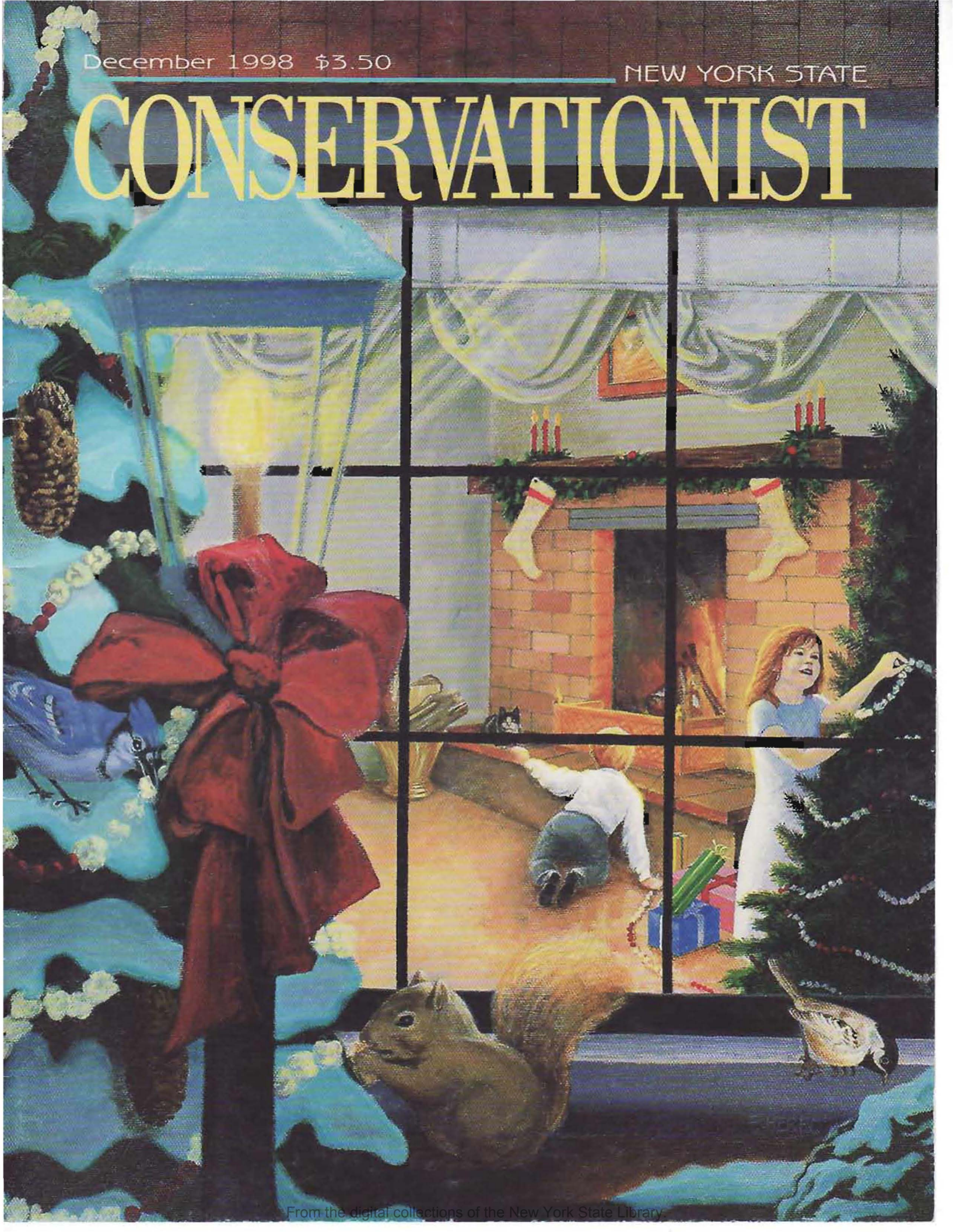


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NEW YORK STATE

# CONSERVATIONIST





Northern cardinal, male, (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) painting by Dann Jacobus

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**CONSERVATIONIST**

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George E. Pataki  
Governor of New York



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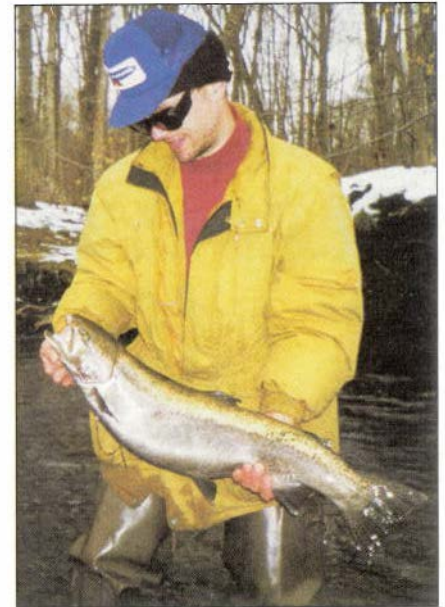
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**Inside front:** Northern cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) painting by Dann Jacobus.

**Inside back:** Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) in Sullivan County © by Gene Weinstein from his 1999 calendar, "Bald Eagles in New York," 3 Belmont Drive, Monticello, NY 12701. \$8.50 plus state sales tax.

**Back cover:** Ice storm, Clinton County by Gary Randorf.

# ICE STORM

## Nature Adapts

by Janet Essman



**L**ike the flexible hemlock tree that bends but does not break, nature has bounced back from the Ice Storm that last winter devastated New York's North Country.

The January storm wreaked havoc on the human population. Weighted down with as much as three inches of ice, tree limbs and utility lines snapped, leaving thousands of people without electric power. Roads were closed by fallen trees and dangling power lines. Farms, and sometimes whole communities, were stranded for days.

Nature, too, felt the impact. Overburdened trees in the Adirondack hardwood forest snapped, littering the forest floor with a tangle of branches. Familiar trails became impassable, stream flows were altered. DEC estimated that the Ice Storm, unprecedented in recent memory for its severity and scope, affected 4.6 million acres of forest and significantly damaged 3 million acres across the counties of Lewis, Jefferson, St. Lawrence, Franklin, Clinton and Essex.

One year later, biologists and foresters are still assessing the impacts of the Ice Storm. In some cases the changes are dramatic, others

are more subtle. Red oak saplings that previously struggled to survive under a dense forest canopy are enjoying a spurt of growth. Birds that nest in tree tops such as scarlet tanagers face a reduced habitat; cavity-dwellers such as winter wrens and hermit thrushes that nest close to the ground will thrive in the jumble of fallen and broken trees. Some predict that the deer population may increase because of better forage in the newly cleared areas where the storm brought down mature, shading trees. But opportunities for hunters may be limited because of the new natural obstacles that have reduced access to the forest.

Producers of sugar maple, timber and wood products face serious economic losses from dead and dying trees, and forest biologists point out that the wounded trees are more susceptible to disease, insect damage and drought. On the other hand, wildlife ecologists say disturbances like ice storms create positive long-term benefits to the forest community. The woody debris provides food and cover for many wildlife species and returns nutrients to the soil. Broken branches in the forest canopy create sunny openings on the forest floor

(above)  
Mourning doves and other animals of the North Country adapt to the altered habitats.

which allow new growth of shade-intolerant trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers that provide food and cover for animals. One thing is certain: Last winter's Ice Storm provided tremendous opportunities for research.

"The ice storm brought about dramatic ecological changes that raise fundamental questions about the structure and function of ecosystems," said Kenneth B. Adams, an ecology professor at SUNY Plattsburgh. "We have a unique opportunity to investigate damaged ecosystems and try to predict various paths that recovery might take. Once we analyze the data we'll have a clearer picture of how different species are impacted by natural events and how they recover."

As part of a class project, Adams's students are tagging and measuring hundreds of red oak trees near West Chazy, Clinton County. The study will provide data about the natural restoration of the forest ecology.

During the next few years, scientists will try to assess Ice Storm impacts on forest insects, tree pathogens, plant and animal communities and aquatic habitats. They will also look for ways to help private woodland owners, maple producers and tree care professionals develop recovery plans and lessen the impact of future natural disturbances.

The trees, of course, are the storm's most obvious victims. Conifers such as spruce and

hemlock survived because their branches folded down instead of breaking off under the weight of the ice. The greatest immediate mortality was to six- to ten-inch diameter hardwood trees such as maples, oaks and beech, explained Dave Smith, DEC regional forester in Watertown. "The pole-sized trees bent over and broke at the trunk. Smaller trees bent to the ground but did not break and they can recover. Older, larger trees

lost branches at their tops, but they had plenty of root reserves and could put out new leaves in the spring," he said.

While some impact to trees was immediate, most of the effects will only be obvious after



Gareth Pinnadore



W.A. Barnaszewski

(above) Spruce trees survived by bending under the weight of the ice.

(left) Ice-encased branches sparkle in the sun.



The northern forest will bounce back.

several growing seasons. Trees that lost most of their crowns may not die right away, but they are more susceptible to environmental stresses in the future. "If a deciduous tree loses more than 75 percent of its crown, we consider it to be severely damaged. That's probably enough to cause the tree to die within three years," Smith said. "But it depends on what happens over the next few years."

The heavy rains that fell last spring probably helped many damaged trees survive through the summer, said Adams. "The first season after the Ice Storm, we had the wettest spring on record for the Champlain Valley. That makes the direction of forest recovery quite different than if it were dry instead. It eliminated the potential stress from drought and prevented the wildfires that might have occurred," Adams said. "Local climate conditions over the next few years will continue to impact the direction recovery takes."

Danger from fire and falling tree limbs will persist for quite some time, said Michael Birmingham, a forest ecologist for DEC in Albany. "We'll have a lot more trees in the forest that will decay and become hollow over the next 10 or 20 years," he said. "The next storm that comes along will knock down these trees, and they will fall on fences, causing

wounds in other trees, injuring wood workers and causing hazards to people."

For some red oak trees, the long-term news may be good. Although the Ice Storm caused heavy damage to mature red oaks, it may stimulate the growth of oak seedlings. Many red oak stands throughout the U.S. are not regenerating

because the seedlings do not receive enough sunlight under the canopy of mature oak stands, said Adams. Ice Storm damage dramatically opened the Adirondack forest canopy and now allows sunlight to reach the oak seedlings. "These seedlings are important to the future of the red oak stand because the overstory trees were so badly damaged that seed production will be minimal for the foreseeable future. It will be interesting to observe the competition between sugar maple, beech and red oak seedlings in this new environment," he said.

Some forest animals also may find survival trickier during the next few years. The thin tree canopy means decreased production of acorns, hickory nuts and beech nuts, and meager pickings in some locations for gray squirrels, chipmunks and turkeys, said Joe Lamendola, a DEC wildlife biologist in Watertown. He said turkeys will look for food on farm fields this winter, and they still may not find enough to eat because fewer farms than usual are in production. "We lost a lot of farms from the Ice Storm because dairy farmers lost their cows. The turkeys may lose one more food source."

Turkeys have more places to hide from predators, however, as do grouse, woodcock, deer and small mammals such as voles and

mice. The fallen logs and tangled branches provide abundant cover that keeps animal and human hunters from reaching their prey easily. Raccoons, wood ducks and other species that den in hollow trees may find more hospitable habitats. Black bears, woodpeckers and other animals that feed on insects in dead wood will find more abundant food.

