



Grass Roots News

Advocating for Conservation and Sportsmen Since 1933

November/December 2019

Vol. 19 No. 6

APPEALS COURT RULES IN FAVOR OF SNOWMOBILING IN ADIRONDACK PARK

By Bill Conners

I'm feeling selfishly giddy over a decision recently handed down by the New York State Court of Appeals regarding snowmobiling in the Adirondack Park. The decision supports the use of an interior road in the Adirondacks as a snowmobile trail.

That said, I am not a snowmobiler; I have no interest in snowmobiles and I believe that — like any other recreational vehicle — you should not be able to use them anywhere or anytime you like, just because it makes you feel good.

The road at the center of the court case came into possession of NY State when the Nature Conservancy purchased it and the land it traverses from the Finch, Pruyn & Co. as part of a large convoluted land deal. Subsequent to the Finch, Pruyn to Nature Conservancy deal, the land was conveyed to New York State at a cost to taxpayers of more than \$50 million.

As the Finch, Pruyn deal started unfolding in 2012, I foolishly felt there was a chance that the recreation and environmental communities would see that while it was a big investment, people would feel good about it because everyone -- all of the stakeholders -- would have access to it.

Then the horse trading began. Through the entirety of the Adirondack Park Agency's land classification process into and through the Department of Environmental Conservation's development of Recreation Management Plans for the more than 65,000 acres involved, it was obvious the environmental community wanted to limit access as much as it could. They rallied their troops and launched a lobbying effort to have the land classified as wilderness, thereby severely limiting access, meaning that nothing but foot traffic would be allowed. And, once the land was classified, they would see that the Recreation Management Plans developed by DEC would limit activity even on those lands classified as wild forest where more intensive use was to be allowed.

The commitment that then-DEC Commissioner Joe Martens made in 2012 was "there will be access for everyone," but it wasn't worth the paper it wasn't written on. His commitment for access quickly shaped up to be the age-old "trust me" rope-a-dope. Seven years later the economic boon to the region promised by Gov. Andrew Cuomo has yet to materialize in large measure because so few people are able to access the property.

Access to the two main parcels conveyed to the state — the Chain Lakes parcel and the Boreas Ponds parcel — is severely limited, especially if you consider the fact that none of us is getting any younger and use of the interior reaches are now limited to foot traffic in spite of the fact there is a viable network of roads that have existed there for many decades. Prior to the state taking possession logging trucks used many of the roads.

During winter the roads are impassable and largely empty of foot traffic because of the snow. Using these backcountry roads as snowmobile trails makes good sense. Snowmobiling is an important economic engine for the region. Of the estimated 10,000 miles of snowmobile trails in New York, 1,800 of them are in the Adirondack Park; 750 of those are in Hamilton County, where the Chain Lakes are located.



A recent court decision supports the use of an interior road in the Adirondacks as a snowmobile trail.

Unfortunately, plans to use the Chain Lakes Road as a snowmobile corridor were scuttled by a lawsuit filed by Adirondack Wild. The Adirondack Council also joined the fray by filing an amicus curiae brief (friend of the court). An amicus brief is filed with an appellate court by a party that is neither plaintiff nor defendant in the suit, but which has an interest in the court's decision.

Obviously, both of these environmental organizations would have an interest in stopping development of the trail. Their vision for the Adirondacks is a private park for 1% of the population, paid for by all the state's taxpayers.

The suit challenged the DEC's approval of the use of the Chain Lakes Road, claiming the trail would violate state law, specifically the APA Master Plan and the Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act. Clearly, they have no interest in the region's economic issues and the fact that the Adirondack Park's 137,000 year-round residents struggle to make a living there.

Recently New York's highest state court rejected Adirondack Wild's claim and ruled in favor of the DEC, thereby paving the way for the snowmobile trail. The Access the Adirondacks Alliance has applauded the decision, noting that the court held that the snowmobile trail is permitted in that location because it is the continuation of a use pre-dating the enactment of the Rivers Act. The Appeals Court also rejected Adirondack Wild's claim that the Adirondack State Land Master Plan trumps the Rivers Act.

