish. Important Great Lakes sportfish, taken in open water by trolling plugs and spoons and using downriggers to get lures deep. Also taken on trout or salmon egg sacs, lures and flies, fished in tributaries during fall spawning runs. ✚

Dead Trees Are Full of Life

By Sharon Mammoser
photos by author

I heard them before I saw them, their feet crunching the dried leaves as they made their way through the forest. They were two students in the midst of my orienteering class, navigating by compass to the spot I was stationed. I waited patiently, hidden from view behind a boulder, my job was to check that they were managing fine and send them to their next destination. The crunching suddenly ceased, still some distance away and I peered above the rock. They were stopped at a standing dead tree 20 feet away. One student had both hands against the thick trunk, and was rocking it, presumably to make it fall. The naturalist in me shouted to stop them and I quickly took advantage of the moment to point out the benefits of leaving the dead tree standing.

No doubt like many people, he was confused as to why I would be unhappy about knocking over the dead tree. It's something many might not think twice about. Sometimes the dead trees will be used for firewood. Sometimes they're removed because of safety hazards, whether real or perceived. Often they are regarded as ugly and useless. Sometimes they are just knocked over because they are there. "What's the difference?," the students asked. After all, the tree *was* dead.

The fact is that standing dead trees, or snags, are used by numerous animals, some of which are dependent on them for their survival. Amazingly, a standing dead tree can support more wildlife than a live one. And though it continues to decompose and support life lying on the ground, it aids animals higher on the food chain when standing. And when toppled, a dead tree might be removed from the forest, used as firewood or simply to "clean up" the area, thus robbing the forest of vital habitat and nutrients.

Snags provide many benefits to wildlife. They can be used as nest or den sites, roosting cavities, places for feeding, singing, courting, preening, hiding, landing, watching, hunting and communicating. According to the Northeast Natural Resource Center snags provide "essential habitat elements for at least 85 species of birds and over 50 species of mammals." To escape the heat of the summer, some frogs and salamanders will take shelter in dead trees. Snakes, especially before shedding their skins when their eyes are clouded over, may seek the sanctuary of a dead tree. In addition, hundreds of insects and invertebrates inhabit dead trees.

Dead tree with many woodpecker excavated cavities

Some snags have a solid exterior but are rotten inside, often creating a hollow cavity for larger mammals like gray fox and lynx. Other snags are not hollow inside, but are soft and pulpy. This type of snag is what I refer to with children as "a woodpecker restaurant" because it is often loaded with carpenter ants, wood-boring beetle larvae and other insects and invertebrates that woodpeckers will feast on.

The black-capped chickadee, one of many birds that nest in dead trees.

Numerous birds require snags for nesting cavities. Without snags, these animals are dependent on human intervention such as nest boxes or nesting platforms. The osprey builds its nest on a branch of a dead tree and adds a

(right) Northern flicker courtship display

(below left) Pair of great blue herons nest beside marsh

(below center) Osprey pair nest on dead tree

(below right) Turkey vulture perching on dead tree

new layer of sticks each year. Sometimes these nests get so heavy they cause the tree to fall over. Great horned owls, great blue herons and some hawks also nest in snags. Many birds excavate nesting sites in the soft wood of dead trees. Referred to as primary excavators, these birds include the red-headed woodpecker, red-bellied woodpecker, downy and hairy woodpecker, northern flicker, black-capped and boreal chickadee. In addition to the creation of nesting sites, the pileated woodpecker will create large roosting holes in which they can safely spend the night. Many primary excavators use the nesting cavity only once, preferring to make a new hole the following year. The empty holes do not remain empty long.

Many cavity-nesting birds are secondary excavators. They don't make the cavity, but use existing holes made by other birds or natural events.

Gray squirrel eating safely in dead tree

When located near waterways or wetlands, snags are used as nesting cavities by wood ducks, common goldeneyes, hooded and common mergansers and bufflehead. When located in forests, they may provide nest sites for northern saw-whet owls, red-breasted and white-breasted nuthatches and great crested flycatchers. Snags located in or near meadows provide perching sites as well as nesting sites for American kestrels, merlins, great horned owls, barn owls, eastern screech owls, barred owls, bluebirds, wrens and some warblers. One bird, the brown creeper, builds its nest under the loose bark of a dead tree.

In addition to birds, other animals use dead trees, sometimes for den sites, for shelter, a place to store food or to hide from predators. Some, such as the flying squirrel, use the cavity year-round. Some use the trees on a temporary basis. Many ani-

Bark beetle tracks

If you have a dead tree in your yard...

...or forest and it truly is a threat to people or property, consider the following:

- Cut off only the top part, leaving a section of trunk for animals to use.
- Leave the removed section, or the entire tree (if cut down) on the ground. This way some animals will still be able to use the tree and vital nutrients from the decomposing tree will be allowed to return to the soil.
- If the tree poses no safety hazard, consider leaving it alone.