Lamendola said that "... in areas where hunters can hardly walk through the woods, the deer are primed to boom." He said deer, along with bears, foxes and coyotes, can also find more edibles among the shade-intolerant blueberries, raspberries, dogwood and viburnum that will grow abundantly on the now-sunny forest floor. He predicted that the increased animal populations will exceed their food supplies for a few seasons and then return to normal. "The deer population will get higher much quicker than usual and will rapidly start to decimate some species of plants," he said. "It may take about four years for the deer to catch up to the food supply."

Some songbirds may also benefit from the branches, leaves and logs on the forest floor. Adams said he expects to see more songbirds that live close to the ground, including the rufous-sided towhee, white-throated sparrow, dark-eyed junco, ovenbird and hermit thrush.

As the dead trees start to decay, he also expects an increase in cavity-nesting birds including winter wrens, black-capped chickadees, great-crested flycatcher, bluebirds, woodpeckers and various owls.

On the other hand, birds that make their nests in the tops of trees may suffer from lost habitat. In a survey of canopy-nesting songbirds in the Adirondacks this summer, Adams found reduced populations of scarlet tanager, red-eyed vireo, least flycatcher, eastern wood-pewee and rose-breasted grosbeak. Pinpointing just one cause for a species' decline is difficult, however, because so many interacting factors affect migratory bird populations. "We don't know if the low numbers are due to the loss of their wintering habitat in South America or to the loss of summer habitat here," Adams said. "It's a bit more complicated than we thought. We saw a lot of birds present in the overstory, but whether or not they were nesting we don't know. They might have been unpaired males that returned looking for their summer habitat. It will prob-



M.A. Bannaszewski



Gareth Plumadore

(above) Spruce boughs bend but don't break.

(left) Fallen trees and power lines stranded many communities.



(above) Broken and splintered trees are more prone to disease and fire.

(right) As much as three inches of ice weighed down tree limbs

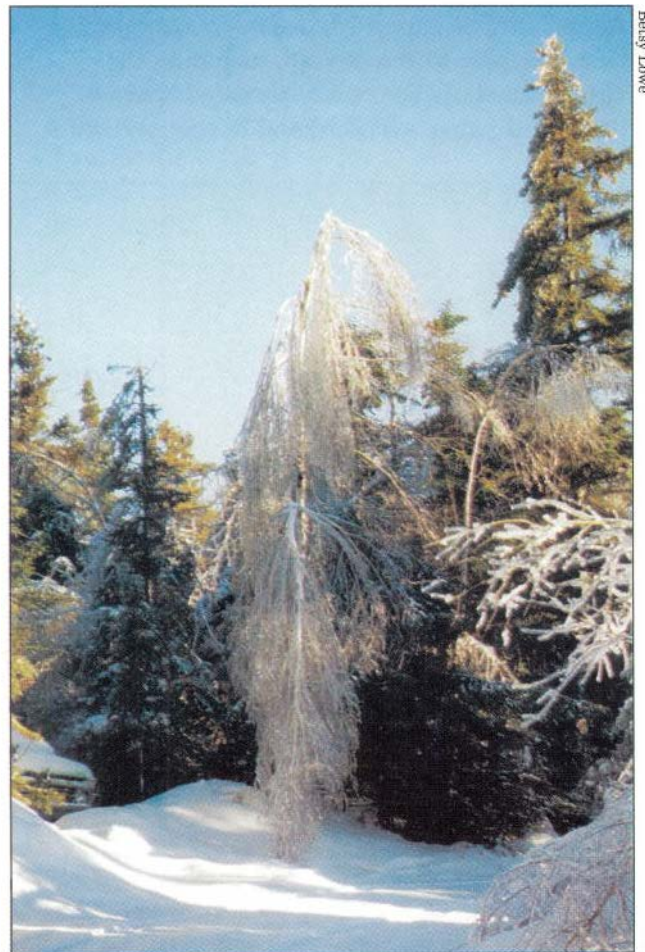
ably take another two or three years of studying bird communities before we see any clear pattern emerge.”

Adams said it is not likely that the Ice Storm will cause local extinction of any species, because animals can find alternative habitat nearby. Instead, he said we will see what he calls a “reshuffling of abundance” among plants and animals. “It appears at this time, that the Ice Storm caused a re-assortment of the relative importance of species present in the forest. Some species are increasing, and others will decline,” he said. “For the next few years we’ll see a change in dominance as plants and animals respond to their new environment.”

Like the reactions of plants and animals of the forest, humans’ reactions to the Ice Storm are complex. Whether the storm was good or bad for the Adirondack forest community depends on your point of view. The storm caused great damage to pocketbooks of people with financial interests in the trees. Two-thirds of northern New York’s maple producers reported heavy damage to their sugar bushes and tapping equipment, according to a state Department of Agriculture survey. At least 15 of producers who reported damage said they will not tap their trees in the 1999 maple season. Wood lot

owners also suffered. “The Ice Storm crushed the economic return I would have seen,” said John Gibbs, owner of a 170-acre tree farm and a DEC forester in Potsdam. “I invested in woodland because 30 years down the road there would be income, and it’s gone now. It will take 40 years for the trees to return to the value they were before the storm, and another 20 or 30 years after that for them to be of commercial value. It won’t be during my lifetime.”

Although the economic repercussions will last for decades, none of the changes are permanent. “Emotionally it’s tough for people, because in their lifetime they won’t see the forest as it was. But the forest will recover,” said Adams. “Forests are very dynamic. They are always in different stages of recovery since their last local disturbance. Wildfires, insect defoliation, timber harvesting — these are all disturbances and they come at different intervals, frequencies and intensities. The Ice Storm is just one more kind of disturbance.”







Icicles bar entry.

“Determining your threshold of impact is really a balancing act. It depends on whether you base your threshold on visual impacts, economic impacts or impacts on wildlife populations,” said Jim Beil, assistant director of the DEC Division of Lands and Forests in Albany. “If you end up with a bigger deer population because more light can hit the ground and subsequently there’s more succulents for the deer to eat, then it’s a positive impact for the deer. But if hunters can’t get through the woods because of all the branches on the ground, it’s a negative impact for hunters. If landowners get sick of getting beat up by nature, they will sell their land. And if they sell it to someone who breaks up the forest, it may be detrimental to the environment,” he said.

While scientists’ approaches may differ, they agree that studying the forest after the storm will provide important information about other damaged ecosystems and the best options for forest restoration. “That’s what the studies are for,” said Birmingham. “These studies get us out of the box of assigning good or bad to natural events. They quantify the impacts so we can address specific questions like, ‘how does an ice storm influence the impacts of insects on trees, and what is the best human response?’”

Janet Essman is a free-lance writer living in the Albany area.

## Fire and Ice: Friendly or Fatal?

The jack pine trees that are part of the rare ecosystem in Altona in Clinton County depend on periodic fires to regenerate. While the Ice Storm of 1997 provided plenty of fuel for the life-giving fire, the crushing destruction to this stand of trees may be fatal to the seed-bearing pine cones.

The dilemma poses management challenges for DEC and the W.H. Miner Institute, both of which have interests in the 4,500-acre pine barrens known as Flat Rock. Nearly 80 percent of the jack pine trees died because of the storm, said Kenneth B. Adams, an ecology professor at SUNY Plattsburgh. Half of the trees snapped off below the crown and a third were uprooted or stripped of most of their branches.

Flat Rock, one of a handful of sandstone pavement pine barrens that DEC classifies as “rare,” retains little moisture and supports an unusual mixture of plants, Adams said. Jack pine is the dominant tree, but the pitch pine in one section of the barrens presents a unique combination of species, according to Adams. There are more than 40 species of vascular plants and at least 50 kinds of lichen, mosses and mushrooms. The adjacent hardwood forests and wetlands contain another hundred or more species of ferns, wildflowers and trees. In sum, it is an ideal living laboratory for forest researchers and Adams’s students.

Both jack pine and pitch pine are shade-intolerant trees that depend on fire for the survival of their species. Each requires open sunny spaces of the type created by forest fires. The resinous cones of the jack pine also require heat from a burning tree canopy to release seeds and create a seed bed suitable for germination.

Because of nearby development, wildfires in Flat Rock have been snuffed out and there is no plan to set prescribed burns. The most recent wildfire in one section was in 1957 and some areas have not burned in more than 80 years. Without the life-releasing fires, many of the trees are approaching their biological life span with no replacements in sight.

It is ironic that the jack pines of Flat Rock face greater danger of extinction *because* of fire. The dead, dry branches that litter the ground are heavy with jack pine cones containing decades of stored seeds. But a wildfire at ground level probably will incinerate most of the seeds, Adams said. A planned burn might be very difficult to control because of the high fuel load on the forest floor, he added.

— Janet Essman



Pitch pine sprouts anew.

# Ornamental & Edible

## Decorate a tree for wildlife

by Jennifer Risley

DEC photos



**B**righten up the winter landscape by sharing holiday decorations with wildlife.

Edible ornaments fashioned from simple materials for outdoor display add color to the winter scene and attract wild birds and animals for your viewing pleasure.

Don't worry that the survival of the wildlife will depend on your continuing to provide food. Biologists assure us that wild birds and other neighborhood critters will do just fine on their own when it comes to foraging for food. Only in times of extreme cold will supplemental feedings from humans increase their chances of survival.

Instead, decorating trees for wildlife is more for your own enjoyment. It's a fun outdoor winter activity that brings into view such wild animals as blue jays, cardinals, chickadees, squirrels, raccoons and chipmunks. Some of these decorations, such as the edible garlands, can first be displayed indoors before they are put out for your feathered and furred visitors.

The first thing you need is a tree. Look for a bush or small tree in your yard sturdy enough to support your

homemade ornaments and close enough for you to observe any visitors. A natural Christmas tree that has outlasted its indoor purpose can be recycled outside for this purpose. Or place a number of sturdy branches (bare or evergreen) in a container of soil. Better yet, plan for the future by planting a tree near your favorite viewing window.

If you would like to fine tune which wildlife will visit your display, consider that black-oil sunflower seeds and safflower seeds are best for attracting chickadees,

titmice, nuthatches, finches, cardinals and grosbeaks. Niger (thistle) seeds are preferred by goldfinches, redpolls, and pine siskens.

Suet will lure insect-eating birds such as woodpeckers, chickadees, and titmice. Orioles, mockingbirds, robins, bluebirds, tanagers and waxwings will be attracted by fruit. Welcomed or not, squirrels, chipmunks, and raccoons

will come to your tree for just about anything.

**H**ere are some suggestions for using readily available ingredients for decorating an outdoor tree to attract wildlife.



