



NNY Outdoors

A Watertown Daily Times/
Malone Telegram production

Fall 2024

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■ A 1927 lesson about marsh birds from Minna Anthony Common.

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Minna Anthony Common at work in an undated photo. Watertown Daily Times.

ON THE HUNT



Angus, a Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever, retrieves a lesser scaup during the 2023 waterfowl season on the St. Lawrence River. The waterfowl season starts Oct. 12 this year, one week later than traditionally. It is open through Dec. 1 and then again from Dec. 14 to Dec. 22 after the Department of Environmental Conservation adjusted the season following hunter surveys. ALEC JOHNSON/NNY OUTDOORS

WELCOME TO NNY OUTDOORS - CELEBRATING LIFE IN THE NORTH COUNTRY

This is the inaugural edition of NNY Outdoors, a publication of the Watertown Daily Times and Malone Telegram.

Here in Northern New York, we are surrounded by the outdoors, and the seasons drive our hobbies and how we live.

We have boating, sailing and fishing in the summer; hiking, hunting and leaf peeping in

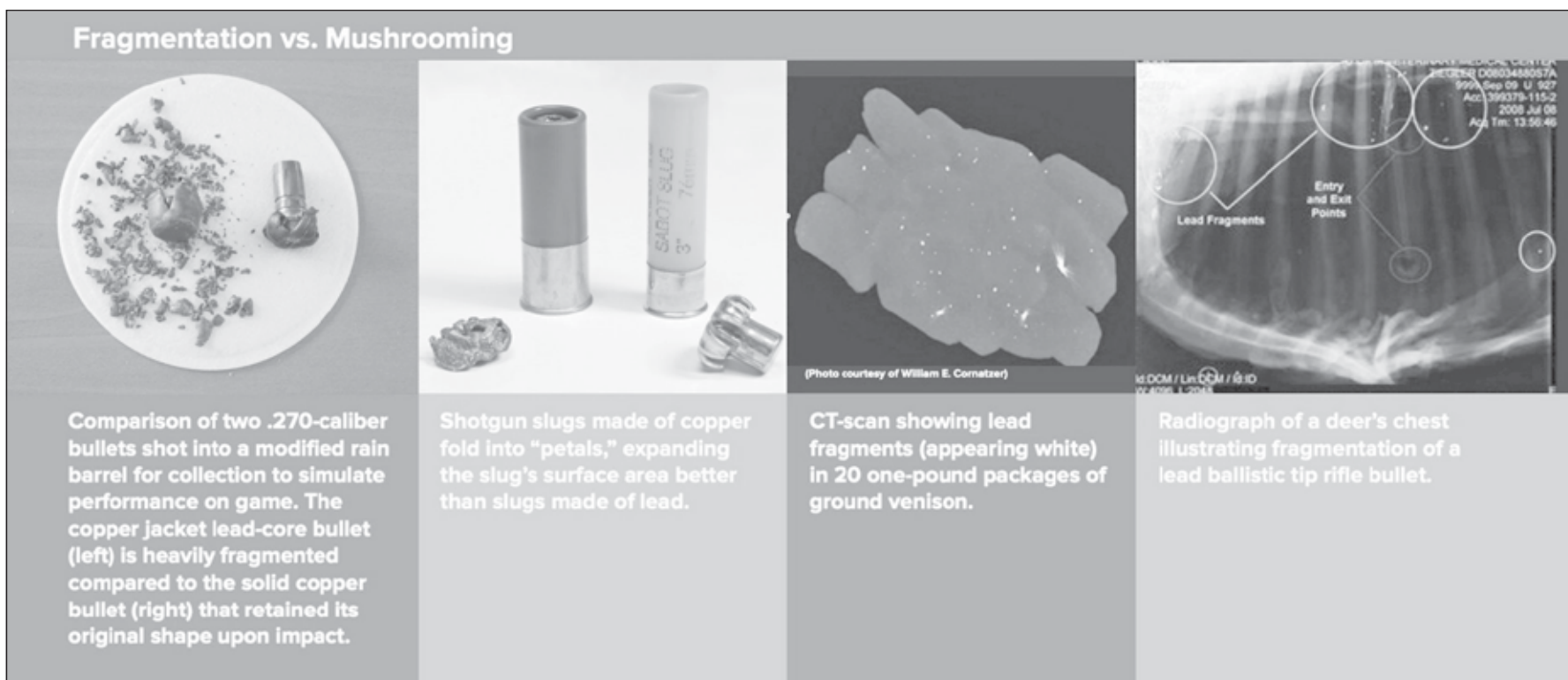
the fall; skiing, snowmobiling and ice fishing in the winter; chasing the spring bullhead or salmon run while watching buds breath new life to surrounding trees in the spring and so much more.

The four seasons give us distinct changes throughout the year that guide our activities. As the cool nights and mornings are here in September we're preparing for our fall and

winter seasons. This publication is meant to give readers a place to learn more about our surroundings. We look forward to reader submissions. We hope you enjoy this and we look forward to expanding on this initial edition. If you have a good story or photo to share, please email to nnyoudoors@wdt.net.

-Alec Johnson, Editor & Publisher

DEC expands ammunition study in conservation efforts



The NYS DEC released this chart about nontoxic bullets for deer hunting. NYS DEC

ALBANY — New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Interim Commissioner Sean Mahar has announced DEC is expanding statewide the multi-year cooperative study of how increased use of non-lead ammunition for deer hunting can improve the survival of bald and golden eagles. Hunters statewide are now eligible for a rebate up to \$60 for the purchase of non-lead ammunition for use during the 2024-25 deer hunting seasons.

"Hunters are critical partners in promoting sustainable wildlife management practices across North America, including ongoing efforts to improve golden and bald eagle populations in New York State," Interim Commissioner Mahar said. "By using non-lead ammo, hunters can help ensure scavenging animals like eagles are not unintentionally exposed to toxic lead fragments from bullets. DEC appreciates deer hunters who have volunteered to be part of this study and encourages others to participate during the upcoming hunting season."

DEC highly prioritizes minimizing risks to wildlife and

people from lead hunting ammunition. Eagles can incidentally ingest lead bullet fragments when scavenging the remains left behind after a hunter field dresses a deer. The golden eagle population is relatively stable in the eastern United States, although a multitude of human-caused threats still exist. While the bald eagle population continues to recover in New York, research has shown that lead-related mortality slows population growth. The newly expanded study aims to determine whether this source of mortality can be reduced by increasing the proportion of hunters using non-lead ammunition.

Initially available for hunting in specific Wildlife Management Units (WMUs), the study is expanding statewide to include all WMUs where a firearm can be used to hunt deer. Participation in the rebate program is voluntary and will be available to all firearm deer hunters statewide. DEC's research partners will be offering rebates up to \$60 for the purchase of certified non-lead ammunition and participation in both pre- and post-hunt surveys.

DEC expects to continue the study and rebate program for the 2025 and 2026 hunting seasons. For more information about the program, assistance with finding ammunition, and a program application, visit the Hunters for Eagle Conservation website.

