Excerpts from Sue Morse's *Wildlife and Habitats*

The cougar's status in the northern forest is shrouded in mystery. Is the species present in our wildlands or not? Numerous sightings, some them credible, continue to baffle biologists. Recent confirmations in several states throughout the Midwest, as well as confirmed travels of transient western cougars reaching the east proves that there are a growing number of bona fide cougars out there traveling throught and in some cases recolonizing eastern habitats. "Cougar Conundrum," p. 123.

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Tracking appeals to us because we enjoy sorting nature's subtle clues – clues that lead us to visualize and appreciate the behavior of different wildlife species. Simple tracks of moose and deer are3 obvious discoveries for the most part. Other evidence, a bed site, a rub, or a hair snagged on a twig tip – these are signs that enable elusive specie to come alive in our imaginations. "Clods, Wedgies and Imprints," p.20.

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High-quality summer and fall forage enable deer to grow a thick, insulating coat and store a protective fat layer from shoulders to rump. Furthermore, brown adipose fat accumulates around organs and intestines. Despite meager amounts of food, deer can subsist by drawing energy from their stored fat and thereby minimize costly food-seeking activity. Basic metabolic rates decrease dramatically, compensating for food shortages. During all but the warmest portions of the day, deer remain in their beds, conserving energy by not moving about and exposing themselves. "Hardship in the Deeryard," p. 227.

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A seed's journey – whether it is encased in an apple, embossed on a strawberry, or set aloft to ride the wind as the downy tuft from a dandelion – benefits from an amazing suite of strategies and design. And animals, including insects, birds, mammals, and even fish and reptiles, are all to willing to lend a hand. Indeed, over 100 genera of North American plants depend upon coevolved, mutually beneficial partnerships with animal seed dispersers. "A Seed's Promise," p. 55.

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The wolves will return. Without passports, they will slip across the Canadian-U.S. border, and much will change in our Northern Forest. "When the Wolf Returns," p. 237.

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To catch the hare, one must be like the hare…. Lynx and snowshoe hare skeletons look remarkably alike. "Form Follows Function," p. 115.

A bear's pre-hibernation mission is to gain roughly a third of its body weight in summer's harvests of berries and cherries and in fall's bounty of beechnuts, acorns, and mountain ash fruit. The landscape-scale abundance of beechnuts makes it indisputably the Northern Forest's premier power food. A 1982 Forest Service study by Arnold and Connie Krochmal showed that beechnuts pack more punch than any other indigenous nutmeat, including acorns: they contain nearly 20 percent protein and slightly more than 50 percent fat. Multiply that by the prodigious pounds upon pounds of nuts and berry fruit that a bear can consume in a single day, and you can appreciate the derivation of the word "mast" – from the old Aryan root word meaning "to be fat"! "Mast Miracles," p. 79

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Aside from tracks in the mud, how can we determine if a sow with cubs has used a given wetland? I look for babysitter trees, usually large hemlocks or white pines. It's long been known that bear cubs will climb large trees to escape predators, but I discovered nearly 40 years ago that certain trees in wetland habitats are used every year by a female with her new cubs. Mother hides her cubs high in the concealing foliage of these large conifers while she forages throughout the wetland nearby. "Bear Families in Spring," p. 89.

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The forest floor in April is an open book for finding tiny mice and vole "digs" – small holes and patches of ground where duff and soil have been scratched aside. Such excavations show where these mammals have dug up various species of hypogeneous (underground) fungi, including truffles, false truffles and *endogone* species. Inspect these disturbed areas closely and you may find the small round or irregularly shaped "fruitbodies" of the sought-after fungal species, some resembling miniature potatoes. "Sign of Wee Beasties in the Spring," p. 47.

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