# Decorate for Wildlife

## Suet Cake Ornaments

**Ingredients:** suet (raw beef fat found at most stores selling birdseed or from your butcher), birdseed, cornmeal.

**Equipment:** cookie cutters, string, waxpaper

**Procedure:**

- 1) Melt suet in a pan over low heat
- 2) Pour liquid fat into another pan leaving solids behind
- 3) Add birdseed and cornmeal until mixture is just pourable
- 4) Place cookie cutter on wax paper with a 12-inch piece of string looped through the cutter as a hanger
- 5) Spoon suet and seed mixture into cookie cutter and let set until cool (about 15 minutes)
- 6) Carefully remove cutters
- 7) Tie string to make loop and hang



## Egg White Ornaments

**Ingredients:** egg whites, birdseed or nuts

**Equipment:** wire, greased pan

**Procedure:**

- 1) Whip three egg whites until stiff
- 2) Fold in several cups of seed or nuts
- 3) Mold the mixture into small shapes and place on the pan
- 4) Bake at 300 degrees F for 30 minutes or until it hardens
- 5) Push wire through ornament and hang

## Garlands

**Ingredients:** popcorn, cranberries, apple slices, grapes

**Equipment:** florist's wire, or heavy thread and needle

**Procedure:**

- 1) Make knot at one end of wire
- 2) String together ingredients
- 3) Twist ends together and hang loop

## Orange Cups

**Ingredients:** oranges, cranberries, birdseed

**Equipment:** knife, heavy thread and needle or wire

**Procedure:**

- 1) Halve oranges, scoop out pulp
- 2) Using needle and thread or wire, make hanger for orange cups
- 3) Mix pulp with chopped cranberries and seed or nuts
- 4) Fill orange cup with mixture and hang

## Peanut Butter Cones

**Ingredients:** pine cones (dry and scales open), natural peanut butter, cornmeal or oatmeal (makes peanut butter easier for birds to swallow), birdseed

**Equipment:** Wire or string

**Procedure:**

- 1) Tie string under top cone scales and hang
- 2) Mix peanut butter with cornmeal and seeds to make a slightly dry mixture
- 3) Using a knife, spread mixture all over cone
- 4) Roll cone in seeds

## Coconut Cups

**Ingredients:** coconuts, suet (or birdseed)

**Equipment:** instruments for cracking coconuts in half, screw eyes, wire

**Procedure:**

- 1) Halve coconut
- 2) Make hanger for coconut cup by attaching wire loop to screw eyes screwed in near top of cup rim
- 3) Fill with melted suet and/or birdseed and hang

Jennifer Risley, of Syracuse, is a former environmental educator at DEC's Rogers Center in Sherburne, Chenango County.

# Arctic Visitor: The Snowy Owl

By Beverly Metott

Mike A. Amich



In the real world of predator and prey, the snowy owl hasn't had to master the art of artificial camouflage thanks to its unique natural coloration.

The male is nearly pure white, while the female has brown spots and bars mottled throughout her white body, only her face remaining white. The juvenile is different yet: more a dusky-brown or sooty-gray, with much bolder spots and bars than its parents. All three color variations are hard to detect, and for this reason alone the snowy owls are capable of perfect concealment.

When fall arrives, the snowy owl stays in its northern territory in the Arctic, or flies southward for a more reliable food source, usually near the U.S.-Canadian border (though they've been seen as far south as the Gulf of Mexico).

To go would mean entering unknown, and

oftentimes — dangerous territory new to the young bird. To stay could mean facing a severe winter. If the snowy owl faces a shortage of food, it will migrate southward. How far south is often a tricky question. Richard Clark, a retired biology professor from York College in Pennsylvania said: "It all depends on what the snowy owls find in moving southward. They do rely heavily on lemmings, and the population of these rodents goes up and down every so many years. Meadow voles are common in our area, and the population goes up and down with them as well, so they can either stay in the far north when lemmings are plentiful, or continue farther south (when lemmings are scarce) until they find an ample food supply. It's safe to say when there's a good year for lemmings, there's a nice size family for snowy owls." Other prey includes mice, squirrels, songbirds, waterfowl and ground birds such as pheasant and quail.

Success at hunting affects the breeding with all birds of prey. If food is abundant, the female snowy owl may lay anywhere from six to eight eggs. When food runs short, she may not lay any at all. In good years, the eggs hatch over several days. In this way there is considerable size difference between owlets.

The larger receive first dibs on the food available and the smaller nestlings get food only when the others are satisfied. It might seem cruel, but this is nature's way of making sure they're given a maximum chance at survival, even if other nestlings from the same brood starve to death in the process.

The oldest owlets have many advantages over their younger siblings. While their down remains white, the oldest already changed to a fluffy gray, allowing them to blend better with the open tundra, and even hide from predators. By the time the last owlet is just leaving the nest, the oldest owlet has grown its flight feathers, ready to take to the air. The owlets that live are heavy in weight, and strong enough to survive on their own. In fact, young birds may not breed the first couple years until their skills are such that they can care for themselves, and their brood.

The territory a snowy owl claims is large, often covering up to four square miles. They have the same strong talons and hooked bills as hawks, and often share the same hunting area. Snowys are most active as hunters at dawn and dusk.

A young bird encounters several adjustments on its first trip south. Since much of its young life has been spent in daylight hours, a snowy living in southern regions must develop hunting skills for the dark, not a difficult task considering its keen hearing. Furthermore, the owl is moving from an open, treeless tundra to a forested area. On their wintering grounds, even in New York, they tend to inhabit places similar to the tundra, such as airports and agricultural areas. It's not uncommon in New York State to find these birds resting on open ground, or on low perches which have an open view.

Frontal eye placement gives these owls binocular-like vision. At night, the pupils dilate immensely, each independent of the other. During the day, they contract, even though their day vision remains sharp. They can detect any glimmer, or trace of movement, thanks to a chemical in the eyes known as visual purple (found in the eyes of all birds and mammals). Visual purple further amplifies the image for quick and immediate detection. Since owls lack color vision, this image is portrayed in shades of gray and white.

Owls can hear and pinpoint sounds in total darkness without the use of vision. They have lopsided, oblong ear slits just beneath their skull feathers with the right slit slightly higher than the left slit for precise triangulation. The ear tufts present on many species of owls are absent on the snowy. Their range of hearing, though not wide, is keen and precise.

A definite hunting advantage of owls is their incredible ability to turn their heads in a three-quarter turn, without moving their bodies. Complex musculature around the neck bones helps owls to see in all directions.

Once the prey is detected, the snowy approaches stealthily and soundlessly. It's so quiet, the approach is like that of a phantom; suddenly the bird just appears from out of nowhere. This is because the fringes on the leading edge of the wings dampens the noise caused by airflow. The snowy owl spreads its talons as widely as possible in moving over its prey and pounces on its victim.

The snowy owl isn't a fast bird, as Professor Clark noted: "But then lemmings don't travel too fast either. Snowy owls have a broad wing which allows for a slow flight. Speed is not their thing, but they're very efficient." Their hearing, sight and flight abilities make them excellent predators. And simply by moving their heads from side to side in the air, they can estimate the distance between themselves and their prey with extreme accuracy.

The body length of the full grown snowy is about 20 inches, with a wing span of anywhere from 51 to 71 inches. Its legs are feathered right down to its black talons that match the black bill and the eyes are brilliant yellow with black centers.

No matter where this spectacular bird spends the winter months, it returns to the Arctic in the spring to breed. The female nests on a hummock in the tundra to protect the eggs which are round and white, with rough shells. While she sits on the eggs to keep them warm, the male hunts. For well over a month he will bring her food until the eggs hatch and she, too, can take to the skies to help feed the young brood. She risks leaving the owlets susceptible to open dangers, like the jaeger, an Arctic bird related to gulls, and the Arctic fox.

In that first year, the hunting skills and fierce predatory instincts of the young are not as sharpened as their parents, but by winter they will be able to make it on their own.

In the fall, this new family of snowys again faces the choice of whether to stay in the northern territory, or fly southward for a more reliable food source. With this decision the cycle is repeated, and the greatest chance for survival comes strongly into play.



V.A. Bannaszewski

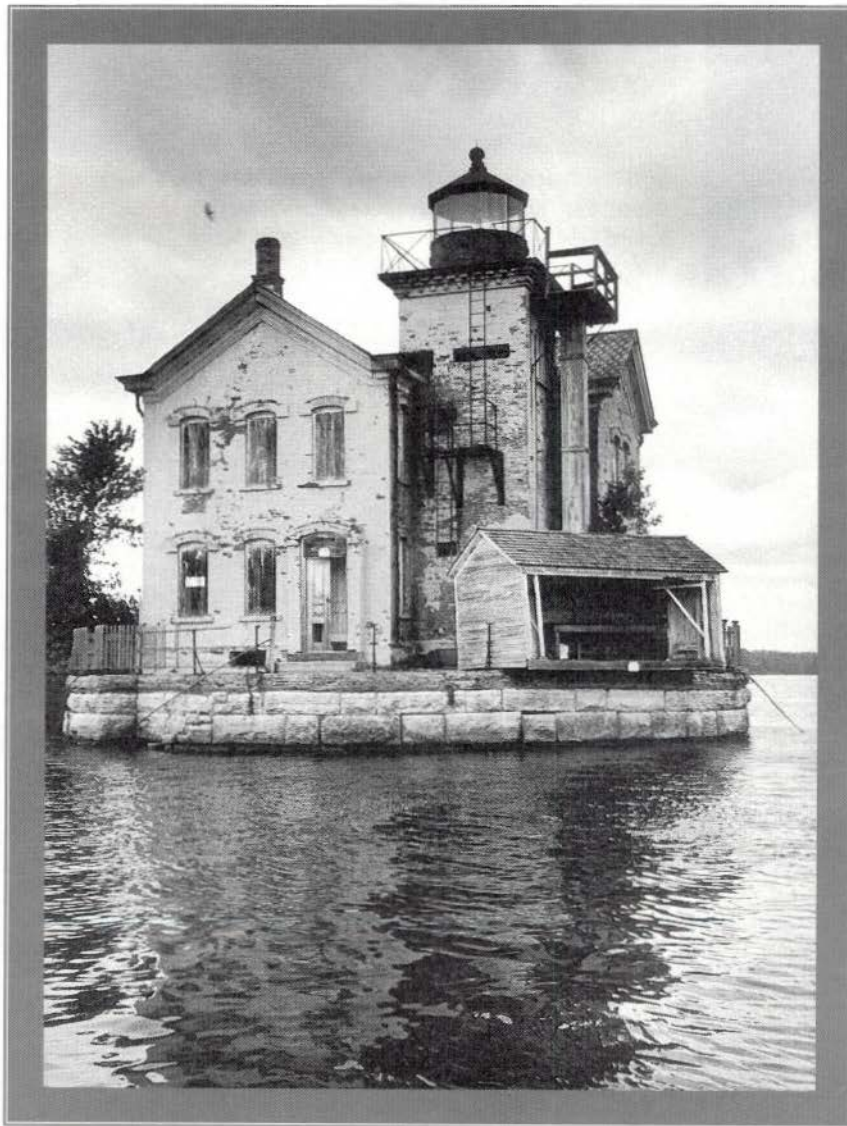
Beverly K. Metoff is a free-lance writer from Sandy Creek, Oswego County.



*The  
Hudson*

*perspective and retrospective*

*Photographs © by Joseph Squillante*



**F**or more than 20 years, Joseph Squillante has been capturing the majestic splendor of his beloved Hudson River. He has meandered along much of its 316 miles, from the headwaters on Mount Marcy in the Adirondacks to the placid marshes of the Hudson Valley New York Harbor.

