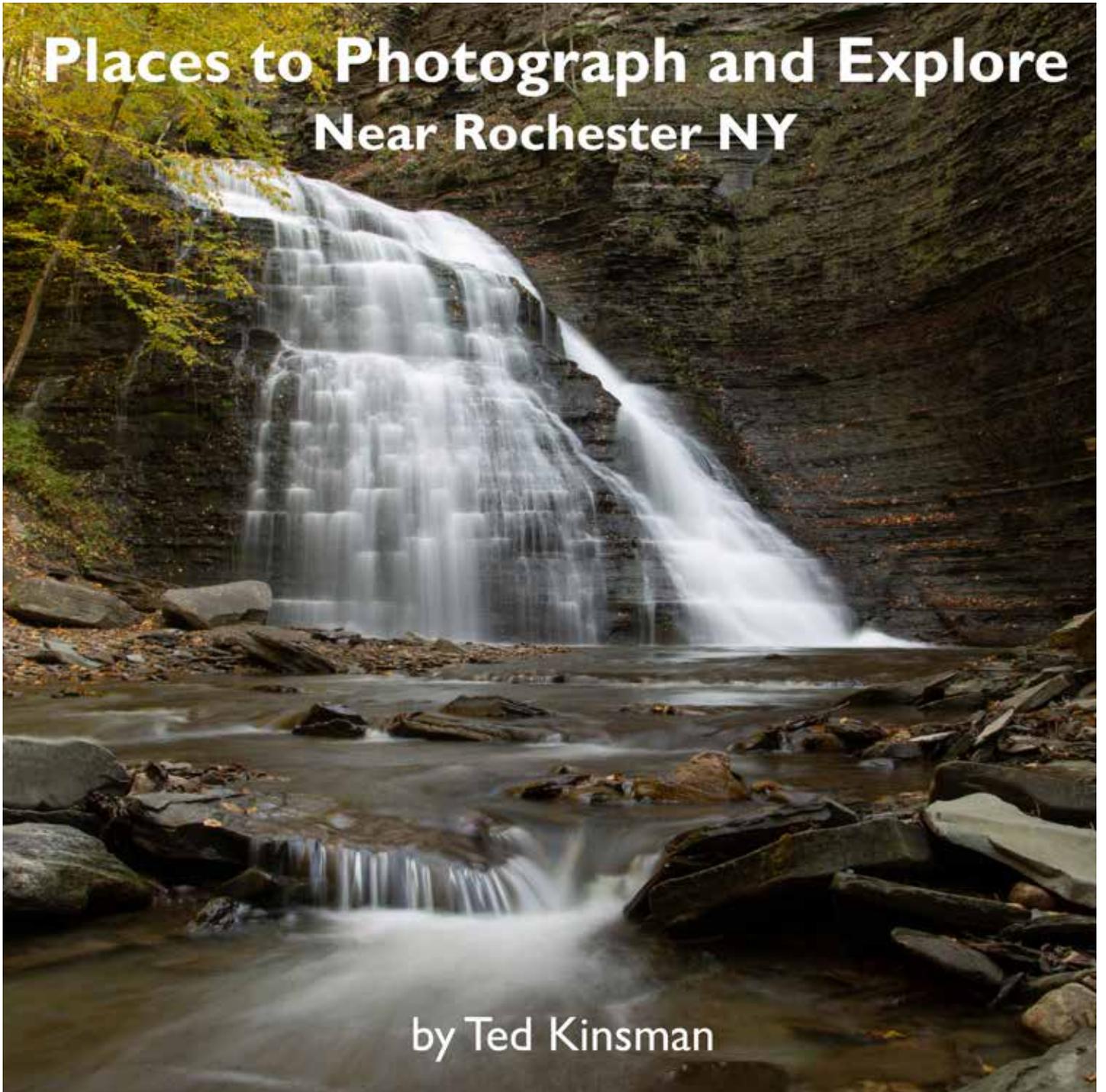
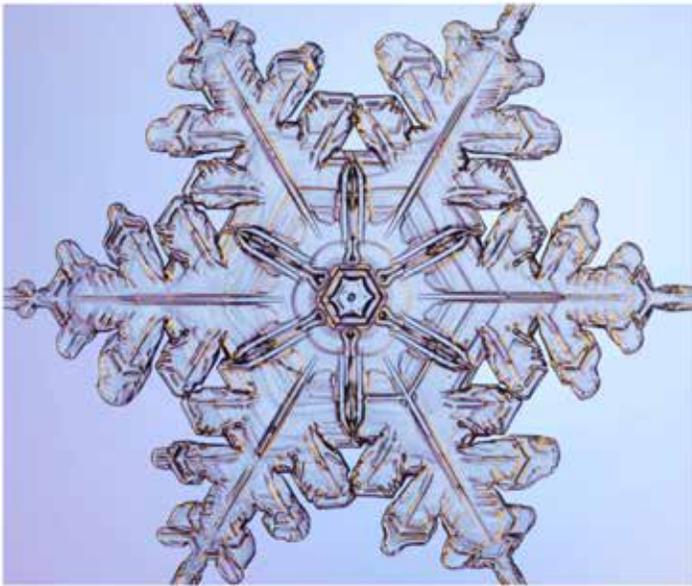


Places to Photograph and Explore Near Rochester NY



by Ted Kinsman



New York State Snowflake



Bioluminescent mushroom (*Panellus stipticus*)



Spotted Salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*)



Eternal Flame

Places to Photograph
and
Explore Near
Rochester, New York
by
Ted Kinsman

Cover: Grimes Glen in Naples NY
2nd Edition May 2023



The famous Rainbow Falls, Watkins Glen in Watkins Glen, NY

Upstate New York, is blessed with numerous natural parks, two Great Lakes, and a 400-mile canal system. This book was created for students who are new to the Rochester area as motivation to experience some of the natural wonders this area offers. This brief book is only intended as a starting point to a few of the spots that I like to explore. Numerous places were left out due to lack of space. Each season has its own hidden gems to find. If you discover an interesting location that was left out, please send an email and I will try to include it in the next edition.