The Alliance is a coalition of conservation, recreation, local government, businesses and sportsmen's groups, including the 70,000 members of the New York State Snowmobile Association. Alliance members believe all outdoor open space recreational uses should be allowed in the Forest Preserve, as defined in the State Land Master Plan. They further argue that 3 million acres — the state-owned land in the park — is enough to accommodate all uses without negatively impacting the ecosystem. Taxpayers of the State of New York paid to purchase these lands with the promise they would be open for public recreation and enjoyment.

But is the battle really over?

Environmental organizations have been doing a lot of muscle flexing in the Adirondack Park for years, most of the time at the cost of the regional economy. This decision could possibly open the door on many access issues. Maybe backcountry hunters and anglers will eventually see some benefit. Only time will tell.

As for the battle over the Chain Lakes Road and the snowmobile trail, I think this decision may stand.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

DEFENDER MEMBER:

Duane Griffin, Mexico
Daniel Stone, Corinth

GUARDIAN MEMBERS:

Ducks Unlimited Seneca Falls Chapter, Geneva
Nathan Kennedy, Liverpool



Buck A Member Contributors:

Chautauqua County Sport Fish Advisory Board,
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- CNY Wildfowlers Association**, Bridgeport
- East Worcester Fish & Game Club, Inc.**, East Worcester
- Millgrove Sportsmen's Club, Inc.**, Corfu
- Otisco Lake Rod & Gun Club**, Marietta
- Salmon River Strutters NWTF**, Lacona
- South Bristol Fish & Game Assoc., Inc.**, Naples
- Waterloo Rifle & Pistol Club**, Waterloo

GEOFF RETURNS – WILL THE FISH COOPERATE?

By Mike Elam

Photos by Krys Elam

Previously I wrote about my friend Geoff from Barnsley, England, and our fishing misadventures. November 2018 made for some pretty tough conditions with 3 inches of rain, very muddy water, strong winds and some fairly heavy snow squalls. Our mutual friend Don from Ohio came a little earlier that year and we had some good smallmouth and perch fishing with a couple bonus walleyes. Apparently fishing in a boat with 4-6 inches of snow falling was not on Geoff's or Don's bucket list.

For 2019 Geoff wanted to come back to try his luck again. His trip got off to a rocky start when his flight was cancelled amid the Thomas Cook fiasco in England where over 20,000 travelers were stranded. Geoff was able to book a later flight to Toronto and stayed with us for 8 days. His time frame was two weeks later than originally planned, and it actually made for better fishing. Don came up for 3 days to fish as well.

Don has had some bad weather experiences over the years while fishing Lake Ontario. Geoff has also seen the weather spoil some very good fishing, so on Thursday, October 17th, the three of us went fishing and fought 30 mph winds with gusts up to 40 mph. Friday was a little better and we did manage a few bass, both smallmouth and largemouth. Now with two days of bad weather conditions, I have to question who is the bearer of bad weather -- Don or Geoff? For entertainment on those two days we watched the combat fishing below the Waterport Dam, the end of the trip for spawning King Salmon.



Things did pick up on Sunday; with no wind, fishing a jig and minnow, we got enough smallmouth to feed four people supper. I had picked up 2 lbs. of certified minnows for bait that would last for the week, so on Monday Geoff and I went to Braddock Bay for perch. After a couple hours of fishing we found good perch numbers along a weed line and managed to boat 56 of them, many 12-13 inches. It was enough perch to feed four people for three meals with plenty of leftovers.

Eating fish you catch yourself was a real treat for Geoff and his spouse. The fish in England caught in public waters are unfit for consumption and the fish caught in "pay to fish" waters most often have to be released. England has perch that look just like ours but they can weigh 3-4 lbs. And fishing from a boat is an experience for Geoff, since most of his fishing is from the bank.

Geoff had to get used to my short 7 ft. rods and setting the hook. He uses 12 and 13 ft. rods for his type of fishing, mostly for carp; using a hair rig, there is no hook set, just pick the rod up and wind in the carp. It took a little coaching, but by the end of the first day Geoff had picked up on the American traditions of "rippin' lips" and "crossing the eyes."



