



Grass Roots News

Advocating for Conservation and Sportsmen Since 1933

July/August 2019

Vol. 19 No. 4

RECOVERING AMERICA'S WILDLIFE ACT WILL INVEST IN ON-THE-GROUND FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

By Bill Conners

Right now, 12,000 species in America need conservation action and 40 percent of the nation's freshwater fish species are at risk. According to its sponsors, the Recovering America's Wildlife Act will help prevent those species from becoming threatened or endangered by creating a 21st century funding model.

The Wildlife Society is poised to support the bill introduced by Representatives Debbie Dingell of Michigan and Jeff Fortenberry of Nebraska, with more than 50 co-sponsors. If enacted into law, it will provide \$1.4 billion in dedicated annual funding to state and tribal fish and wildlife agencies. This funding would go toward the conservation and monitoring of at-risk species, known in states as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN).

To qualify for funding support, each state must develop a State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). New York State assessed 597 species, identifying important habitats, population trends, and the scope and severity of threats for each. The species assessments resulted in designating 366 species as SGCN, 166 of which are designated High Priority SGCN. There was insufficient data to establish population trends for 113 species which are thus designated as Species of Potential Conservation Need (SPCN).

Everyone has an interest in seeing this bill signed into law--hunters and non-hunters alike. The legislation will provide for the conservation needs of both game animals non-game animals, essentially any species identified by the states' fish and wildlife agencies.

The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (TRCP) anticipates the legislation transforming fish and wildlife management across the nation by "investing meaningful resources into proactive conservation."

"This legislation will invest in critical habitat, stronger wildlife populations, and a more robust outdoor recreation economy," said Whit Fosburgh, president and CEO of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership. "This bill empowers on-the-ground wildlife experts to implement science-based conservation plans that will preserve these species into the future."

A recent national survey determined that each state needs an average of \$26 million in new funding annually to effectively implement their State Wildlife Action Plans to prevent species from becoming threatened or endangered. Current funding levels are less than 5 percent of what is needed.

According to the National Wildlife Federation one-third of all U.S. wildlife species are already imperiled or are vulnerable. We all know that habitat loss, climate change, invasive species, disease, and severe weather are battering all manner of wildlife, whether furred, finned or feathered. Wildlife in general is declining—some species more so than others. State Wildlife Action Plans can help laser focus on species in greatest need of attention.

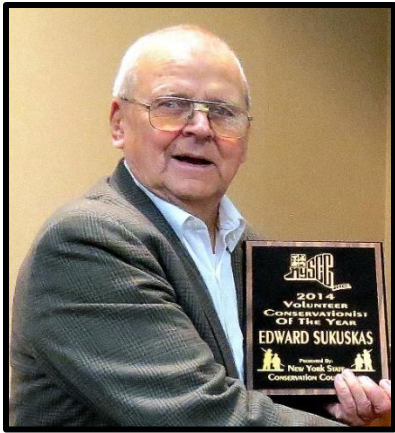
Though the bill has bipartisan sponsors and support, there is no guarantee that it will make it through Washington's partisan gauntlet. In the meantime, it would pay to let your Congressional representatives know how you feel about the bill. Ask them for their support. If we are serious about saving thousands of at-risk species, we must invest in collaborative, on-the-ground solutions that match the magnitude of the wildlife crisis. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act is the bipartisan solution we need.

CONDOLENCES

Ode to a Great Man
By Tom Agar, RCCA VP

With the passing of Ed Sukuskas the Rensselaer County Conservation Alliance and the trapping world has lost a great friend, teacher and leader.

This is a man who only comes into a person's life once in a lifetime. I consider myself very fortunate to have met and made friends with Ed. He could have been just another hunter or trapper that I had met going through life; but Ed was the kind of man that once you met him and he liked you, you had



a friend for life. To say Ed was a hunter and trapper falls way short; he was all those things, but he was also a great educator. Ed loved to share his knowledge with anyone interested in learning how to enjoy God's gifts of nature. He taught people to hunt and trap before the State ever saw a need to teach new hunters and trappers the art and safety needed to be great sportspersons. Ed was the driving force in setting up a wildlife display at our county fair that was admired by everyone.