I have tried to keep the majority of locations within a two hour drive of Rochester.

To quote from the Roman philosopher Seneca, “Travel and change of place impart vigor to the mind”

I hope you use this little book to get ideas of places to visit.

Ted Kinsman
Rochester, NY

Spring 2022

Mendon Ponds Park:

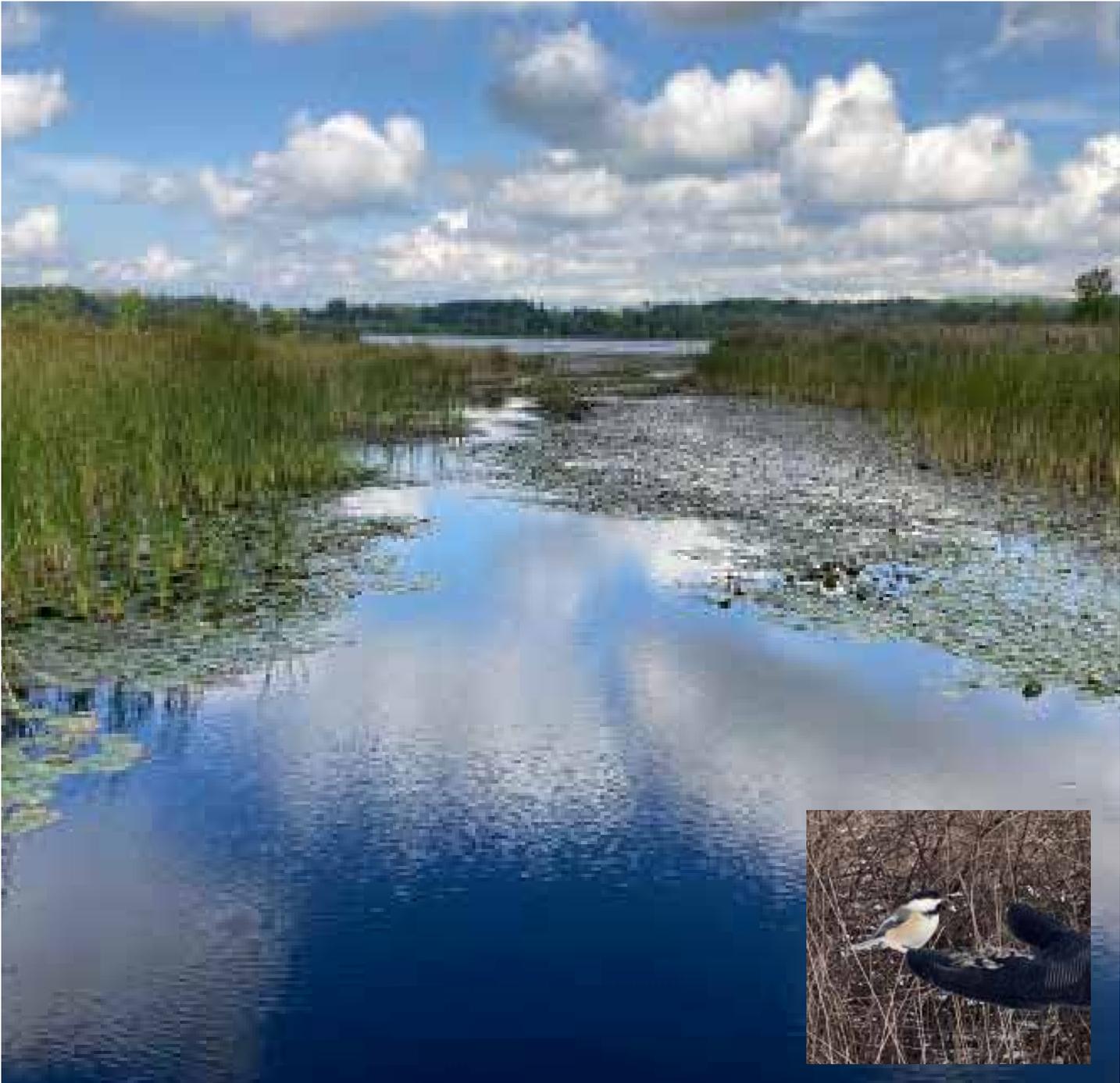
Mendon Ponds Park is a county park located southeast of Rochester, New York.

Mendon Ponds contains a number of unique glacially created land structures, including a kettle hole known as the “Devil’s Bathtub”, eskers, and a floating sphagnum moss peat bog.

At the northern western end of the line of other glacial ponds and lakes near the meromictic “Devil’s Bathtub”, there is a sphagnum moss peat bog, where the build-up of moss has created a floating island in the middle of the lake. The bog is home to a number of carnivorous plants, including sundew and pitcher plants.

In winter, the park’s chickadees will eat out of your hands. There is also a popular walk for children featuring little wooden houses and little doors on trees. A house found on the fairy trail is shown below. A robin’s nest is shown on the right below.





Thousand Acre Pond, Mendon Ponds Park

The Erie Canal:

The Erie Canal of the New York State Canal System (formerly known as the New York State Barge Canal) was completed in 1825. It was built to create a navigable water route from New York City and the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes, originally stretching for 363 miles from the Hudson River in Albany to Lake Erie in Buffalo.

The canal's peak year was 1855, when 33,000 commercial shipments took place.

In 2000, Congress designated the Erie Canal way National Heritage Corridor. The original towpath where animals pulled boats has been replaced with a bike path that now extends the total length from Buffalo to Albany. From Lock 33 in Brighton to Lock 34 is a continuous 54 mile bicycle path that is perfectly flat. The Erie Canal is an excellent way to bike between the little towns that still complement the canal system. Medina, Brockport, Pittsford, and Fairport are only a small selection of the interesting towns to explore by bicycle or walking along the towpath. A canal boat is seen in Pittsford, below is an offshoot of the canal connecting Geneva and Waterloo.





