



ECOS NEWS

ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse

Celebrating Our 47th Year in Environmental Education

Volume XLVII

Number 6

December/January 2019

ECOS Holiday Party and Re-gifting Sale



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2019, 6-8 PM

NISKAYUNA COMMUNITY CENTER

2682 AQUEDUCT ROAD, NISKAYUNA, NY



BRING A FINGER FOOD TO SHARE

AND A GIFT FOR THE RE-GIFTING SALE

ENJOY GOOD COMPANY AND THE FUN OF THE RAFFLE



PRESIDENT'S PIECE

Moving into 2020, the need for people and groups who will stand up for the environment has never been greater. In 1962, Rachel Carson's seminal book, *Silent Spring*, alerted the public to the destructive effects of human activity on the environment and sparked the environmental movement. In 1972, ECOS was founded to counteract that threat. ECOS is still needed. In the past year, several major scientific reports have described in alarming detail how extensively humans have caused damage to the environment is. Regardless of the onslaught of evidence, ignorance of, and resistance to, the facts of global warming and of species loss is widespread.

What role can ECOS take? To guide us, we have drafted a new mission statement: "The purpose of ECOS is to provide environmental experiences and education for youth and adults in order to develop an appreciation and understanding of the natural world and the impact of human activities upon it and to inspire action to preserve the environment."

Getting people to experience the natural world and develop an appreciation of it through guided nature walks, classes and publications has long been a major focus of ECOS. Programs for school children have also been a good part of our activity. However, in this time of rapidly increasing understanding of the continuing threats to our environment, ECOS and its members, need to do even more...

In the years since ECOS was founded, many things have changed. Most women are now working; technology has radically changed the way people get information; the pace of life seems to have speeded up. ECOS is making changes in response to the new reality. We have established an on-line presence on Facebook and the web (www.ecosny.org) and we are using MailChimp, an email service, for timely communication with our members. We are scheduling activities on evenings and weekends for people who work during the day and for families. We are reaching out to schools and afterschool programs and leading experiential environmental activities. We are

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developing collaborative relationships with other organizations to broaden our reach and theirs.

But... we need to do more. We need to be a strong voice for the environment, both as an organization and as individuals. And we need you to help...by giving your time as a volunteer, by participating on a committee or on the board, by supporting us financially, by sharing your ideas, by standing up for the natural world.... Your grandchildren will thank you.

—Ruth Bonn

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The ECOS Nominating Committee is beginning its work. If you are interested in serving on the ECOS Board or have a suggestion of someone else you think would be a good addition to the ECOS Board, please tell us! Qualifications are: interest in the environment and a willingness to contribute your ideas, energy, and time

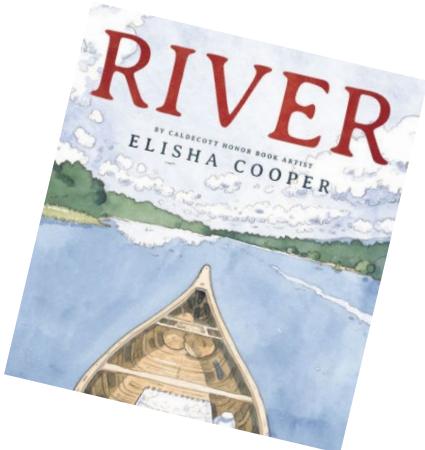
Send nominations or statements of interest to info@ecos.ny. Tell us briefly why you are interested in serving on the board, or, if you are suggesting someone else, why you are suggesting that person.

LOOKING FOR A GIFT FOR A CHILD?

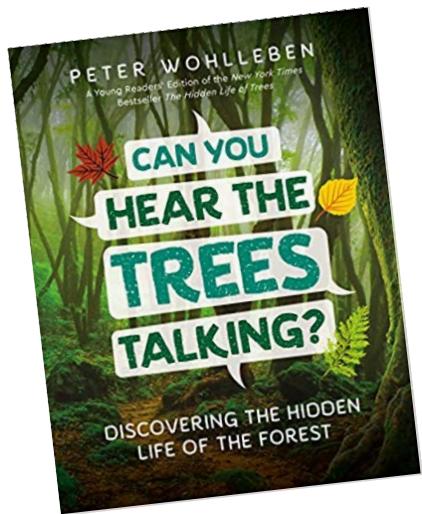
GIVE A BOOK ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT!

