



# ECOS NEWS



*ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse*  
Celebrating Our 43rd Year in Environmental Education

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## **Saturday, June 4 is the American Hiking Society's National Trails Day**

The country's largest celebration of trails. National Trails Day events will take place in every state across the country and will include hikes, biking and horseback rides, paddling trips, bird watching, geocaching, gear demonstrations, stewardship projects and more.

To find an event near your visit  
<http://nationaltrailsday.americanhiking.org/>



## **ECOS Canoe & Kayak Outing**

Saturday, June 4 ECOS will once again partner with the Friends of Schoharie Crossing for a Day on the River paddling along the Mohawk River and Schoharie Creek. See Insert for details

ECOS NEWS

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**ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse, Inc.**

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*ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse is a non-political, not-for-profit organization. Our mission is to provide environmental information and educational opportunities that enhance appreciation of the natural world, to build a community that is aware and knowledgeable about environmental issues, and to advocate informed action to preserve our natural resources. ECOS is funded through the support of our members and the community.*

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**eBay Giving Works**

Did you receive a holiday gift you don't want or need? Sell it on eBay and support ECOS. eBay Giving Works is the dedicated program for charity listings where you can buy or sell items to support nonprofit organizations. eBay Giving Works is the dedicated program for charity listings on eBay, enabling you to list items on eBay and donate part or all of the final sale price to your favorite nonprofit organizations. Since 2000, more than \$81 million has been raised for charity from listings sold on eBay worldwide. To learn how the program works visit [ebay.com](http://ebay.com) and click on Giving Works. ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse is participating in this program.

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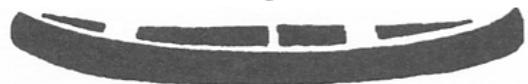


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**New York Climate Change Science  
Clearinghouse Now Online**

New York Climate Change Science Clearinghouse (NYCCSC) is now available at <https://www.nyclimatescience.org>

The New York Climate Change Science Clearinghouse (NYCCSC) is a gateway for policymakers, local planners, and the public to identify and access documents, data, websites, tools, and maps relevant to climate change adaptation and mitigation across New York State. The goal of the NYCCSC is to support scientifically sound and cost-effective decision-making. The vision is a dynamic site where users can find information in multiple ways, including through interactive tools that use data from different sources.

NYCCSC includes an interactive map and GIS viewer with a large collection of data layers, as well as datasets and documents.

**Annual Kids' Arts Festival  
Saturday, June 4 Jay Street Noon to 4:00!**

Schenectady Recycles! Committee looks forward to the event and welcomes you to join in planning, assist the children, and provide clean light-weight or medium-weight fabric. White sheets are needed for one of the two main projects. To sign up for a shift of 1-1/4 hr. or more, for further news, and to offer fabric pieces or scraps, please e-mail with Arts Fest as the subject: [schenectadyrecycles@gmail.com](mailto:schenectadyrecycles@gmail.com).

This year's theme centers on inventions and other things: "Get smART". Of course it's *smart* to divert as much as we can from the landfill, and a current focus in our region is *recycling textiles*. Crowd-sourcing to create an artwork is an *inventive* project. We are planning such a project, calling it "*kidsourced*." The kids who add to a long banner will see the finished artwork as it is exhibited around the area.

Schenectady Recycles will also be exhibiting at the Upper Union Street Strawberry Festival on Saturday, June 18.

Roberta Farrell,  
Chair of ECOS Schenectady Recycles! Committee

**ECOS Membership**

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Please check your membership contribution level.

\$30. Individual                       \$55. Donor/Organization                       \$250. + Benefactor  
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My employer will match my contribution. I've enclosed my matching gift form.

I would like to be a volunteer. Please send me more information.

## President's Letter

While many members are planting gardens and planning for the harvests of summer and fall, I'd like to ask your thoughts on planning for the future of ECOS. Similar to our gardens, what we plan and how we manage those plans will have a direct result on what we can harvest.

We need new members, new opportunities to promote environmental education, and new opportunities to be visible in the community. Many of us plant a similar garden every year and we are happy with the results. To some extent ECOS approaches the year in a repetitive manner too, and that is fine for similar results. The Board is aware we need to continue to do much of what we have traditionally done, but that we also probably need to "plant" some new crops.

Do you have any ideas how we can be more visible in the community? Do you have program suggestions that we can take into the classroom? As most schools have eliminated funds for field trips, ECOS can't rely on the past experiences of having students come to some select location to receive instructions. More now than in the past, we must go to the students.