This research was identified as a high priority in DEC's report, "Minimizing Risks to Wildlife and People from Lead Hunting Ammunition." Since the report's release in April 2022, DEC and partners—including the New York State Department of Health (DOH), Cornell University, U.S. Geological Survey, and Conservation Science Global—have taken several steps to implement recommendations in the plan to minimize the risks associated with lead ammunition for hunting:

DEC's Wildlife Health Program is measuring lead levels in furbearers and other scavenging wildlife to evaluate lead exposure. Preliminary results show 36 (44 percent) of 81 sampled fishers had low but detectable lead levels, and eight (15 percent) of 53 bobcats analyzed had detectable lead; data analyses and additional sam-

ple procurement is underway.

DEC hosted a North American Non-Lead Partnership workshop for Hunter Education staff, leaders of New York hunting organizations, and outdoor writers to demonstrate differences in lead and non-lead bullet performance. Work is underway to provide widespread access to these online educational videos and other outreach materials.

DEC and colleagues at the Cornell Wildlife Health Lab analyzed hunter survey data to identify factors influencing use of non-lead ammunition. DEC posted an educational video produced with Cornell Wildlife Health Lab and Cornell Department of Communication titled: "Your Choice of Ammunition" featuring hunters' experience with non-lead ammunition on DEC's YouTube Channel and hunting page, including updated messaging in the annual hunting guide to the benefits of using non-lead ammunition.

DEC collaborated with the Cornell Wildlife Health Lab on a project using game cameras to monitor scavenger use of deer carcasses and published the paper, "Vulnerability to

lead toxicosis and bioindicator utility of deer scavengers in New York," in *The Journal of Wildlife Management*.

DEC updated Hunter Education Program course curriculum and training of instructors to emphasize the risks to wildlife from lead ammunition and the benefits of non-lead ammunition.

DEC continues to update and improve the non-lead ammunition information available in the annual hunting and trapping regulations guide and updated the DEC website about the use of non-lead ammunition.

DOH surveyed food banks on practices related to donation of wild game and updated data collection procedures for lead-impacted adults to include questions about game consumption and lead ammunition use. DOH continues to develop and update outreach materials for pantry/food bank employees and patrons and provides "Health Advice for Harvesting, Preparing, and Eating Wild Game," which provides guidance on best practices.

For more information, visit DEC's website.

Northern Zone hunting seasons

2024-25 WATERFOWL

Youth Days - Sept. 28 & 29
Military Days - Nov. 28 & 29

Ducks - Oct. 12 to Dec. 1 and Dec. 14 to Dec 22.

Scaup (2/day) - Nov. 21 to Dec. 1 and Dec. 14 to Dec. 22

Canada Goose - Sept. 1 to Sept. 25, daily limit 15 and Oct. 26 to Nov. 15, daily limit 3 and Nov. 23- Dec. 1, daily limit 3

Snow Geese - Oct. 15 to April 15

Brant Oct. 12 to Nov. 10

BAG LIMITS

The daily limit of 6 ducks includes all mergansers and sea ducks (scoters, eiders and long-tailed ducks) and may include no harlequin ducks and no more than 4 mallards (2 of which may be hens), 3 wood ducks, 2 black ducks, 1 pintail, 1 scaup (2 scaup are allowed during the 20 days specified above for each zone), 2 redheads, 2 canvasback, or 4 sea ducks (including no more than 3 scoters, 3 long-tailed ducks, or 3 eiders and no more than 1 female eider). For all other duck species, the daily limit is no more than 6.

DEER

Early Bowhunting - Sept. 27 to Oct. 25

Crossbow - Oct. 16 to Oct. 25

Late Bowhunting - Dec. 9 to Dec. 15

Muzzleloading Oct. 19 to Oct. 25 and Dec. 9 to Dec 15, see DEC website for details.

TURKEY

Oct. 1. to Oct. 14

BEAR

Regular - Sept. 14 to Dec. 8
Bow hunting - Sept. 14 to Oct. 25

Crossbow - Oct. 16 to Oct. 25

Muzzleloading - Oct. 19 to 25

RUFFED GROUSE

Sept. 20 to Feb. 28

COTTONTAIL RABBIT

Oct. 1 to March 16

PHEASANT

Oct. 1 to Feb. 28

RACCOON, FOX, SKUNK, OPOS-

SUM & WEASEL

Oct. 25 to Feb. 15

COYOTE

Oct. 1 to March 30.

GRAY, BLACK & FOX SQUIRREL

Nov. 1 to Feb. 28



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DEC plans for new registry for bass fishing tournaments

By **CHRIS BROCK**

cbrock@wdt.net

The Department of Environmental Conservation says that New York is only one of two states in the northeastern U.S. that does not have a fishing tournament registration/permitting system in place.

That may soon change.

The DEC is reviewing public comments, a period that closed June 10, received for its proposed black bass (largemouth bass and smallmouth bass) fishing tournament permit regulations, set to go into effect for tournaments conducted on or after Jan. 1. The DEC has completed its review of public comments and expects to announce the finalized regulations soon. DEC currently anticipates the on-line permitting system will be available in early September.

The DEC posted on its website that the regulations are “planned to go into effect September 1.”

In the permit system’s regulatory impact statement, the DEC says, “A permit and recording system is necessary to allow the DEC to inform and improve fisheries management and provide, if necessary, protections for black bass populations.”

The north country has seen a boom in bass fishing tournaments in the past several years, especially the professional ones attracting big names in the sport. For example, the Minn Kota Stage Seven Tournament Presented by Humminbird, concluded Sunday in Massena. The Bassmaster Elite Series returns to Whitaker Park in Waddington Thursday through Sunday.

In June, Bassmaster Magazine named the St. Lawrence River the second-best bass fishery in the United States for 2023 — a slight slip from 2022 when it was named the top spot in the country.

“New York has become a national destination for black bass fishing tournaments and information suggests that the number of these events has increased significantly over the past decade,” the Bass Fishing Tournament Permit and Reporting System proposal states. “The increase in the number of these competitive events has the potential to place valuable black bass fisheries at risk and pose a social challenge



Kyle Welcher, of Opelika, Alabama, shows off his catch after taking the lead in August of 2023 at the Minn Kota Bassmaster Elite in Clayton. The DEC says a permit and reporting system for bass fishing tournaments is needed to understand the scope and scale of tournaments in New York and the possible effect on fisheries management. The overall scope and scale of tournament activity is unknown. Seigo Saito/B.A.S.S.

regarding competing uses of this resource.”

The DEC says a permit and reporting system for fishing tournaments is needed to understand the scope and scale of tournaments in New York. This will provide the information necessary to identify and respond to potential tournament-related issues and impacts such as user conflicts, overuse of the resource, and concerns about fish populations, including health, displacement and reproductive success.

A permit system will also provide anglers information about the locations and dates of tournaments and summary results of those tournaments, according to the DEC.

Costs of implementing the

proposed regulation will be the responsibility of the DEC, which expects “no costs as a result of this rulemaking beyond typical administrative expenses.”

In addition: “This rulemaking will not result in increased expenditures by other state agencies, local governments, or the general public. There are no costs associated with the permit for tournament organizations.”