I love children's books. One of the joys of teaching young children was that I could read my favorite children's books every year to a different class. So, when our office manager, Maureen, suggested an article on environmental books for children, I was on it!

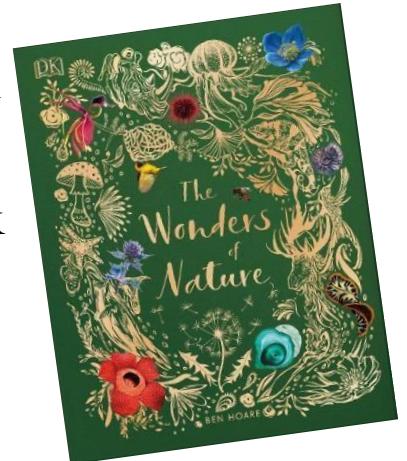
I asked Kathleen Kemp at the Open Door Bookstore on Jay Street for suggestions, which she was delighted to give. She recommended two recent books that she especially loves. *A Stone Sat Still* by Brendan Wenzel (\$17.95) is a read aloud book that tells the story of an ordinary stone and all the animals that use it... as a place to pause, a place to hide, a table, an entire world. *Bird Count* by Susan Edwards Richmond (\$17.95) describes a young girl's adventure when she joins the annual bird count. Kathleen commented that "Both titles are beautifully illustrated, and I think will be perfect...I've also met both authors and both are environmentalists".



River, a "stunning" illustrated book suitable for ages 6 to 12, is also on her list. The author, Elisha Cooper, will be visiting the Open Door on December 7th! A young woman embarks on a 400 mile trek down the Hudson River; she explores the wildlife, flora and fauna, and urban landscapes along the river and experiences storms and perilous waters. Beautifully illustrated; ages 6-12 (\$18.99). Another book she suggested is, *The Wonders of Nature* by DK Publishing (\$19.99) "It's also a beautiful book but is more of a reference book than a story".



Another notable new book is *Can You Hear the Trees Talking?* by Peter Wohlleben. It is a version of the popular adult book *The Hidden Life of Trees*. Colorful photographs, bright presentations of fascinating facts and statistics, and fun pop quizzes make the book accessible and inviting. Says a Goodreads review: "A walk in the park will never be the same after kids read this awe-inspiring book." It's "a tree-treatise treat" says Kirkus Review. Greystone Press, Non-fiction, ages 8-10, \$17.95



—Ruth Bonn



Seven Preserve Challenge Walks a Great Success!

Our Sunday afternoon walks in the preserves which comprise our Seven Preserve Challenge have proved very popular. With six of seven walks completed as of this writing, we've had anywhere from 12 participants (in the rain!) to 40. A number of participants have "risen to the Challenge" and joined us every Sunday, while others have dropped in as they could. We've walked in all kinds of weather; seen fall wildflowers, a gorgeous waterfall, and an old cemetery; learned about Dutch settlers; and simply enjoyed being outdoors in a few of this region's many lovely natural areas. Thanks to walk leaders Bruce Bonacquist, Steve Jones, Ed Kautz, Darwin Roosa, Will Seyse, and Peter Tobiessen, as well as to all who participated, for some very enjoyable Sunday afternoons!

If you've not been able to join in the walks, you can explore the preserves on your own at any time, and then complete a short form to receive your free patch. Further information can be found on our web site www.ecosny.org. Happy walking!

—Holly Hawkes



Indian Kill



Plotter Kill



Sanders Preserve



Plotter Kill



Bozen Kill



Christman Sanctuary



Plotter Kill



Christman Sanctuary

1st Annual Environmental Networking Forum

—Art Clayman

On October 10 ECOS participated in the first-ever Schenectady County Environmental Networking Forum. In fact ECOS did more than participate; it sponsored the event, along with the Schenectady County Environmental Advisory Council (SCEAC) and the Schenectady First Reformed Church, where it was held.

