



# ECOS NEWS



*ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse*

Celebrating Our 48th Year in Environmental Education

Volume XLVIII

Number 1

February/March 2020



## **ECOS ANNUAL MEETING**

Wednesday, March 11, 2020

Niskayuna Community Center  
2682 Aqueduct Road, Niskayuna

All ECOS members are invited to attend.

5:30 Annual Meeting

Elect Board members, learn about the budget,  
and hear what ECOS is doing now and what our plans are for the future.

6:30 Light refreshments and social 'hour'

7:00 "Springtime on a Northern Lake  
and Do Aquatic Creatures Talk with Each Other?" with Peter Tobiessen,  
ECOS Board member, Aquatic Biologist,  
Professor Emeritus at Union College, and author of

*The Secret Life of a Lake, The Ecology of Northern Lakes and their Stewardship* (2012)

We look forward to seeing you!

*Save the Date*

***ECOS Annual Dinner***

Thursday, March 26, 2020

SUNY Schenectady

More details to follow

**ECOS NEWS**

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P.O. Box 9118, Niskayuna, NY 12309

Office phone: 518-370-4125

E-mail: [info@ecosny.org](mailto:info@ecosny.org)

Web: [www.ecosny.org](http://www.ecosny.org)

Editor: Maureen Gebert

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Peter Tobiessen

Andrew Kulmatiski

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Gerry Magnes

**VOLKSSPORTERS**

Empire State Capital Volkssporters, ESCV, is planning a walk through the city of Saratoga on Saturday, March 21, 2020 at 9 am.

All participants must register between 8:30-8:55 at the Presbyterian-New England Congregational Church, 24 Circular Street, Saratoga Springs, NY. The cost is \$2.00 for those not yet members of ESCV. Parking and rest rooms are available at the start.

You can choose between a 5k or 10k walk, which pass many Victorian homes and shop fronts, past world-famous mineral springs, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Canfield Casino and Italian gardens in the city park, the historic thoroughbred race course, and National Racing Museum and Skidmore College. Come walk with us!

Questions? Email [saratogawalk@walkescv.org](mailto:saratogawalk@walkescv.org)

**ECOS BUSINESS**

**BOARD MEMBERS NEEDED**

The ECOS Board is looking for a few good men and women. This is an opportunity to have your ideas heard and make a difference.

The Board meets about 10 times per year and works to educate and inspire a passion for our environment. We do this through programs, walks and a variety of outreach. New Board members will be appointed at the annual meeting on March 11.

If you or anyone you know is interested in serving on the ECOS Board, please get in touch with Andy Kulmatiski ([kulmatiski@aol.com](mailto:kulmatiski@aol.com)).

**MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL**

During the month of March you will be receiving an ECOS Membership renewal notice. Please also consider this a time to recruit friends and neighbors as new members. Copy the membership renewal form you receive or use the one on the back of the newsletter.

**TWO WAYS TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH ECOS**

**E-mail:** To be informed about important upcoming events, please send your e-mail address to [info@ecosny.org](mailto:info@ecosny.org). ECOS sends announcements about once or twice a month, and we never share your information.

**Facebook:** If you're on Facebook, you can find us at ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse (<https://www.facebook.com/ecosny/>). To see ECOS announcements, you can "Like" or "Follow" the ECOS Facebook page. The Facebook page is a good place to see photos of past events and notices of new ones.

## **AN INVASION!**

Rachel Carson Dinner Talk

—Art Clayman

The United States is fortunate in that, since its founding as a nation, it has never been invaded by a foreign army. That's partly due to its military strength, and partly due to the two big oceans that surround us.

But armies aren't the only possible invaders. There's another type, one with which we are engaged in a serious and seemingly losing battle: invasive species, and unlike armies, these invaders don't respect military strength or national boundaries. They may come by air, land or sea.

ECOS members who attended the annual Rachel Carson Celebration Dinner on November 19th learned all about invasive species from keynote speaker Kristopher Williams, who is an expert on the subject. Mr. Williams is director of Capital Mohawk PRISM (Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management), an organization that leads invasive species management and education efforts in an 11-county region.