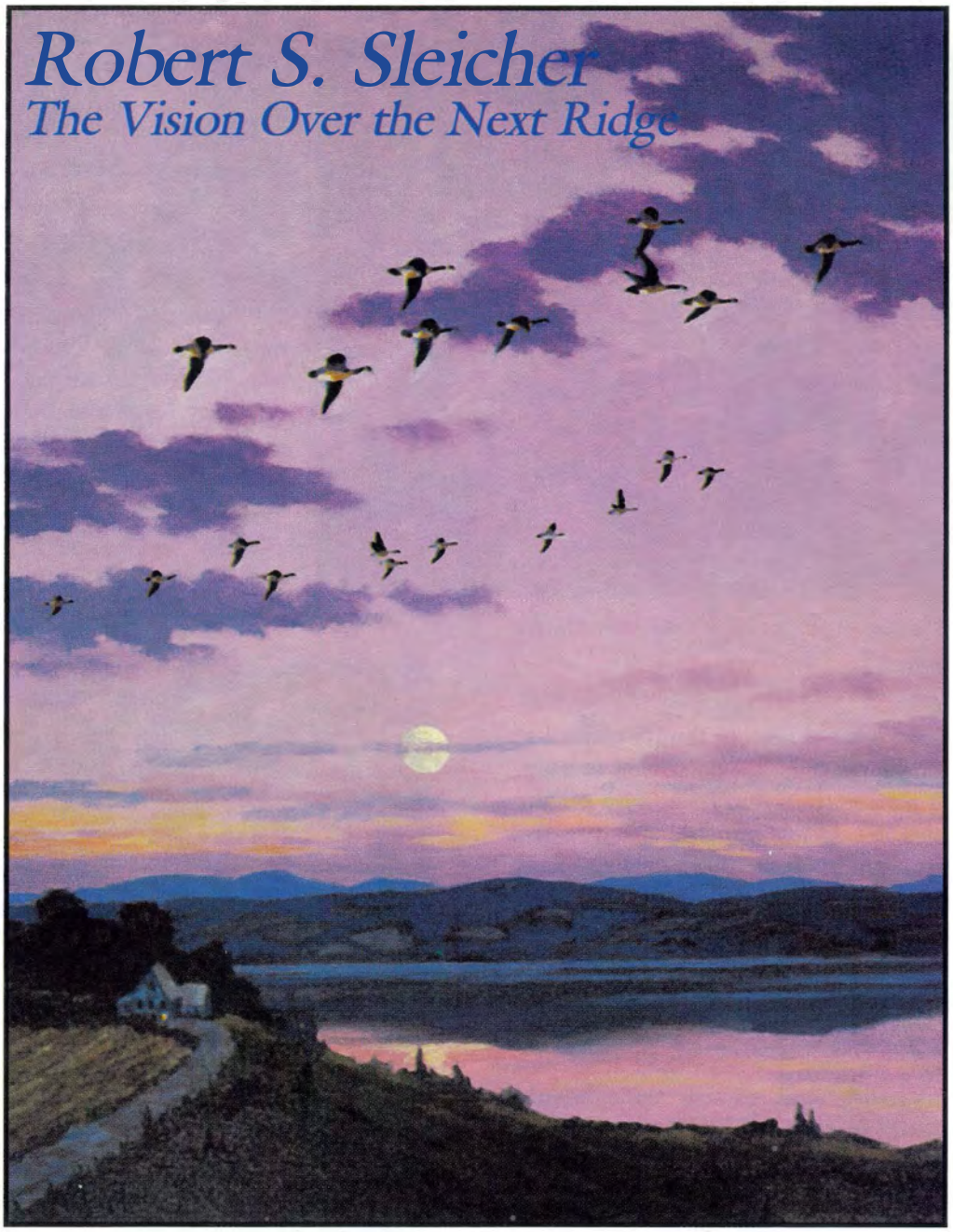
mals in this category are not seen or familiar to many people primarily because they are nocturnal or rare. They include the pine marten and lynx, both on the endangered species list. Other animals that use the cavities of dead trees include opossums, several species of bats, eastern chipmunks, porcupines, raccoons, skunks, long-tailed weasels, deer mice and mink.

Trees provide people with many things. We get pulp to make paper products, lumber for building and wood for fuel. We take their fruit, use the shade they provide and admire their beauty through the seasons. In our quest to "improve" our world, we often forget the services trees provide the other creatures which inhabit our Earth. Trees are not just valuable to people; they are valuable to wildlife, essential in fact. Perhaps next time before you cut down that dead tree for firewood or knock it down for the heck of it, you will think of all the life it supports and will leave it alone, to rot and fall on its own. The tree may be dead, but the animals that are living need it for their survival. Even in death, the tree keeps on giving.

Sharon Mammoser of Patterson, Putnam County, is a teacher, naturalist and a free-lance writer and photographer.

Large cavity in dead tree

Robert S. Sleicher
The Vision Over the Next Ridge



Morning Over Lake Champlain

By William Repp

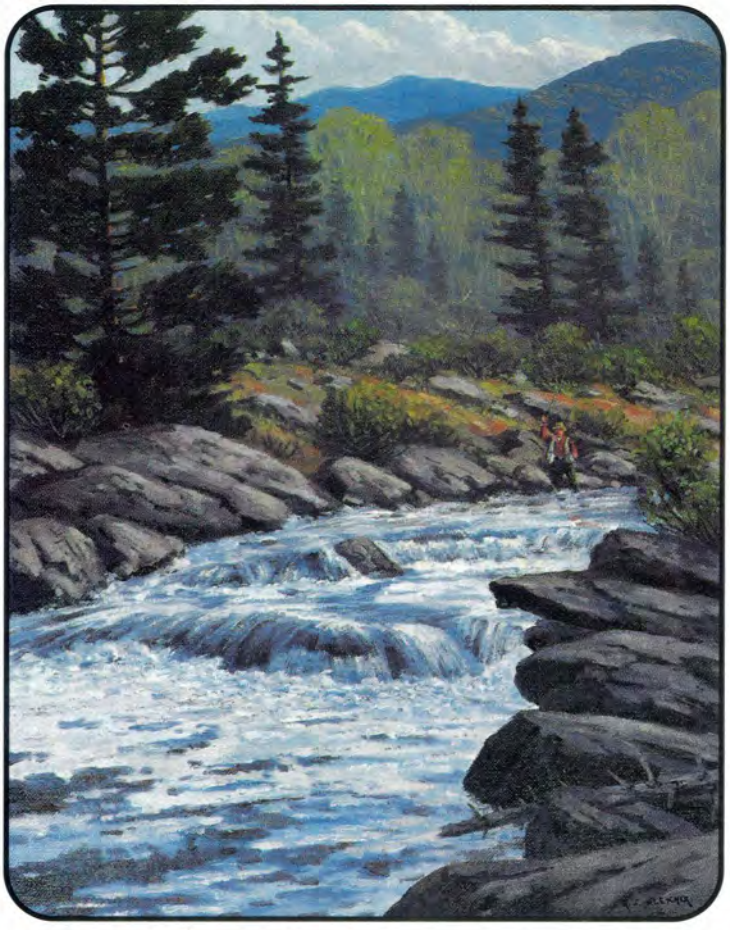
Bob Sleicher is a "mountain man." His wilderness camp at Cranberry Lake in St. Lawrence County lies deep within the North Country of the Adirondacks. There are no autos, telephones or electricity— only the stark, wild, rugged peacefulness that comes from a mountain cabin.

Sleicher's yearning for the grandeur and majesty of nature draws him yearly to the West where he has prospected for gold, rafted the Colorado River and painted Pike's Peak.