Any time we weren't fishing from a boat, I could find my friend on the dock fishing for his favorite fish -- carp. He used his boileys he'd brought along with my corn and managed 3 carp. He also baited one rod with treated rainbow skein for catfish, but no takers.

One thing Geoff said he would like on this trip was to catch as many species of fish as we could, so on Tuesday we put in at Pt. Breeze and fished Oak Orchard Creek. We ended up having two really good days for quality, quantity and variety. We were able to find some very nice smallmouth in the 3-4 lb. range; four fish were in the 5 lb. range, and one may have pushed 6 lbs. The fish were 20 – 21 ½ inches with big bellies. I told Geoff some anglers fish a lifetime for this size

smallmouth. Fishing tube jugs tipped with a minnow, perch eye or spikes, we had two days of very good fishing despite an all-day rain on Tuesday. We had good rain gear so didn't mind. We managed smallmouth up to 21", perch to 14", some 12" crappie, some respectable bluegills and a bonus bright silver 7 lb. steelhead.

As for species of fish we caught 12 different kinds: smallmouth and largemouth bass, walleye, pike, carp, rock bass, yellow perch, white perch, steelhead, crappie, bluegill and pumpkinseed sunfish.

We put up with some wind and rain but had some great New York State fall fishing. As I am writing this article, my friend Geoff and the love of his life, Madeline, are flying home to England. And I am sure he's a happy angler with some good memories.

As for Don, he is coming back the first week of November to fish steelhead off the Olcott piers and to fish perch with me. The word from his home front is "bring back perch fillets." If we do well on perch, he may get a hero's welcome.



VENISON CHILI FOR THE MASSES

By Bill Conners

In the last edition of Grass Roots News there was a report about youth activities in the Hudson Valley, including the Federation of Dutchess County's annual youth pheasant hunt held at the Lafayetteville Multiple Use Area.

It is a vigorous day, so it takes a lot of food to keep the crowd satisfied and energized. The day starts off with bacon, egg and sausage breakfast sandwiches and a few gallons of hot coffee and hot chocolate. Then add in hamburgers and hotdogs and the mainstay – venison chili for lunch.

To feed all of the attendees, the chili is produced ahead of time because cooking five gallons of it is what I call tedious. Cooking that volume requires careful attention to avoid burning it to the bottom of the pot. I learned long ago to use a long-handled barbecue spatula to keep this witch's brew stirred. The long, straight edge does a good job of keeping the chili turning all the way to the bottom. By the time I'm finished, I always declare that if I **EVER** have to produce another pot of chili, it will be too soon. But year in and year out, chili stays on the menu for the hunt. If you are so inclined, corn muffins are always a nice accompaniment for the chili.

Obviously, it would be all but impossible to cook all the chili in one pot. I split it between two large pots and spend most of the time hovering over the stove to make sure I don't scorch the chili by not stirring it enough. I also use a diffuser between the burner and the bottom of the pot.

As for the recipe, there is nothing magical about it. Nearly every chili lover I know has a recipe that is "the best chili you'll ever eat." I'm not going to make the claim that this recipe will produce a blue-ribbon quality bowl of chili, but for the nearly 25 years that we've been serving it, the reception has been consistently good.

Because the crowd we serve it to is wide-ranging in age and taste, I've always been careful to not give it too much of a bite, so feel free to leave the ground cayenne you'll find on the ingredients list on the spice rack.

Ingredients:

15 lbs. Ground Venison (no additives)
8 Large Green Bell Peppers
8 – 10 Cubanelle Peppers
3 – 4 Very Large Texas Sweet Onions (or equivalent Vidalia or other sweet onions)
4 Large 106 oz (6 lb. 10 oz) Cans Crushed Tomatoes
10 – 15.5 oz cans Kidney Beans
2 – 15.5 oz cans Cannellini Beans
6 – 8 Oz Chili Powder (more or less depending on your preference)
2 tbs ground cayenne powder



Evenly divide the ingredients between your cooking pots. The quantities listed above will produce approximately 5-6 gallons of chili.

