

Celebrating Animals

I like to walk through the woods that surround my house in the Adirondack Mountains of northeastern New York. I trudge for miles along streams punctuated by beaver dams, hoping for a glimpse of the elusive wild animals who also make their homes here.

On one walk, I came upon a beautifully patterned garter snake curled in a perfect spiral on a patch of grass. Apparently the snake had the same idea I had, coming out to sun himself on this particularly gorgeous day. I snapped a picture with my long lens and backed away to avoid disturbing him from his resting spot.

Snakes get a bad rap from many people, but they are as important in the cycle of life as the cute pandas or striking loons that everyone admires. They feed on slugs, worms, insects, leeches, spiders, frogs, birds, and rodents and, in turn, provide food for hawks, crows, raccoons, and other species. They're shy animals who prefer to avoid humans, and the vast majority are harmless.

I hope more people will learn to appreciate the beauty of all wild animals, not just the furred and feathered ones, and recognize that they, too, have a place in this world.

— Marian Atkinson, Saranac, New York

YOUR BEST SHOT

Do you have an inspiring photo of a favorite pet or wild animal? Send it to us for possible publication in *All Animals*, along with an explanation of 250 words or fewer about why it's meaningful to you. E-mailed photos should be at least 300 dpi and no more than 6 MB; please include only one attachment per e-mail.

Send submissions to allanimals@humansociety.org or *All Animals*—Your Best Shot, The HSUS, 2100 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037.

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