In his talk, Mr. Williams told us what invasive species are: non-native species that can cause harm to the environment, human health, or the economy. He told us why they are bad. Because they cause or contribute to: a reduction in biodiversity; the loss of native fish, wildlife, plant and tree species; an increase in crop damage, diseases in humans and livestock; and a decrease in recreational opportunities and income. The overall impact of invasive species in the United States is estimated at \$120 billion each year.

Mr. Williams also told us how government agencies and organizations such as his rank invasive species: based on their ecological impact, rate of dispersal and distribution, and cost of control; and what they try to do about them, in order of preference: prevent, eradicate, contain.

Finally, he told us what individuals can do. Go native, he said. There are a wide variety of beautiful, easy-to-care-for native plants available. Never use invasive species in your landscaping, and remove invasive plants from your garden.

Mr. Williams' message was well received by the nearly 100 in attendance at the dinner. They and other ECOS members interested in combating invasive species will soon have a chance to play an official role. This spring they can be trained in using an online system or smartphone app called iMapInvasives, which allows citizens who find invasive species in the field to report them to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, so their spread can be tracked. Check Facebook or our website for the date of the training.

## *What can I do?*

—Arden R. Rauch

Food waste is something we can all do something about...at least in a small way. Americans waste 150,000 tons of food each day! Most of the tons of food which are sent to landfills comes from homes--from you and me! Methane from landfills is a potent greenhouse gas. Reducing our food waste is a small thing we can do for the climate...

- First, plan ahead. When will you use the food? How much will you use? Buy the appropriate amounts.
- Don't throw them out! Leftovers can be used. They may even taste better the second day. And you can freeze leftovers to use later. Or you can get creative with your leftovers!
- Do things get lost in the refrigerator or on the storage shelf? Organize your fridge. Rotate items so older items move forward into view.
- Keeping fruits and vegetables fresh can be a challenge. For suggestions, check out sites such as: [https://www.ehow.com/how\\_7717056\\_store-fruits-vegetables-fridge.html](https://www.ehow.com/how_7717056_store-fruits-vegetables-fridge.html)
- Read labels. A "best by" date doesn't mean you need to throw it away. It's the manufacturer's best guess on how long the food will taste its best. Foods can be safely eaten for weeks and months (even years in the case of canned foods) beyond "best by" dates. "Use by" dates on perishable foods have leeway in the range of days.
- There are always some food, food scraps, vegetable trimmings, etc. that don't get eaten. Composting is an Earth friendly solution to the issue of food waste. You are now giving back to the soil and not creating greenhouse gas emissions from the anaerobic decay in landfills. (More about composting in the next Newsletter)

PRESIDENT'S PIECE. . .

## Small is Important

—Ruth Bonn

I'm sitting down to write this on December 20<sup>th</sup>, the shortest day of the year, but by the time you read it, days will be noticeably longer. Spring will be less than two months away. In our world of artificial lighting and indoor lives, we are far less aware of the small daily and seasonal changes in the sky than our ancestors were. We no longer spend time in fields at night watching our flocks, with little to entertain us but the changing patterns of the stars in the sky. In fact, most of us cannot see the night sky that our ancestors did even when we are outside looking skyward at night. We, in North America and Europe, live under light polluted skies. Ironically, it's only become worse with the advent of LEDs, which consume less electricity but are often brighter and left on longer than the incandescent bulbs they replace.

Light, energy from the sun, is the basis for all life. But as well as being a source of energy, it is a source of information. It tells organisms when to sleep, hunt, migrate, metabolize and reproduce. The invention of the incandescent light bulb began an assault on the natural rhythms of life. Studies on the effect of light on various species, from fish to trees, birds to humans, show the unintended consequences of human activity. Animal migration and reproduction, bird nesting and fledging, growth of tree leaves, pollination, sleep and even the spread of disease are affected.

