

Great Outdoors Beckons to All

After the weather cools and before the blizzards, revel in the hills, trails and streams

By David Figura
Outdoors Editor

The autumn is a glorious time to be outdoors in Upstate New York. Fishing, hunting, kayaking, hiking — take your pick.

Besides the breathtaking scenery (particularly during the height of fall foliage season), the cooler, more pleasant weather often holds an added bonus — few, if any, bugs.

A sampling of activities include:

1. Hook a big salmon: Ready to rumble with a huge fish? Drive up Interstate 81 to Pulaski between Labor Day and mid-October. Thousands of chinook and coho salmon swim up the Salmon River each fall to spawn. We're talking 20- to 30-pound fish here. They can be taken on bait, flies or lures.

2. Bronzeback bonanza: Just around State Fair time, the local smallmouth bass fishing starts to warm up. From Halloween and continuing through Thanksgiving, the smallies are on fire. They're ravenously feasting on baitfish and crabs, building fat reserves for the long winter. Check out the Seneca River, Onondaga Lake, all the Finger Lakes — and marvel at the fight these fleshy fish have to offer.



File photo / Al Campanie, 2001

KAYAKING can be great in September and October, and the water is still relatively warm (just in case you fall in it).



File photo / Gary Walts, 2005

HIKING TRAILS are plentiful in CNY. Felicia Wells, son Noah and their dog Nutmeg enjoy the trails at Rice Creek Field Station, Thompson Road, Oswego.

3. Fall trout fishing: Typically, with the colder water temperatures, trout fishing will pick up after the long, hot summer. The fish become more active as they begin bulking up for the winter. Brown trout in particular become very territorial and aggressive as they get ready to spawn. Hot spots include Limestone Creek, Chittenango Creek and Nine Mile Creek. For the bigger fish, check out West Canada Creek or further south, the Delaware River.

4. Hunting (bow and arrow): Bow season starts the Saturday after Columbus Day (Oct. 13). Hunters can go after deer, and in limited areas, bear as well (in the Catskills and southwestern New York).

5. Hunting (firearms): Fall hunting kicks off Saturday with the squirrel season. The rest of the small game hunting opportu-

nities (rabbit and grouse) begin Oct. 1. Those hunting big game (deer and bear) have to wait until Nov. 17.

6. Birding: Nothing symbolizes fall like the sight and sound of honking Canada geese flying overhead in a V-formation. A popular resting area along the flyway for many migrating birds is the Montezuma Wildlife Refuge in Seneca Falls. During the fall, areas throughout the refuge are jam-packed with birds of every size, species and color. For further information, click on friendsofmontezuma.org or call 568-5987. Another spot to check out is the recently opened Montezuma Audubon Center in Savannah. For more information, call 365-3580 or check out www.onondagaudubon.org.

7. Fall camping: Take in the warm, Indian summer days and cool nights. The fall holds great

weather for being out in the woods and around a camp fire. A number of state-run camp sites remain open for the fall foliage and hunting seasons. To find out which campsites are open, check out www.dec-campgrounds.com.

8. Canoeing/kayaking: Check out the fall foliage and the reflection it makes on the water, said Richard Phillips, president of the Central New York Kayak Club. "And the water is still warm, you don't have to worry about falling in," he added. His club is planning a trip in September on the Moose River at Old Forge. For further information, check out www.cnykayak-club.com. Another active club is the Kanawake Canoe Club. Click on

www.kanawakecanoe.org/KanawakeWelcome.html.

9. Hiking/backpacking: Once

again, a great time to get out and see the scenery. Want company? Check out the Adirondack Mountain Club, Onondaga Chapter, www.adk-on.org.

10. Biking/mountain biking/cyclocross: Don't put the bikes away after Labor Day. The weather cools down and the cycling season remains hot. In addition to touring and racing on pavement, cycling enthusiasts can be found in the woods, riding their mountain bikes. Others are transitioning into cyclocross — competition that takes in elements of both road racing and mountain biking. (The courses feature pavement, as well as wooded trails.) For further information, click on onondagacyclingclub.org (cycling on the road), spokepost.com (cyclocross); and mountain biking (on the bikeloft.com Web site, click on CNYD.I.R.T.).



File photo / Dennis Nett, 2006

FISHERMEN CAN REEL IN hefty salmon, like this one caught by Omar Ruscitti, of Quebec City, at the Salmon River in Pulaski. People come from far and wide to fish for a few days in the Oswego County village.