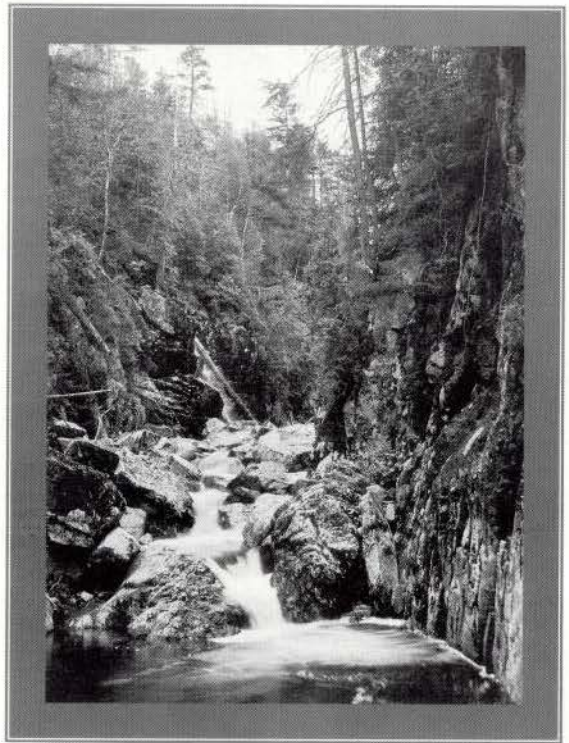
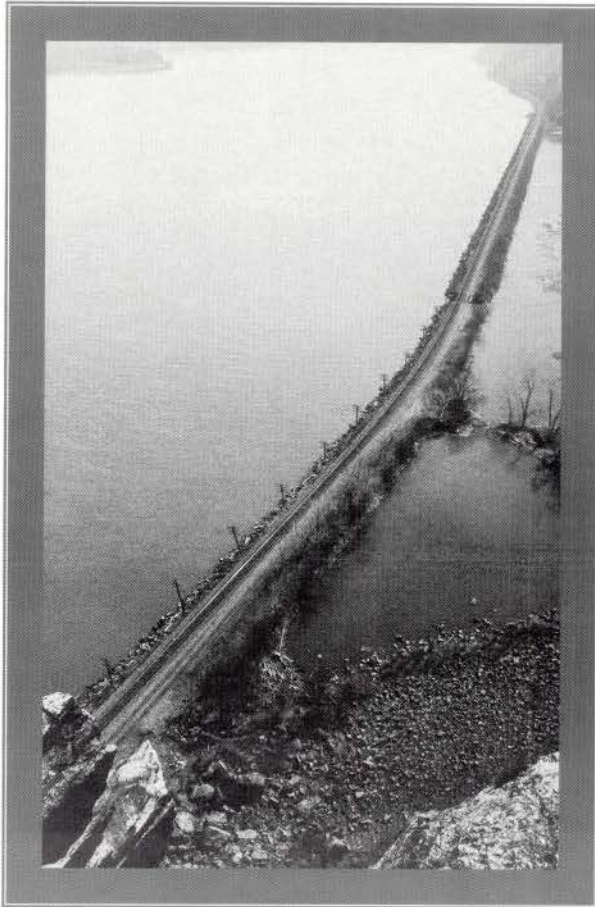
“My love and sense of wonder for the Hudson grows each time I visit its shores,” Squillante says. “I strive to capture its beauty and foster awareness of its grandeur.”

His commitment to the Hudson River and its photography led him to found, with his wife, Carol Capobianco, the Hudson River School of Photography. Through exhibitions, slide lectures and photo walks, they bring people closer to the river and its beauty.

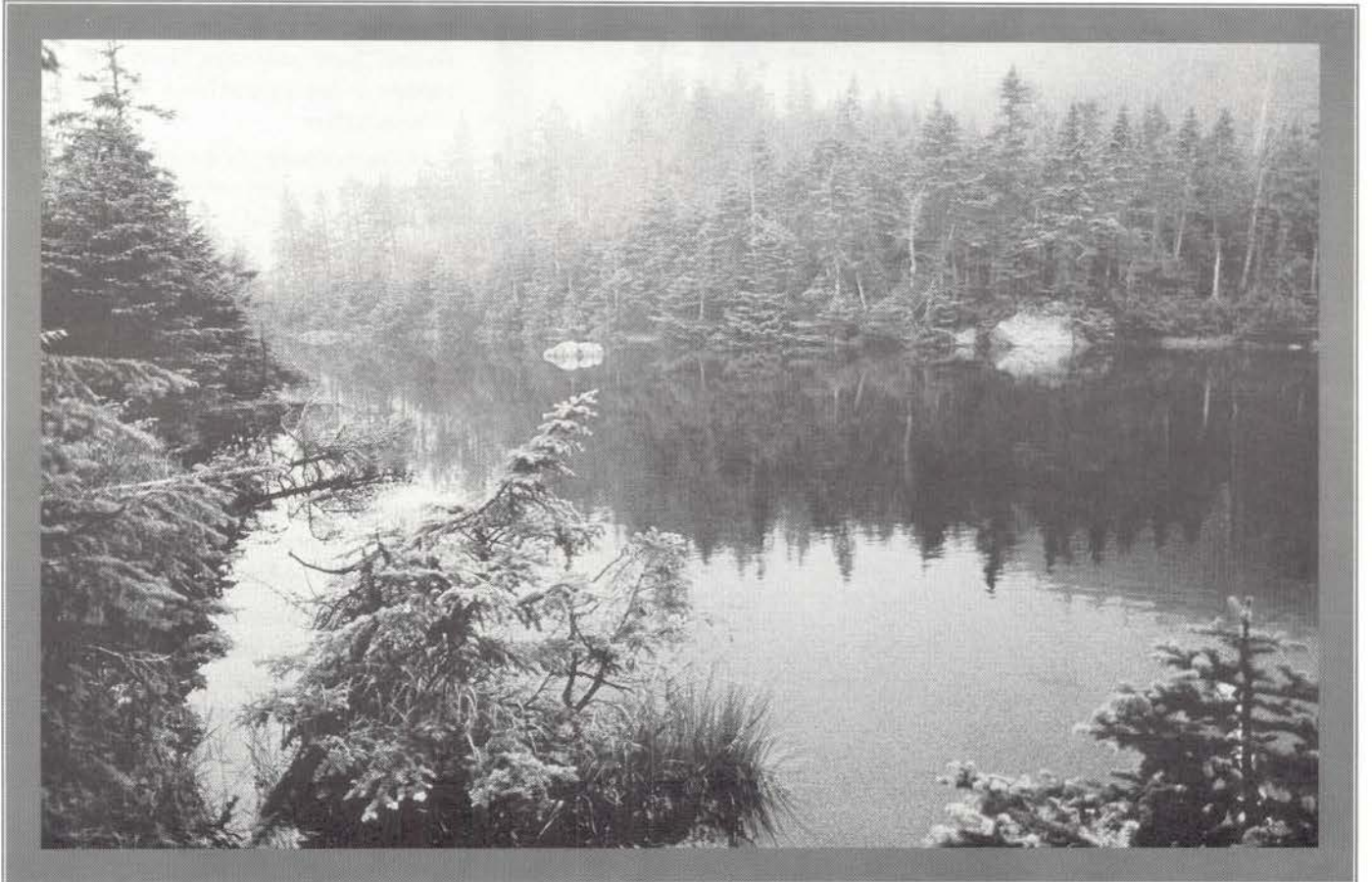
Photography is an ideal medium to share this vision. “Go to the river with your camera and seek out its wonders,” Squillante says. “The picturesque is all around us. I believe an appreciation of this great natural resource will lead to a better understanding of its importance.”

Squillante has studios in Tivoli, Dutchess County, and Mount Vernon, Westchester County. His e-mail address is [HUDSON@ULSTER.NET](mailto:HUDSON@ULSTER.NET).

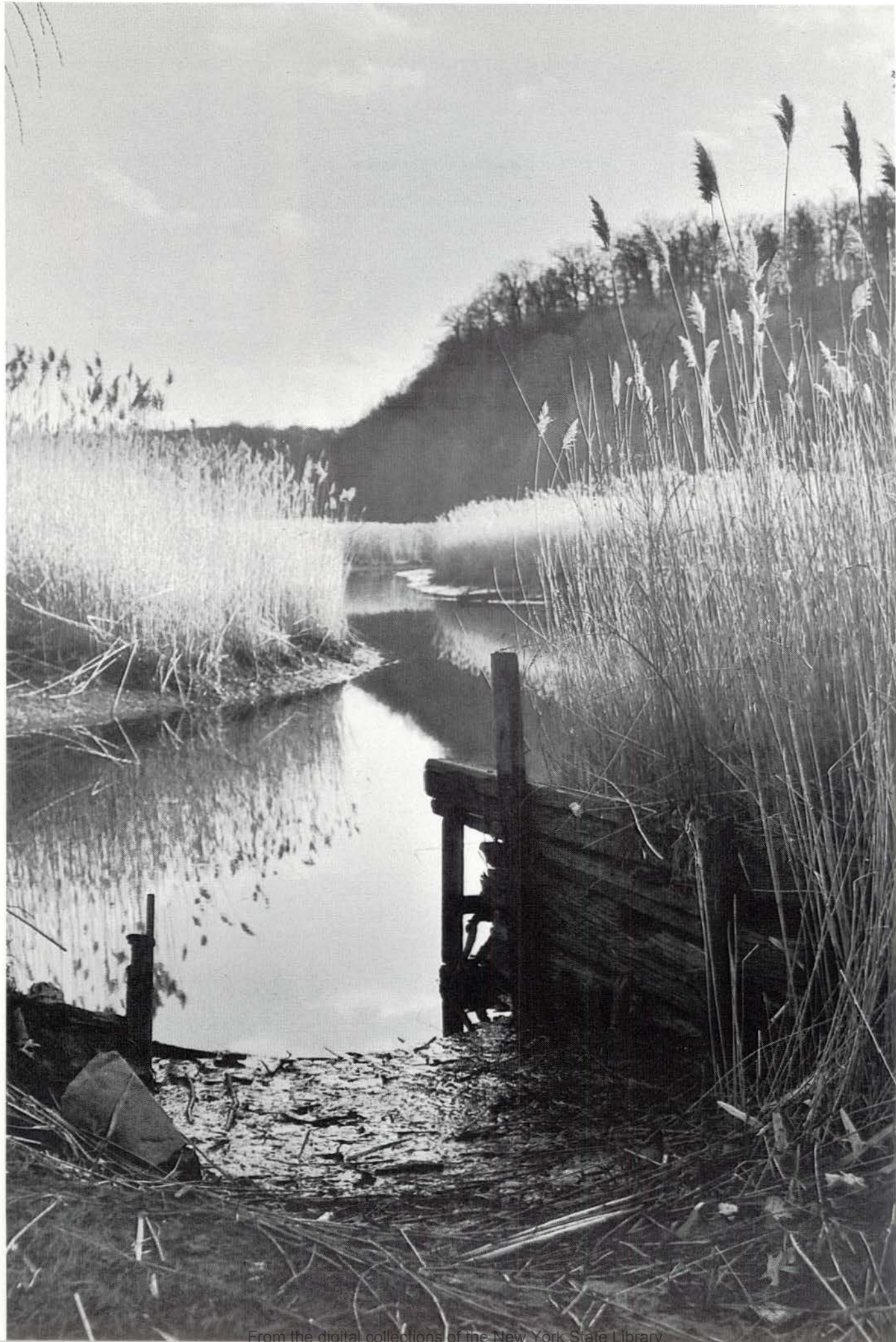
(opposite) Boy fishing  
 (top) Catskills from Tivoli Landing, Dutchess County.  
 (above) Lighthouse at Saugerties, Ulster County, before restoration.