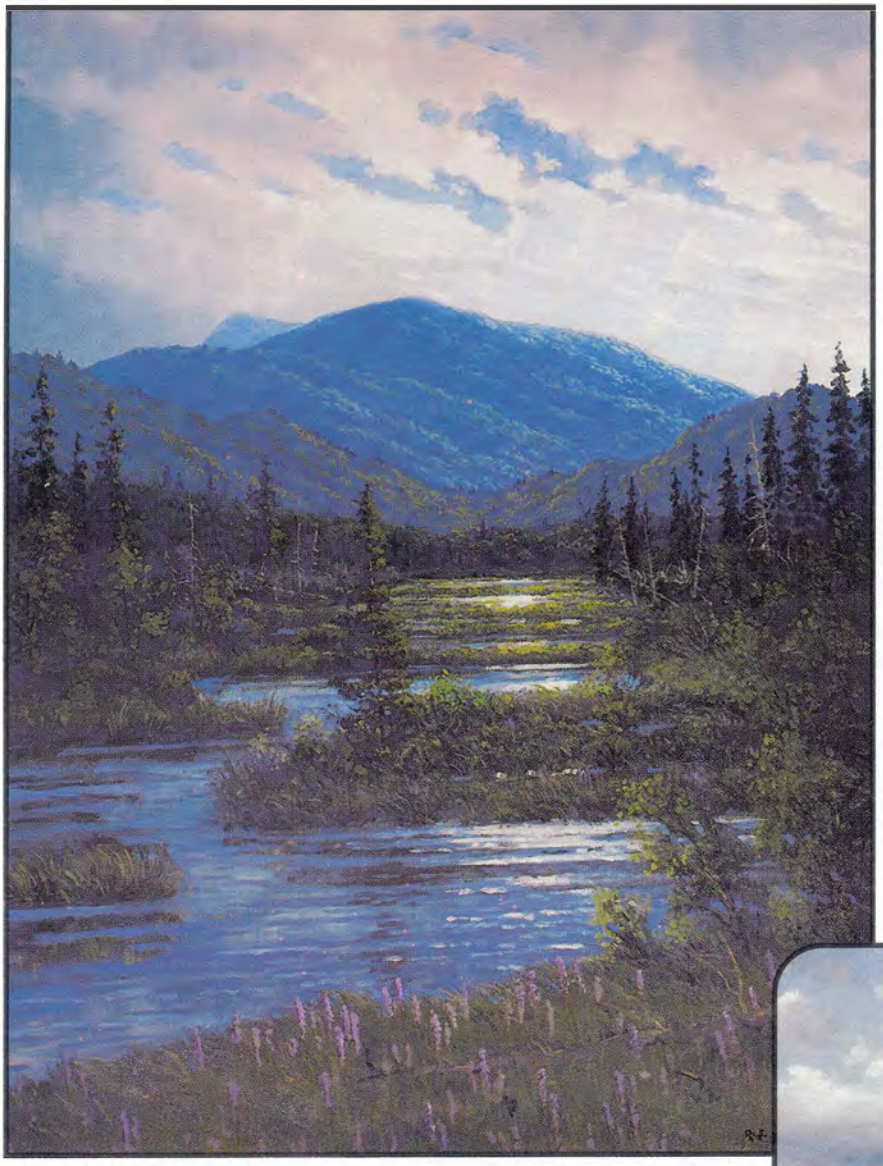
"I guess there is some deep, wild spirit or freedom in me that always makes one want to see what's on the other side of the next ridge," the artist said. "I think most painters who have this style also have an insatiable sense of curiosity about almost anything."

Cranberry Lake Afternoon

"A painter is somewhat like a good hunter. To get the true feeling of the subject matter, there usually is a little suffering involved. You can't always stay on the trails to find what you want."



Upper Boreas River



The Flowed Lands

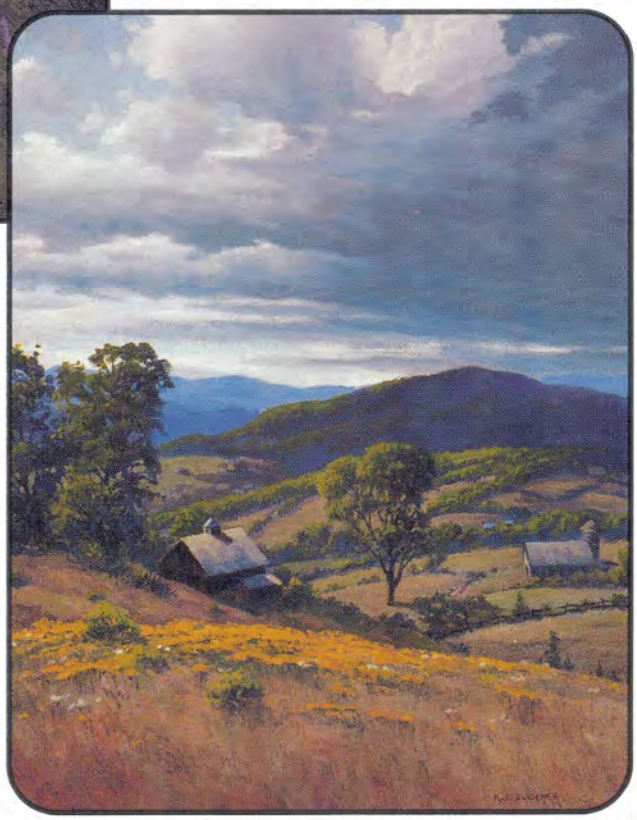
Sleicher is a member of the Society of Animal Artists whose works have been exhibited throughout the United States and in a number of outdoor publications, including several covers and portfolios for *The New York State Conservationist.*

Robert S. Sleicher's works are featured at:

Four Cedars Gallery
126 Austin Ridge Road
Norwood, NY 13668-9778
(315) 353-2922

"I prefer to do paintings that are dramatic through color and present a realistic element of life and the wilderness, whether it be a deer leaping through the mist of the northern forests or a mountain man crossing Beartooth Pass in Montana," Sleicher said. "I always do a full landscape background so that one is left with the total visual impact of the painting."

William Repp is a management consultant from Rochester.



Champlain Valley—Adirondacks

Large Format Edition of the Peterson Field Guide to Eastern Birds

by Roger Tory Peterson. 289 pages. $24. Houghton Mifflin Company 1-800-225-3362. www.hmco.com.

Reviewed by Robert deVilleneuve

For those of us in the "trifocal generation," the field guides of our youth often are near impossible to use in the field. Our arms are just not long enough to read the text and to see the graphics at the same time.

Anyone who has tried to juggle binoculars, reading glasses and sunglasses while trying to keep that "confusing fall warbler" in sight will greatly appreciate the new *Large Format Edition of the Peterson Field Guide to Eastern Birds.*

This new edition is about twice the size of the standard field guides. It incorporates large type for easy reading and 390 new color range maps that were created specifically for this edition. The maps are conveniently located next to the bird descriptions, opposite the illustrations.

And best of all, the tried-and-true art of Roger Tory Peterson is now big enough to make identification easy for those of us on the far side of forty.

The large format edition includes more than 400 species and descriptions that are shorter than those found in the standard field guide. So you still will want to own both books.

This large format edition is every bit as good as the standard edition. It will make a great holiday gift that will be appreciated by any birder who would like to leave the reading glasses at home.