We have all observed the effect of lights on moths who are in effect trapped by light, and of spiders and daddy-long-legs who position themselves near outside lights like diners at a buffet. Less apparent to us is the effect on nocturnal pollinators (moths and beetles). Studies show that artificial light decreases pollinator visits to plants at night by over 50% with a resultant reduction in food production. Pollinator numbers are declining worldwide. Artificial light appears to be yet another threat to pollinators, along with pesticides, loss of habitat and native plants, and climate change.

A small step we can take is to reduce our use of outdoor lighting and cover lighted windows that attract nocturnal insects. Germany has announced a 100-million-euro initiative that will encourage the use of exterior lighting that is triggered by motion detectors rather than always on. Our localities can

also be encouraged to think differently about public lighting. Insects may be small, but their role in the proper functioning of the ecosystem as food for other creatures, as nutrient recyclers and as pollinators, is huge.

## Native Plants Support Wildlife

—Janet Hollocher

Neatly-trimmed uniform grass, carefully-pruned shrubs with attractive foliage, flowers whose colors delight the eye from spring to fall, cleared up and cleaned out in winter -- this is the ornamental lawn and garden that many of us strive for. But with the loss of so many birds, bees, and butterflies from the natural environment, we ask, "How do our lawns and gardens serve wildlife?"

Entomologist and wildlife ecologist Doug Tallamy believes that ordinary gardeners "have become important players in the management of our nation's wildlife", and that we can "make a difference... to the future of biodiversity, to the native plants and animals of North America, and to the ecosystems that sustain them." (*Bringing Nature Home*, 2007, p. 9)

Ecosystems are the key, and they need the insects that have evolved with them. Insects pollinate the plants and provide protein to baby birds and other animals. Insects feed on plants and are themselves predators, keeping the ecosystems in balance.

A yard full of native plants can be beautiful, and a no-pesticide smorgasbord and haven for native insects and the wildlife that depends on them.

On the other hand, a yard full of non-native ornamentals is like a sumptuous-looking buffet composed of inedible food facsimiles -- attractive, yes, but lacking real nourishment.

Imported ornamental plants can harbor other hazards, as well -- elm disease, chestnut blight, oak wilt, and insects such as hemlock woolly adelgid and emerald ash borer. Non-native plants can themselves become destructive invasives, as acres overtaken by purple loosestrife, oriental bittersweet, and multiflora rose have shown.

Good news, though: we support native wildlife when we replace non-native specimens in our yards and gardens with native plants that are suited to the local environment. We can offer a home to the bees, birds, and butterflies that need our help, and enjoy their beauty and their variety.

# The Grass Roots

## Approach to Learning

Part of ECOS' The World Around Us  
Talk Series

ECOS' series of winter talks got off to a great start with a January 8<sup>th</sup> presentation by Rebekka Henriksen. In an engaging 90-minute session, Rebekka, a volunteer and mother of three children at Zoller Elementary School in Schenectady, told a receptive audience about the various gardens she and students have been creating and maintaining there the last few years.

Zoller's campus is a big piece of green space on the city's north side — and Rebekka has big plans for it. She wants to use the gardens not only as a teaching tool and emotional outlet for the kids who attend the school, but as a source of food and gathering place for the surrounding community.

The project is already a success. On the grounds are a flower and a vegetable garden that the children take care of after school as part of a garden club (it has 50 members), and also during the day, a class or a few kids at a time.

Rebekka says she has worked with 300 students in all this year, planting seeds, cultivating the crops, harvesting them. Many have had their first snap pea or cherry tomato there, or touched a worm or watched a bee pollinate a plant for the first time. Rebekka, who also works as a paraprofessional and substitute in the school and knows the kids well, says even the more challenging students, "They are different kids when they are out there in the garden."

Not content to just grow flowers and vegetables, Rebekka and the students have established a rain garden to restore a wetland, which has attracted wildlife such as mallard ducks. They have planted trees with the aim of creating a fruit orchard. Rebekka also wants to compost food waste from the school cafeteria, create an outdoor classroom, and start a CSA (Community-Supported Agriculture) farm for the families and neighbors of Zoller.