Do you have ideas on how we can better use email to communicate with our membership, or Face Book to promote our hikes and our publications?

Do you have suggestions on programs we should consider? You can reach me at [wseyse@nycap.rr.com](mailto:wseyse@nycap.rr.com) or phone me at 518 369-4254.

And please remember to recommend an ECOS membership to anyone you know that has similar interests, and introduce them to our local guides to hiking, and biking.

Will Seyse

## Executive Director's Report

Busy, busy, busy. That sums up our spring so far at ECOS. After two cold and rainy walks to begin our spring walk series we were greeted with a beautiful day for our walk at Shenentaha Creek Park with 33 nature lovers joining us.

ECOS volunteers have been busy setting up our information table and leading nature walks at several events in the region including the Hudson Valley Community College Earth Day Fair, Rosendale Elementary School Earth Day, Albany Earth Day Festival in Washington Park, Mabee Farm Migration Festival, Pine Bush Lupine Festival and Niska Day.

Through May and into June we will be participating in several more environmental field days events for fourth and fifth graders. With these programs ECOS will reach over 1,000 students this spring!!

I was once again asked to be a regional judge for the NYS Envirothon this year. There were 13 teams competing in the regional event held at the New York Power Authority Blenheim Gilboa Visitor Center. It was a great event and exciting to see so many schools competing.

Thank you to all our volunteers who have helped make this a

successful spring for ECOS. And thank you to the Audubon Society of the Capital Region, Mabee Farm and Schenectady County Historical Society for helping make the Migration Festival a success and to the 36 hardy people who joined me for nature walks along the Win Bigelow Trails during the festival.

I would also like to thank The Iroquois Museum for inviting us to tour their new nature trails and I would encourage everyone looking for a new place to walk to stop by and visit them, and tour the museum while you're there.

Be sure to mark your calendars and join me for our paddle along the Mohawk on Saturday, June 4.

Patrick Clear

## Heldeberg Workshop 2016 Schedule

The Heldeberg Workshop is not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing an Adventure in Learning. It is chartered by the Board of Regents and is located on over 200 acres at the foot of the Helderberg Escarpment in the Town of New Scotland. It offers 1 and 2 week outdoor courses, taught by certified teachers and expert artisans, in science and nature, high adventure, theatre and art, to name a few.

Visit [www.heldebergworkshop.org](http://www.heldebergworkshop.org) for schedule and information.

The Heldeberg Workshop is chartered by the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York. The Heldeberg Workshop has a permit to operate from the Albany County Department of Health.

## Xerces Society Milkweed Seed Finder

Native milkweeds (*Asclepias* spp.) are essential for monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) caterpillars and support a diversity of pollinators with their abundant nectar. By including milkweeds in gardens, landscaping, wildlife habitat restoration projects, and native revegetation efforts you can provide breeding habitat for monarchs and a valuable nectar source for butterflies, bees, and other beneficial insects. As part of our [Project Milkweed](#), we have created this comprehensive national directory of milkweed seed vendors to help you find sources of seed. <http://www.xerces.org/milkweed-seed-finder>

## Ocean Plastics Pollution Problems

By Graham Kilpatrick

Every day we use many different types of plastics for various tasks. Most of the plastics we use are disposable and intended for one use only. When we recycle these disposable plastics, we make a small but meaningful difference in the battle against ocean pollution. Whether plastic debris is blown by winds or dumped off of barges, around 80 percent of it comes from land.

The best way we can make a difference is by trying to ensure that the plastic does not reach the sea, because once plastic reaches the sea it can take anywhere from 500-1,000 years for it to degrade. Individually people can make a difference by volunteering to clean up a local beach. By recycling plastic you can help cut down the amount of plastic that heads to landfills or

that could possibly reach waterways and oceans.

People from New York State who are land locked may be less concerned about the ocean plastics pollution issue. But studies have shown that plastic pollution in the Great Lakes may be just as bad if not worse than ocean pollution. Samples collected from Lake Erie showed its waters contained large amounts of plastic particles, and 85 percent of these particles were smaller than two-tenths of an inch and much of that was microscopic.

If ingested the tiny plastic particles can cause harm to both fish and birds. Research is in the early stages of determining whether fish could pass on these particles to human consumers. In the meantime spreading the word about plastic recycling and increasing individual recycling efforts are great ways to reduce the impact from ocean and lake plastic pollution.