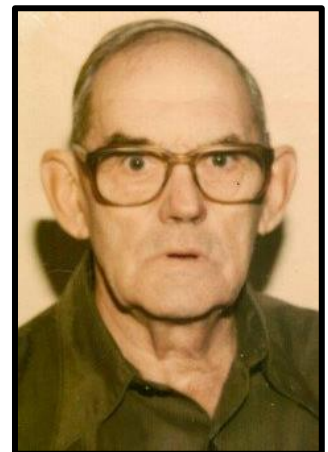
Some NYSCC members may recall Ed from 2014 when he was named Volunteer Conservationist of the Year for, among other things, being instrumental in getting DEC's Conservation Camps to teach the trapper education course. When Ed saw a need he got on the phone or did it himself. He helped the Pioneer Fish and Game Club raise quail and

pheasants and taught Boy Scouts how to make duck and bluebird boxes, keeping a diary of where the boxes went. He was the person we all called when we had a question about nature.

Ed will take his place with some other famous people from Hoosick Falls, NY. Grandma Moses and Wayne Trimm were both artists. Now, famous Outdoorsman and Educator Ed Sukuskas joins them. You'll go down in history Ed ... thank you for being my friend.

Jeannette Lindbergh, 79, of Franklinville (Cattaraugus County) has also passed away. She represented her county to the NYSCC for several years, was a member of the Franklinville Conservation Club, Cattaraugus County Trappers Association and was past secretary of the Farm Bureau of Cattaraugus County. 'Nettie' was a strong supporter of the NYSCC and sought to promote it to her club and county federation. She closed her emails with the thought, "Go fishing - Good things come to those who BAIT!"

Carlton Hatch, 94, of Delhi (Delaware County) was very active in organized sportsmen's groups. He was past president of the Delaware Co. Federation of Sportsmen and the Hamden Fish and Game Club. He also served as Regional Director and was a Life Member of the NYSCC, a member of the NRA, NYS Rifle and Pistol Association, and the Hartwick Rod and Game Club. He served over 30 years on both the regional and state levels of the NYS Fish and Wildlife Management Boards, attending bi-monthly meetings of the Hudson Valley Greenway. Carlton also served on the Citizens Advisory Board formed to build the Catskill Interpretive Center in Shandaken.



AN ANCIENT ONE SWIMS AMONG US

By Mike Elam, NYSCC Director at Large

Recently I had the opportunity to participate in the Orleans County Cooperative Extension's 6th grade Conservation Field Days, representing the Orleans County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs. Over two days I did 18 presentations on sturgeon, each 15 minutes long, to approximately 350 6th grade students and their teachers from five area school districts. Thanks to Tom Brooking and New York Sturgeon for Tomorrow, I was able to get "Stella the Sturgeon," information and pictures that helped with my program. Stella is a replica mount of a sturgeon I estimate to be between 80-100 lbs., depending on how many zebra mussels she has consumed recently.

New York Sturgeon for Tomorrow is a group promoting education about sturgeon and the hope of future self-sustaining populations. New York has a few prehistoric fish, all of which I'm fond of with sturgeon being my favorite, probably because it is the largest.

Here is what I presented to my captive audience: Sturgeon were swimming in Earth's lakes and rivers long before the dinosaurs were here. Fossils of sturgeon have been dated at 200 million years old; and at 100 million years, they evolved into what we have today. There are 27 species of sturgeon in the world, all in the Northern Hemisphere; Beluga in Russia, Ukraine and Crimea are the largest. New York has three species of sturgeon -- the short nose (smallest) and Atlantic (largest) are both in the Hudson River and are anadromous. Lake sturgeon, New York's largest truly freshwater fish, are present in Lakes Ontario, Erie, Champlain and Oneida, the upper and lower Niagara and St. Lawrence Rivers, along with Cayuga and Black Lakes. They range throughout the Great Lakes to as far north as Hudson Bay and South to Alabama.