Robert deVilleneuve is the production director for *The Conservationist.*

Moose: Spirit of the North Woods

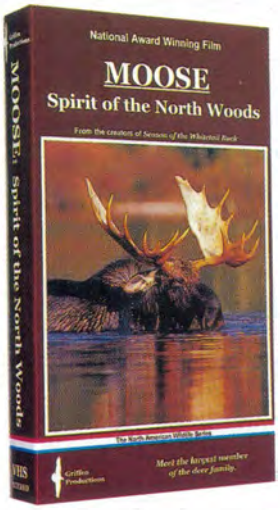
By Gary Griffen. 52 minutes. $23.95 (NYS residents add sales tax). Griffen Productions, RD1 Box 253H, Red Hook, NY 12571.1-800-553-3454. www.moosevideo.com.

Reviewed by Alan Hicks

For me, a good wildlife video leaves the audience with a greater understanding and appreciation of both the subject and all the natural world. For a video to be great it must also draw the audience into consuming all the information it can easily digest, yet leave it craving still more. It must answer all the common questions. Finally, the viewer should be leaning forward at the closing credits and walking away with a hint of "gee-whiz" and a pocket full of interesting little somethings that they had never before considered.

Gary Griffen's *Moose* is a great visual success. The scenery is always good and at times spectacular. No one that I would care to know could look at the footage of the autumn hardwoods draped in an early snow without wanting to be there. With moose themselves, the cinematographer has demonstrated a degree of patience, perseverence and skill that he can be proud of.

The script is well written and Richard Kiley, a voice long associated with quality nature productions, gives its presentation an air of authority. Hearing the vocalizations, especially of the calves, is a memorable plus, as is the impressive footage of the cow in a full sprint. Leading the "gee-whiz" department was an excellent section



about why a moose's eyes are reflective. It is unfortunate that there is not more material of this nature as some obvious choices are missing that could have easily been added by eliminating the apparent redundancies about breeding and by reducing shots of wandering animals. Distinguishing the sexes (absent antlers) was one item that came to mind as did showing how moose display anger and how people should respond to those rare events. I also would have welcomed more discussion about vehicle collisions, putting the risk into perspective and how drivers could lessen that risk.

The pace of the film is as steady, and as calm, as . . . well . . . a moose. The quick glimpses of other forest dwellers and of the landscape helped, although showing, and interpreting various moose sign would have both answered many common questions and improved the visual flow.

Is it a good video? Absolutely. Is it a great film? Not quite.

Alan Hicks is a wildlife biologist for DEC at Delmar, Albany County.

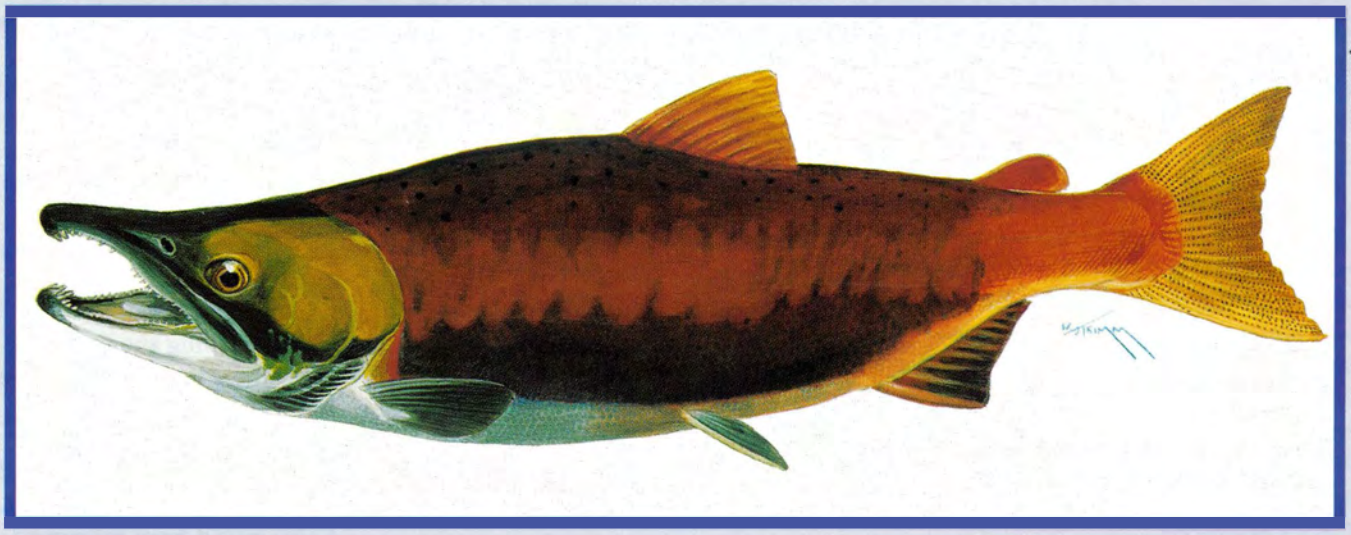
Kokanee
Our Littlest Salmon

By Mark Radz

Kokanee, sockeye or "red salmon" are all popular names for (*Oncorhynchus nerka*) the smallest representative of the salmon family in New York.

Not native to our region, kokanees are a Pacific salmon that spawn from Monterey Bay in California, north to Point Hope, Alaska. At one time these runs contained many millions of fish. But due to habitat degradation and other unseen forces, this no longer occurs. Kokanee once were sought commercially, often canned and sold as a delicacy throughout the country. They are not yet considered a threatened species, but studies are under way to determine their status. Kokanee are steel blue to greenish above, fading to bright silver sides, pearl white below. They have no distinct spots. However, in strong light I've noticed black flecks on the backs of some specimens. Also under the same conditions, young fish exhibit an almost rainbow-like iridescence. This quickly fades as the fish dies. Breeding males develop a moderate humpback appearance, along with a hook jaw and a brilliant red body color. Hence the moniker "red" salmon. This is true of sea run fish. The landlocked specimens will take on a hook jaw but not the hump or color of their larger ocean counterparts. At least, this is the case of all the adult fish I've observed.

"Salters" may be up to 33 inches in length and 15 or 16 pounds. However, fish denied access to the sea will be much smaller. Stocked as fingerlings, they will be 9 to 11 inches long the following season. The few that survive angling pressure and predation for another year will be 13 to 17 inches long. These fish are considered lunkers and are quite rare. The largest that I've handled in my profession as a taxidermist was a 17-inch breeding male caught by William Beck in Crane Pond, Hamilton County. It was only an ounce or two shy of the state record. Certainly diminutive in size compared to most salmonids.



Wayne Trimm

Kokanee have been stocked in several lakes in New York, including Long Pond, Franklin County (10,000), Polliwog Pond, Franklin County (41,600), Bug Lake, Fulton County (10,000), Mitchell pond, Hamilton County (5,000), Little Hill Pond, Lewis County (2,000), Deer Pond, St. Lawrence County (2,200), East Pine Pond, Esssex County (11,500) and Lake Colby,

Mark Radz

Franklin County (20,000). They have also been stocked to a limited extent in Lake Ontario.