The DEC noted that a voluntary registration system was considered. “A full accounting of the scope and scale of tournaments and their results is necessary to provide information for effective management. Participation in a voluntary registry would likely provide only a partial accounting of tournament activity,” its report

notes.

“Fishing tournament directors” will be required to apply for a fishing tournament permit for all events that meet established definitions.

For the purpose of the new rules, the DEC defines a fishing tournament as “organized competition among anglers or teams of anglers that is based on a measure of fishing success, such as the cumulative weight or length of targeted fish species; is operated on one day or a set of contiguous days, and has a minimum of 10 competitors.”

A fishing tournament director is defined as “any person responsible for organizing or operating a fishing tournament.” Those directors will need to supply a re-

port of tournament results within 45 days after the event. Reports will need to be submitted online through a link on the DEC website.

A fishing tournament permit will only be required for tournaments targeting black bass (largemouth and smallmouth). Tournaments targeting other species will not require a permit. There is no cost to apply for this permit.

Permit applications will have to be received no sooner than 365 days and no later than 45 days prior to the tournament.

Once the system is implemented, a map and list of permitted tournaments will be available on the DEC website.

Junior Bassmasters enjoy volunteer service at Elites Tourney



A large contingent from the NNY Junior Bassmasters Club was on hand Aug. 18 to present Bassmaster Elite Series Master of Ceremonies Dave Mercer with an award for his great career and his support of anglers of all ages. Provided photo

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New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Sept. 6 to Sept. 13

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SALMON RIVER

As of September 3, the river is at 392 cubic feet per second (CFS) and the dam release is at 750 CFS. Anglers who fished the river this past weekend reported the lower end of the river having the most Chinooks with a few Cohos mixed in. The highest activity seen in the fish was early in the morning and as the sun came out the fish were found in the shaded areas of the river. Keep an eye on flows and dam releases before going to the river.

OSWEGO RIVER

The river is at 2,350 cubic feet per second (CFS) as of September 3. For walleye, try large stickbaits or jigs. Bass are being caught along the wall on crank baits, senkos, and drop shots. The water temperature in the river is still in the 70-degree range. A few anglers have reported seeing a few salmon run up the river.

Remember there are mandatory personal flotation device (PFD) zones on the river. For more information on PFD zones and life jacket loaner programs, visit the Oswego County Tourism website.

LAKE ONTARIO

Anglers are reporting the lake bite for salmon is proving to be getting tough due to the salmon starting to stage to head into the river and tributaries. Anglers fishing the

lake are trolling within the depth range of 100 to 190 feet of water for salmon but are moving towards shallower waters and staging at the mouth of Salmon river. Green mid-size magnum spoons have been proving to be productive in the mornings along with flasher/fly combos. Jigging for kings, lakereels, and coho is proving to be very effective on the lake. Smallmouth bass are also biting great right now on drop shots in the lake. If possible, look for areas of off colored water around river mouths, these "mud-lines" can be good places to troll in or on the edge of. As the day brightens, fishing deeper with chrome patterns often helps to extend the bite.

SKANEATELES LAKE

Look for yellow perch in 15 to 40 feet of water. Lake trout can be caught in about 40 to 70 feet of water, trolling or vertical jigging. Lake trout are biting well on mepps lures while trolling. Rainbow trout can be found in 75 feet of water. Bass can be caught on drop shots, stickbaits, or crankbaits. Look for walleye in 40 feet of water jigging or trolling. For more information on how to catch bass, visit Fishing for Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass on the DEC website.

CAYUGA LAKE

Look for lake trout in 80 to 150 feet of water, vertical jigging or trolling. White and black colored jigs are hot right now for the lake trout. Rainbow trout can be found in around 40- 80 ft of water jigging or trolling. Landlock salmon can be found in around 20 feet of water near tributaries in the lake. Yellow perch are being caught near

shore in 15 to 40 feet of water on small jigs. For large-mouth bass try drop shot, tube jigs, senkos, or a stick bait.

ONEIDA LAKE

Walleye seem to be biting in 20 to 40 feet of water trolling or jigging. Good baits to try are stickbaits, crankbaits, blade baits, jig/worm or worm harnesses, and buck tails in perch pattern. Bass can be caught in the shallows on rattle-traps, jerkbaits, spinnerbaits, chatterbaits, swimbaits and topwaters. Smallmouth bass can also be found in the deeper water around 15 to 50 feet on humps or rock piles. This deeper water swimbaits, dropshots, or jigs work very well. Panfish can be found on the outside edges of weed beds in 10 to 20 feet of water. For panfish try small jigs, small bright colored spinners, or #4 hooks with a nightcrawler.

OTISCO LAKE

Look for tiger musky in the shallow north end, Lader Point, Turtle Bay and along the causeway using spinnerbaits, chatterbaits, swimbaits or large stickbaits. For walleye, try trolling in the 15-to-20-foot depth range with stickbaits or spoons.

WHITNEY POINT RESERVOIR

For walleye, try crankbaits, stickbaits, jig/worm or worm harnesses. Walleye can be caught by jigging or trolling. Channel catfish and bullheads will bite on nightcrawlers, cut-bait or dead minnows. For tips on how to fish for catfish visit DEC's Fishing For New York's Big cats webpage.

DEC plans webinar on waterfowl news and updates

Times staff report

Wildlife biologists at the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation will host a virtual meeting

from 7 to 9 p.m. on Sept. 23, to advise the public of a variety of regional and statewide waterfowl news and updates.

Meeting topics: Highlights of wetland management. Expected impoundment fall water level status.

Research programs at the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, and the Tonawanda, Oak Orchard, Northern Montezuma, and Braddock Bay wildlife management areas.

Atlantic Flyway waterfowl populations.

Upcoming duck and goose hunting seasons.

For general questions, contact DEC's Iroquois Wildlife field office at (585) 948-5182.

To register and to receive instructions on joining the webinar, go to wdt.me/waterfowldec.

10th Mountain troops take on '46er' challenge Climb to Glory



Sgt. 1st Class John P. Pearson of the 10th Mountain Division poses in 2021 with daughter Ariana, then 6, on top of Algonquin Peak, one of the 46 Adirondack High Peaks in the Adirondack Park and the second-tallest mountain in New York. Photo courtesy of Alanah Pearson

By CHRIS BROCK

cbrock@wdt.net

WATERTOWN — The 10th Mountain Division reached new heights Aug. 22 in its

“Climb to Glory” path of prestige.