(left) The West Shore Line from Bear Mountain, Orange County.  
(above) The Flume, Opalescent River, Essex County.  
(below) Lake Tear of the Clouds, Essex County, source of the Hudson River.  
(right) Piermont Marsh, Rockland County.







# Winter New Yorkers

Come winter, some species of New Yorkers head for warmer climes. Those that remain behind adapt to meet the challenges of the season.

Some animals take on both different names and different appearances. The dusky varying hare is transformed into a white-furred snowshoe hare, the better to elude predators. The brown-coated weasel remains an effective hunter when it dons the winter white of the ermine.

The snowy owl is a native of Arctic lands, but often winters in New York. It finds our winter to be relatively mild and rich with prey.

The cardinal is likely to be more visible at feeders when it switches its diet from insects to seeds. The canvasback duck moves from its summer home in freshwater marshes to saltwater bays in winter to feed on plants and mollusks.

Deer take on a heavier, denser coat. They yard up in conifer stands to browse where the snow cover is light.

Feathered or furred, our wild winter residents are suited for the season.

— Ben Kroup

White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) by Len Rusin



Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*)  
by John Andrea

The north wind doth blow,  
And we shall have snow,  
And what will poor  
Robin do then,  
Poor thing?

Anonymous





Red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) by Mark E. Verna

Long-tailed weasel (*Mustela frenata*) by Robert McNamara





Canvasback (*Aythya valisineria*) by Len Rusin

The way a crow  
Shook down on me  
The dust of snow  
From a hemlock tree  
Has given my heart  
A change of mood  
And saved some part  
Of a day I had rued.

Robert Frost (1874-1963)  
Dust of Snow

⊗

Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) by Marcel Bordei





Snowy owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*) by Len Rusin

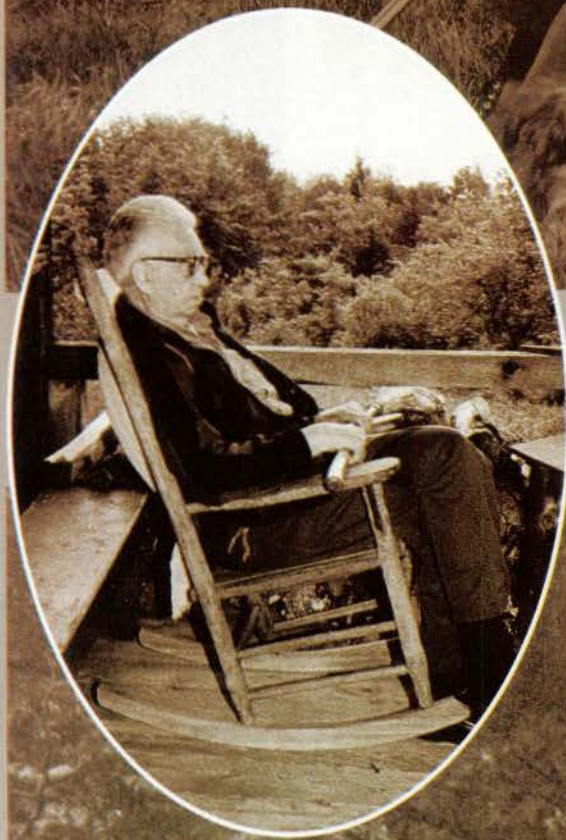
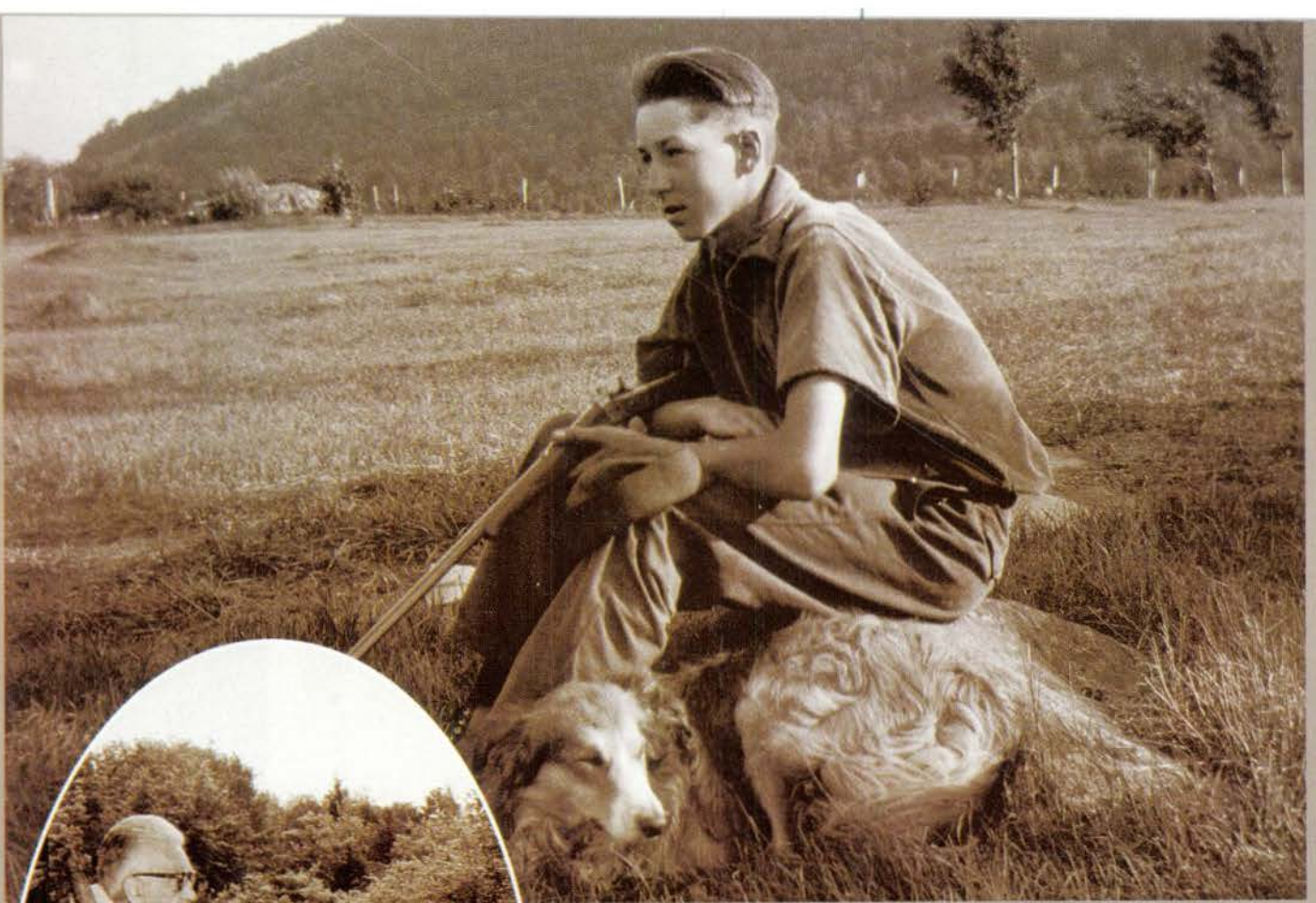
*A snow year,  
a rich year.*

*George Herbert  
(1593-1633)  
Jacula Prudentum*

∞

Snowshoe hare (*Lepus americanus*) by John Hamburger





# PAUL SCHAEFER:





Avalanche Pass from Flowed Lands in Adirondack High Peaks, Essex County

( Ken Rimony )

# AN ADIRONDACK ORIGINAL

By Paul Grondahl

**P**aul Schaefer's unflagging commitment to the wilderness can be traced to one of those watershed moments of adolescence when, as an 11-year-old in 1919, he attended a meeting held by state conservation officials. The boy went home wearing a tiny pin stamped with "New York State Conservationist" and a reverence for wilderness imprinted on his very soul.

Until his death in Schenectady in 1997 at the age of 87, Schaefer preserved the memento of that occasion in a leather change purse. In the decades between, this son of the Mohawk Valley worked tirelessly to protect and preserve his adopted home lands, the Adirondack Forest Preserve that sprawls across six million acres in the heart of New York State's North Country.

{ previous page,  
from top }  
Paul Schaefer as a  
young man

(Schaefer archives photo)

Schaefer in 1996  
at Beaver House,  
Bakers Mills,  
Warren County

( Ken Rimony photo )

Schaefer, at right,  
in 1947  
with mentor  
John Apperson

{ Howard Zahniser photo }

Continued on page 24



Paul Schaefer, second from right, at Cataract Club hunting camp in the Siamese Ponds Wilderness, Warren County. (Schaefer archives photo)





## Library seeks home

Friends and associates of the late Paul Schaefer, the Adirondack advocate, are raising funds to establish a permanent research library and nature sanctuary at Schaefer's former residence in Niskayuna, Schenectady County.

For more information, contact:  
 The Association for the  
 Protection of the Adirondacks  
 P.O. Box 951  
 Schenectady, NY 12301

( from top ) Adirondack Room in the stone Dutch Colonial-style residence Schaefer built in Niskayuna, Schenectady County. The house and grounds are proposed as a research library and nature sanctuary. Schaefer's first log cabin in Bakers Mills, Warren County. ( photos Paul Schaefer, Ken Rumrill, Paul Schaefer )

Schaefer went to work after completing just one year of high school to help support his family. And yet he became a self-taught Renaissance man who, at turns, mastered the professions of builder, designer, historic restoration specialist, writer, photographer, documentary film producer, lobbyist and conservationist.

Schaefer's biggest fight on behalf of the Adirondacks came during the late 1940s when utility companies proposed 35 major hydroelectric dams and reservoirs that would have involved clearcutting and flooding several hundred thousand acres in the Adirondack Park — including the largest deer wintering grounds, on the Moose River Plains.

At his own expense, Schaefer put together photographic displays of the critical wilderness areas that would be lost to the dams. He printed brochures. Then he crisscrossed the state for several years, sounding the alarm. The dams were stopped.

In the Adirondack great room of the stone Dutch Colonial that Schaefer built as his residence in Niskayuna, Schenectady County, he surrounded himself with treasures of his beloved wilderness.

The great room is straight out of the North Country with its hand-hewn beams, cathedral ceiling, a huge stone fireplace and decor of snowshoes, mounted animals and camping gear. The focal point is a hand-crafted relief map of the Adirondacks that measures 12 feet by 10 feet.

In his foreword to Schaefer's book, *Defending the Wilderness*, Charles Callison writes: "As the decades passed, others may have been up front in the halls of legislation or courts of law, but it was Paul Schaefer who was their coach, their cheerleader, their pamphleteer and their supplier of facts, facts gleaned not only from books, but first-hand on innumerable hikes and camping trips into remote reaches of the great region, as often carrying a camera as a fishing rod or a deer rifle."

Schaefer's legacy to the land that he so loved is shown here in photographs from his personal collection that are now part of the archives of the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks, temporarily based in Schenectady. They depict images of a remarkable man and his dedication to a remarkable land.



Paul Grondahl, a feature writer of the *Albany Times Union*, is the author of the biography, *Mayor Corning: Albany Icon, Albany Enigma* (Washington Park Press, 1-800-465-0169). Portions of this article were first published in *The Conservationist* in December 1990.

(above) Johnny Morehouse, Adirondack mentor, and Paul Schaefer's wife, Caroline. (Paul Schaefer photo)

# The Schaefer Trail

by Phil Brown

In the 1990s, volunteers blazed a trail up Burnt Ridge and Gore Mountain in honor of the brothers Paul, Vincent and Carl Schaefer. Paul had been a tireless advocate for preservation of the Adirondack wilderness. His two brothers did much to promote skiing in the North Creek region.