I've had the opportunity to fish for kokanee in one of their original and southernmost plantings, Glass Lake in Rensselaer County. This is a small body of water, but deep and cold and considered prime habitat for these particular fish. They are very reluctant to leave their comfort zone to strike a lure. One successful old-timer relates that they will come up in the water column if attracted, but never down.

Because of this reluctance to move, and the fact that they are strictly plankton eaters, fishing is very specialized. If not properly equipped, and fishing at the right depth, you might fish a lake containing them for years and never catch one. The primary lure of choice is the Lake Clear Wobbler. Various sizes are used but most often it is 3-1/2 to 4-1/2 inches long, silver on one side and brass on the reverse. To this is attached a leader from a few to 18 inches in length and a small (#8 or #10) wire or forged plain or gold hook. Attached to this is a piece of baby corn (white is preferred over yellow).

Sometimes small pieces of garden worm are used if the action is slow. By rowing or using an electric motor, this offering is slowly trolled from a long, limber rod and a bait-casting reel spooled with color-coded lead core line. I'm sure that downriggers could be used with 4-6 pound test line for even more sport in catching these feisty little fish. And sport it is, with even nine- and 10-inch fish often surfacing to jump again and again, trailing yards of heavy lead line behind them.

Make it a point to pursue our littlest salmon sometime in the near future. It's an angling experience not to be missed. And no one goes angling for them just once. Chances are, you will be the one hooked and, like me, will return again and again.

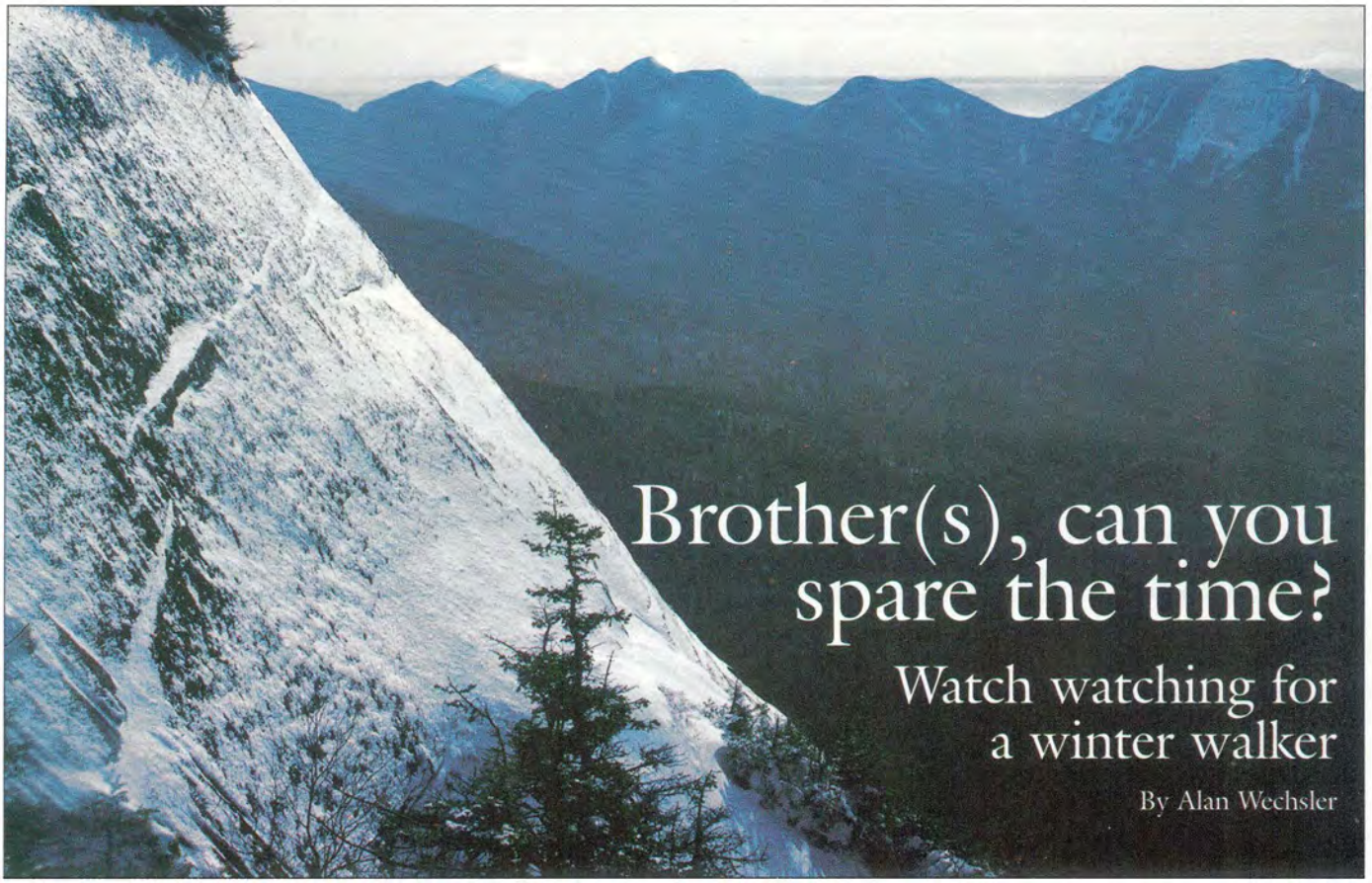
Mark P. Radz is a taxidermist and free-lance writer from Wynantskill, Rensselaer County.

Stocking Salmon and Trout

Kokanee salmon are just one of a number of salmon and trout species stocked by DEC into New York's waters. Each year, DEC's hatcheries produce for distribution into nearly 1,000 public waters across the state approximately 900,000 pounds of brook trout, brown trout, rainbow trout, splake, lake trout, chinook salmon, coho salmon, landlocked Atlantic salmon and kokanee. Some species, like the kokanee, are stocked solely to enhance recreational fishing. Other species, such as the lake trout, are put into certain waters to aid in restoration of the species.

To find out more about stocking in New York State, as well as a listing of stocked waters, visit DEC's website at:

www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dfwmr/fish/index.html



Alan Wechsler

Brother(s), can you spare the time?

Watch watching for a winter walker

By Alan Wechsler

Scarring from a past landslide that gave Big Slide Mountain its name. Check on trail conditions before venturing into areas of the Adirondacks effected by recent landslides.

When you're hiking by yourself in the Adirondacks in late December and you know you're pushing daylight, you tend to look at your watch a lot.

Hmm. 2:25 p.m. I was nearly down from Yard Mountain with four easy miles to go and two hours of daylight. No problem at all.

