

## CONSERVATION COMMENTS

By Paul M. Kelsey

### WILDFIRES

With trout season here, the spring fire season can't be far behind. This year, in fact, it is closer than usual, for the relatively snowless winter means that the usual blanket of wet snow in the woods & brushlot which normally keeps the dry grass and leaves wet until well into April just isn't there. An early flight over Region 7 in March, when things normally would have been under snow, revealed four grass fires.

The mud underneath apparently misleads many people into a false sense of security during the spring. In spite of what appears to be wet conditions, two out of three New York wildfires occur during the months of April and May. The reason for this is that spring kite-flying winds very quickly dry out vegetation that has been soaked with melting snow, leaving it tinder dry for several weeks, even though there is mud underneath.

Normally fishermen are not a bad fire risk, but with drier than usual conditions during the first week or two of the trout season they must be particularly careful. New York's chief causes of wildfires are debris burners and smokers and it is in the latter classification that fishermen must mind their manners.

Surprisingly, children are usually the third most important cause of fires in New York. This is probably due to the fact that spring vacation usually falls during the fire season and village and country youngsters are out enjoying the first of the warm spring days on hikes and outings. Another surprise may be that lightning is an extremely minor cause of fires in the east, about one percent of New York's. We usually don't have dry thunderstorms like those common in the west.

Throughout the State about one third of wildfires are not in forest land. In the western part of the State this fraction would be larger for many fires are in relatively open brushland or even grassland. Though not forestland at the time many are on their way to becoming forestland, either through natural seeding or through reforestation

The dollar and cents loss in timber caused by such a fire is very little but each time a field burns over, young trees are killed and the day when it will be a productive forest is delayed.

It is true that in southern states, burning with low intensity fires is one management tool used to care for pine plantations. These southern pines are more fire resistant than our northern varieties and the light burns kill off competition from inferior hardwoods. If the fire does not consume our commercial varieties of pines, the heat alone can kill or destroy the growth layer under the bark.

High intensity fires do more damage than just killing trees, for they also burn the organic matter in the soil and thus reduce its ability to sustain plant life and to absorb moisture. No better proof of this is needed than to look at some of the old burns in the Adirondacks that occurred around the turn of the century. These so completely burned the organic matter in and on the soil that nothing but mineral sand and rock remained. Even today many of these burns are still in the blueberry and bracken stage with only an occasional aspen or birch to break the profile.

The loss of wildlife during spring fires is great for it is the start of the breeding season and the first eggs are being laid by grouse, woodcock, ducks and pheasants, and the first young rabbits have been born. The little rabbits are helpless in their nests for two weeks, so are completely at the mercy of a fire. Things aren't quite so bad in the case of the burned out nests, for normally the hen will re-nest. Her second nest, however, may not be in a good cover and may not have as many eggs.

New vegetation will not come out much sooner than normal, even though the snow left early, so we can expect that this year's fire season will be a long one. Remember — ONLY YOU CAN PREVENT FOREST FIRES by being careful with your matches, cigarettes, trash fires and campfires.

## Warm-Season Crops

Tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, and sweet corn are among crops that are sensitive to frosts, so they should be planted when all danger of frost is past. Eggplant, peppers, melons, and snap beans also belong to this group.

Described as warm-season crops, these vegetables seldom grow well until the weather has really moderated during late May or in early June.

In most parts of New York State, it is not safe to plant these crops before May 20, says Prof. Philip A. Minges at the N. Y. State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Cornell University.

Crops that are normally transplanted in New York include tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, watermelons, celery, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, cabbage and muskmelons.

Transplants of some of these crops are usually available locally at garden supply stores or nurseries, although all the desired varieties may not be in stock.

Reviewing varieties suitable for home gardening, Minges advises the gardener to plant both an early maturing and a late maturity of many crops to stretch the harvest period.

Here are some recommended varieties:  
Tomatoes — Springest New Yorker and Gardener 67. These are early varieties. Mid-season varieties include Superbowl, Heinz 1330, Jet Set, Sunray, and Small Fry (cherry type). Late varieties include Big Boy, Ramapo, and Roma (paste tomato).

Cucumbers — Early Set and Pato Pik (small vine) are early slicers. Sweet Slice is a new introduction with a non-bitter flavor. Other popular slicing cucumbers

with mosaic resistance include Marketmore 70, Tabgreen 65, and Gemini. Pickling varieties recommended are Wisconsin SMR 18, Pioneer, and Bravo (all mosaic resistant).