The Erie Canal seen from Pittsford NY

Corbett's Glen Nature Park (Penfield NY):

This park is relatively new and only created in the mid-1990's. The site of the main water falls is accessible from two different sites: a parking lot at 415 Penfield Rd. and a small parking lot uphill from the tunnel under the railroad track off rt. 441. The park is good to visit year round, but the month of October holds a special treat. Landlocked salmon from Lake Ontario move up Allen's Creek to mate and lay eggs. These fish are three feet in length and are very common around the middle of the month. The fish migration is triggered by temperature and rainfall and is quite a sight to see. The Native American Indians often camped at the base of the falls and fished and hunted. Look to this area to find flint arrowheads and scrapers.





The Corbett's Glen Waterfall - the location of many a photo-shoot

The Hidden Graffiti Tanks of Cobb's Hill Park:

To the north of the Cobb's Hill Park in Rochester NY are two abandoned iron water tanks that the city has unofficially designated as graffiti areas. Local artists will walk in and paint for days. This gallery has wallspace unparalleled by anything local, the surface area of these tanks is larger than all the walls in the art galleries in Rochester, and the walls are ever changing. These tanks are worth a visit at any time of the year to see what is new.





The Graffiti Tanks of Cobb's Hill Park



Channing H Philbrick Park (formerly Linear Park) in Penfield NY



Channing H Philbrick Park is known for the large salmon that migrate up stream in the fall.

Niagara Falls (American Side):

The American side of the falls offers a visitor center. Take the walking bridge to Goat Island or drive and park in the visitor's lot. Leaving the parking lot, take a moment to admire the arches, which are all that is left of the original power plant located on the site. There is a historic statue to Nikola Tesla, the famous scientist responsible for the invention of alternating current (AC), which made the modern power distribution system for the world possible.

The Cave of The Winds is a tunnel leading to a walkway at the bottom of the falls. A bright yellow raincoat is provided to help keep the visitor dry. The wooden walkway is destroyed by the ice every winter and is rebuilt every spring.





Niagara Falls from the American side looking towards Canada.



Niagara Falls from the Maid of The Mist boat ride.



Niagara Falls from the American side

Whirlpool State Park:

This park is located on the western part of the state and is a wonderful gateway to the wonders offered by the Niagara Gorge. From the parking lot the visitor is greeted by some of the nicer restrooms found in the state and a number of visitors' displays showing the trails in the area. To the north there are two sets of steps to the Gorge, the first and closest trail to the Gorge is about 1/8th of a mile north of the parking lot. In recent years, the walkway and stairs have been rebuilt and are no longer a jagged mess. At the bottom of the stairs go to the left (south) along the trail. The trail is actually the bed of the Niagara Falls trolley that was abandoned in the early part of the 1900's due to constant landslides. The trail now goes over several of these landslides. To your right will be the majestic Niagara River. After about a half mile on the trail you will come to the large whirlpool. This is the end of the class 5 rapids that stretch upriver. There is a large flat area on the shore that is fun to explore and the trail will continue upriver until ending at a large landslide. This is an exciting trail that has helicopters zooming overhead, the jet boats running up river, and the historic Spanish Aero cable car going overhead.



Class V rapids seen from the Whirlpool Pool Trail.



Hiking Whirlpool State Park on the American side looking towards Canada.

Fort Niagara:

Further north on the American side is Fort Niagara. This fort played a pivotal role in the War of 1812 and has a number of walks and buildings to explore. The park service does a nice job firing the cannon once or twice a day in the summer.





Fort Niagara.



The Thirty Mile Point Lighthouse has an original observation tower and is located on the Shore of Lake Ontario to the east of Fort Niagara in the town of Baker, NY.



Tibbets Point Lighthouse marks the point where Lake Ontario meets the St. Lawrence River in Northern New York State. Built in 1827.



Honeoye Lake as seen from Harriet Hollister Spencer State Recreation Area



The hills of Canandaigua Lake, looking north from the overlook view along County Road 2 north of Naples.. 27

The Glens in Naples – you will get your feet wet!:

The town of Naples is located at the Southern tip of Canandaigua Lake. There are four very good glens to hike. The most popular hike in the area is Grimes Glen, Tannery Creek, and Conklin Gully. All of these are very solid hikes. If you are looking for more of a thrill, try a hike in Clark's Gully. Clark's Gully is very steep in places and there are numerous questionable ropes to help you up the difficult areas. While hiking in Grimes Glen, keep a sharp lookout for the name Grimes etched in the rock near the falls. Grimes was also the location of a large tree fossil that was removed from the Glen and now sits in the state museum. These are all very photogenic hikes and well worth spending a day exploring them all.



*Above is a typical rope climb in Clark's Gully. A challenging hike for sure!
To the left is Tannery Falls.*



Tannery Creek Falls in the town of Naples NY



French Hill Falls the first water fall encountered when hiking up Grimes Glen

The Boathouses of Canandaigua Lake

These odd arrangement of boathouses / cottages were established in the 1850's and expanded in the early 1900's when the city pier was built. In 1990 the boathouses were added to the Canandaigua Historic District to preserve their heritage.



Watkins Glen State Park:

The glen was developed for tourists in the 1880's and has been a destination ever since. Watkins Glen is known as one of the most picturesque spots in all of New York State. The scene of the five pools under Rainbow Falls is often used as a picture to represent how beautiful the state is. This is also the most popular glen of what I call the great parks. It is a 45 minute drive from Ithaca and on any given day you will hear numerous foreign languages. Tour busses park at the top and let tourists walk to the bottom. This is a very popular attraction and is just about always crowded. Do not let the popularity of this park keep you away, it should be on the top of your must-photograph list of places in New York State.





A fall hike in Watkins Glen State Park



The most photographed waterfall in New York is Watkins Glen



Watkins Glen in the winter

Seneca white deer:

The Seneca white deer are a rare herd of deer living within the confines of the former Seneca Army Depot in Seneca County, New York. These deer are enclosed by a huge wire fence. The deer are often seen next to the fence in the early morning or evening. The section of road next to 96A allows the best viewing. Take your time driving this road and have a look out for these special deer.





