

# Critters of New York



## Pocket Guide to Animals in Your State

ALEX TROUTMAN

produced in cooperation with Wildlife Forever

# Contents

About Wildlife Forever .....	2	Northern Long-eared Bat.....	40
Acknowledgments .....	3	Northern Raccoon .....	42
Dedication .....	3	Northern River Otter .....	44
Introduction.....	6	Red Fox.....	46
New York: The Empire State ..	7	Striped Skunk.....	48
How to Use This Guide .....	9	Virginia Opossum .....	50
Safety Note .....	9	White-tailed Deer .....	52
Notes About Icons.....	10		

## Mammals

American Beaver .....	12	American Goldfinch.....	54
American Marten .....	14	American Kestrel .....	56
Black Bear .....	16	American Robin .....	58
Bobcat .....	18	American Woodcock .....	60
Coyote .....	20	Bald Eagle .....	62
Eastern Chipmunk.....	22	Barred Owl .....	64
Eastern Cottontail.....	24	Belted Kingfisher .....	66
Eastern Fox Squirrel.....	26	Black-capped Chickadee.....	68
Harbor Seal .....	28	Bobolink .....	70
Humpback Whale .....	30	Canada Goose.....	72
Indiana Bat .....	32	Common Loon .....	74
Long-tailed Weasel.....	34	Double-crested Cormorant ..	76
Mink.....	36	Eastern Bluebird.....	78
Moose .....	38	Eastern Meadowlark .....	80
		Great Blue Heron .....	82

## Birds

Great Horned Owl.....	84	Northern Cricket Frog.....	128
Hairy/Downy Woodpecker...	86	Northern Leopard Frog .....	130
Hooded Merganser .....	88	Queen Snake .....	132
Mallard .....	90	Snapping Turtle, Common ..	134
Mourning Dove .....	92	Wood Frog.....	136
Northern Cardinal .....	94		
Osprey .....	96	Glossary.....	138
Peregrine Falcon.....	98	Checklist.....	140
Red-tailed Hawk/		The Art	
Red-shouldered Hawk.....	100	of Conservation® .....	142
Red-winged Blackbird .....	102	Photo Credits.....	143
Short-eared Owl.....	104	About the Author .....	144
Snowy Owl .....	106		
Trumpeter Swan.....	108		
Wild Turkey .....	110		
Wood Duck.....	112		

## **Reptiles and Amphibians**

American Toad .....	114
Bog Turtle .....	116
Eastern Box Turtle .....	118
Eastern Garter Snake .....	120
Eastern Newt.....	122
Five-lined Skink.....	124
Gray Tree Frog.....	126

## How to Use This Guide

This book is your introduction to some of the wonderful critters found in New York; it includes 21 mammals, 32 birds, and 12 reptiles and amphibians. It includes some animals you probably already know, such as deer and bald eagles, but others you may not know about, such as queen snakes or bobolinks. I've selected the species in this book because they are widespread (northern raccoon, page 42), abundant (black-capped chickadee, page 68), or well-known but best observed from a safe distance (common snapping turtle, page 134).

The book is organized by types of animals: mammals, birds, and reptiles and amphibians. Within each section, the animals are in alphabetical order. If you'd like to look for a critter quickly, turn to the checklist (page 140), which you can also use to keep track of how many animals you've seen! For each species, you'll see a photo of the animal, along with neat facts and information on the animal's habitat, diet, its predators, how it raises its young, and more.

## Safety Note

Nature can be unpredictable, so don't go outdoors alone, and always tell an adult when you're going outside. All wild animals should be treated with respect. If you see one—big or small—don't get close to it or attempt to touch or feed it. Instead, keep your distance and enjoy spotting it. If you can, snap some pictures with a camera or make a quick drawing using a sketchbook. If the animal is getting too close, is acting strangely, or seems sick or injured, tell an adult right away, as it might have rabies, a disease that can affect mammals. The good news is there's a rabies vaccine, so it's important to visit a doctor right away if you get bit or scratched by a wild animal.



### Did you know?

Beavers are rodents! Yes, these flat-tailed mammals are rodents, like rats and squirrels. In fact, they are the largest native rodents in North America. Just like other rodents, beavers have large incisors, which they use to chew through trees to build dams and dens. Beavers are the original wetland engineers. By damming rivers and streams, beavers create ponds and wetlands.