The trail, which opened in 1997, begins at the North Creek Ski Bowl, a small ski slope owned by the Warren County town of Johnsburg. It ascends through mostly hardwood forests to Saddle Lodge part way up Gore Mountain, sometimes following ski and mountain bike routes. From Saddle Lodge, hikers can reach the 3,583-foot summit of Gore by following the skiers' Cloud Trail and a work road. Eventually, the Schaefer Trail may be extended so hikers can continue to the summit through woods.

For those who don't want to hike all the way to the summit, Burnt Ridge's rock ledge — dubbed Paul's Ledge — makes a logical turnaround point. The ledge offers fine views to the south and west of Crane Mountain, the Wilcox Lake Wild Forest and nearby Bear Mountain. One highlight en route to the ledge is a natural amphitheater with steep rock walls and enormous boulders — some jumbled together like abstract sculptures.

In snow season, hikers are not allowed to continue past Paul's Ledge, for beyond it, the hiking trail makes use of alpine ski trails for short stretches. At Saddle Lodge (elevation 2,950 feet), the trail markers end. Those going to the summit can consult a large outdoor map for the rest of the route.

Gore offers chairlift rides from early June to early September, so it's possible to ride up the mountain and walk down the Schaefer Trail. Unless a second vehicle has been parked at the

Ski Bowl, at the rock amphitheater, hikers should turn right off the Schaefer Trail to follow the mountain bike trail back to Gore's base lodge.

## DIRECTIONS:

From NY 28 in North Creek in Warren County, turn south on Ski Bowl Road and drive 0.3 mile, bearing right at a junction, to the parking area on the right.

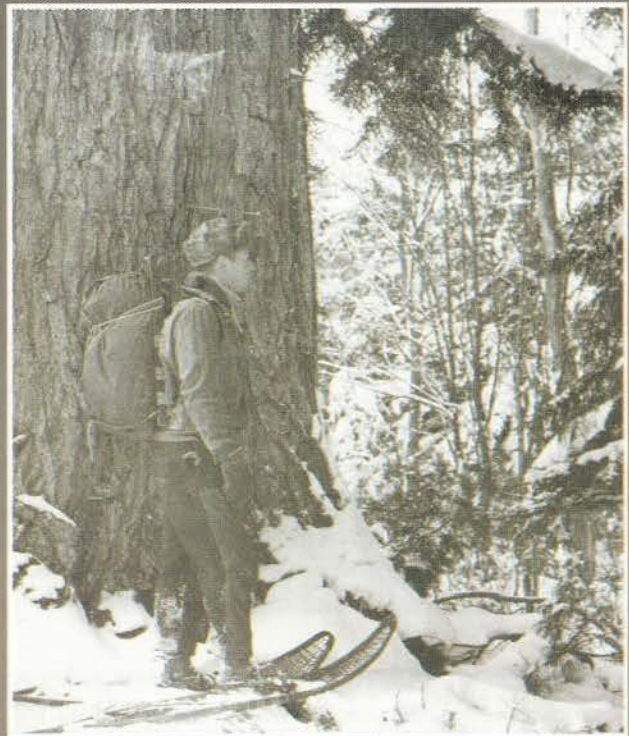
## TRAIL:

1,050 feet elevation at trailhead; 2.5 miles to Paul's Ledge (2,700 feet elev.); 3.3 miles to Saddle Lodge (2,950 feet elev.); 4.5 miles to Gore summit (3,583 feet elev.).

## DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:

Moderate to Paul's Ledge; strenuous if going to the summit.

**Phil Brown**, formerly of Schenectady, is a copy editor for the *Chicago Sun-Times*. He is the author of *Longstreet Highroad Guide to the Adirondack Mountains* to be published in the spring of 1999 by Longstreet Press, Marietta, Ga. (1-800-927-1488).



(Schaefer archives photo.)

**N**ot long after the salmon have made their fall journey up the Salmon River in Oswego County, the lake-run rainbow trout, also known as steelhead, follow suit, seeking out deep channels and pools for over-wintering. I've often thought that it's a good thing the steelhead engage in this pre-spawning activity, or I would have scarce chances to match wits with this elusive, monstrous salmonid.

In early December, steelhead have already begun their winter-long migration to the Schoolhouse Pool and the flyfishing-only area off County Route 52 and beyond. Some of the fish are remnants of a small number of steelhead that just couldn't resist running with the mass of chinook and coho salmon that entered the river in October, and have lost the bright silver and green colors they wear in Lake Ontario. "Fresh-run" is an oft-heard comment referring to brightly-colored steelhead, recent departures of the lake. Like the color change the salmon undergo, long-term residents of the river are easily identified by darker green colors on the sides and very little light color along the belly, below that astounding pink stripe. The darker colors perfectly suit the previously-silver torpedoes, allowing them to camo in with the brown and black freestone and boulder-filled bottom that comprises the murky depths of the river.

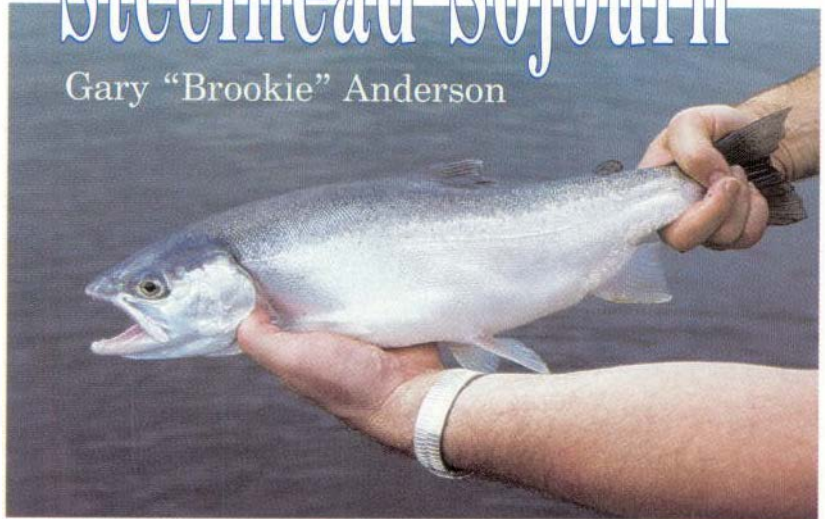
Steelhead can be found throughout the 14 fishable miles of the river, accessed by angler parking areas perpetually maintained by DEC along State Route 13. The Pineville Bridge parking area on the river side of County Route 48 was my destination this day in late December.

The bridge pool and the channels below are lesser known areas compared to the popular Schoolhouse Pool and I chose this area for its semi-solitude. Even steelheading at the reputed Schoolhouse doesn't compare with the numbers of salmon-anglers that appear in the fall, although the elimination of snagging and patrolling by environmental conservation officers has somewhat reduced the carnival atmosphere of years past.

The northern air, though cold, smelled fresh and crisp as I crunched the frozen amber leaves underfoot on my way down the trail at the top of the pool. Steelhead will tend to congregate near the head of a pool, a few feet beyond where the water first slips into the hole. While

# Steelhead Sojourn

Gary "Brookie" Anderson



W.A. Banaszewski

not necessarily the deepest part of the pool, those areas should be thoroughly fished also. I made several casts of my black stonefly before realizing I was getting "strikes" but was too slow to react. A steelhead doesn't really strike at all, but casually closes its mouth on the bait before quickly releasing it. Often the only indication of a hit is that the drift of the line simply stops for a millisecond.

The steelhead was taking the fly on every other drift, and I had to concentrate and poise myself for the hit. I was almost raising the rod tip in anticipation when the drift paused and I flexed the rod skyward to set the hook. The fish seemed quite indignant at the idea of me hiding a hook in its snack, and raced the pool several times before appearing at the surface, shaking its head. Even with the violent thrashing, I knew from experience the fish was only resting up for more of its legendary dashes around the pool. Reeling the fish to the shallows after minutes spent tiring each other out, I was assured the battle was not quite over yet as it continually slapped its tail. The shallows finally afforded me a look at the splendid pink-striped torpedo with small, dark spots.

Before releasing the majestic beauty, I gently moved it back and forth, pushing water over the gills to revive it. I then headed back up to the place at the head of the pool, knowing that where there is one steelhead, there are three.

I was elated that the steelhead were biting, since steelhead anglers experience a phenomenon known as the steelhead "turning on." It is a feeding or aggressive period in the morning and evening, but it could also occur any time of day. Waiting for the event to start can drive one crazy, but one of the good things about steel-

heading is that no special equipment is required while fine-tuning technique. Any set-up with a sensitive-tipped rod held by an alert angler will do.

Try 36 inches or more of 2, 4 or 6 lb. leader, depending on how many fish you want to lose. Seriously, use the lightest line possible—steelhead are wary of line. Use as much leader as you can control effectively while casting, the idea being to keep the sinker away from the fish's head. As I've said, steelhead are alert and harassing them with a sinker won't help. Only wade in as far as necessary to cast, and don't step in if you don't have to. I've been up on a high bank when the light was right, and have seen steelhead 30 to 40 feet from an angler, repositioning away from them.

Tie the leader to a swivel. Pass the line from the pole through the eye of a snap-swivel to which a "slinky" is attached and tie the line to the other end of the swivel. A slinky-drifter is hollow parachute cord filled with lead shot which is less susceptible to hanging up on rocks. This provides more fishin'-action satisfaction! The slinky slides freely, but is prevented from sliding down to the lure by the swivel. The problem with split-shot for weight is that they easily get under rocks and get stuck, taking the rig with them. A pencil-lead set-up is also good for this reason. Use as little weight as possible to keep the rig tapping along the bottom, resealing the slinky with a lighter if split-shot is removed to adjust the weight. Try black or brown stonefly patterns or four or five steelhead eggs tied in blue or orange maline netting on a blue or black floating jighead. Natural-colored artificial eggs and jigs are also productive.

**C**ast the rig above and across the suspected holding area of the fish, reeling up slack. Raise the rod tip slightly to feel the taps and walk the bait down through the pool. Detecting strikes is the next order of business and is accomplished by concentrating on line drift and the taps.

Concentration is two-thirds of the technique because, when the cadence of the tap is expected but not felt, it sometimes means a steelhead has taken the bait and the hook should be set. Lake-run rainbow trout are unlike resident stream trout in that you won't feel a discernible nibble.

Concentration is critical because the fish will usually only hold the bait for a brief moment. Be persistent and drift the hole continually to aggravate disinterested steelhead into hitting. When the fish are aggressive, at most all that will be felt is a twanging rubber band feeling before the hook is quickly set and the fish

explodes into the mad dashes that made them famous. Play them slow and tire them out plenty before even bothering to pick up the net. The steelhead's other famous characteristic is its incredible endurance. Actually, it seems you can't tire them out. The steelhead gets beached or netted during brief weak spells.

Once addicted, try tying your own flies. Nothing fancy, just get some black dubbing material and #6, 8 or 10-size hooks at a specialized tackle shop. Form a portion of the material into thin yarn and wrap around the hook.