Sweet Corn — Earliness, Royal Crest, Spring Gold and Seneca Explorer (all yellow and early). Main season varieties include Jubilee and Seneca Chief. Bicolor varieties — Sprite (early), Butter and Sugar (mid-season), and Sweet Sue (main season). White varieties — Silver Sweet (early), Glacier (mid-season), and Silver Queen (late).

Eggplant — Early Beauty and Long Tom (both early). Main season varieties are Black Magic, Jersey King, and Black Beauty.

Peppers — Ace, Italian Sweet and Canape (all early varieties). Watermelons — Sugar Baby and Summer Festival (both early).

Squashes — Table King and Gold Nugget (both winter squashes). Table King is a new acorn squash with a bush-type vine. Emerald is a new bush-type Buttercup. Summer squashes include Zucchini hybrids, Burpee's Golden Zucchini, Seneca Prolific, Seneca Butterbac, and White Bush Scallop.

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## Woodchuck Hunting

The on-again-off-again weather that has frustrated New Yorkers since the first of March must be driving woodchucks to distraction. During the many pleasant spells they have been up and around, only to suddenly find themselves snowbound again. At this time of year they are normally feeding voraciously on newly grown greens in fields and along roadsides, so they must have gone to bed hungry more than once this year.

I have faith that spring will finally arrive and when it does, the chucks will be out trying to make up for lost time. This reckless feeding coincides with a period when the vegetation is extremely sparse, making chucks a very tempting target for the outdoorman suffering from spring fever.

The first few warm evenings and week-ends will bring out hunters many of whom will simply cruise the roads scanning the fields, and hopping out of their cars for shots at the less than wary chucks. Some so-called sportsmen may even shoot without bothering to get off the highway, and sometimes even sprawling across the fender of the car to get a more steady aim. These are illegal and unsporting actions condemned by legitimate sportsmen. Moreover, if successful, too many such shooters will not resist the temptation to drape the carcass over the nearest fence for all to see.

Of all the folks who take to the field with rod or gun, the legitimate chuck hunter is in the best position to help establish good relations with the landowner. Farmers are pleased to have someone give them a hand in controlling these pests. However they can tell when an offending chuck has been eliminated without having it hung on their fence. This type of action turns the landowner against the hunting public and often causes him to close his land to outdoorsmen.

As the Spring progresses, opportunists who hunt from the road give way to died-in-the-wool chuck hunters who pit their stalking skill and shooting ability against the wariness of the woodchuck. Not only is cover then to the advantage of the chuck, but he is no longer on the reckless feeding spree that follows the winter-long hibernation.

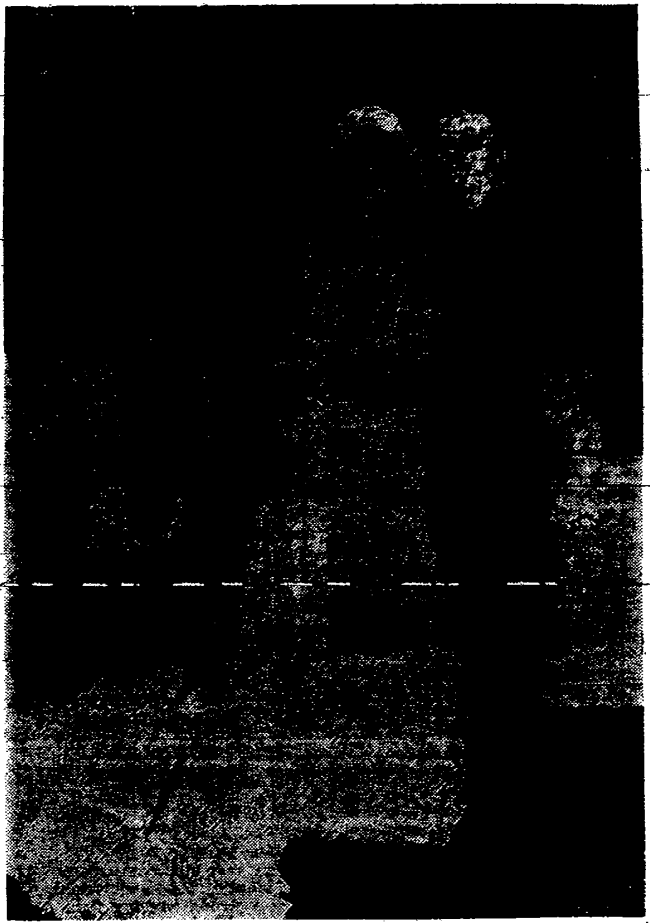
To fully appreciate how good an opportunity the chuck hunter has to endear himself to the farmer one must recognize how much damage the woodchuck can actually do. To the casual observer, the scarcity of alfalfa around a woodchuck burrow may look like the extent of the damage. Unfortunately, the loss in crops is only a small part. More serious is the damage that can occur to farm equipment and the disruption of the farm schedule that this may cause. The non-farmer can easily understand the cost of repairs and the cost of the time lost, but harder to understand is that the hay which finally gets into the loft after the repairs are made is the same in quantity, but may be considerably less in nutritive value than it would have been if put away without delay.