Size Comparison

Most Active

Track Size





# American Beaver

*Castor canadensis*

**Size:** Body is 25–30 inches long; tail is 9–13 inches long; weighs 30–70 pounds

**Habitat:** Wooded wetland areas near ponds, streams, and lakes

**Range:** Beavers can be found throughout New York and in much of the rest of the United States.

**Food:** Leaves, twigs, and stems; they also feed on fruits and aquatic plant roots. Throughout the year they gather and store tree cuttings, which they eat in winter.

**Den:** A beaver's home is called a lodge. It consists of a pile of branches that is splattered with mud and vegetation. Lodges are constructed on the banks of lakes and streams and have exits and entrances that are underwater.

**Young:** Young beavers (kits) are born in late April through May and June in litters of 3–4. After two years they are considered mature and will be forced out of the den.

**Predators:** Bobcats, cougars, bears, wolves, and coyotes. Human trappers are major predators too.

**Tracks:** A beaver's front foot looks a lot like your hand; it has five fingers. The hind (back) foot is long, with five separate toes that have webbing or extra skin between them.

Beavers range from dark brown to reddish brown. They have a stocky body with hind legs that are longer than the front legs. The beaver's body is covered in dense fur, but its tail is naked and has special blood vessels that help it cool or warm its body.





### Did you know?

The raccoon is great at catching fish and other aquatic animals, such as mussels and crawfish. They are also excellent swimmers, but they apparently avoid swimming because the water makes their fur heavy. Raccoons can turn their feet 180 degrees; this helps them when climbing, especially when going headfirst down trees.

Size Comparison



Most Active



Track Size



Hibernates





# Northern Raccoon

*Procyon lotor*

**Size:** 24–40 inches long; weighs 15–28 pounds

**Habitat:** Woody areas, grasslands, suburban and urban areas, wetlands, and marshes

**Range:** They are found throughout New York and the US; they are also found in Mexico and southern Canada.

**Food:** Eggs, insects, garbage, garden plants, berries, nuts, fish, carrion, small mammals, and aquatic invertebrates like crawfish and mussels

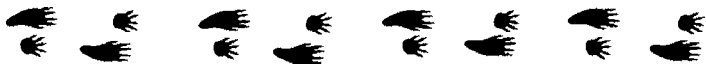
**Den:** Raccoon dens are built in hollow trees, abandoned burrows, caves, and human-made structures.

**Young:** 2–6 young (kits) are born around March through July. They are born weighing 2 ounces, are around 4 inches long, and are blind with lightly colored fur.

**Predators:** Coyotes, foxes, bobcats, humans, and even large birds of prey

**Tracks:** Their front tracks resemble human handprints. The back tracks sort of look like human footprints.

The northern raccoon has dense fur with variations of brown, black, and white streaks. It has black, mask-like markings on its face and a black-and-gray/brownish ringed tail. During the fall, it will grow a thick layer of fat to stay warm in the winter.







### Did you know?

The American goldfinch helps restore habitats by spreading seeds. The goldfinch gets its color from a pigment called a carotenoid (say it, kuh-rot-en-oid) in the seeds it eats. It can even feed upside down by using its feet to bring seeds to its mouth.

Nest Type



Most Active





# American Goldfinch

*Spinus tristis*

**Size:** 4½–5 inches long; wingspan of 9 inches; weighs about half an ounce

**Habitat:** Grasslands, meadows, suburban areas, and wetlands

**Range:** Found throughout New York year-round; they can be found throughout much of the United States and southern Canada during various times of the year.

**Food:** Seeds of plants and trees; sometimes feeds on insects; loves thistle seeds at birdfeeders

**Nesting:** Goldfinches build a nest in late June.

**Nest:** Cup-shaped nests are built a couple of feet above-ground out of roots and plant fibers.

**Eggs:** 2–7 eggs with a bluish-white tint

**Young:** Young (chicks) hatch around 15 days after being laid; they hatch without feathers and weigh only a gram. Chicks learn to fly after around 11–15 days. Young become mature at around 11 months old.

**Predators:** Garter snakes, blue jays, American kestrels, and cats

**Migration:** Nonmigratory in New York; in some states, it will migrate north for breeding territories and south for wintering areas.