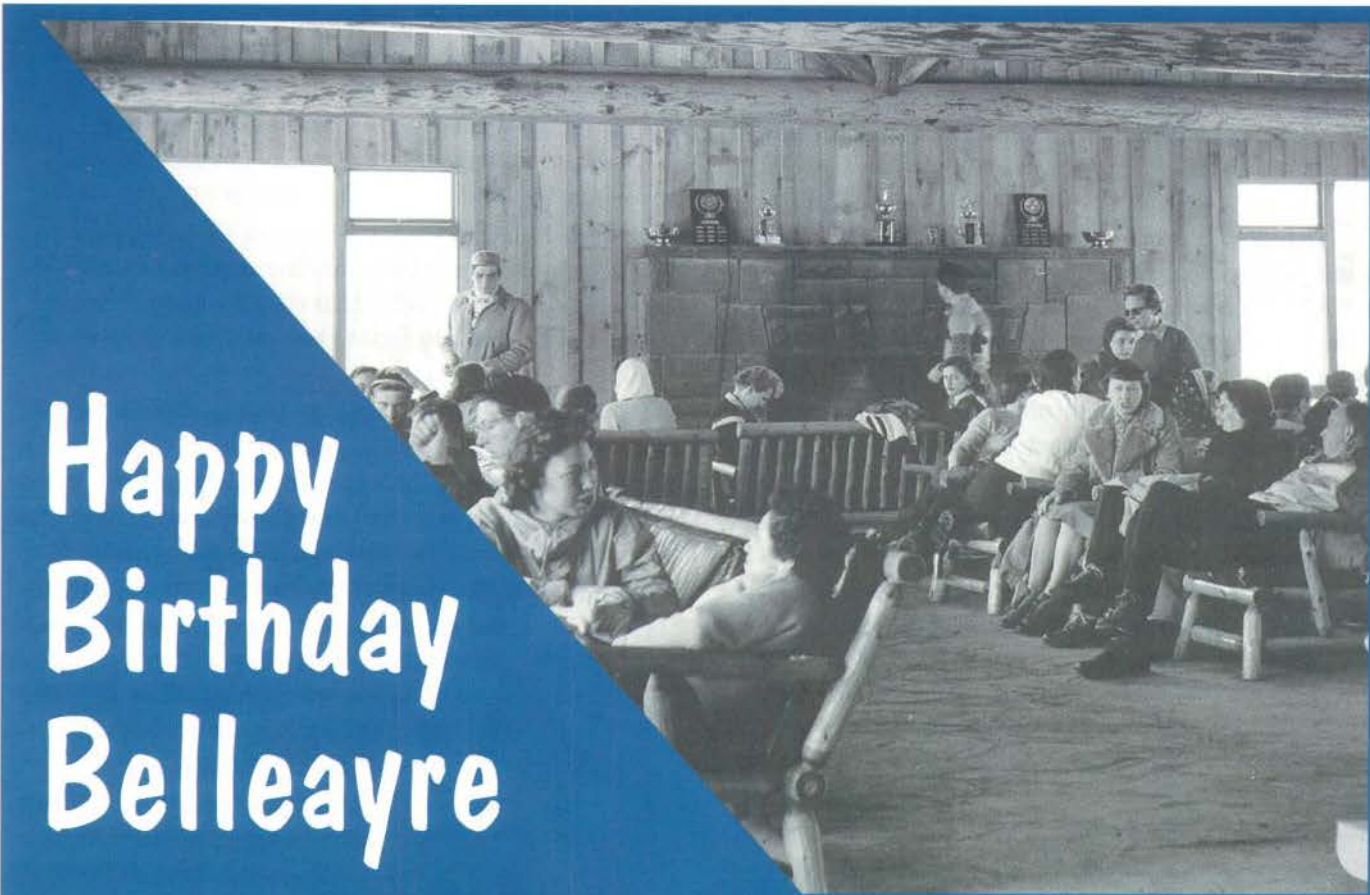
Use brown or black thread and make several wraps near the eye. Then loosely wrap the body to leave a finished product about half the size of your pinkie. Better yet, convince yourself store-bought flies work first, then tie your own based on their model. Nothing beats the satisfaction of catching fish on bait you made yourself.

Let me warn you to dress warmly in layers that permit freedom of movement as you add or subtract clothing. Nothing will reduce your desire to persist more than being cold.

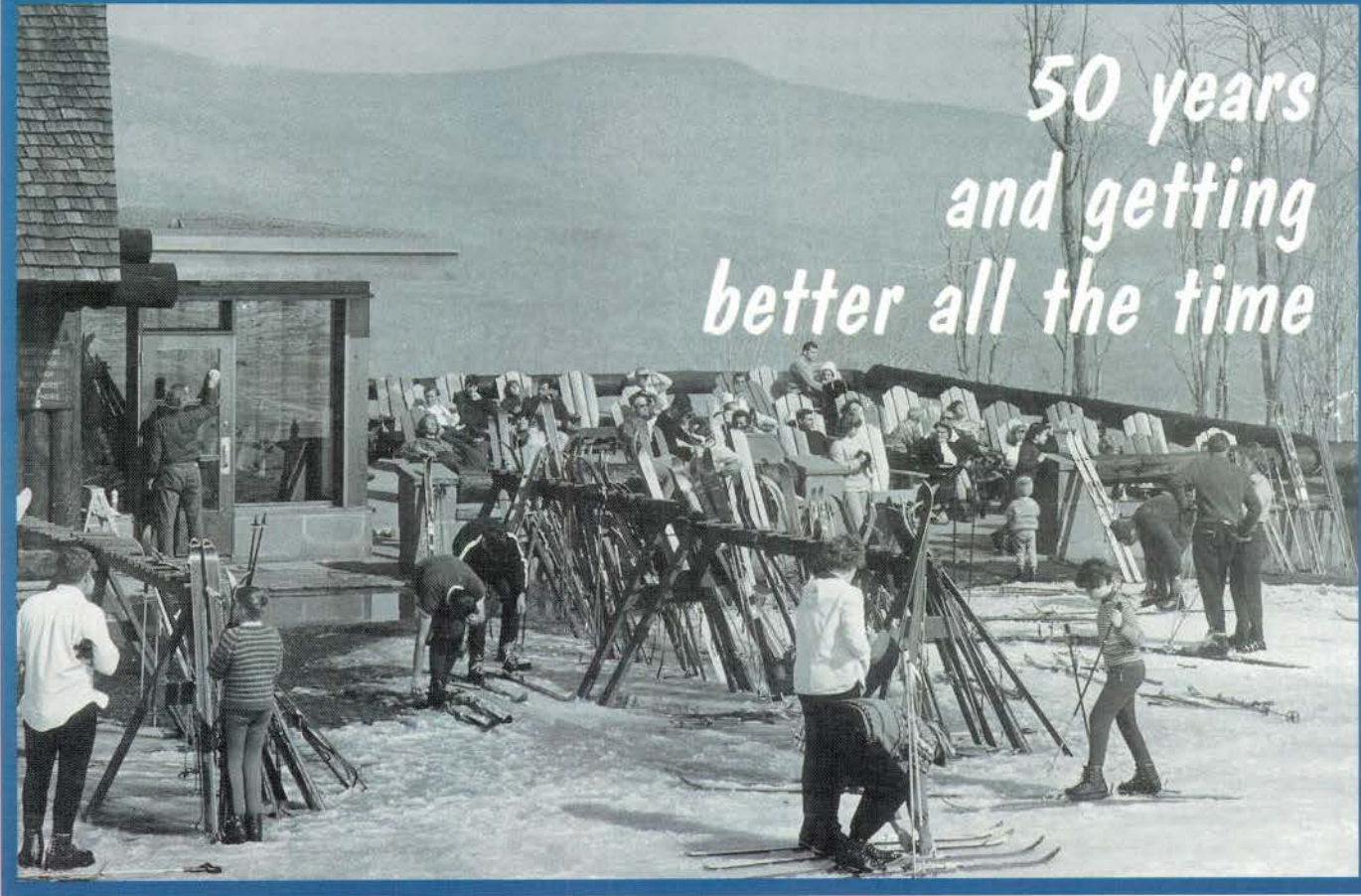
Lest I make it sound all too easy, one steelhead landed out of three fish hooked is a good average. Be satisfied with just having the fish on the line because landing three steelhead in a single day approaches the mastery level.

Gary "Brookie" Anderson is an outdoor writer from Syracuse. His work has been featured in *Fur-Fish-Game* and other publications.





Happy  
Birthday  
Belleayre



*50 years  
and getting  
better all the time*



(left) Former Governor Harriman and Dot Nebel at Belleayre in 1958.

(inset) Dot at 92.

For more than half a century, skiers have come to the heart of the Catskill Mountains to ski at the area's oldest active ski center, Belleayre Mountain.

The mountain, which celebrates its 50th birthday in 1999, has been a destination for skiers since even before 1949, when a special amendment to the New York State Constitution allowed the construction of ski trails on the "forever wild" lands of the Catskills.

Boasting the highest skiable peak in the Catskills, Belleayre has been part of American skiing from its very beginning, and in this anniversary year, it's interesting to look back at what a different world it was when Belleayre Mountain Ski Center was born.

Skiing became immensely popular in America after the 1932 Olympics in Lake Placid. Suddenly, tens of thousands of people dressed in baggy pants and thick woolen sweaters were spending their weekends gliding through fields and forests on long wooden slats.

The first documented skiers to reach the summit of Belleayre were the father and son team of Oliver and E. Maltbe Shipp, who skied up the mountain on Feb. 22, 1931. When they returned, the Shipp's drew a map of their route for others to follow, and left it hanging at the hotel where they were staying, the Pine Hill Arms. The map still hangs in the hotel to this day.

Hundreds of skiers followed their lead, skiing down the unfinished trails, even before the center officially opened in 1949.

When it opened, Belleayre had just five trails, an

electrically powered rope tow, New York's first chair lift, a summit lodge, a temporary base lodge with cafeteria and dirt floors, a garage/workshop, and parking for 300 cars. It was an immediate hit.

Catskill Mountain residents remember how skiers would pitch tents outside the lodge so they could beat the crowds and be first on the lift line. The ski trains extended their run to reach Belleayre, and the nearby communities opened their doors to skiers: almost every home rented rooms on weekends as demand exceeded the capacities of the few hotels.

Snow-making, of course, was unheard of. Skiing depended on natural snow, but that was rarely a prob-

lem on snowy Belleayre, which averaged more than 125 inches a year. Grooming was primitive, accomplished mostly by teams of workmen on snowshoes using a technique known as "foot-packing." From its beginning, Belleayre benefitted from the expertise of one of the great women in American skiing. Dorothy "Dot" Nebel, a native of Schenectady, had raced in Europe in 1938 for the U.S. national team, had been selected for the 1940 U.S. Olympic Team, and had taught at Pico during World War II. She was running the Gore Mountain Ski School when she was called upon to help design the trails at Belleayre Mountain.

After seeing the original plans, Nebel rushed to Belleayre and completely redesigned the ski trails to what was then considered the cutting edge in mountain design concepts.

Dot Nebel, now 93 years old and still a skier, stayed with Belleayre as head of the ski school for its first 17 years.

Belleayre, still owned and maintained by DEC, may be the oldest of the Catskill ski centers, but it shows no signs of slowing down with age. Belleayre now boasts 33 trails with nine lifts and tows, but its status as a forest preserve ski area has mandated that the natural environment be disturbed as little as possible.

For more information on skiing at Belleayre or special 50th anniversary events, call 1-800-942-6904.