About 200 Fort Drum soldiers, in teams, summit-

See CLIMB T7

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Bergenost-Norwegian	Havarti-Original, Chive/Horseradish, Dill,	Romano Wedge
Black Olive & Red Pepper Cheddar	Herb & Garlic Cheddar	Sharp Cheddar
Bleu Cheese	Hickory Smoked Cheddar	Strawberry Chardonnay Cheddar
Blueberry	Horseradish Cheddar	Sausage Pizza
Brick (young) Cheese	Horseradish-Smoked Cheddar	Swiss
Buffalo Bill Cheddar (hot)	Habanero & Jalapeno Cheddar	Smoked Swiss
Buffalo Wing Jack-Mild	Jalapeno/Cayenne Cheddar	Baby Swiss
Cascadita	Jalapeno Muenster	Lacy Swiss— 25% Less Fat
Chastinet (mild chewy parmesan)	Jumpin' Jack	Smoked XXX-Treme and Medium
Champagne Cheddar (sweet)	Killer Dill Cheddar	Scorpion (hot)
Chicken Soup	Limburger & Limburger Spread	Swedish Farmers Cheese
Cheese Curd (Plain, Garlic,	Maple Cheddar	Tomato Bacon Swiss
Horseradish, Italian, Jalapeno)	Maple Cheddar with Bacon	Tomme
Chipotle Pepper Jack	Medium Cheddar	Wasabi Horseradish Cheddar
Chocolate Cheese Delight	Merlot Wedge	XXX-Treme (3 yr. old Cheddar)
Colby	Mild Cheddar	XXXX-TremeEst (5 yr. old Cheddar)
Colby Jack	Monterey Jack	Tempting 10 Year Old Cheddar
Colby Salami	Mozzarella	3lb Waxed Sharp Cheddar Wheel
Cranberry Chipotle	Muenster-Creamy	Cheese Spreads/Shaker Cheese
Crumbled Feta	Mushroom Leak	Kraft Flavored Cream Cheeses
Extra Sharp Cheddar	Naturally Wood Smoked Cheddar	Kraft Plain Cream Cheese 3lb Tubs,
Farmers/Veggie Farmers Cheese	Steakhouse Onion Cheddar	Cheesecake Filling & Loaves
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Climb

From T6

ed the 46 Adirondack High Peaks tame day. For individuals, hiking the 46 Adirondack High Peaks is recognized as one of the greatest challenges in the Adirondack Park. But pulling it off as a brigade-level operation involves another level of intense planning and strategy.

“We’re going to be the first organization ever to submit all 46 high peaks on the same day,” said Sgt. First Class John P. Pearson, who in April returned from a deployment to Iraq with the 2nd Brigade Combat team.

Fort Drum public affairs officer Maj. Geoffrey Carmichael refers to Pearson, a former Army rappel instructor, as “the brigade’s mountaineer.” Pearson and Fort Drum Capt. Joshua Crossman, operations officer, developed today’s climbing operation.

In October of 2021, members of the Pearson family, John, his wife and children — then ages 6, 9 and 10 — became Adirondack 46ers, a club dedicated to hikers who have summited all 46 High Peaks of the Adirondack Mountains. They completed the challenge in a remarkable five months.

Today, Pearson will be one of the climbers as he also helps to manage the operation.

“We’re going out to do this to train junior level leaders, the E5s, E6s, how to do land navigation, decentralized operations in a large remote area,” he said. “It’s all the things that would be required of an army fighting force in the future, like a large-scale combat operation.”

Pearson said Fort Drum is working with agencies such as the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Adirondack Mountain Rescue and state forest rangers.

“We have inter-operability and approval through all of these,” he said. “It’s taken nine months to get where we’re at.”

Pearson said today’s operation will be executed by 24 teams of eight soldiers each. “We’re going to have

soldiers across the 2nd Brigade Combat Team of the 10th Mountain Division on every

summit all at the same time. It’s not only going to be a historic event for the division, but it’s going to be one in general because no organization has ever summited all 46 in a single day.”

The training, Pearson said, will be invaluable for the troops of the 10th Mountain Division, which has roots in the mountains. The 10th Light Division (Alpine) was constituted on July 10, 1943, and activated that July 15 at Camp Hale, Colorado. The Army reactivated the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum in 1985. Troops regularly return to Colorado to train.

Pearson said that many future threat locations are in the mountains.

“We lost that skill set,” he said. “We’re trying to get soldiers back into the mountains and understand how to survive in the mountains. That’s what this is all about.”

“I think it’s going to do a lot for the 10th Mountain Division story,” Carmichael said.



THE 2023 DEER SEASON AFTER REPORT



Jon French, a second-generation deer cutter, right, fills out a custom cut order form for Tim Tobin, who brought in a 10-point buck from Paul Smith’s in 2020. CHRISTOPHER LENNEY/WATERTOWN DAILY TIMES

Times Staff Report

Hunters harvested more than 16,000 deer across the tri-county area in 2023, according to data released by the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

Jefferson County saw the fifth most number of deer harvested among the state’s 62 counties at 6,673, while St. Lawrence County realized the seventh highest total with 6,113. Steuben County in the state’s southern tier led all counties with 14,295.

The 2023-24 deer harvest included more than twice as many older bucks, bucks two-and-a-half years old or older, than were harvested in the early 1990s, and nearly five times as many than were harvested in 1969 when DEC first began monitoring the age structure of New York’s deer herd.

“Nearly 70 percent of the bucks harvested by hunters during the 2023-24 deer hunting seasons were two years or older,” Interim Commissioner Mahar said. “This demonstrates the continued effectiveness of DEC’s Let Young Bucks Go and Watch Them Grow campaign, and the willingness of hunters to voluntarily pass up opportunities at young bucks to improve their future opportunities to harvest older bucks.”



File photo.

The 2023-24 estimated deer harvest included an estimated 112,224 antlered bucks (i.e., adult males) and an estimated 97,557 antlerless deer (i.e., adult females and fawns of either sex). Statewide, this represents a 3.6 percent decrease in antlered buck harvest and a 15.6 percent decrease in antlerless deer harvest from last season. The decrease in antlerless deer harvest, which is approximately 15 percent lower than the five-year average, is concerning because DEC manages deer populations through actions that encourage harvest of antlerless deer. Harvesting antlerless deer helps ensure deer populations remain in balance with available habitat

and do not exceed levels of public acceptance that can lead to increased crop damage, deer-vehicle collisions, and other potentially negative deer-related impacts. Harvesting antlerless deer also helps ensure deer are able to meet their nutritional demands for antler development, fawn recruitment, and body growth.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) reported that 209,781 deer were harvested in New York during the 2023-2024 hunting season. This is the lowest number of deer harvested in the state since 2017, when 203,427 deer were hunted. The 2023 harvest was also below the 5-year average of 229,839 deer

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State Record Catch

By **CHRIS BROCK**
cbrock@wdt.net

REDWOOD — This fish story begins with a gag gift of a fishing net and ends 53 inches and nearly 16 pounds later with a record-breaking haul of a whopper that the state Department of Environmental Conservation calls a “living dinosaur.”

Charles “Chuck” W. Zimmerman of Hilton, Monroe County, always has at hand and just out of reach on his fishing trips on Butterfield Lake in Jefferson County a net that was gifted to his late father, William Zimmerman.

“My aunt bought it for my dad years back at a garage sale as a gag gift, pretty much saying, ‘You’ll never need this sized net for what you are fishing for,’” Zimmerman said.

That changed on June 21, when Zimmerman, on a boat with his buddies on the lake, caught the first state record fish of 2024.

He caught a 53-inch, 15-pound, 14-ounce longnose gar, smashing a 2018 record.

The catch surpassed the previous state record of the species, caught in Lake Champlain in 2018, by 1 pound, 4 ounces.