Seneca lake seen from the public dock at Watkins Glen

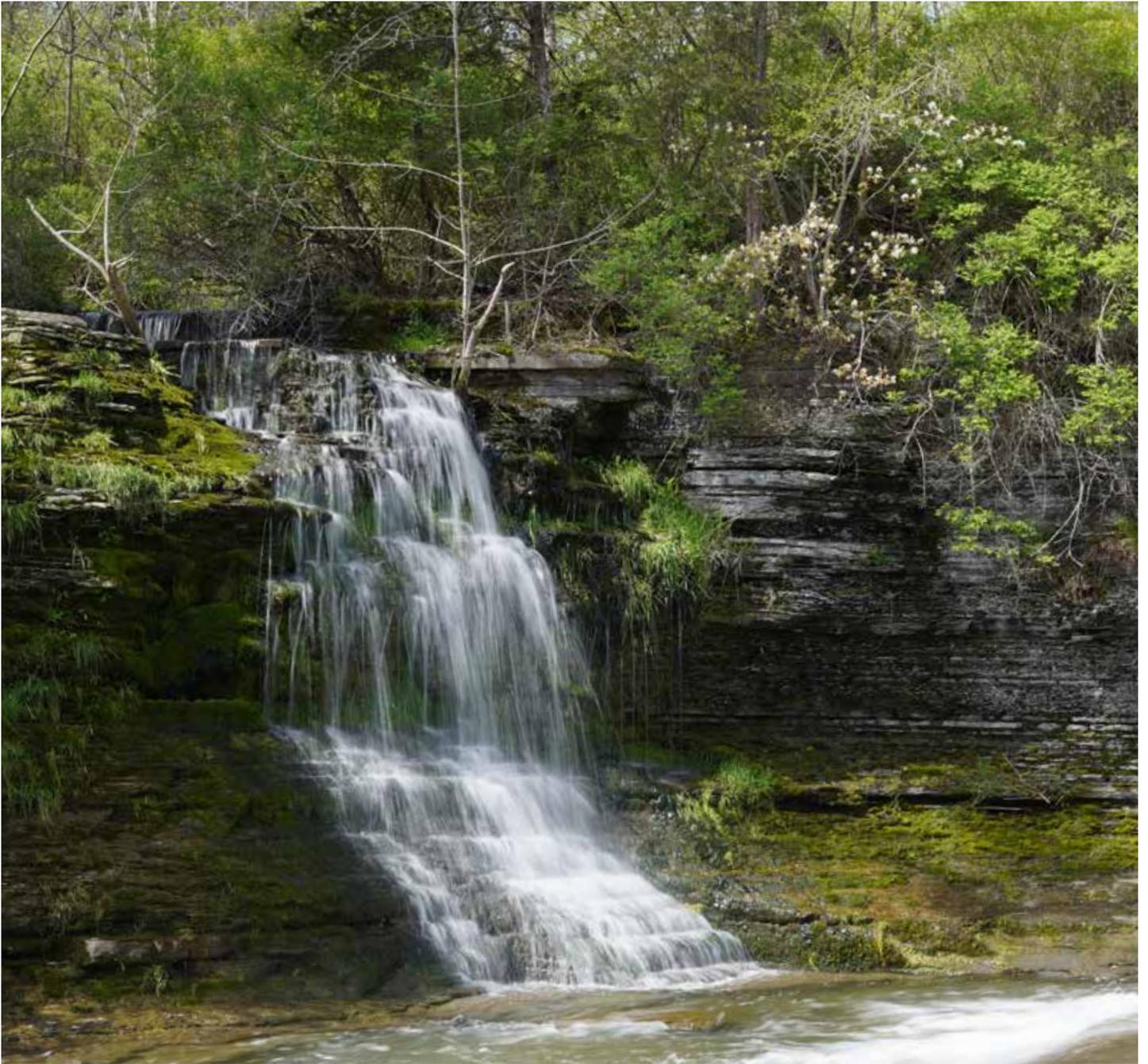


The highest waterfall in the eastern United States - Taughannock Falls State Park. Just North of Ithaca, NY

Taughannock Falls State Park:

The waterfall hike is the flattest of all walks in any New York State glen. From the lower parking lot near Lake Cayuga the path leads along a large flat stream. At the end of the walk is the majestic 215-foot waterfall Taughannock Falls. This is the highest waterfall east of the Mississippi River. The walk is lined by education displays that are really quite interesting and worth the time to pause and read. There is a second nice walk into this park. The rim trail starts to the south of the parking lot and immediately goes up a series of steps to the edge of the gorge. The path then leads its way around the edge of the gorge, crossing over the north side far above the waterfall. This is a very nice rigorous hike that will take a few hours to complete. Along the way you can observe the huge turkey vultures that nest along the walls of the gorge.