The forum — the purpose of which was to get the various environmental organizations and agencies around the region in the same room and see how their collaboration and effectiveness could be increased — was a few years in the making.

It started with a couple of meetings between then-President Will Seyse, Program Director Art Clayman, and representatives from SCEAC. But it wasn't until Alexander Lykins, whose job at the time was Union College Sustainability Coordinator, joined the boards of both ECOS and SCEAC that the idea really took off. And after more than a year of planning, there it was on October 10 — a full-day forum held at the environmentally conscious First Reformed Church in the Stockade.

The event featured a keynote address by Rory Fluman, the new Schenectady County manager; breakout sessions on various environmental subjects; a lunchtime panel discussion with Glenville Supervisor Chris Koetzle, Niskayuna Supervisor Yasmine Syed, and Scotia's public works superintendent; and another panel with representatives from the New York Power Authority, Department of Environmental Conservation, Capital District Regional Planning Commission, and Local Governments for Sustainability.

In all, 69 people from 37 organizations attended the conference from 37 different organizations. ECOS was represented by five board members: President Ruth Bonn, Arden Rauch, Janet Hollocher, Steve Jones and Art Clayman, who served as facilitator for a breakout session on preserves and open space. Other breakout sessions were on climate change, transportation, recycling, solid waste, and water.

In each of the sessions, participants identified themes and goals and made recommendations for action. The open space and preserves group, for example, recommended: a management plan for each of the county preserves; improved transportation and access to them; creation of an app for the preserves;

and adoption of the National 10-Minute Walk Campaign, which calls for residents, no matter where they live, to have a park or green space within a 10-minute walk of home.

While this was the first such forum, the participants agreed it should not be the last. Too many good ideas came out of it, too many relationships started — and there is way too much work to be done to stop with just one.



Talking to Children about Climate Change

Another Benefit of the Recent Sustainability Forum

—Arden Rauch

Children do worry about climate change. We owe it to our children (and adults) to address their mounting anxiety produced by the ever-increasing drum beat of climate change. To do so, the first step is to listen and acknowledge their fears and gently help them address their irrational fears with information, but above all do not dismiss their fears.

Then, describe the people and organizations that are working on solutions. And they do exist but are overshadowed by both deniers' barrage of distorted information and the torrent of current events. Next, describe what you are doing and what they can do. Taking action is an empowering antidote to fear. Joining a group or local organization which is committed to action will further assuage their anxiety by reducing their sense of helplessness.

The recent Sustainability Forum brought people from various Schenectady County public and private groups to talk about issues and how they can be addressed on the local level. Although it is not possible to assess tangible results now, the mere fact that adults are taking climate change seriously and making plans to ameliorate the results counters the sense of helplessness. Furthermore, it is comforting to note that New York State is one of the leading states planning for and implementing measures to address the impending changes.

AN UNDERAPPRECIATED NATURAL RESOURCE IN SCHENECTADY

The Many Facets of Vale Park and Cemetery

The 100 acres of Vale offer green respite in the city of Schenectady. Located between Brandywine Avenue and Nott Terrace, Vale is the site of Schenectady's Urban Farm, a Level 1 Arboretum, a Certified Wildlife Habitat, listed by the National Park Service as part of the Underground Railroad Network to Freedom, and on the National Register of Historic places. In addition, Vale Cemetery offers natural burials, one of only seven cemeteries in New York to do so.

People concerned about the environment are rethinking the "American Way of Death" (tip of the hat to Jessica Milford's 1963 book of the same title). Typically after death the body is embalmed with formaldehyde (a known carcinogen) and placed in a metal or exotic wood casket which is then placed in a concrete vault and buried. A large carved granite or bronze marker is placed at the grave. Thereafter, the burial site is scrupulously maintained by frequent mowing and applications of herbicide and fertilizer.

An environmentally friendly alternative is "green burial", which does not involve chemicals. Organic products are used in place of formaldehyde or the body is refrigerated until burial with ice or dry ice. Burial is in a biodegradable wood, wicker, or cardboard container. No concrete vault is used. In time the site may become a wildflower meadow or even a bird/butterfly habitat. A simple flat marker is placed at the site and the global positional coordinates are recorded.