According to data from Cornell University, gar have lived in North American waters for 50 million years: “Gar are long, cylindrical fish with distinctive long jaws containing needlelike teeth.

Most modern gar live within shallow, vegetated freshwater habitats, although some species frequent brackish and marine coastal waters.”

Cornell says longnose gar have a unique ability: breathing atmospheric air, a result of its swim bladder being connected to the esophagus, allowing it to operate as a primitive lung. “This ability to breathe air at the surface allows gar to live in low-oxygen conditions frequently found in shallow, freshwater habitats associated with coastal wetlands.”

The longnose gar is unrelated to the sturgeon, but biologists often refer to both as being “living fossils.” The gar is also distinct in its appearance, having a long



The lure that Chuck Zimmerman used to land the 53-inch, 15-pound, 14-ounce longnose gar that smashed the 2018 state record.

Provided photo

narrow snout full of teeth. Their scales are heavy and they are voracious predators of smaller fish. On average, north country gar can live up to 20 years, with some far surpassing that mark, according to biologists.

But despite a widespread gar population found in Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, the St. Lawrence River, Lake Champlain and Chautauqua Lake, many anglers and outdoors enthusiasts never encounter one.

As a side note, or as a warning: The eggs of longnose gar are extremely toxic to humans.

Water from adjacent Mud Lake flows into Butterfield Lake. Other fish species present in the lake are largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, northern pike, walleye, yellow perch, black bullhead, bluegill, black crappie and bowfin. Butterfield Lake is southwest of Black Lake in St. Lawrence County. In mid-May 1995, a fisherman from Pennsylvania broke the state longnose gar record at the time by catching one that measured 49 inches and weighed 12 pounds, 8 ounces. It broke the previous record for a longnose gar of 11 pounds, 6 ounces, which was caught in Lake Champlain in 1992.

Reporting on the record 1995 catch, a DEC biologist told the Times: “They are very predacious and occasionally attack people — when they’re caught, that is. If it’s got a hook in its mouth and it’s chomping away and your hand’s



Chuck Zimmerman poses with his record-breaking longnose gar June 21 at his dock on Butterfield Lake. Provided photo



Longnose gar typically reach lengths of 3 to 4 feet. They inhabit warm, shallow areas. CORNELL UNIVERSITY

near it, it will chomp on it too.”

On June 21, Zimmerman and his three friends stumbled upon some longnose gar on Butterfield Lake.

“The full circle, feel-good part of this story is closing the loop on finally getting a monster wall mount,” Zimmerman said. “My dad has since passed, in 2004. This is the 20th anniversary of his death.”

The Zimmerman family has had a cottage on the north end of the lake since the 1980s. Zimmerman, his wife and two children, ages 6½ and 3, make it up here as often as they can in summers. Back home in Monroe County, Zimmerman is manager of logistics at Rochester Regional Health. The fishing tradition was passed down to Zimmerman by his dad.

“It was a very cool moment to have with my buddies out on the boat at definitely my favorite place in the world,” Zimmerman said. “This is my paradise up here. I’m so glad that it happened at Butterfield. I would have had it happen nowhere else but here to catch some kind of state record. It’s pretty awesome.”

See GART13

Adirondack Rail Trail's second phase wraps up

By **AARON MARBONE**

Adirondack Daily Enterprise

LAKE CLEAR — Around 60 people, many of them wearing helmets, filled a clearing at a junction of the Adirondack Rail Trail near Little Green Pond on Monday to mark the official opening of the second phase of the 34-mile trail — a former railroad corridor connecting the villages of Tupper Lake, Saranac Lake and Lake Placid.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation gathered people there to announce that the portion of the trail from Saranac Lake to Floodwood Road is now complete, and that work on the third phase — from Floodwood to Tupper Lake — is starting immediately. The first phase — from Lake Placid to Saranac Lake — opened last year.

After the press conference on the trail, a cohort of state officials, cycling enthusiasts and bike advocates took a 3.5-mile ride down the trail to eat lunch at Charlie's Inn in Lake Clear.

Interim DEC Commissioner Sean Mahar's daughter Stefanie, who turns 13 today, wore a helmet and carried a bike. She said she's been riding since she was 5 — mostly in her neighborhood. Stefanie said she loves riding trails like the rail trail through nature.

"You get to be free," she said.

Stefanie is an example of what her father describes as state officials' hope that the rail trail will get families out in nature together.

The DEC commissioner said this section of the rail trail is opening early, which he said is the result of good construction weather and a great construction team.

After the officials pedaled away from the junction, Rifenburg Construction foreman Francis Riley and employee Connor Dyn — who have been part of the crew building the \$8.75 million section of the rail trail through the woods over the past year — adhered



Bicyclists embark on a segment of the Adirondack Rail Trail in Lake Placid in May. Andy Flynn/Adirondack Daily Enterprise

reflective tape to the yellow gates at the intersection. Riley said the work went faster this year than last.

"Just hard work, bud," he said.

Despite the rainy summer this year, he said the crew didn't take rain delays and worked in downpours as often as they could. Riley and Dyn both said they are proud of the work and enjoyed seeing so many people enjoying their trail on Monday.

Kubricky Construction of Saratoga County has been awarded the \$7.4-million state contract to construction the last phase of the rail trail from Floodwood Road to Tupper Lake.

Sean Mahar was hesitant to give an end date for this section, but said he hopes it is ahead of schedule, too. Completion of this phase has been scheduled for 2025.

Use of this third phase is currently prohibited while work starts on it, for the safety

of the public and construction crews. A pause of this prohibition will occur during snowmobile season, from Dec. 9 through March 31.

Mahar said the rail trail fits in to Gov. Kathy Hochul's new "Get Offline, Get Outside" campaign. The trail ensures the outdoors are accessible for everyone, he said, and he hopes it will bring all sorts of people into "this amazing part of the (Adirondack) Park."

State Office of General Services' Executive Deputy Commissioner Tom Nitido said OGS usually does a lot of behind-the-scenes infrastructure in the state. To work on something so public, something he'll be able to use, was "beyond exciting."

State Department of Transportation Region 2 Director Linda Lubey said the rail trail is not just a way to get to a destination — it is a destination itself.

She said the DOT is working at improving the train depot at

the trail's end point in Tupper Lake, where the train service to Old Forge begins. The DOT is creating a pathway connecting the depot to the trail, installing a covered area for train passengers and creating a new train maintenance shed there.

Now that this section of the trail is open, the focus turns to maintenance and safety.

The Adirondack Rail Trail Association has a Volunteer Stewardship Agreement with the state. It is currently looking for volunteers at a Sept. 7 "Rail Trail Work Bee" to stain the timber fences along Phase 1 of the trail. Registration is at tinyurl.com/mafzuyxh.

There is a 55 mph speed limit on the trail — and a 15 mph limit in towns — which Mahar said will be enforced by local and state law enforcement. All-terrain vehicles and certain types of e-bikes are also not allowed on the trail.

"We're always watching," Mahar said ominously.

But he added that it will ac-

tually take users on the trail reporting violations to the DEC or to local law enforcement.