Watch out for thoughts like that. Your situation can change quickly. All it takes is a simple matter of losing the trail. Next thing you know, you're lost in the woods, pushing your way through thick pines and sharp-edged blowdowns, relying only on adrenaline and faith that you're heading in the right direction.

But I'm getting ahead of myself.

It was a brilliant, sunny day in the High Peaks with no clouds in the sky, barely a breeze, the temperature hovering around a relatively-mild 20 degrees. With nothing to do the weekend after Christmas, I decided to take a solo hike up Big Slide via the Three Brothers, with maybe a loop over Yard Mountain if I had time.

There are few trails that rival the beauty and ever-increasing view from the Brothers. This incredible trail remains passable today while some others in the region were snarled by the destructive force of Hurricane Floyd this past September. But in wintertime, this is not a route for the klutzy, or the timid.

The trail begins at the Garden parking lot, which fills up in minutes in the summertime but only had a handful of cars on this chilly December morning. In no time, I'm in my boots and on the trail, crampons clanking away on the back of my daypack.

The Brothers are actually a series of cliffs on top of a ridge that gets higher and higher as you make your way along the four-mile route to Big Slide Mountain. It only takes about 45 minutes of hiking before you reach the first Brother. From there, the hike takes you along one of the greatest views in the High Peaks. John's Brook is below you and the Great Range is on the horizon, with more than a dozen of the state's highest mountains filling your vision.

I've never been clear on where the second Brother is. All I know is from that point on, the views don't stop for several miles.

From here on, a winter hike can get tricky. There are several short, steep sections that are almost rock-climbs. And with the trail covered in snow and ice, the route requires careful maneuvering and balance.

I can see a party ahead — the only people I'll see for the next five hours. It's a couple taking a break on what may or may not be the second Brother. They were well-prepared for the weather. Each wore a full-size backpack, with winter boots and crampons. I, on the other hand, had a day pack filled with an extra-heavy sweater, a space blanket and a few other supplies. It was enough to survive a night out if I had to. But I was hiking on a popular trail, moving fast and I knew where I was going. There shouldn't be any problems. "See you on top," I told them, knowing I would be long gone by the time they made the summit.

The second half of the hike to Big Slide is far less interesting. A couple of quick views, and then woods until you climb another steep section and find yourself staring out on Big Slide's namesake — a landslide that years ago ripped away part of the mountainside. Today, the slide was covered in a thin layer of snow, making a beautiful white foreground to frame the peaks of Marcy and Algonquin in the distance. From there, the summit was only a few yards away.

But I didn't have time to dwell on the view. For there was plenty of daylight left, and I had decided to continue the extra mile and a half to Yard Mountain before heading down to John's Brook. It was a beautiful day, and I was in a groove.

It took less than an hour to reach Yard. But from here down to the valley floor was the steepest part of the trek. At one section, I had to descend a 50-foot ledge covered with ice. Luckily, there were ample handholds, and I didn't need to strap on my crampons.

Then I lost the trail.

No problem, I thought. Looking at the map, the trail that heads to John's Brook Lodge was directly south, and downhill. I had a compass. All I needed to do was a little bushwhacking. No need to backtrack.

But I had neglected to take into account the character of the Adirondack woods. Here, nature has conspired to make off-trail hiking an affair more like an obstacle course than a jaunt in the woods.

And so I found myself pushing through huge sections of blowdown that could not be avoided. Sometimes branches would snap. Once I slipped off a fallen trunk. I fell onto my backpack, broken branches landing on top of me. I had to laugh. At least, I would've if I hadn't gotten the wind knocked out of me.

I got up, brushed myself off and kept going. There were animal tracks all over the place — deer, snowshoe hare and other species I couldn't recognize. And then, a half-hour after losing the trail, I found some human tracks — on a huge trail. Exactly where I thought I'd find it.

Perhaps it was stupid to blunder off the trail like that. But it was an exciting half-hour and it got my blood pumping and my adrenaline surging. Aside from a few scratches, there was no harm done. And there certainly was no chance I would have missed the trail.

I still managed to get out before sundown. Barely.

Alan Wechsler, a reporter for the Albany *Times Union*, has been hiking in the Adirondacks for 15 years.

Landslides alter landscape

The landslide that gave Big Slide Mountain its name occurred many years ago and the hiking trail on that Adirondack mountain is usually passable.

Not so for some hiking trails that were blocked by landslides and blowdowns resulting from the Hurricane Floyd weather front that hit the Adirondacks in September 1999. If you have any question about the trail conditions, before setting out check with local hiking clubs, guides or call the Department of Environmental Conservation office in Ray Brook, Essex County, at (518) 899-1300.

As author Wechsler notes, it is a good idea to ALWAYS carry a compass, map and enough gear to settle in for the night if it becomes necessary. Make sure you tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return. — RWG

file photo

photos by Jin Clayton, except where noted

New Belleayre Mountain Towers above the Catskills

By Tony Lanza

It's a brand new look for the oldest operating ski center in the Catskills.Belleayre Mountain has undergone dramatic improvements over the past year in time for the 1999-2000 ski season. Belleayre Mountain's 51st consecutive season will showcase a new bigger and better Belleayre. Two new quad lifts, a new lodge, upgraded snowmaking and the development of new and extended trails will result in a 20 percent increase in skiable terrain. If that is not enough, a tracked vehicle dubbed the "Beast of Belleayre" now provides the more adventurous skiers and snowboarders access to the remote areas of the mountain.

The upgrades and additions are financed though the commitment made by Governor George E. Pataki to provide $5 million in capital improvements for Belleayre. Operated by the Department of Environmental Conservation in the beautiful Catskill Forest Preserve, Belleayre, not just a winter resort, provides year-round recreational opportunities and serves as an economic linchpin for the central high peaks of the Catskills.

Governor Pataki also directed that $1.5 million from the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act of 1996 be used to improve sewage collection and treatment programs at the state-operated facility as part of the long-term program to improve water quality in the region.

Improvements at Belleayre amount to complete redesign of the mountain that entirely transforms the skiing and snowboarding experience at the oldest active ski area in the Catskills.

The improvements amount to a complete redesign of the mountain that entirely transforms the skiing and snowboarding experience at the oldest active ski area in the Catskills. "Belleayre is now not only the oldest operating ski area in the Catskills,' said superintendent Richard Clark," it's also the newest. Skiers familiar with Belleayre will be amazed at the difference."

The new quad, Tomahawk, will provide better access to the highest skiable peak in the Catskills. The new 5,000-foot Superchief quad makes the long awaited connection of the upper and lower mountain a reality. Roaring Brook, Belleayre Mountain's most popular run, now rides and skis an incredible 2.27 miles, the longest trail in the Catskills. The new configuration at Belleayre will promote better traffic flow for the users and provides better connections to various sections of the facility.