Sturgeon are long-lived fish -- one lake sturgeon was documented at 150 years old. They can be aged by cutting the pectoral fin and counting the growth rings. Since they are long-lived, sturgeon mature slowly, males at 8-12 years and females at 12-20 years with females growing larger than males. This means that sturgeon won't spawn 'til they are basically teenyboppers and spawn periodically, not every year. A female can lay 100,000-800,000 eggs, but it could be several years between spawning cycles. They spawn in May and June on gravel in streams or rivers similar to areas used by salmon and steelhead. It is important to monitor spawning areas and protect them to aid sturgeon restoration. Sturgeon are cold blooded fish, and growth is influenced by water temperature. Shallow lakes, like Oneida or Black, warm faster and will see faster growth.

A sturgeon's skeletal structure is cartilage; the only bones they have are scutes along their sides for protection. A predator would look at a small sturgeon and think, "This could be serious heartburn." They have no teeth but a gizzard to grind their food. Sturgeon have a mouth that extends out to suck up food, so it is a bottom feeder, making it basically a swimming vacuum cleaner. They have four barbels that act as taste buds and are not very particular about what they eat ... crawfish, snails, freshwater mussels, fish and, I'm sure, they're chowing down on zebra and Quagga mussels. They have no scales but skin that is like fine sandpaper. Skeletons and skin are similar to sharks. Their bodies are torpedo shaped with flat stomachs so they can swim in strong currents. Divers tell of them lying on the bottom facing into the current, just resting. How big can lake sturgeon get? Two hundred pounds have been recorded, maybe 300; but any over 100 lbs. I would call big.

Predators besides man are lampreys and most likely cormorants. For small ones maybe some predator fish. Sturgeon have survived for 100 million years and now populations have been depleted. How did this happen? Native Americans lived with and respected lake sturgeon for a few hundred years. They had mythology and legends about the great sturgeon, used them in ceremonies, for medical purposes and as a meat supply when they came to spawn. The skin was also used for bowls and jars.

Now came the Europeans. In short order they dammed spawning streams or polluted them with runoff from mills, logging or farming so sturgeon could not reach spawning areas or eggs were smothered from pollution. Commercial netters wanted more valuable fish, and sturgeon were thought a nuisance that tore up nets so they were dispatched as trash. After the Civil War, it was discovered their flesh was good and, of course, there was caviar from eggs. Now there was a market, so by 1890, up to 4 million pounds of sturgeon a year were harvested from Lake Ontario. As a result, sturgeon - can't reach spawning areas + overfishing + slow reproduction = extinction. What can be done now to protect and increase sturgeon numbers?

New York closed sturgeon fishing in 1976, with only two remnant populations documented in the St. Lawrence River. In 1983 NY listed lake sturgeon as threatened. Lake sturgeon are present in 20 states with 19 listing them as threatened or endangered. NYSDEC received some fertilized sturgeon eggs in 1994 (I believe from Quebec), raised them in the Oneida Fish Hatchery and released them in Oneida Lake in 1995. While getting eggs for hatcheries from ripe fish can be a problem due to intermittent spawning cycles, between 1995 and 2018 NYS DEC has stocked 10,000 in Oneida Lake. Fortunately, there has been some wild reproduction from these fish.

In 2003 and 2004, approximately 1,900 yearling sturgeon were stocked in the Genesee River. They are being monitored and it is hoped survivors could spawn in 2020.

The US Fish & Wildlife Service did a five-year study on the lower Niagara River where it has been estimated that 5,000 native sturgeon use the lower Niagara for their life cycle. USFWS caught 800 sturgeon with setlines with only 50 recaptures. I was fortunate to spend 10 days working with USFWS as a volunteer, but that's another story.