The trail is designed to withstand snowmobile traffic in the winter. Mahar said the DEC will monitor its condition over time, adding that there are plenty of state funding sources for maintenance.

At the many places that the rail trail crosses a road, Mahar said everyone should "be aware." Cyclists should always yield at the asphalt and watch for cars; motorists should slow down and look both ways when driving through these intersections.

The state is putting more than \$30 million into the 34-mile trail. The DEC is predicting between 56,000 and 800,000 visitors to the trail annually.

While the economic impacts promised by the trail are not quantifiable yet, Mahar said he can't wait to see the metrics and is certain the trail

High School trap shooting on target



Gouverneur won the Travelling Team Championship Trophy back in June at the BLFGA High School Trap Invitational. From left are: Coach Mike Cappellino who won the Coaches' Competition, Nick Canell, Paul Minkler, Ryan Mashaw, Zack Marlow, Jackson Breckinridge, Dryden Sixerry and Ayden Brown. Dave Shea/ The Journal

By DAVESHEA
The Journal

Trap Shooting is the fastest growing high school club sport

in New York State and the country.

The second annual Black Lake Fish and Game Association's

High School Trap Invitational reflected that growth last June as the field grew by 70 over last year's invitational. Along with

the joy of competitive shooting the trap shooting has also gained great success because it teaches youngsters the lessons of firearm safety and allows them to gain confidence as their shooting skills mature.

"Everything went smoothly today and we finished right on schedule. The kids and the coaches had a great time. We had a coaches competition today which was won by Mike Cappellino of Gouverneur and it was great the way the kids reacted the coaches scores were posted," said Frank Goodwin, a member of the Morristown

Central team, who helped coordinate the action.

"The biggest thing about this sport is the emphasis on safety. We never have any injuries. Next year we are going to open the invitational to all schools in St. Lawrence and Jefferson Counties and it will be a two-day event. We are all excited about it."

Continued growth in the future is projected and Lawrence Kring of the BLFGA's trap invitational committee is a major plus.

"We love seeing students

See TRAP T13



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Hundreds of Red-Wing Black Birds
Nest in Cat Tails—Least Bittern
Occasionally Seen Along the
River.

By **MINNA ANTHONY COMMON**

Minna Anthony Common was Northern New York's best known writer and illustrator of nature subjects. She wrote regularly for the Watertown Daily Times from 1925 to 1950. The Minna Anthony Common Nature Center is on Wellesley Island. Each edition of NNY Outdoors will feature a column by Minna.

Red-brown rocks tossed indiscriminately about from the shore line of nearly every one of the Thousand Islands so whether the river is high or low there is a never a muddy bank anywhere. Trees and shrubs grow among the rocks to the river's edge. Here and there on the larger Islands are marshy bays. Perhaps because of their scarcity, these teem with bird life.

Marsh grasses and water loving plants fill these bays near the shore, bordered by cat tails where the water is shallow, then wild celery and native rice and finally in the deep water, reeds. Certain birds prefer each of these nesting sites.

Many marsh birds are strictly nocturnal judging from the strange sounds which the air as soon as dark descends. We real musicians sing in the daytime and among these the little Marsh Wren easily takes first place. They are true optimists, believing without doubt that a cheerful song will dispel all troubles.

With unusual forethought they roof their nests and enter through a tiny round hole in one side, so they can sing whether the sun shines or the rain descends

because they know their family is safe and dry. They build in the tall grasses near the shore and there clinging to a swaying weed, with saucy air and upturned tail they sing and sing, a rollick-ing, bubbling song.

The Red-wing black Bird nests in the cat tails, First he brings a clump of these together and binds them securely so they form a wigwam like a roof. The nest is made of the leaves of the cat tails as cleverly woven as an Indian basket and lined deeply with fine grasses. The nests are put from six inches to a foot above the water and if a sudden wind blowing into the bay raises his waves sometimes the. Nests are wrecked. One year after a bad storm we found 30 homes overtaken by tragedy.

The Least Bittern is not a rare bird, but it is clever at conceding itself. It will stay clinging lengthwise to a cat tail while rowboat passes almost within arms reach and not be noticed. It is about the length of a robin, but much more slender and has a longer bill. Its colors, worn lengthwise in stripes, match the cat tail's in sun and shadow. The nests are woven like a mat with almost no edges. The young are little fluffy, yellow chicks, with very long necks and large, round, black eyes. They too will "freeze" when anyone comes near.

The Black Duck, the Coot and the Hell Diver all nest among the reeds and their young leave the nest as soon as hatched and fol-



Minna Anthony Common at work in an undated photo. Watertown Daily Times.

low the mother bird about. The ducks hide in the reeds and betray their presence by quacking.

The Coot, called also March Chicken, has toes with wide round lobes on each side which make the feet resemble snow shoes and the bird can generally run on top of the water with a great splashing.

The little Pled-billed Grebes or Hell Divers are everywhere floating idly about in family groups. They look like small ducks with only a head and bill above the water. At any disturbance they dive instantly, a little pointed tail coming up as the head goes down. In fact, they earned their common name because after the old time gun flashed they could dive before the shot reached them.

Probably the shyest of all these water birds is the Virginia Fall. If flushed it flies up and drops with

dangling legs just beyond where it was and no amount of patient waiting will bring it out again that day.

Sometimes the Great Blue Heron or the American Bittern will be found standing quietly close to the rushes and fishing. The Heron does not nest in the marsh but perhaps miles away in a tree colony. The Bittern conceals both its nest and queer long-legged young with great care. It is known by hunters by the name of Mud Hen. Its strange booming love song resembles nothing so much as a pile being driven into the water. The effort the bird makes to produce this sound is startling. Such contortions should produce better results.

Rowing quietly through the rushes one day we had the pleasure of coming upon one of these birds getting his morning meal.

He stood just at the edge of the cat tails in about six inches of water and in the play of light and shade was cleverly concealed by his speckled brownish coloring. We waited a few minutes then like a flash he bent his head to the water and scooped up a frog. It disappeared down his throat head first with considerable difficulty and we could see the bulge of his eight inch long neck as the front descended. The marvel was how could anything at least three times as large go around as the neck go down inside, but it did and what's more, six more frogs and a fish disappeared in like manner. Then, his appetite appeased, like a shadow the bird slid back among the rushes and was lost to view.

The love for a marsh grows upon one. It speaks a language of its own, not always quiet but peaceful.

Trap

From T11

shooting here and enjoying themselves. This is a lifetime sport and in the future when we are all gone. Some of these young people will be running the club."

"That's the plan" said Goodwin.

"This is a special sport," said BLFGA member and father of two shooters Scott Ritchie.

"In trap shooting a 12 year old can compete along side someone in their eighties."

Gouverneur won the traveling Team Championship Trophy with a 225-222 margin over Indian River and 2023 champion Heuvelton. Morristown (216), Morristown (216), OFA (214), Hammond 203 and Harrisville (199) rounded out the scoring. Individual shooters from Lisbon also participated but the Golden Knights didn't score in the team standings.

The BLFGA is the home venue for the Morristown, Heuvelton, Hammond and OFA teams who compete in the New York State Clay Target Shooting League.