During the summer, American goldfinch males are brightly colored with golden-yellow feathers and an orange beak. They have black wings with white wing bars. The crown (top) of the head is black. In winter, they molt, and the males look more like the females. Females are always greenish yellow with hints of yellow around the head.



### Did you know?

The American kestrel is the smallest species of falcon not only in the US but in all of North America! It's also the most common falcon of North America.

Nest Type



Most Active





# American Kestrel

*Falco sparverius*

**Size:** 8½–12¼ inches long; wingspan of 20 inches; weight: 2¾–6 ounces

**Habitat:** Cities, suburbs, forests, and open areas such as meadows, grasslands, deserts, parks, and farm fields

**Range:** They can be found throughout most of New York year-round; throughout most of North America except the extreme north of Canada and Alaska.

**Food:** Grasshoppers, dragonflies, small birds, lizards, and mice; sometimes snakes, bats, and squirrels

**Nesting:** Nest in cavities that are made by other birds like woodpeckers, in human-made and natural crevices like tree hollows, and in crevices of rock formations.

**Nest:** They do not use nesting materials but will make a small depression if material is already present.

**Eggs:** 4–5 yellowish to white or burnt red-brown eggs, 1–1½ inches long and 1 inch wide

**Young:** Chicks hatch 25–33 days after laying and will leave the nest around 30 days later. Chicks hatch with pink skin and little down feathers.

**Predators:** Snakes; large birds of prey, like hawks, owls, and crows; bobcats, skunks, and other mammals

**Migration:** Not a migrant in New York

Kestrels sport a rusty-brown, spotted back. Their tail has a black band that stretches across it. Females have brown-to-reddish wings, and the males have grayish-blue wings. Both males and females have black lines under their eyes that resemble mascara or makeup running down their face.



### Did you know?

Bog turtles are the smallest species of turtle in North America. Bog turtles' shells are not strong enough to protect them from predators, so they will bury themselves into mud when threatened.

Most Active

Hibernates





## Bog Turtle

*Glyptemys muhlenbergii*

**Size:** 3–4½ inches long; weighs 4 ounces

**Habitat:** Meadows, prairies, forests, suburban areas, bogs, marshes, swamps, and other wetlands

**Range:** Found as far north as New York and as far south as northeast Georgia and westward to Ohio. In New York, they can be found in western parts surrounding the Great Lakes and in the southeastern parts of the state.

**Food:** Omnivore that eats aquatic plants, algae, insects, snails, earthworms, seeds, berries, snakes, and carrion or dead animals

**Mating:** April–June

**Nest:** Nests are built in elevated portions of grasses or moss in wetlands; females dig a cavity.

**Eggs:** 2–5, white, elongated eggs, about 1¼ inches long

**Young:** Young hatch 42–70 days after laying; temperature determines the sex of hatchlings. Hatchlings are just under an inch. Males are larger than females at hatching and grow faster; both sexes are fully grown around 5–6 years but are not reproductively mature until 8–11 years.

**Predators:** Raccoons, skunks, foxes, dogs, and birds

Bog turtles have a dome-shaped carapace (top shell) that comes in variations of light–dark brown. The carapace has rings on its scutes that usually have orange-yellow centers. The plastron is also varying shades of brown. They have dark-brown-to-black skin with a large yellow-to-orange or reddish spot on the side of their neck. Males have a shell that caves inward, while females have a relatively flat shell.

# Get to Know the Wild Side of New York!



Learn about 65 of New York's most important birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. The *Critters of New York* wildlife pocket guide is informative, concise, and easy to use. Each species is showcased with a professional-quality photograph that's paired with neat-to-know details like habitat, range, and a "Did You Know?" set of facts.

## Book Features

- 65 critters—only New York animals
- Full-color photographs of every species
- Concise descriptions and interesting facts
- Attractive layout with kid appeal

## About the Author

Alex Troutman is a fish and wildlife biologist and an environmental educator. He is the co-organizer for several Black in X weeks, and he takes part in movements that encourage diversity in nature and STEAM fields, the celebration of Black individual scientists, and increasing awareness of Black nature enthusiasts.

*A portion of the proceeds from the sale of this book benefits the conservation efforts of Wildlife Forever.*

**PUBLICATIONS**  
**Adventure**  
an imprint of AdventureKEEN

JUVENILE NONFICTION / NATURE / NEW YORK

ISBN 978-1-64755-433-0



9 781647 554330