From a humble beginning in 1994, NYSDEC has turned sturgeon restoration into a priority issue with assistance from USFWS, USGS and the NYSDEC Fisheries and Fish Hatchery System. They have been able to stock sturgeon in the St. Lawrence and Genesee Rivers as well as Oneida, Black, and Cayuga Lakes. With Vermont looking into sturgeon spawning streams on the Vermont side of Champlain along with lamprey control, things look promising for Lake Champlain. So, as of 2019, NYS priority sturgeon restoration could be summed up as a "cautiously optimistic success."



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

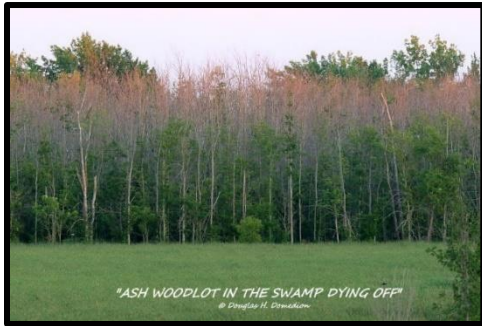
DEFENDER MEMBER:
 Ray Besecker, Thontosassa, FL

GUARDIAN MEMBERS:
 Dennis Rhoads, Cortland
 Michael Speranza, Watervliet

GENESEE CONSERVATION FOUNDATION, INC.
Charles O. Hancock, President
 (585) 223-1850 Phone (585) 223-6855 Fax
chancock@rochester.rr.com Email
 A charitable foundation concerned about conservation issues, with special interest in Genesee, Livingston, and Monroe Counties.

WE ARE LOSING SOME OF OUR TREES

By Douglas H. Domedion



Next time you are driving through the country, the swamp or even in the city, take note of the tree tops. You will probably spot masses of trees dying along the small woods, even in your yard. The dying trees are ash, and it is a pretty good bet that we are going to lose them all to a non-native beetle that is sweeping across the state at an alarming rate.

The problem has developed in recent years and is caused by a non-native insect, the emerald ash borer, that probably got into this country riding on



pallets of imports from Asia. It was first discovered in Michigan in 2002 and has spread to 13 states, including New York, and two Canadian provinces.

The emerald ash borer is a very small but very destructive beetle. It has four life stages: adult, egg, larva and pupa. Adult beetles have a shiny emerald green body with a coppery red or purple abdomen. They can measure 1/2" long and 1/8" wide with metallic green wing covers. Beetles may be present from late May through early September but are most common in June and July; they leave distinctive D-shaped exit holes in the outer bark of tree branches and trunks after they lay their eggs.

Signs of infestation in the tree canopy include die back, yellowing, and browning of leaves. Increased woodpecker activity is often the first sign that EAB are present. Insect activity can lead to large strips of bark falling off as the larva chew their way into areas around the tree that supply the tree with water and nutrition from the root system. On the trunk and branches, there will be small, D-shaped holes that are left by emerging beetles. When the tree's bark splits or falls off, S-shaped larval galleries may be visible.



So how does this insect kill an ash tree? Adult beetles lay eggs on the bark of the tree, and when the eggs hatch, the larvae (immature beetles) bore into the bark and feed on the transportation tissues of the tree. This disrupts the movement of nutrients and water within the tree, girdling it and causing its death.

Adult EABs typically fly less than 1/2 mile from their emergence tree so there is a gradual spread effect; but the main cause has been man made by the transport of ash wood around the state. There is a regulation against transporting firewood more than 50 miles in NYS, but we all know how that works! It only takes one violation to mess things up and it is almost impossible to control. Someone picks up a bundle of firewood from an infected area and hauls it to their cabin or cottage for campfires ... and the damage is done.