Sources

<http://www.nrdc.org/oceans/plastic-ocean/>

<http://www.acs.org/content/2013/april/polluting-plastic-particles-invade-the-great-lakes.html>

<http://ecowatch.com/2014/04/07/22-facts-plastic-pollution-10-things-can-do-about-it/>

### **Should Everyone Switch to Single Stream?**

**By Graham Kilpatrick**

Single stream recycling has gained substantial popularity across the country. People have quickly taken a liking to single stream for the convenience of lumping glass, paper and plastics together. With the positive buzz surrounding single stream, people tend to over look the facts, issues and costs associated with the process. Each municipality has its own individual circumstances that help determine whether single stream or dual stream is the best option.

The single stream container is a larger bin for residents to cram more recyclables in. Single stream recycling has been proven to bring in more recyclable materials over all. However, with paper, glass and plastic all together, the chances of contamination are greater with single stream. Consumers who try to recycle every last possible item like food products, can contaminate large amounts of recyclables. The contamination reduces the overall quality of the material for the reprocessing companies that utilize the recyclables.

Reprocessing plants that make the materials into new products run into frequent problems of contaminants and residuals with single stream. Dual stream has shown to have a higher quality output but brings in far less overall quantity. For municipalities there are a variety of determining factors in choosing the method of recycling. The distance from the recycling plant, cost to upgrade, town recycling participation and a number of other variables must be taken into account to determine what the best choice for the district is. Single stream and dual stream get the job done at different efficiencies, but that does not necessarily make one better than the other.

Sources

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/single-stream-recycling/>

<http://www.npr.org/2015/03/31/396319000/with-single-stream-recycling-convenience-comes-at-a-cost>

[http://www.qconline.com/opinion/columnists/dan\\_lee/exploring-pros-and-cons-of-single-stream-recycling/article\\_eb679](http://www.qconline.com/opinion/columnists/dan_lee/exploring-pros-and-cons-of-single-stream-recycling/article_eb679)

### **Great Lakes Pollution**

**By Graham Kilpatrick**

The Great Lakes are vast and majestic, yet under constant threats from human impacts and climate change. The Great Lakes are the world's largest fresh water ecosystem and contain twenty percent of the Earth's surface freshwater. It is important to protect them and keep them healthy so that people can continue to enjoy them for future generations. Land development around each lake plays a large role in the pollution problems experienced in each lake.

Microscopic plastic pollution is a growing problem that is spreading and critically endangering the health and ecosystems of the Great Lakes. Plastic particles have already been documented in multiple Great Lakes that can cause toxic chemicals and disease causing bacteria. Fish and animals can ingest tiny plastic residuals from various types of consumer products. This can cause harm to them as well as anyone that could consume the fish or animal.

Lake Michigan has the most land development, industry, and urbanization along its shorelines. Lakes Huron and Ontario also have large urban areas along their shorelines, although the overall development along their coasts is less than Lake Michigan. Lake Erie is surrounded primarily by agricultural development. Lake Superior has the least amount of developed land along the coasts, resulting in lower levels of pollution. These factors contribute significantly to the types of pollution each lake deals with.

Agriculture is a leading cause of lake and river pollution, especially in Lake Erie. Commercial farmland on the shores of Lake Erie uses large quantities of chemical fertilizers that eventually run off into the lake. Lake Michigan receives a large amount of its pollution from large industrial waterfront cities like Chicago and Milwaukee. Most of the land surrounding Lake Superior consists of National Forests and National Parks. Limiting development along the coasts has helped create cleaner ecosystems and environments for Lake Superior.

To prevent further pollution of the Great Lakes it is important to limit development. Many wetlands that help filter groundwater and are home to various plant and animal species have already been lost to agricultural, industrial and residential development. Preserving wildlife and ecosystems around the Great Lakes will limit the amount of pollution and runoff that can enter the lakes.

Sources

<http://www.glerl.noaa.gov/pr/ourlakes/threats.html>

<http://www.nrdc.org/water/oceans/ttw/great-lakes.asp>

**#5 Plastics**

By Calvin Wiles

As recycling practices have advanced over time, it has become more difficult for consumers to know exactly what to do with their household recyclables. For years, most of us have been told to remove plastic bottle caps before recycling our bottles. However, most people could not tell you the reasoning behind it. Bottle caps consist of #5 plastics, as do most yogurt containers, dairy products, Britta water filters, medicine bottles, etc. Number 5 plastics consist of polypropylene and are chemically very different from most other types of plastic. Hence, they have traditionally caused problems throughout the recycling process and at sorting facilities. Polypropylene is known for being extremely versatile and is considered to be a structural or fiber type of plastic. The downside to this benefit is that it has a high melting point of about 320 degrees Fahrenheit and causes problems when melting down plastics at recycling facilities because its melting point is so much higher than the majority of other plastics.