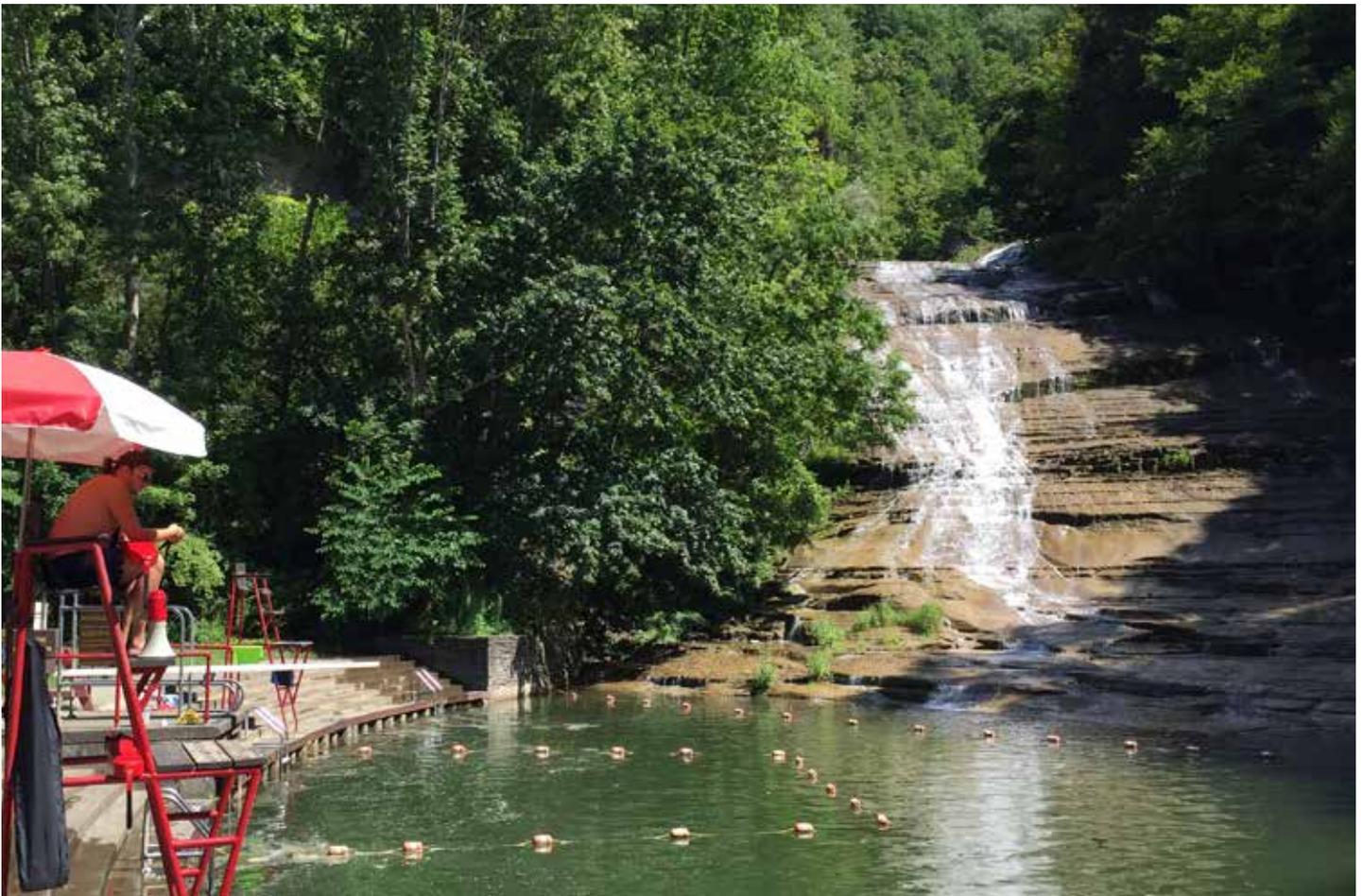
One of the many waterfalls in the top hiking area of Taughannock Falls State Park.



Blue bonnet wild flowers in bloom the first week of May - Taughannock Falls State Park.

Buttermilk Falls State Park:

Buttermilk is one of the most popular swimming areas in Ithaca. The park is extremely popular with locals, college students, and visitors. During the summer there is a warm water swimming area with a diving board. The hiking trail for the gorge starts just to the south of the swimming area and climbs up a very steep series of slate steps. The trail winds through numerous waterfalls and flat areas of running stream before an upper picnic area is reached. This upper section has a parking lot if you are interested in driving here. Continuing along a flat path to Lake Treman, held in place by a large stone dam, there is a quiet hiking trail that circles the lake. This area of Buttermilk Park is fairly quiet and relatively few people hike to the dam. The architecture of the dam and surrounding area are quite interesting to see and photograph. Once again, a testament to the skill of the CCC.





Buttermilk Falls State Park, a nice hike up from the parking lot.

Robert H. Treman State Park:

This park is a few minutes south of the town of Ithaca. The town is a great location to travel out to several of the local parks. Treman has two access points, the lower parking lot is a high traffic area for locals and tourists. In the summer the stream is dammed up and there is a diving area with lifeguards on duty. The water is usually quite cool even in the middle of summer. The trail to the top of the glen is found on the side of the parking lot. The hike to the top and back to the bottom is a few miles, but very delightful since it forms a loop. Of special interest is a hidden statue of a bronze rabbit that is in honor of a children's book. I will leave the location of the statue as a challenge for the reader to find on their own. There are two spectacular waterfalls in this park, but hiking the big loops yields a nice view just about everywhere. The intrepid hiker can make it to the top, or drive to the top parking lot where a historic mill is open as a free museum. This features a number of rooms showing the various ways that grain was transported through the mill when it was in use. The mill was powered by a water dam that was located next to it. Also in the mill museum is a very nice display for the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) that was responsible for building the trails, bridges, and buildings in the park. We would not have such nice parks if it were not for the dedicated young men of the CCC





Lucifer Falls is a 115 ft cascade in Robert H. Treman State Park.

Letchworth State Park:

Letchworth State Park is the closest example of what I like to call the great parks. These include Letchworth, Stoney Brook, Watkins, Robert H. Treman, and Fillmore Glen to the east. All of these glens owe their development to the CCC.

Letchworth State Park follows the Genesee River and there is the Mount Morris Dam at the north end. There are numerous trails that go along the top of the river gorge, but there are a few trails that lead down to the river - namely Lee's Landing, St. Helena, and Gardeau). The fall foliage can be spectacular on just the right day. The lower, middle, and high falls are all visited by easy walking trails. There is a brand new train bridge that traverses the river above the high falls. Visitors are not supposed to walk on the bridge, although it seems like there are never fewer than fifty people on the train bridge whenever I visit.





Letchworth State Park.