*The Finest Square Mile — Mount Jo and Heart Lake*, by Sandra Weber. 175 pages, Purple Mountain Press, P.O. Box E3, Fleischmanns, NY 12430, 1-800-325-2665. \$16 paper.

**Reviewed by Edith Pilcher**

Anyone who has ever visited Heart Lake and Adirondack Loj will enjoy this romp through a history of the area with its fascinating array of characters — the colorful inventor Henry Van Hoevenberg (builder of the first Adirondack Lodge), his mysterious love, Josephine Schofield (for whom Mount Jo is named), as well as Melvil and Godfrey Dewey and many lesser lights.

The author is a fine writer, with a crisp, narrative style and colorful descriptions. Her extensive research is clearly documented in unobtrusive footnotes, revealing broad scholarship.

She weaves a chronicle among many disparate people and events, fostering suspense as each chapter leads delightfully into the next with a web of interactions and relationships. Early chapters retell the legend of Henry Van Hoevenberg's love affair with the elusive Jo, enhanced by some surprising facts, previously unknown. Well-accepted myths are proven false and alternative identifications and explanations are provided — rational, believable but unprovable.

From heartbreak came inspiration. Henry (known as "Mr. Van") built a magnificent memorial to his lost love — the original Adirondack Lodge, completed in 1878, a huge, rustic log structure overlooking Heart Lake in Essex County. Details of its construction and operation and the rising and declin-

ing fortunes of Henry Van Hoevenberg are related, culminating in another tragedy — destruction of the lodge in the forest fires of 1903. The loss might have been even greater: Van Hoevenberg's attempt to die with his masterpiece was narrowly averted by the foresight and courage of a trusty friend who risked his own life to save him.

The record flows on to "Mr. Van's" connection with the Lake Placid Club, and his close friendship with Melvil and Godfrey Dewey. It includes many years of active employment and residence at the Lake Placid Club, an abortive attempt to rebuild the lodge (now spelled "loj" in Melvil Dewey's phonetic style), many more technical inventions, introduction of winter sports at Lake Placid by the Club's Snobirds and founding of the Adirondack Camp and Trail Club (a precursor of the Adirondack Mountain Club) which devoted itself to trail construction and maintenance, including many miles originating at Heart Lake.

The story continues into the present day, recounting construction of a new "loj" in 1927, rental and then purchase of the Heart Lake property by the Adirondack Mountain Club, and subsequent improvements carried out in the spirit and philosophy of "Mr. Van" — to serve the hiking public while conserving natural resources. A final chapter details the glacial, climatic and natural history of the region around Heart Lake.

This is a delightful book, attractively laid out and illustrated with black and white photos, maps, line drawings and some original etchings by Ryland Loos. The author refers to Mr. Van's "gift for weaving and telling a tale which made

him a boon companion." She displays much the same talent.

Edith Pilcher is a seasonal resident of both Schenectady and Herkimer counties. She is an Adirondack historian and author of three books and many articles about the area.

*Lake George Reflections: Island History and Lore*, by Frank Leonbruno with Ginger Henry. 236 pages, Purple Mountain Press, P.O. Box E3, Fleischmanns, NY 12430, 1-800-325-2665, \$18 paper.

**Reviewed by Fred LeBrun**

Any thoughtful, observant person standing for 42 years in the same place anywhere on this planet is bound to have a lot to say.

For 36 of his 42-year career with the state Conservation Department which in 1970 became the Department of Environmental Conservation, Frank Leonbruno spent from just after ice-out in the spring until late November in the same place. Glen Island is midway up Lake George and houses the administrative offices of DEC for the lake. Frank retired in 1983 after serving his last 10 years as supervisor of the Lake George operation.

He is thoughtful and observant, as this personal reminiscence of the momentous events, personalities of the day and general passing parade makes abundantly clear. What he has to say is well worth the read for anyone with even a general interest in the rapidly changing Lake George of this century.

Leonbruno was on the beat for the rise, fall and resurrection of the Sagamore Hotel on Green Island. He watched the consequences of fortunes lost due to the Great Depression on several of the privately-owned islands, and wit-



## Letters

nessed changing attitudes and the clientele utilizing Lake George's enumerable public islands, large and tiny. Enumerable because over his lifetime, the count has changed. You'd think something as concrete as land sticking up would be easy to quantify, but not so Leonbruno tells us. With the building of a dam at the Ticonderoga end of the lake, the water level is actually two feet higher than before. Islands that existed no longer do, or are down to just a couple of rocks. Natural erosion has taken its toll as well, and so has overuse by too many feet clamoring to camp or picnic on certain ones. The islands are fragile. Frank Leonbruno has made a lifetime commitment to advocating rip-rap to shore up eroding island shorelines.

He was born in nearby Whitehall in Washington County, home of the U.S. Navy, where his family worked in the silk mills. At age 16, in 1935, he came to Bolton Landing, Warren County, and signed up for the Civilian Conservation Corps at the headquarters located under the shade of Tongue Mountain. He stayed with the CCC for six years, married a woman from Bolton, and then went to work for the Conservation Department a mile or so away. At age 80, he still lives in Bolton. So he speaks with the authority of someone who was there — and is still there — about the issues surrounding the lake, such as the creation of the Lake George Association and the state's reasserting its control over the islands with a controversial permit system, about rattlesnakes and drownings and similar calamities. A thoughtful and observant witness.

Fred LeBrun, a columnist for the *Albany Times Union*, is a raconteur and chronicler of life and times in New York State.

*New York State Conservationist*, December 1998



### Frog house

I thought it a bit unusual last fall, when this little frog took up residence in this bird house just about the time the pears on the tree were getting ripe. This year the little fellow was back, but only stayed a few days. Perhaps this was because I had already cleaned out the bird house and there wasn't much nesting material for the frog to stand on. Strange things happen here at the house once occupied by Ichabod Crane.

Esther Tuttle  
Kinderhook, Columbia County

### Sharing the forest

In "Wild in New York" in your October issue you discuss safety during the hunting season by presenting dangers that any hunter should be aware of. But what about many of your readers who just like to be in the woods for the forest experience? It would be nice if we knew when we should don our red hats or head for those State Parks where hunting is prohibited. None of us hikers, walkers and just plain

watchers want to become a statistic.  
Hamilton Armstrong  
Fayetteville, Onondaga County

Wayne Jones, *DEC Sportsman Education Administrator in Albany*: *It's always a good idea to know what other people might be doing in the field, and when. Hunting season dates are published in the DEC "Hunting and Trapping Regulations Guide," available free at county and town clerks' offices, as well as sporting goods stores and other outlets that sell hunting licenses. Season dates also can be found on the DEC website at [www.dec.state.ny.us](http://www.dec.state.ny.us).*

*The hazards of hunting season are inflated. National statistics show that a person who is not hunting is 40 to 50 times more likely to be struck dead by a bolt of lightning than by a hunter's bullet. Other than members of hunting parties, no person in New York has ever been killed in a hunting accident. No hiker has ever even been injured by a hunter. Hunting injury rates are very low, in part, because for the past 50 years DEC has required that each hunter complete mandatory hunter education courses.*

*During the busy October and November hunting seasons many hikers take a hint from cautious hunters and wear an inexpensive fluorescent orange vest or hat for an extra measure of safety.*

### Correction

In the "Wild in New York" section of the October 1998 *Conservationist* the author of the article "Lost in the Woods" was misidentified. It was written by DEC Forest Ranger John Chambers of Essex County.

### SILENT NEW YEAR

By David Williams

**T**hree o'clock: the magic hour. Many a skier has passed here since the blizzard of Monday night, though all but a few have now retreated to their hearthsides. Not for me. Give me the plodding inspirations of the unbroken trail through Chenango Valley State Park in Broome County. I am waxed to the nines, and glide along with thrilling ease — across a rolling mix of hardwoods beside the lake, down through a dark cathedral of spruces into the bog below, up a heart-thumping hemlock slope to the old road.

I meet two elder gents at the top, taking a sociable pipe before their perilous descent. Their battered hickory skis come to exquisite points at the tips; great whorls of smoke gather about the cowls of their ancient poplin anoraks. They steal admiring glances at the gleaming varnish on my own skis, and know that I am with them in spirit. But I do not want to be initiated into their hoary mysteries today.

I nod politely and ski on — a miracle of lightness and being. A fawn leaps from the brush up ahead and dashes across the trail. Run, run, little fellow, fly like the wind! But he pulls up a few fathoms into the thicket and watches me impassively.

At the far end of my desolate loop, I approach a solitary figure and brace myself for her cringing regard: My grizzled beard is frozen solid and my ratty flak jacket is not of this world. But she smiles pleasantly and says hello. I ski on.

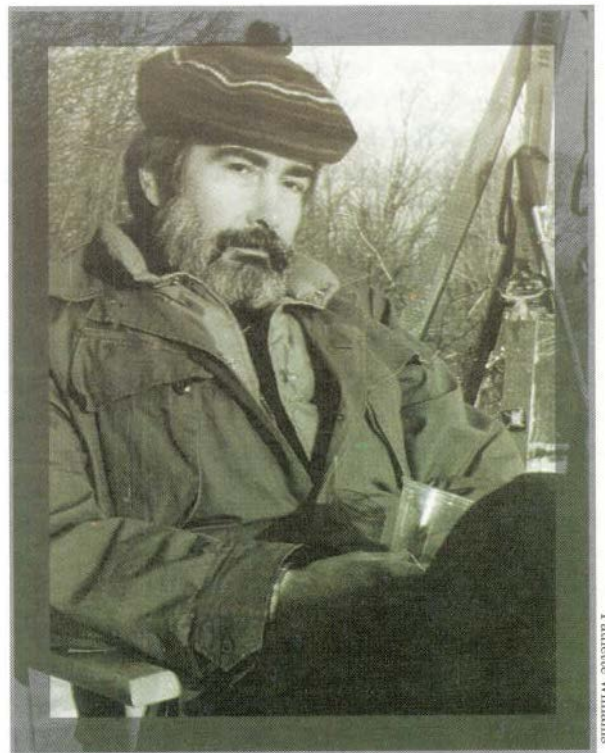
Thence, out onto the golf course, where the fading New Year's sun casts a spectral glow across the landscape. I plunge into the magnificent, unblemished powder and break trail toward a distant bluff of pines. A silver ribbon of icebound river threads its way in the distance. Below the bluff, two pilgrims inch their way through a swale that in balmy times engulfs errant approach shots on a tricky par five.

The lead skier shoulders a jaunty rucksack; the second slogs along wearily behind. Suddenly, I yearn to break the spell of splendid isolation, to sweep down like the wolf on the fold and grin toothily at their doorstep. And so I push off down a lunatic chute — free as a bee — and in seconds I am there.

But they are glad to see me! It has grown bitter cold. The young guy asks which way to the parking lot. His father stands by, blistered and wild-eyed, with only a huge collar to protect his head from the punishing wind. Directions delivered, he thanks me in a courtly German accent. The son frowns, and they are off again — on their obscure familial errand.

The lot is deserted when I finally reach my car. I pour a fortifying mug of café royal from an old steel thermos, and toast the new year in the gathering gloom. An elegant sliver of moon hangs low in the west, poised like a fine china teacup. I cock my ear for the garrulous yipping of coyotes somewhere off on the tundra. It is ghostly quiet.

David Williams is a free-lance writer from Binghamton, Broome County



Paulette Williams



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Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) © by Gene Weinstein

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