Prep:

Assuming you plan to cook in two large pots, divide all the ingredients into two batches:

Split all the peppers in half, remove seeds and chop into medium pieces

Remove skins and chop onions into medium pieces

Drain and rinse kidney and cannellini beans

Then:

Brown venison in batches

Lightly sauté the peppers and onions

Split the crushed tomatoes between the two pots; do the same with the venison and the sautéed veggies and the spices.

Simmer the chili until just about the time your arms feel like they are going to fall off; 2 to 4 hours should do it depending on much heat you put to it. Remember, that much chili will take extra attention while simmering in order to avoid scorching it.

I fill the 5-gallon Igloo and sit it in a large chest cooler surrounded by ice and covered with a quilted moving pad (unnecessary if you happen to have access to a refrigerator large enough to handle a 5-gallon Igloo).

A turkey cooker would be handy on hunt day. A six- to eight-quart pot is handy; just keep topping it off as the crowd makes the chili disappear.

THE CHRISTMAS TREE

By Douglas H. Domedion

Long before the advent of Christianity, plants and trees that remained green all year had a special meaning for people in the winter. Just as people today decorate their homes during the festive season with pine, spruce, and fir trees, ancient peoples hung evergreen boughs over their doors and windows. In many countries it was believed that evergreens would keep away witches, ghosts, evil spirits, and illness.

Germany is credited with starting the Christmas tradition when devout Christians brought decorated trees into their homes. Some built Christmas pyramids of wood and decorated them with evergreens and candles if wood was scarce. By the 16th century the Christmas pyramid and the paradise tree had merged, becoming the Christmas tree.

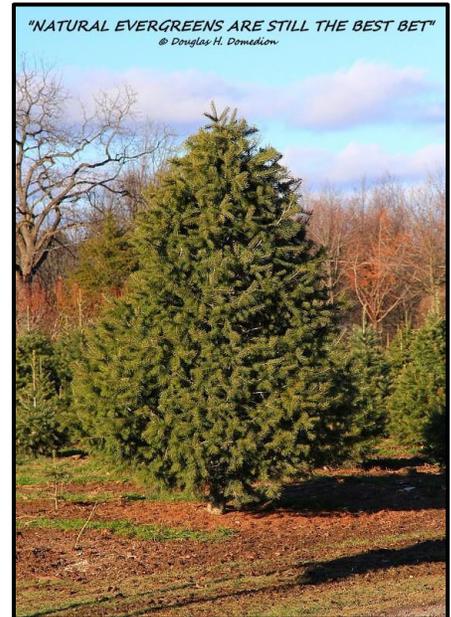
The custom was widespread among the German Lutherans by the 17th century, but it was not until the following century that the Christmas tree became a deep-rooted German tradition. Introduced into England in the early 19th century, the Christmas tree was popularized in the mid-19th century. Taken to North America by German settlers as early as the 17th century, Christmas trees were the height of fashion by the 19th century.

Blown-glass ornaments were offered for sale in Britain and the United States as early as the 1870s, many produced in small workshops in Germany, which also created decorations made from tinsel, cast lead, beads, pressed paper, and cotton batting. In the United States F. W. Woolworth stores were selling \$25 million in ornaments annually by 1890, by which time strings of electric tree lights were also available. In the 1930s, artificial trees made of brush bristles were developed in the United States, and the 1950s and '60s saw the mass production of aluminum and plastic trees. Artificial trees gained significant popularity, particularly in countries where fresh trees were hard to obtain. In recent years, more people have had the "real or fake" debate. A common misconception is that artificial trees are more environmentally friendly than cutting down live ones. However, artificial trees are made with non-biodegradable plastics and metals, and sometimes even contain toxins like lead. The toxins remain indefinitely once you dispose of the tree, taking up increasingly scarce landfill space.

Fresh-cut Christmas trees are a renewable, recyclable and sustainable resource. Saying "no" to a live tree won't save a tree from being cut down. Christmas trees are grown solely to become Christmas trees, and those farms help stabilize soil, protect water supplies, and provide habitat for wildlife. While growing, trees absorb carbon dioxide from the air and emit fresh oxygen, thus helping with climate change.