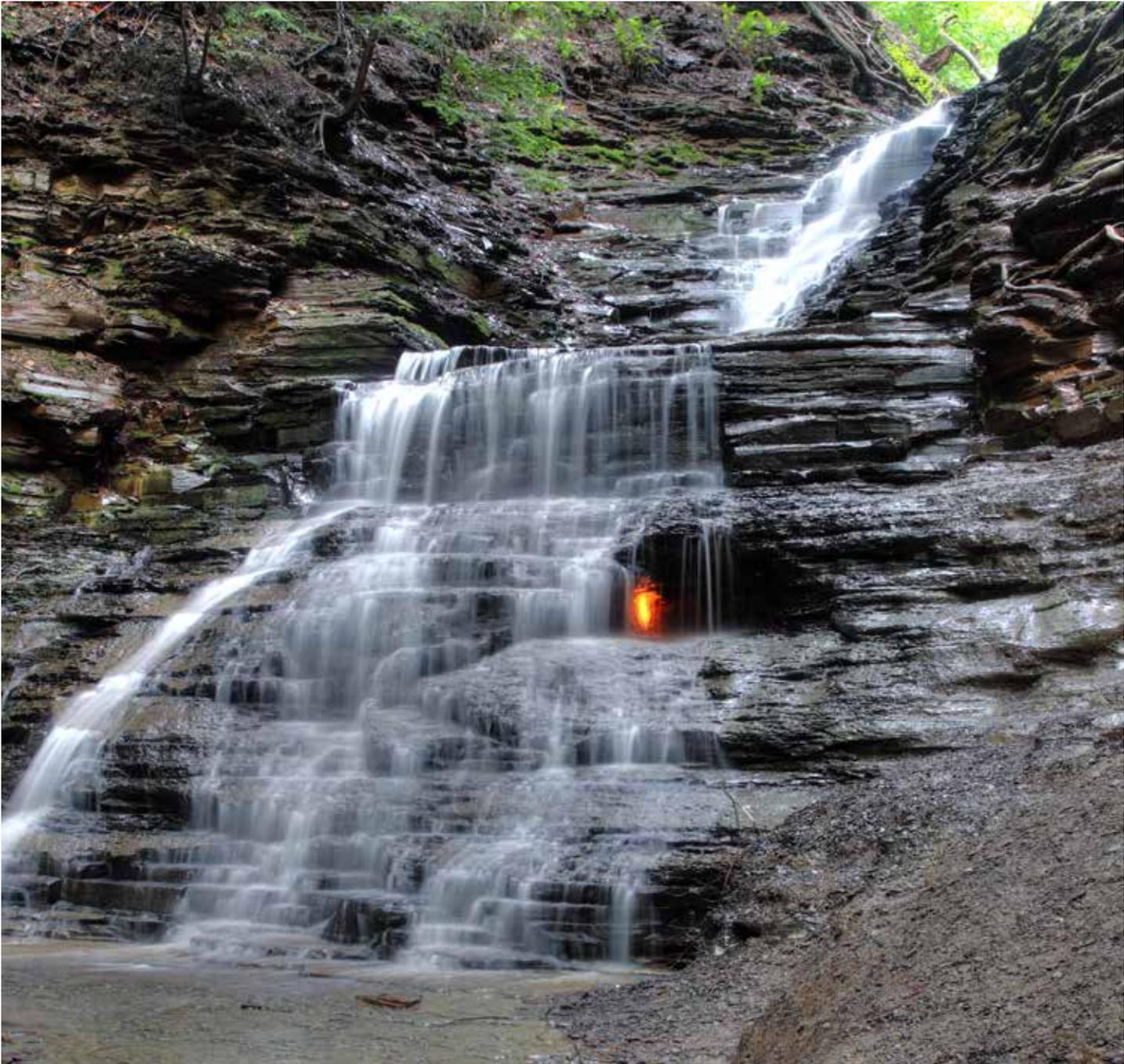
Havana Glen:

This glen is located just outside of Montour Falls (worth a visit in its own right). Havana Glen used to be a fully developed glen with hanging stairs that allowed a visitor to explore all the way up the glen. A number of years ago the trail system was washed out and never rebuilt. The glen would never again compete with Watkins Glen as a tourist attraction. The modern visitor is treated to a 400-foot walk upstream to a delightful waterfall named Eagle Falls. Small and picturesque, this little glen is well worth the \$2.00 per car parking fee.





Havana Glen, south of Montour Falls



Eternal Flame Falls - Don't forget to bring a lighter.

Eternal Flame Falls:

This park used to be a hidden gem of upstate, but the popularity of photographing the flame has increased the parking lot from road side parking to a huge lot that can hold 200 cars. The parking lot is quite close to the Buffalo Bills stadium, so keep an eye on game day. If the Bills are playing you will want to skip hiking this trail due to the tremendous amount of traffic.

The trail to the flame is fairly well marked and once you walk down to the riverbed, it is simple to follow the river upstream to a waterfall. About 10 feet up the waterfall there is a natural gas leak that can easily be lit with a lighter. Be sure to bring a lighter on the hike with you, since the flame often goes out. I have been told that this is the only natural gas leak under a waterfall in the world.





Chimney Bluffs State Park

Chimney Bluffs State Park – along Lake Ontario:

Chimney Bluffs is a giant glacial deposit called a drumlin that is being eroded by Lake Ontario. The lake continues to erode the cliff face and as it does so the erosion leaves large pillars of dirt that resemble chimneys. In recent years Lake Ontario's water level is quite high and what once was a little beach to walk under the cliff is now gone as the water laps at the base of the cliffs, increasing erosion. There is a trail along the top of the cliffs which gives a wonderful view of the erosion, but it is a very good idea to stay off the eroding areas as they are highly unstable. This ever changing hillside is worth a visit. If you decide to hike the path along the top edge, watch out for unstable ground and also the abundant poison ivy. On the beach you can find numerous fossils. Pictured below is a pre-Devonian cephalopod – an animal similar to the current day nautilus but with a straight shell.



Beechwood State Park (undeveloped):

Beechwood State Park is a former Girl Scout camp now in a state of decay. Located to the west of the town of Sodus is the former Girl Scout camp Beachwood. Donated to the state in 1999, the park has a number of abandoned buildings and even an empty swimming pool. If haunted dilapidated buildings are your thing, this park is for you. The state is still not certain what to do with the property and currently the town of Sodus is in charge of the park. There are a number of buildings locked up and kept in storage for some potential use. Park in the little lot next to the river and have a nice walk through the park to end up at the beach. After hiking there a few times, I discovered that my mother went there when she was a girl in the 1930's.