Vale is a not for profit, non-denominational cemetery founded in 1857. It was designed during the 1850's Rural Cemetery Movement, with picturesque ponds, scenic pathways, exotic trees, and flora. It is a green sanctuary in the city, well worth a visit. ECOS plans to sponsor some walks to explore this underappreciated resource in the spring.

To learn more about Vale, visit: valecemetery.org



Some of our dedicated volunteers at the October 15 trail clearing for this season's cross country skiing

ECOS' Program Committee's Plans for the Cold Months

— *Art Clayman*

- A talk on the use of herbs for cooking, health and wellness, with a focus on those grown locally.
- A series of talks on the Mohawk River.
- A movie on an environmental theme, with pizza.
- A tour of Railex, Union Pacific's massive fresh fruit and vegetable shipping operation in Rotterdam. Check our web site, Facebook page, or your email inbox for the exact dates and times.

We are also considering a program where ECOS members would read books with environmental themes to Schenectady elementary school children. (If you are interested in doing this call (518) 370-4125 or email info@ecosny.org.) Also we will be continuing something we started earlier this year, i.e., environmental activities for children in the Schenectady Jewish Community Center's afterschool program.

Some species are dormant in winter. As you can see, ECOS is pretty active.

Partner Events

7-Dec Holiday Bazaar at Thacher Nature Center	10 am-4pm
8-Dec Holiday Bazaar at Thacher Nature Center	11am-4pm
26-Dec Family Fun at Thacher Nature Center	9am-5pm
27-Dec Art Workshop at Thacher Nature Center	2pm-4pm
1-Jan First Day Snowshoe Walk at Thacher Park	11 am-1 pm
1-Jan Volkssporters New Year's Day Walk	1pm-?
3-Jan All About Adoptions at Thacher Nature	10am-12pm

Partner Key

TCHR	Thacher Park	https://parks.ny.gov	518-872-1237
VOLK	Volkssporters	www.walkescv.org	

ECOS Winter Outings

It's that time of year when we are looking forward to snow and winter activities!

ECOS will be running ski and snowshoe trips similar to the past couple of years which means that different people will need to volunteer for a certain day to lead a trip. The first trip day is scheduled for January 7. Sue and I expect to be able to take that day to get things rolling. The rest will be every Tuesday until the end of February. Outings will be at locations within the Capital District similar to what has been on our outings list for many years. There is an insert of our potential outing locations and carpool locations for the different sites in the newsletter. The outings generally start about 9:30 am at the trailhead and run for 2 to 3 hours. We hope to get out every day even if we need micro-spikes when the snow does not cooperate.

If you would like to lead, February 18, and 25 are still available. Contact Roy and Sue Keats at roysueski@yahoo.com or 518-466-8544, so we can put you on the Leader List. You don't need to be an expert skier to organize a Tuesday outing. In general outing locations are chosen based on what the leader of the day can learn about ski conditions each week. There were times last year that we had to go out with traction gear instead of skis or snowshoes, but we still got out!

Please let us know.

Thanks,

Roy and Sue Keats



ECOS Membership

ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse

P.O. Box 9118, Niskayuna, NY 12309 518-370-4125

Please check your membership contribution level.

\$40 Individual \$75 Donor/Organization \$150 Sustainer

\$50 Family \$100 Supporter \$250 Benefactor

\$500 Patron

Name _____ Phone _____

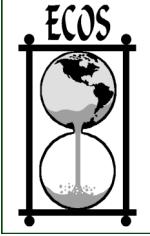
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As a GE employee (or retiree), my contribution is eligible for GE Foundation Matching Funds. I have registered with GE for the matching gift by computer at www.gefoundation.com. If you do not have computer access, call customer service at 1-800-305-0669.

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.



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DATES AND EVENTS TO REMEMBER

Winter Ski and Snowshoe Outings

January 7

January 14

January 21

January 28

February 4

February 11

February 18

February 25

**Holiday Party and
Re-gifting Sale**

December 11, 2019

6-8 PM

*Check our Facebook page or web
site for additional winter activities
as they are scheduled*

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, build a community that is aware and knowledgeable about environmental issues, and advocate informed action to preserve our natural resources. ECOS is funded through the support of our members and the community.