The most dramatic moment of the new expansion had to be the sounds of the powerful Sikorski helicopter hoisting the 51, 40-foot-tall, three-ton towers into place on the mountainside. The dramatic flying of the towers is the most emblematic event of the most aggressive, ambitious expansion in the resort's 50-year history.

Mother Nature can sometimes be unpredictable and uncooperative, but two new 400-horsepower vertical pumps producing an additional 2,000 gallons per minute and 31,000 feet of new snowmaking pipe increase the mountain's snowmaking capacity to 92 percent of the trails.

Improvements were not just limited to the outdoors. The new Longhouse Lodge is a multi-purpose building designed to relieve the pressure and congestion of the Overlook Lodge. The contemporary longhouse structure is thought to be the symbol of a new beginning for the Iroquois people. How fitting it is that the new lodge, a building that will serve families, ski clubs, and groups is named the Longhouse Lodge. The new building brings the number to four day-use lodges at Belleayre.

More improvements are scheduled for the next season. A new, expert-level trail will be opened in the name of Belleayre's own Olympic ski coach, Dot Nevel, and expansion of the parking facility is planned.

Design and constuction management services for these projects are being provided by DEC's Division of Operations with Belleayre's own staff constructing the new trails and installing the snowmaking pipes.

New and expanded trails and lifts will challenge skiers and snowboarders at Belleayre.

Belleayre Mountain, on Route 28 in Ulster County, was opened as a ski center in 1949 with five trails and an electrically-powered rope tow. Belleayre made the news when they installed New York's first chair lift, a single chair rising 3,000 feet to the summit lodge. Residents recall how skiers would pitch tents outside the lodge so that they could be first in line for the lift. Bigger and better, Belleayre Mountain continues to rank as one of the finest winter recreational facilities in the Northeast.

For more information:
(914) 354-5600
www.belleayre.com

Tony Lanza is the assistant superintendent and director of skier services at Belleayre Mountain Ski Center, operated by the Department of Environmental Conservation.

Tales of a Tenderfoot Mountain Hiker

by Warren F. Longacker

I guess it was sometime during the 1930s when I was first introduced to the Adirondacks. I had just purchased a new Thompson canvas-covered canoe and was itching to try it on a few Adirondack streams and lakes.

With a brother and a mutual friend and the canoe on top of the car, we drove north on old Route 9 to spend a week canoeing, fishing, and mountain climbing in the North Country.

We headed for the southwest approach of Mt. Marcy, the old Twin Brooks trailhead at Lake Sanford and the abandoned iron mine. It was a long trail, 14 miles to the summit.

Driving over the old Blue Ridge Road that led from North Hudson to Tahawus we stopped at the Boreas River. Here we met an Adirondack native who, after talking with us and hearing our plans, tried to get us to rent one of his cabins for the night. "Looks like rain," he said.

He offered to show us some good trout fishing at the base of a dam at the Cheney ponds. We took him up on it and canoed down to the dam where each of us caught several brook trout. Back at his camp our host fried them in butter and we all feasted on delicious Adirondack trout. We thanked him but did not rent the cabin and went on to the trailhead.

Luckily we met a forest ranger coming out of the trail. "Where are you going with that canoe, boys?" he asked. I told him we were headed for the mountain and thought we could use it on some of the streams there.

"You won't be able to use it on those streams," he said. "You're in the High Peaks area. If I were you I'd take it off the trail a couple hundred yards or so and hide it in the woods. Cover it with brush and leaves so it can't be seen. And take that rack off your car and hide it, too. If some smart guy sees that he might put two and two together, figure you brought a boat or canoe here and go looking for it."

We spent three days on the trail, fishing where we could — even at the foot of Hanging Spear Falls — and sleeping in lean-tos along the trail. At the old Four Corners lean-to at the base of the mountain we found ourselves ill-equipped for camping as we had no sleeping bags. With the three of us sleeping under blankets it seemed the ones at the sides were constantly being exposed to the cold mountain air. But it was even more disconcerting to feel field mice run over your bare feet during the night. It rained just about every day and the trail turned into a small stream. Our soaked shoes were causing blisters on our feet.

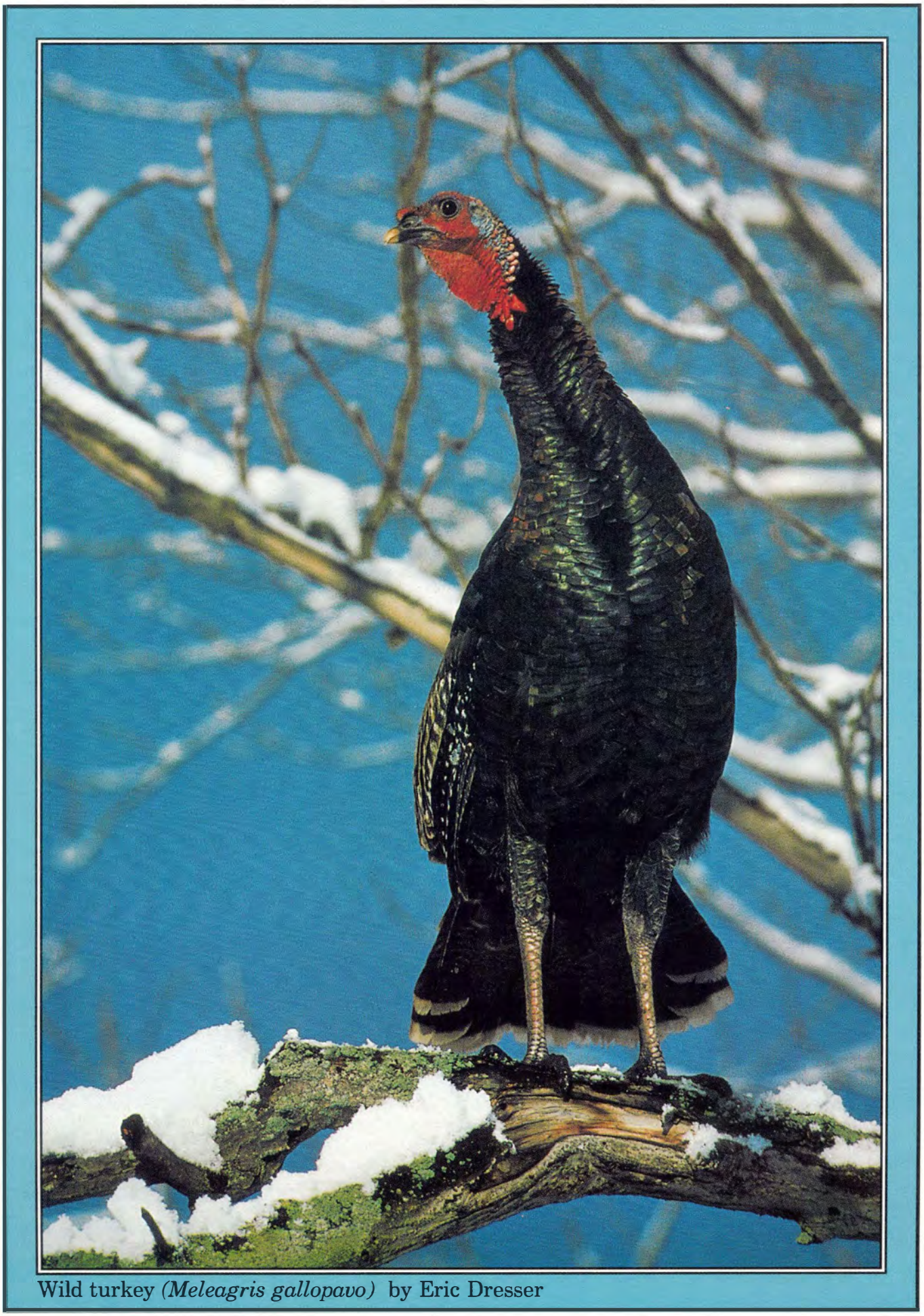
Back at the trailhead we found our canoe and car rack safely where we had left them. After our hike we drove up to Coney's to canoe on the Raquette River. Here we caught a stringer of yellow perch, bass and bullheads. Already I was planning a longer canoe trip on the Raquette, maybe even the Fulton Chain. Then deciding to climb Mt. Ampersand we drove a few miles east to spend the night at the lean-to at the south shore of Middle Saranac Lake.