The woman has a vision ---- she thinks in terms of whole ecosystems --- but also the skills, common sense and commitment to turn it into reality. The kids at Zoller are lucky to have her, and the school district is also lucky; it would do well to use her and Zoller as a model for urban agriculture at other schools. In fact, with climate change and the number of small farms dwindling as young people move off the family farm, many experts see a big opportunity, and need, for urban agriculture.

Rebekka has gotten some small grants for her projects, but she also needs small donations, partners and volunteer help. She has extended an open invitation for ECOS members to get involved, as some did during last year's Plant a Seed Day. She says they could work with kids in the garden, or come and teach a lesson on a subject they know about, whether it's botany, bees, soil, solar energy, composting, or something else.

An ECOS board member Janet Hollocher, who attended the talk and wrote a Facebook post about it, says, "Gardens offer the chance to learn from nature, learn by doing, add to food variety and nutrition, and to strengthen understanding of the curriculum by experience in a growing outdoor classroom."

If you are interested in working with Rebekka and the kids at Zoller, contact ECOS at [info@ecosny.org](mailto:info@ecosny.org)  
Or contact her directly at [rebeccakhenriksen54@gmail.com](mailto:rebeccakhenriksen54@gmail.com)

## Partner Events

### **Pine Bush Discovery Center, 195 New Karner Rd, Albany, NY**

**Fee:** Free! Reservations required for all attendees (regardless of age). Children under 18 must be accompanied by an adult. Make reservations by calling 518-456-0655.

#### **Groggy Groundhogs, Saturday, February 1, 2020, 11:00am–12:00pm. Suitable for ages 6-10.**

Will Punxsutawney Phil see his shadow when he wakes up on February 2nd? Join us for a short talk and walk, to learn more about these common mammals. We will also discuss the origins of Groundhog Day and make our own predictions about how long winter will last. We plan to walk approximately one mile.

#### **Winter's Eve Nature Journaling, Wednesday February 5, 2020, 6:00pm–8:00pm. Suitable for teens and adults**

The cold weather and short days of winter mean many of us spend less time enjoying and connecting with nature. During this indoor, evening program we will spend time appreciating photographs of the Pine Bush Preserve while we exercise our creativity through nature journaling.

#### **Terrific Turtles, Sunday February 9, 2020, 1:00pm–2:00pm ; Saturday February 29, 2020, 11:00am–12:00pm. Suitable for all ages**

Have you ever seen a turtle in the Pine Bush? In this program, we will learn what types of turtles live in the Pine Bush, where they live, and how they survive. The program will be indoors, and participants will see and learn about the live turtles that live in the Discovery Center.

#### **Deep Freeze, Saturday February 15, 2020, 11:00am–12:30pm. Suitable for ages 6-10, tweens, teens and adults**

Amphibians and reptiles have unique ways to survive through the winter weather. Join us for this program and learn why we call it “deep freeze”. We plan to hike approximately one mile. In case of snow, we will provide snowshoes.

#### **Mid-Winter Recess Nature Journaling, Monday February 17, 2020, 10:00am–3:00pm. Suitable for all ages**

Use the Albany Pine Bush as inspiration to make your own journal. We will have a variety of nature journaling activities set up for you to explore. Materials will be provided. Sign up for one or more 30 minute time slots between 10am and 3pm.

#### **Mid-Winter Recess Nature Journaling, Tuesday February 18, 2020, 10:00am–3:00pm; Wednesday February 19, 2020, 10:00am–3:00pm; Thursday February 20, 2020, 10:00am–3:00pm. Suitable for all ages.**

We will have a variety of nature journaling activities set up for you to explore inside at your own pace as well as suggestions for self-guided journaling along the trail. Materials will be provided. Sign up for one or more 30 minute time slots between 10am and 3pm.

#### **Winter's Eve Nature Journaling: Focus on Sketching, Wednesday February 19, 2020, 6:00pm–8:00pm Suitable for teens and adults**

During this indoor, evening program we will view photographs of the Pine Bush Preserve while we exercise our creativity through nature journaling. In this program, we will focus on practicing nature sketching.