In Michigan, the first state in the US infested with EAB, the greatest economic impact has been on communities faced with removal of thousands of dead ash on streets and in yards. Many of these dead trees pose significant public safety hazards and liability problems for municipalities. Ash is also a common and valuable forest species; its seeds are a food source for birds and mammals. White, green and black ash species comprise almost 8% of all trees in NY State. Ash is a commercially valuable species used for baseball bats, flooring, furniture, lumber, and pallet manufacture. The estimated annual contribution of forest-based manufacturing and forest related recreation and tourism to the New York State economy is over \$9 billion.

Can the ash tree in a park or your yard be saved? Yes. If the tree is still in healthy condition a certified arborist should be hired to evaluate the trees to see if it is worth the effort. Treatment can be by soil injection, trunk injection, bark spray or canopy spray. The ash trees in woods or along a big hedgerow? No, it is just not practical or cost effective on a large scale.

As if that were not enough, another enemy of these trees is ash die back caused by a fungus present in this country and overseas. It, too, is killing a lot of the ash.

My contact information is 585-798-4022 or woodduck2020@yahoo.com.



Buck A Member Contributors:

Brunswick Sportsman's Club, Inc, Cropseyville * **Manchester Hunt Club, Inc.**, Poughkeepsie
Otego Rod & Gun Club, Otego * **Otisville Sportsmen's Assn., Inc.**, Otisville
Otsego County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, Otego
Pheasants Forever Wyo/Gen Chapter 843, Gasport * **SCOPE Genesee County**, Batavia

General Donation Contributors:

Black North Rod & Gun Club, Inc., Waterport * **Brush Busters Hunting Club, Walton**
Mike & Krys Elam, Albion * **Monroe County Conservation Council**, Penfield

WHAT'S HAPPENING OUT THERE

Iroquois Rod & Gun Club, a member of the Schenectady County Conservation Council, will have a "Sportsmen Garage Sale" on Saturday, August 10, from 9am – 4pm. This event is open to the public and will be held indoors and outdoors, rain or shine. The club's address is 590 Feuz Road, Rotterdam, NY 12306, about 2 miles from NYS Thruway Exit 25A.

Club members, non-members, businesses and organizations will be the vendors and customers. Offered for sale include items related to hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, camping, target shooting, archery, reloading, collectables, tools, and useful stuff.

For more information or to reserve a place, contact Gary at 518-526-2166.

The Clayton Rotary Club has announced the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) as the featured exhibitor for the 2019 Clayton Gun Show. The show will be held August 17-18, 2019, at the Cerow Recreation Park Arena in Clayton, NY, and is a Yellow Ribbon event for military personnel.

The DEC outdoors training and experience program will be among the more than 60 sporting exhibitors and vendors at the show, including gunsmiths, guides, conservation organizations, and collectors, buyers, and sellers with new, used, and antique firearms; sporting knives; black powder guns; military memorabilia; and gear for hunters, anglers, and outdoor enthusiasts.

Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW) and Beyond BOW are programs designed to teach women outdoor skills through information, encouragement, and hands-on instruction in such activities as fishing, shooting, archery, hunting, trapping, outdoor photography, camping, canoeing, outdoor cooking, and more. Classes are designed for women ages 18 and older with little to no outdoors experience. Examples of Beyond BOW experiences include hunter education courses, a guided fishing trip on Lake Ontario, and Adirondack camping and hiking trips.

The Clayton Gun Show hours are 8:30 am-5 pm on Saturday, August 17, and 9 am-3 pm on Sunday, August 18. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$4 for military personnel with ID; children under 12 enter free. Show proceeds benefit Clayton area charities.

For more information, contact show managers Tony Pisarski, 315-783-6017; Tom Neely, 315-482-4596; or Aileen Martin, 315-767-5643.