The former Girl Scout camp of Beechwood State Park shown here in 2014



The Keuka Lake Outlet Trail goes from the town of Dresden to Penn Yan and offers numerous waterfalls along the way. This is an excellent gravel bike path. Spring 2021



*The Keuka Lake Outlet Trail is the location of one of the first hydro-electric stations.
Shown here is the massive amount of water flowing in the spring 2023.*



One of the best hiking trails in the area is the fire trail on the East side of Hemlock Lake. This lake is the water supply for Rochester and has no cottages or structures. This is how all the Finger Lakes looked before settlers arrived.



East side of Hemlock Lake looking to the west. Keep your eyes open for indian artifacts that can be found along the shore in times of low water.

Fillmore Glen State Park:

Fillmore Glen State Park is one of the most difficult glens to get to from Rochester since you will have to drive around three of the Finger Lakes (Canandaigua, Seneca, and Cayuga Lake) to get there. Located south of Moravia, the park offers a number of different hikes. In the summer there is a nice swimming area just downstream from the stone bridge. This is the easternmost park made by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the Finger Lakes Region.





Fillmore Glen State Park



She-Qua-Ga “tumbling Waters” right off main street Montour Falls, New



The north end of Seneca Lake holds Seneca Lake State Park. This park offers a path that connects the city of Geneva to Waterloo.



Great Gully, Located South of Union Springs -Eastern shore of Cayuga Lake.

Great Gully, Located South of Union Springs on the Eastern shore of Cayuga Lake:

Great Gully is a hidden gem. A half mile walk upstream from the parking lot brings you to a 15-foot waterfall with ample room to walk behind. The base of the falls has a swimming hole a bit over three feet deep.



Above is the bright orange mushroom: chicken of the woods.

Green Lakes (Syracuse):

This park is made up of a campground, golf course, and two very special lakes. The lakes have a specific level of dissolved calcium in the water that makes the water a bright blue. The lakes are very deep, the largest is over 300 feet deep, so deep that the water does not turn over with the seasons like a normal lake. The special name for a lake like this is a meromictic lake and they tend to have very special animals and water chemistry. This lake has a layer of red bacteria at about 30 feet, below which there are very high concentrations of sulphur dioxide dissolved in the water. You can rent rowboats, but you are not allowed to bring your own boat since this is one of the very few lakes that is not contaminated by the invasive zebra mussel. The best hiking trail goes around the two lakes.

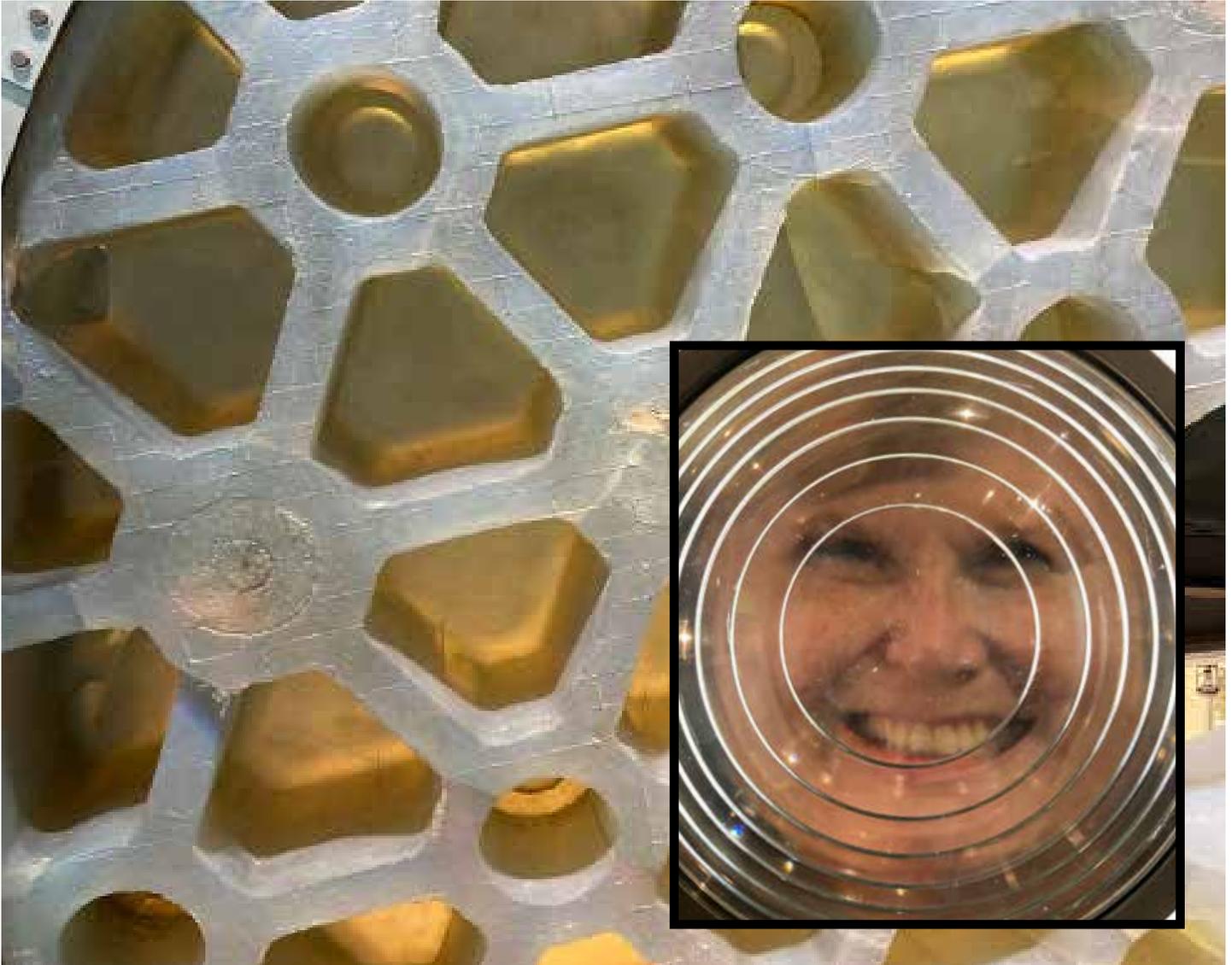




The amazing electric blue waters of Green Lakes State Park in Syracuse.