Many of the shooters will travel to Bridgeport this weekend to compete in the New York State Championships.

Ryan Mashaw of Gouverneur emerged as the Top Male Shooter with 49 points followed by Caleb Bugenstock of Indian River at 48 and Michael Gately of Indian River (47). Jordan Parmeter captured Top Female honors at 43 followed by Cheryl Jackson of Indian River (41) and Angela Halladay of Hammond (40).

In the Blind Draw competition Team 11 (Nick Canell (G), Ryan Mashaw (G), Jackson Beckenridge (G), Matthew Seeley (O), Jackson Beckenridge (G), Brady Eggleston (H)) placed first at 216 followed by Team 8 (Joshua Spilman (G), Dryden Sixberry (G), Jacob Hunter (Hamm), Jed Farley (O), Hunter Mashaw (G)) at 202 and Team 16 (Austin Halladay (H), Typer Lesperance (Harr), Nate Bujnowski (O), Luke Stawser (IR) and Landon Webster (Hamm) at 200.

Look for coverage of the 2024-25 season in *The Journal and Watertown Daily Times*.

Trail

From T10

is driving business.

The state does not have an official count of how much use the open portions of the trail have seen so far, but anecdotally, Mahar said he hears it's been busy. He has friends who have traveled here just to ride the trail.

As state officials rode away from the junction and Risenburg employees put the finishing touches on some of the gates, Terri Clark and Rob Swartley, from Philadelphia, happened to cycle by and thanked the construction workers.



Interim state Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Sean Mahar straps on a helmet with a GoPro camera before striking out on a 3.5-mile group ride on the now-officially-opened second phase of the Adirondack Rail Trail last week. Aaron Marbone/Adirondack Daily Enterprise

They have heard about the plans for the Adirondack Rail

Trail for years when they visited the Tri-Lakes and this was their first visit where they could finally enjoy it.

"Oh my god. We love it. It brings so much joy to people," Clark said.

Swartley said any cyclist tired of hassling with cars riding roads can appreciate the trail through the serene and scenic backcountry.

Clark said she'd seen adults riding tricycles earlier in the day.

"I really feel like there is a bicycle for every body," she said.

As they continued their ride, the two were very excited to see construction workers carting off orange barrels carrying "Trail Closed" signs.

Gar

From ??

Zimmerman and his friends traditionally travel to Butterfield Lake the weekend after Father's Day, which this year was June 16. "We all have kids, so usually we go after that weekend," he said. "We are the fishermen who say, 'Whatever bites.' We don't really go for anything specific."

His three fishing buddies on June 21 were Nate Marzulo, Greece; Mike Tette of Hilton and Chris Cole of Hilton, owner of the 15-foot boat the team was fishing from.

"If it wasn't for Chris, I'd have this rusty old rowboat that my dad used to haul out with all of us in there," Zimmerman said. "So now that we finally have a boat, thankfully to Chris, we're able to hit parts of Butterfield that we wouldn't be able to back in the days with my dad."

Zimmerman said that he and his buddies usually fish from sun up to sun down, with a break on shore for lunch.

"Usually prime time hits around 6 p.m. and after, until the sun sets," he said. "It's not much luck during the day, but on June 21st, we were just trolling the southeast side of the lake."

That's when they saw a gar pike.

"My buddy that's up on the trolling motor has a little bit of a vantage point up top, and says, 'Gar pike!' and we all stood up and saw this huge shadow just below the surface of the water," Zimmerman said. "We all got excited, and he goes, 'There's more!'"

They saw "a school of six or eight" of the fish.

"We hit this jackpot and you could see them just floating there," Zimmerman said.

All four of the anglers tossed in their lines.

"When I casted, I had my favorite lure on there, a square bill, kind of like a crank bait,"

Zimmerman said.

A square bill lure, also known as a crank bait, runs shallow and has a square-shaped diving bill that has corners instead of being rounded.

"It dives like four to six feet," Zimmerman said. "That's what I use almost anywhere on the lake because it's pretty shallow. I throw it out there, and as it's in the air, my buddy goes, 'Wrong lure.'"

When the lure got halfway back to the boat, Zimmerman realized that indeed it was the wrong lure.

"So I quickly pop open my tackle box. I know exactly what goes across the top of the water, and this thing has been in my tackle box probably a good six years and I hadn't caught a single fish on it."

The lure, about 6-inches long, is a "jointed swim bait."

"It has a nice, smooth back and forth motion with two treble hooks on the bottom. It looks like a minnow," Zimmerman said. "I throw it on the pole, and on the first cast, the gar just crushes it. My pole is bent in half and it took five to eight feet of drag and while keeping pretty good tension on it with the reel at the same time. And that's where the fight ended."

Fishing reel drag is a feature that controls the tension on the line when a fish is hooked and trying to swim away. When a fish pulls hard on the line, the friction is overcome and the reel rotates backwards, releasing line and preventing it from breaking.

"So after that, it was like reeling in a lot of almost like weeds," Zimmerman said. "It got halfway to the boat, I'm standing up, see its head, and I'm like, Oh, my God!"

He then called for the net — something that Zimmerman usually handles.

"The net is up in the middle of the boat where I sit," he said. "I'm usually the net guy and the one usually taking pictures of the sunset and scenery and my other buddies are the ones catching the fish."

Therefore, when he called for the net, he might as well have asked for a tennis racquet. He said the fish drama had left his friends "frozen."

"But I said, again, 'We've got to get the net right now!'" Zimmerman said. "So they started scrambling."

The gar was netted just as it was being pulled to the boat. "And we just absolutely celebrate and lose our minds," Zimmerman said.

Zimmerman carries fishing gloves on his trips. "I knew about the teeth," he said. "The gloves are more so for bowfin. Sometimes we throw the gloves on for them. I pretty much grabbed its snout with its mouth closed. I could feel the teeth protruding like an overbite."

He took out the lure.

"Time then froze for like just a minute," Zimmerman said. "We were like in awe. And I was thinking, 'What's the next step?'"

But he knew the gar was a candidate for a wall mount. There were no thoughts at the time of a state record.

"My father, myself, my buddies on the boat — none of us have a wall mount," Zimmerman said. "Every year, that's the goal."

The wall mount dream especially returns when Zimmerman and his friends drive by Patterson's Taxidermy on Church Street in Alexandria Bay. "Every time we drive by there, we're like, 'One of these years.'"

A stringer was attached to the fish for its trip to shore. "It was a three-man job," Zimmerman said. "Someone had to kind of prop its mouth open while another person held the fish and the third person had the stringer coming through the gill and out the mouth."

They got to the dock, and shortly after, a boat came near and slowed. "They see us pull it out of the water, and go, 'What the heck is that?'"

When the gar was explained to them, someone on the boat asked if it was mea

Gar

From T13

sured. "We were just worried about keeping it on the boat, getting it back and getting it to a taxidermist," Zimmerman said.

He and his friends pulled out a

tape measure and a weight scale. Meanwhile, the people nearby in the boat watched. Zimmerman said he learned it was piloted by a Chad, but he didn't get his last name. Coincidentally, Chad told him that he was also from the Rochester area.