ONEIDA COUNTY'S CAMDEN MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS RELEASE TROUT, SALMON

By Paul Miller, Fish Creek Atlantic Salmon Club

On May 17th some 250 brown trout and Atlantic salmon were released into Mad River behind the Camden Middle School by over 150 joyous 6th graders. Students participated in a science class project to raise brook trout in a specially equipped fish tank. The salmon were tank raised at BOCES in Verona by an environmental science class. All the fish appeared vigorous and ready for the habitat change from tanks to the Mad River, and students were quite excited as well.



Prior to the release, Paul Miller, treasurer of the Fish Creek Atlantic Salmon Club, gave a brief audio-visual presentation in the middle school auditorium about the fish to be released and the environment of Mad River. Due to recent rains, Mad River was at a very high level and a strong current was present.

The Tug Hill branch of Trout Unlimited and the Fish Creek Atlantic Salmon Club have sponsored the trout/salmon in the classroom program for the past 6 years in Camden and neighboring schools. On the release day, members of the two clubs collected water bugs from the bottom of the river to display to the students and assisted the teachers in supervising the students at the River.

Many thanks to teachers Michele Brayman and Emily Lapier for their ongoing support, participation and encouragement of their students.

ACCA OBSERVES NYS OUTDOORS DAY

By Kevin Busch

Albany County Conservation Alliance took great pleasure in assisting on June 8 for the Second Annual NYS Outdoors Day at the 5 Rivers Environmental Education Center in Delmar, NY.

At the event NYSDEC 5 Rivers had seven stations set up consisting of archery, fishing, camping, hiking, simulated hunting, bird identification and orienteering. Participants got to spend a beautiful day outdoors visiting all the stations and getting a sampling of some new adventures or, in some cases, rekindling past enjoyments. The ACCA offered instruction and helpful information on the basics of camping and fishing.



Mike Speranza of Watervliet Fish & Game and Ed Horick III of Voorheesville Rod & Gun Club offered a great program at the fishing station. After a very short presentation and instruction it was off to the water. It was so good that even the local wildlife wanted to partake.

Bethlehem Sportsmen's Club offered tips and suggestions from very basic to advanced at the camping station, including setting up a tent camp, fire starting and a general list of items for a successful camp out.

Random feedback from the attendees passing through indicated it was a toss-up as to what was enjoyed the most. Fishing, archery and s'mores topped the list. Thanks to all member clubs



for time or donations to make this another successful opportunity to promote what sportspeople and the great outdoors have to offer. It's safe to say that we have gained future and returnee enthusiasts.



IF YOU ARE NOT CURRENTLY A MEMBER, JOIN TODAY!

Name _____
 (OR) Club Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Email (print clearly) _____

Check One:
 _____ Guardian \$30
 _____ Defender \$65
 _____ Life \$350 *
 * (individuals only)

Send application with check or money order payable to:
 NYSCC
 8 East Main Street
 Ilion, NY 13357

OR
 go to www.nyscc.com and join using the paypal© feature on our homepage.

ARE YOU AIMING FOR CLUB INSURANCE?



To request an enrollment form or discuss coverage, call United Insurance Agency, Inc. at 1-800-728-4522, ext. 313 or email John Long, Jr. at: johnjr@uia.com



- BENEFITS INCLUDE:**
- Competitive Rates
 - Superior Customer Service
 - Experienced Claims Handling
 - Knowledgeable Underwriters
 - Representing the Shooting Sports Industry Since 1980
 - A+ Rated Carrier

- COVERAGES INCLUDE:**
- \$1,000,000 Per Occurrence
 - \$2,000,000 Per Occurrence Option is also available
 - Defense Investigation and Related Cost in Addition to Limits of Liability
 - Additional Insured, Such as Landlords, Added at No Additional Charge
 - No General Aggregate



Table of Contents

Recovering America's Wildlife Act	1
Condolences	2
An Ancient One Swims Among Us	3 & 4
Welcome New Members	4
We Are Losing Some of Our Trees	5 & 6
Thank You	6
What's Happening Out There	6
Youth Events	7
Convention Insert	