Corning Museum of Glass in Corning New York.

This is the world class museum on glass. From industrial applications like lenses and fiber optics to the fine art of glass blowing, this museum is the center of all things glass. Hands on displays and large galleries of modern glass artists.



In 1934 This 20-ton, 200-inch disk was cast out of glass to be a mirror for the new Palomar Observatory. Due to several cracks, a second mirror was made, and that is the one in use today at Palomar.



Louis Comfort Tiffany stained glass window on display at the Corning Museum of Glass in Corning NY

Rock City Park (South of the city of Olean):

This is a private park, operated as a tourist attraction since the late 1880's. Entrance fee is \$5.00. Give them a call if you are wondering if they are open. The rock outcrop is similar in composition to Thunder Rocks in Allegany State Park, and also Rock City State Forest. Rock City Park has a visitor center that doubles as a museum of oddities. The park is a maze of trails between giant boulders rising up 60 feet or more. There are lots of places to explore. Keep an eye out for historic graffiti, but be sure to not leave any. The park was also the location of an oil well that used to operate from a spot near the entry gift shop. The abandoned parts of the operation are quite interesting to inspect. This corner of New York State and adjacent Pennsylvania were one of the first places where petroleum was developed.





The giant rocks of Rock City Park (South of Olean)

Griffis Sculpture Park (Between Ashford Hollow and East Otto, NY):

Off the beaten path north of Ellicottville is the Griffis Sculpture Park. The park is really a number of sculptures connected by a nature trail. The visitor will park at a little parking lot and put a few dollars in a donation jar that might or might not be found around the parking lot. The majority of the sculptures were installed at this location in the late 1960's and range from giant aluminium bodies to spaceships that you can climb into. The park is a fun hike and a visitor is encouraged to bring a picnic if the weather is good. The park is open all year. In the fall before Halloween the park is open at night and has lighted trails. The sculpture park is currently over 400 acres of land with over 200 sculptures exhibited. Many are quite difficult to find, and I am positive I have only seen half of them on my first visit.





Griffis Sculpture Park

Allegany State Park:

The park was expanded and “improved” for tourism in 1927 with the help of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). We are grateful, for the CCC has improved trails in a number of our great parks in New York. Allegany has a number of hiking trails and is known for the Stone Tower near the north entrance. The tower is an early observation tower some 15 feet tall that had a good view before the stands of maples grew around it. The central part of the park is the Red House. The Red House is part visitor center, part museum, meeting room, and gift shop. The Red House overlooks Red House Lake, which in turn is surrounded by a walking trail. The park is bike-friendly, there are a number of mountain bike trails. The park also has a large number of rental huts and is a very popular destination for campers.



Black squirrels are a melanistic subgroup of the eastern grey squirrel (Sciurus carolinensis)



Allegheny State Park.

Kinzua Bridge State Park (Pa.)

Kinzua Bridge State Park is a very unique spot. As far as I know, it is the only State Park in the United States dedicated to tornado damage. In 2003 the Kinzua train bridge was undergoing renovation when an F1 tornado hit it and knocked down over half the bridge. An F1 is the weakest of the tornados on a scale of F1 to F5. Still, an F1 tornado is quite rare in the Northeast, and is a fitting event to create a park around. The state planners made an observation deck out of the standing portion of the train bridge. The observation walkway is still an impressive structure standing above the wreckage of the rest of the bridge sitting in the valley below. I visited in the early morning on a cool day in early October and was surprised to see the park overflowing with visitors enjoying the fall colors. This is a very popular park in the fall season. The drive is just under 3 hours from Rochester and is the longest drive in this book.



The fallen segments of the bridge are shown above in infrared light.



Kinzua Bridge State Park, Pennsylvania

Rochester Area

Cobb's Hill Park
Graffiti Tanks at Cobb's Hill Park
Mendon Ponds
Channing H Philbrick Park
Corbett's Glen
Erie Canal, locks and local towns
Rochester Waterfalls
Lake Ontario (Webster Park, etc.)
Hemlock and Canadice lakes
Seneca Park Zoo

To the West

Niagara Falls
Niagara Falls Aquarium
Whirlpool hike
Cave of the winds (boat ride too)
Fort Niagara
Eternal Flame Falls

Further to the west (Canada)

Canadian Niagara Falls
Floral Showcase
Botanical garden

To the South

Grimes Glen
High Tor Falls
High Tor Glen
Tannery Creek Falls
Clark's Gully
Conklin Gully
Letchworth
Curtiss Museum Hammondsport, NY

To the east

Keuka Lake Outlet Tail
Chimney Bluffs
Beechwood State Park
Geneva Bike trail & Visitor Center
Carpenter Falls (top and middle)
Great Falls
Fillmore Glen
Sampson Military Museum
Geneva Bike trail & Visitor Center

A bit further

Buttermilk Falls State Park
Taughannock Falls State Park
Treman State Park
F. R. Newman Arboretum (Cornell Campus)
Sapsucker Woods (Ithaca)
Museum of the earth (Ithaca)
Ithaca Science Center
Corning Museum of Glass
Watkins Glen
Havana Glen
Griffis Sculpture Park
Allegany State Park
Rosamond Gifford Zoo (Syracuse)
Green Lakes State Park

Places to Photograph
and
Explore Near

Rochester, New York

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Rochester, New York





Ted Kinsman is a Photography Professor at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) where he teaches technical imaging. Kinsman is the 2019 recipient of The Louis Schmidt award for lifetime achievement in biological imaging. He has worked on a number of films including The Planet Earth Series, Sponge-Bob SquarePants, South Park, Avatar, and The X-Files.

This book is dedicated to all photography students.