Here we cleaned the fish and put them in a large pot of water on the ground under the canoe intending to have them for breakfast. The next morning when I looked there wasn't one fish in the pot. "What happened to the fish?" I asked. No one knew. The raccoons must have had one gourmet feast with all those cleaned and washed fish.

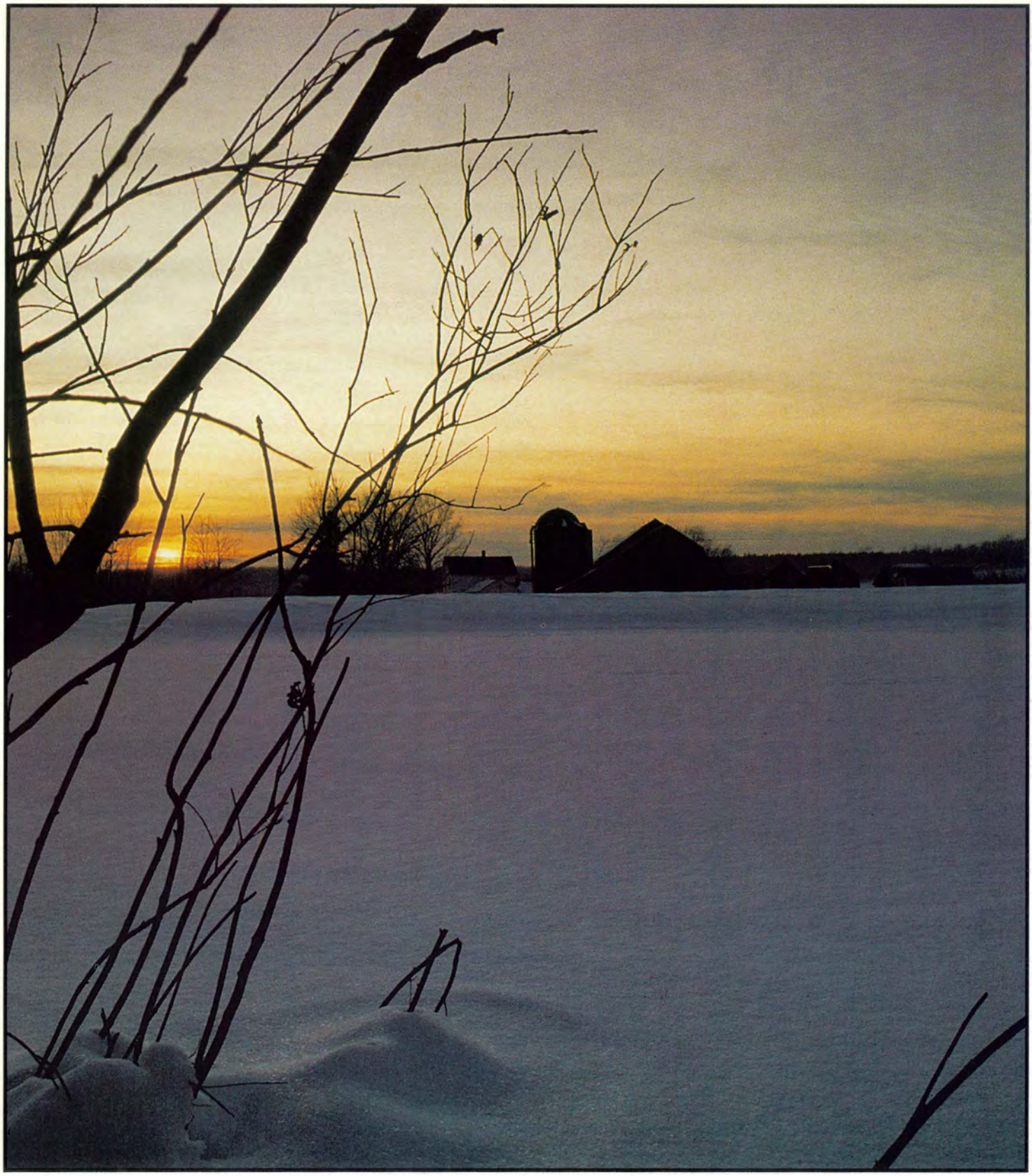
At that time Ampersand Mountain had around 1,000 log steps near the top of the trail, each about a foot high. It made for quite a rugged climb. Our friend had lived in Wells when he was younger so we drove down there next. We pitched a tent on his old neighbor's lawn and spent the next two days fishing and canoeing on Algonquin Lake.

Our week's vacation led to a lifetime of memories. It made me fall in love with the Adirondacks and led to many happy subsequent visits to our unique state park inside the Blue Line.

Warren F. Longacker of Ballston Lake, Saratoga County, is an 86-year old Adirondack enthusiast with wonderful memories of his camping days.



Wild turkey *(Meleagris gallopavo)* by Eric Dresser



Chenango County by Neil Satterly

Special pull-out field guide: "Freshwater Sportfish of New York"