#### **Science Lecture Series: An introduction to the Joint NYSDEC-Cornell Wildlife Health Program with Emphasis on Chronic Wasting Disease Epidemiology, Thursday February 20, 2020, Gather and refreshments at 6:30pm; Lecture 7:00- 8:30pm. Suitable for adults**

Kevin Hynes has been with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Wildlife Health Unit for 25 years. He was involved in documenting early rabies expansion in NY wildlife, West Nile Virus identification and surveillance, and Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) response and surveillance. Kevin's lecture this evening will provide an overview of the Wildlife Health Program structure and case flow in NY and discuss CWD, the disease that is demanding much of the unit's attention and resources.

#### **Movie Day: Chasing Ice, Friday February 21, 2020, 1:00pm–2:30pm. Suitable for tweens, teens and adults**

Join us for an afternoon showing of *Chasing Ice*, a film that captures a multi-year record of the earth's changing glaciers and the journey of the man behind the camera. “*Chasing Ice* is the story of one man's mission to change the tide of history by gathering undeniable evidence of our changing planet.” (Roco Films)

#### **Discover the Pine Bush, Sunday February 23, 2020, 1:00pm–2:30pm. Suitable for all ages**

An extraordinary journey into the Albany Pine Bush—a globally rare, nationally significant and locally distinct inland pine barrens. Our experts will guide you through this 0.9-mile hike over rolling sand dunes where you will discover Pine Bush natural history, and observe seasonal surprises and transformations.



**SKI AND SNOWSHOE OUTINGS**  
Tuesdays through February 28th  
Check for location on facebook  
or call 518-370-4125  
after 3 PM Monday

**Vischer's Ferry—1/7**  
—Will Seyse

Top left: Shale formed from underwater deposits and forced up 90 degrees by earthquakes.

Bottom left: Viewing ducks, geese and a bald eagle



**Woodcock Preserve—1/14**  
—Roy Keats

Top right: Tree huggers embrace the largest oak in the preserve.

Bottom right: Participants saw a little round pond and a heron rookery.



PLEASE GIVE THIS MEMBERSHIP FORM TO A FRIEND OR NEIGHBOR

**ECOS Membership**

**ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse**

Please check your membership contribution level.

\_\_\_ \$40 Individual

\_\_\_ \$75 Donor/Organization

\_\_\_ \$150 Sustainer

\_\_\_ \$50 Family

\_\_\_ \$100 Supporter

\_\_\_ \$250 Benefactor

\_\_\_ \$500 Patron

Please make your check payable to ECOS.

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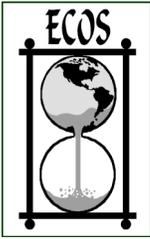
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\_\_\_ I would like to be a volunteer. Please send me more information.



**ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse**  
**P.O. Box 9118**  
**Niskayuna, NY 12309**

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**Rexford, NY**

ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse is located in the Niskayuna Community Center, 2682 Aqueduct Rd. Niskayuna, NY.

**DATES AND EVENTS TO REMEMBER 2020**

**Feb 4, 11, 18— Ski and Snowshoe Outings**

**Feb 19— The last highly successful World Around Us Talk Series on the Mohawk River and Native Americans**

**March 5— Restoring the Rivers—two short films and discussion about Riverkeeper’s work on the Hudson and Mohawk rivers**

**March 11— Annual Meeting**

**March 26— Annual Dinner**

**April 7, 14, 19, 21, 28— Morning Flower Walks**

**April 19, 26— Seven Preserve Challenge Guided Walks**

**May 3, 10, 17, 24, 31— Seven Preserve Challenge Guided Walks**

**May 5, 12, 19, 26— Morning Flower Walks**

**May TBD—Watch for a “No Octane Boat and Bike Sale”**



**Seven Preserve Challenge**

ECOS is conducting guided walks of the seven preserves beginning Sunday, April 19, 2020. Or, you can complete the challenge on your own and at your own pace. Forms are available on our web site: [www.ecosny.org](http://www.ecosny.org) or by calling the office at 518-370-4125. Upon submission of the form, you will receive a patch suitable for affixing to a jacket or other garment.

*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.*