After the holidays, natural trees can be chipped for mulch, put in brush piles to create wildlife habitat, or even used for shoreline stabilization. Real trees are recycled more than 90 percent of the time or will eventually break down on their own. Another way to enjoy a Christmas tree is to buy a live, potted tree from a local grower, and then replant it outside in the spring.

Natural evergreens may still be the best deal for a Christmas tree and our environment, but that is a choice you have to make.



LAKE ALICE FISH SURVEY

By Mike Elam

On October 8 & 9, 2019, fisheries personnel from Region 8, under direction of biologist Matt Sanderson, did a fish assessment of Lake Alice in Orleans County. The methods used were shocking and gill nets of different graduated meshes to catch different size fish.

Shocking is done by boat, generating an electrical field to stun fish that will be netted by the boat crew. The fish are not harmed; most often they are measured, a scale sample taken, and then they're released, maybe feeling like they have a bad hangover. The presence of a shocking boat at work in the dark attracts much attention -- it looks like space invaders have landed.



The NYSDEC has stocked pond walleye fingerlings in Lake Alice for five years, and this was a follow-up assessment. It has stocked 6,200 – 6,500 pond fingerlings, sometimes directly released from a truck and sometimes from a stocking boat. Region 8 Fisheries personnel have been and continue to be very supportive of these efforts. Prior to the DEC stocking, the Orleans County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs participated in a Walleye Cooperative Program for 25 years. VHS and the cost of testing caused a cancellation of the pond raising project.



The fish assessment of Lake Alice showed the ever-changing dynamics of a fishery and how cyclical fish populations change.



Most native populations showed up; gizzard shad were once abundant but are now rare, channel catfish showed an increase, white perch (more or less an invasive) were present in large numbers. Walleye were present and showed up in three different year classes with good growth. Hopefully this will show a good investment and DEC will continue stocking of walleye.



On behalf of Orleans County Sportsmen and all New York State anglers, thank you to Region 8 Fish Manager Web Pearsall and his staff for their work to enhance our angling opportunities.

NEW YORK STATE CONSERVATION COUNCIL, INC. COMMITTEE APPLICATION

Important!! Appointment to NYSCC Committees is not automatic. If you have served on a committee in the past and wish to do so again, you must re-apply each year.

Please return your completed application immediately to:

NYS Conservation Council, 8 East Main Street, Ilion, NY 13357-1899

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archery & Bowhunting | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Energy & Natural Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Environment |
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Are you interested in serving as Chair of one of the above committees?

Yes _____ (Specify) _____ No _____

Signature _____



IF YOU ARE NOT CURRENTLY A MEMBER, JOIN TODAY!

Name _____
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Check One:
 _____ Guardian \$30
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Send application with check or money order payable to:
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OR
 go to www.nyscc.com and join using the paypal© feature on our homepage.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR 2019 B-A-M CONTRIBUTORS

We very much appreciate the contributions of organizations to the NYSCC's Buck-A-Member program for the past year. Donations have been acknowledged in each bi-monthly issue of Grass Roots News. Below is a list of counties with the dollar amount of contributions to B-A-M to date for 2019. Thank you for your support of the NYSCC through this vital program; let's see if we can significantly increase these gifts for 2020! Please note: only Buck-A-Member contributions are listed here; if your county is not listed, no B-A-M donations were received from your associated organizations. Contributions other than B-A-M from individuals, clubs and federations are not included in this list.

- Region 2 – Queens - \$50
- Region 3 – Dutchess - \$1148; Orange - \$500
- Region 4 – Albany - \$325; Columbia - \$322; Delaware - \$60; Otsego - \$575; Rensselaer - \$560; Schenectady - \$1325; Schoharie - \$300
- Region 5 – Saratoga - \$100
- Region 6 – Oneida - \$710
- Region 7 – Broome - \$62; Chenango - \$400; Onondaga - \$1968; Oswego - \$1000
- Region 8 – Chemung - \$100; Genesee - \$400; Livingston - \$1100; Ontario - \$200; Orleans - \$1020; Seneca - \$340; Tompkins - \$50; Yates \$15
- Region 9 – Cattaraugus - \$150; Chautauqua - \$1750; Erie - \$873; Niagara - \$50

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