An official at the bait store helped Zimmerman fill out pa-

perwork, which documented the fish for the possible state record. Meanwhile, DEC officials were contacted. Following the weigh-in, the gar was transported to Patterson's Taxidermy, the long-sought destination. The three-generation family business is owned by Maxwell Patterson.

"They were very helpful and

took their time, asking what position we wanted it on the wall and how we wanted it to look," Zimmerman said.

Patterson said it's not unusual for him to work on a longnose gar. "I've done quite a few of them. I might get one every year or two."

Asked about any particulari-

ties with the fish, Patterson said, "Their skin is tough. You've got to cut the skin with tin snips. It's like armor-plated tough scales."

On the following Monday after the catch, Zimmerman made some follow-up calls to the DEC. "A DEC officer arrived at Patterson's to ID the species and confirmed the paperwork," Zimmerman said.

Zimmerman then had to deal with a hiccup in the record confirmation process. A picture of the fish while it was at the bait store's scale showed that the stringer was still in its mouth, which caught the DEC's attention.

"The reason it was still there was because it doesn't weight much at all and if this thing decided to flip out, I just wanted something to have control."

The DEC asked Zimmerman to have the stringer weighed on a certified scale, which he did at a Wegman's in Rochester. The stringer, basically a thin rope with a loop, came in at 0.48 ounces.

"They deducted that off the total weight and then they confirmed it and approved it," Zimmerman said. "The rest is history."



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Locals, pros test out biking course in Lake Placid

By PARKER O'BRIEN

Adirondack Daily Enterprise

LAKE PLACID — Elizabeth-town native Max Van Wie was all smiles speeding down the upcoming Union Cycliste Internationale Mountain Biking World Series course last Friday at the Olympic Sports Complex, at Mount Van Hoevenberg.

While Van Wie, who built and designed the course, has taken some test rides of his own, Friday marked the first official time riders tested out the course. He was joined by a select few local mountain bike riders, professional rider Greta Kilburn and former pro rider and two-time Olympian Lea Davison, both of Vermont.

The entire course, which is not open to the public, is about 95% completed, according to Van Wie.

The UCI Mountain Bike World Series will take place here from Sept. 27 to 29 and will be the first of its kind in Lake Placid. The event will feature multiple different mountain biking levels, including some top level athletes like Kilburn.

The Lake Placid course is one of 15 stops for the series, which spans 10 countries on three continents. The state Olympic Regional Development Authority, which managed the Olympic Sports Complex, will also host events in 2025 and 2026.

This year's competition in Lake Placid will kick off on Friday, Sept. 27, with a cross-country short track World Cup for both men and women's U23 division. On Saturday, Sept. 28, the U23 division will compete in the UCI cross-country Olympic-distance World Cup.

The event will wrap up on Sunday, Sept. 29 with the marathon distance World Cup and an Olympic distance World Cup race between the men's and women's elite division.

How it started

For the past few years, Van Wie has been working with Vermont-based trail organizations to build mountain biking trails. He recently returned back to the area when the Barkeater Trails Alliance had him build a jump



ORDA employee Nick Zachara, front, rides down a rock garden at Olympic Sports Complex at Mount Van Hoevenberg on Aug. 23, with fellow state Olympic Regional Development Authority employee Blaine Doyle trailing behind. Parker O'Brien/Adirondack Daily Enterprise

trail on its Craig Wood Trails.

"I think that's how ORDA heard about me," he said. "They came over, looked at it and said 'Hey what do you think about building a World Cup course?' and I said, 'Yeah, of course.' I didn't really know where that was going to go and the next time they came and visited, they had some UCI guys from South Africa. I was like, 'Well that's got to be pretty serious, if they're bringing these guys in.'"

After several meetings with UCI, Van Wie completed his design for the course. There weren't any changes during the building process. Van Wie said his creativity was really only stunted by the limits of the property.

Despite being hired to build and design the course, Van Wie doesn't have a cross country bike racing background, which is the competition that will be held in Lake Placid. He's more into building mountain bike and dirt jumps. He said he normally builds flowy berms and flow trails.

When building this project, he wanted visualize the course. He's taken some test rides, but some parts of the course he has

never rode, including over by the snow-making reservoir.

"I know that's going to ride fine," he said. "That's a straight trail."

On Friday, most of the area riders stuck to the dual slalom, which is essentially two parallel tracks with similar small obstacles. Van Wie said the dual slalom was both his favorite and most hated feature, because of the process it took to build it.

"The dirt that these trails are built out of have a lot of residual stuff from past construction," he said. "We were finding wood chips 2 feet down, there was water flowing because there is a lot of ledge here."

Since then, the water problem was fixed. Much of the area is now hardened and dried up.

"That was a big undertaking that wasn't really necessary to do, he said. "We could have have this race and put three berms there and no one would know the difference. But I was like, 'No, I want to do something that is above and beyond,' that and the reservoir feature turned into those kind of bigger things, and then everything else we tried to go above and beyond with what they are, they're just smaller

projects."

Van Wie said there were some minor tweaks left, but nothing major. He was just happy to finally see people ride the course, the largest project he's ever worked on. The whole project has taken him about two months and one week to complete.

"We've never had more than four guys working here at a time," he said. "Normally it's three, but a lot of times it's just been myself and Andrew Gogan, my one employee who has worked for me for a couple of years. I'm pretty proud of what we have accomplished with that few people."

Professional reaction

As a long-time pro rider on the UCI Mountain Biking World Series, Lea Davison says it's special anytime there's a race in North America.

"To have this one so close to home is essentially a dream come true," she said. "I wish it happened when I was still racing."

Even before taking a test ride herself, she said she was loving what she was seeing. She said it's unique in terms of a World

Cup course.

"What I think is unique to Lake Placid are the gorgeous views of the High Peaks, and also these features kind of emulate a bobsled track, which is right next door," Davison said. "That seems very Olympic and Lake Placid-like. There's a lot of climbing, it's challenging, there's a lot of technical sections, so you really need to be an all-around great rider with a lot of skills to thrive on this course."

Greta Kilburn, who will be competing in her first-ever World Cup in Lake Placid, said she loves how there's a bit for every type of rider.

"There's the climb, which has technical sections, but also a double track where you can pass, which is definitely going to benefit a strong climber," she said. "Then there's rugged downhill which are pretty quintessential of the North American riding. Then also the machine built downhill and crazy berms."

Kilburn, 19, was a part of a Vermont-based group called Little Bellas, which helps young girls get into mountain biking. The 501c3 non-profit organization was co-founded by Davison and her sister.

"I knew she was going to be fast from the very beginning and we did a couple races in Vermont together over the past couple of years, and she was sticking with me. She was really growing up and becoming a real talent in this sport and also in Nordic skiing. It's really a dream come true as part of the Little Bellas program to see a Little Bella grow up and take part in a World Cup that's really close to the base."

Kilburn said she's "stoked" to race here in September and hopes that walking and testing out the course may give her a competitive advantage.

"This is amazing getting to come here," she said. "I get to see the whole course and be ready for the event. I'm so excited, my friends are going to come from (University of Vermont) and my family will be here, it's going to be huge."

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