If you use local recycling services like the majority of Americans, then there is a good chance that your municipality will not accept #5 plastics. (In recent years, the city of Schenectady and its surrounding area has changed its public recycling policies to now include #5 plastics with all other types of plastics.) If your local recycling services do accept #5 plastics, that's great, because recycling these plastics is better than their ending up in a landfill, but it is far from an ideal solution. Although your local recycling services may tell you to include your #5 plastics with the rest of your recyclables, that doesn't necessarily mean their facilities can handle them. The healthiest and most sustainable option for our planet is to keep these #5 plastics isolated from the rest of the plastic recycle stream in the recycling process. When we keep these #5 plastics isolated from the rest of the plastics, we are able to preserve the high quality of the remaining recycled plastic product.

A company called Preserve started a program in 1996 called Gimme 5, which allows people to either drop off their #5 plastics into marked bins at Whole Foods Markets stores or mail them directly to the company's facility where they make these plastics into recycled household products like toothbrushes, razors, tableware, and kitchen products. Preserve has partnerships with multiple other companies including, Stonyfield, National Wildlife Federation, Plum Organics, Recyclebank, Berry Plastics, JM Murray, & Kokua Hawaii Foundation. There is a Whole Foods Market on Central Avenue in Albany that carries Preserve drop off bins. This marks a great opportunity for Schenectady residents and other people living in the area to start getting involved in recycling their #5 plastics separately. To learn more about Preserve and what they do please visit <https://www.preserveproducts.com/>.

**Meat Industry**

By Calvin Wiles

Over 55 billion animals around the world are killed every year for consumption by humans. In factory farms, they are confined indoors under cruel conditions, crammed into unsanitary facilities and fed genetically modified corn and soybeans rather than

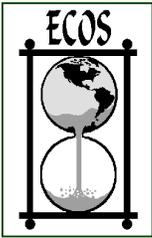
natural growing grass and forage. They are given a steady dose of antibiotics throughout their lives to help them grow faster and to ward off any disease from overcrowding and unhealthy living conditions. Not only is this an inhumane way to treat other living beings, but by treating these animals like this we are producing unhealthy meat for ourselves to eat as the end product of this costly cycle. Above all, industrial agriculture has become one of the most unsustainable practices of our modern civilizations for the well being of our planet.

Throughout the entire process, factory farming destroys our land and natural resources for the sole purpose of providing cheap and unhealthy meat for our people. Industrial farming had not been introduced until the 1970's, but it has spread like wildfire ever since. Today, factory farming is the leading cause of climate change in the world. When you add up all of the fossil fuels burned due to high energy feed, fueling factory farms, processing and packing, deforestation, feed crop cultivation, and desertification, one can see why this industry has become such a disaster for our planet.

To the big meat industries, these animals are simply commodities being exploited for profit. Their number one goal is to maximize output while minimizing costs, and the best way for them to do that is by employing abusive practices that hurt our environment, our animals, and ultimately our own health. About 80% of the crops grown in the US are fed to farm animals. About 349 million acres of our land is used to produce livestock feed. With those crops, the United States could be feeding 800 million people instead, enough to end world hunger. The USDA estimates that more than 335 million tons of waste are produced annually on farms in the United States. That is almost a third of the total municipal and industrial waste produced every year. Animal agriculture is also incredibly wasteful with freshwater. It is responsible for about 20-33% of freshwater consumed in the world today. On average, it takes 2,500 gallons of fresh water to produce a single pound of beef. The entire transportation sector contributes about 13% to global greenhouse gas emissions. The entire impact of livestock and their byproducts for food accounts for approximately 51% of global human caused greenhouse gas emissions. Unfortunately, there are no concrete federal or state laws protecting these animals. There are anti cruelty laws that exist, but they are rarely enforced. It is on the people to make a change.

If humans do not start to make a fundamental shift toward a plant based lifestyle, the results on mankind, all other living species, and our planet will be catastrophic. We need to adopt a food system where we focus our diets on real food that is grown under healthy conditions with purity. It is important to remember that we are always voting with our dollars. The meat industry is not only exploiting these animals, they are exploiting us as well. We need to educate our people on how they are affecting themselves and the world around them by consuming factory meat. When the meat eating stops, so does factory farming.

To learn more about this issue check out "Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret," a documentary that was released in 2014 and addresses the effects of industrial farming on the environment, OR visit their website at [www.cowspiracy.com](http://www.cowspiracy.com)



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**ECOS Spring Nature Walk at Shenentaha Creek Park**