If meat prices stay where they are, probably more chucks will come home to the table than have been salvaged since depression days. It is a good clean animal with a diet much like that of a good beef steer so why not?

Its tenacious hide can be easily removed by chopping off the head and feet with an ax. Next make a fold of skin across the back and slit this with a knife. Insert your fingers in the slit and pull it in opposite directions. Remove all the fat that comes easily, and if you don't find the "kernels" under the forelegs, don't worry. Eviscerate in the normal manner.

All methods of cooking should be preceded by parboiling in a covered pot of salt water. Half an hour will do for a young chuck, while an hour should do for even the oldest. After draining, the meat may be roasted, fried, used in stew or even barbecued.

While enjoying his hunting, any woodchuck hunter who works closely with landowners in his favorite hunting area can unlock doors to many acres of good hunting ground in the fall.



## Barbara Brooks and Donald Pitts Exchange Marriage Vows

Photo by Wittie

Mr. and Mrs. Donald Pitts

The wedding of Miss Barbara Marie Brooks and Donald Pitts was solemnized Saturday, April 20, 1974, at Noon in St. Mary's Church at Bolivar, N. Y.

The bride is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Brooks of 579 S. Main Street, Bolivar, N. Y.. The bridegroom is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Pitts of 52 Chestnut Street, Andover, N. Y.

The Rev. John Hennessy performed the double ring ceremony before an altar decorated with appropriate floral decorations. Pat Appleby was soloist with Mrs. Noreen Ferris, Organist.

Given in marriage by her father, the bride wore a Chantilly lace over taffeta, gown with high neckline, rennaissance sleeves, Empire waist, circled with white satin ribbon, featuring a flowing demibell skirt with wide flounce at the bottom of the gown and circled the cathedral train. Sequins trimmed the sleeves and skirt of the gown and her chapel length veil fell from a Juliet headpiece. She

carried a white Bible and six roses.

Miss Ruth Pounds of Bolivar, was Maid-of-Honor, with Miss Beverly Brooks, sister of the bride and Kathy Sherwood, both of Bolivar, were bridesmaids. They selected dark green gowns with lace trim and carried bouquets of yellow daisies.

Ronald Pitts, Andover, brother of the bridegroom was best man, George Brooks, brother of the bride from Bolivar, and James Pitts, brother of the bridegroom, from Andover, were ushers.

A reception for 75 guests was held at the Cameo in Wellsville following the ceremony.

Following a wedding trip to Niagara Falls, Mr. and Mrs. Pitts will reside in Andover, N. Y.

The bride is a graduate of Bolivar High School and is employed at the Bolivar Market Basket Store.

Her husband is a graduate of Andover Central School and is Assistant Manager at the Andover Market Basket Store.

## Local Farmers Asked To Reckon Fuel Need

Area farmers are being asked to provide information for use in estimating New York State's energy needs for agricultural operations. The local survey is part of a state-wide effort conducted by Cooperative Extension, Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service of USDA, and the Department of Agriculture and Markets.

Information furnished by farmers will be used by the New York State Energy Office to support requests for federal fuel allocations.

A single-page questionnaire on 1973 and 1974 crop acreages and 1973 fuel consumption is being sent to all farmers with the request that it be filled out and returned by May 1.

Post-paid envelopes and instructions are enclosed with the survey forms. County Cooperative Extension staffs and ASCS offices are cooperating to reach all farmers by mail.

Any commercial agricultural producer who does not receive a

form by April 27, should contact the Allegany County Extension office at Belmont — phone 268-7644.

Although agriculture has been given a high priority for energy for food production, current allocation estimates are not believed adequate for expected needs. The State Energy Office anticipates that information direct from farmers will be the most useful in estimating 1974-75 agricultural requirements.

The importance of having complete, prompt responses from all farmers was emphasized by David L. Call, State Cooperative Extension Director, in announcing the survey. "If farmers' energy needs are to be met, the State Energy Office will need the best information available to obtain allocations from the Federal Energy Office," he said.

Fuel consumption on New York farms rises sharply during spring field operations and tapers off in late fall when harvesting is completed. The farm survey is expected to indicate the extent of these peak seasonal demands.

Group together small-growing, quick-maturing crops in the vegetable garden.

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