



ECOS NEWS

ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse



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.

Celebrating Our 49th Year in Environmental Education

Volume XLIX

Number 5

August/September 2021



Save the Date

Thursday, October 21, 2021

Rachel Carson Celebration

Turf Tavern, 40 Mohawk Ave, Scotia

Our first in-person dinner in a year!

See insert for more information and reservation form

Infrastructure Talks

—*Matt Tate*

This summer we are happy to share a new discussion series with our members called “Infrastructure Talks.” These talks introduce local environmental infrastructure and projects through a brief presentation followed by a walk/bike ride. The first of these presentations took place on Friday, June 25 at 6 pm at Blatnick Park and was led by ECOS student intern Matthew Tate. This talk discussed the green candy cane-shaped methane-release pipes dotting the hill of the park covering what once was a landfill. Another feature of the presentation was the delicate balance that must be kept between maintaining the structure of the gas-containing foundation of the old landfill by mowing the grass every so often, and preserving the grass as wildlife habitat for native bird species, including the imperiled bobolink. It is important that the Town take appropriate care of both the health of its citizens and the species that make Niskayuna their home.



Top left: learning about the landfill. Top right: bobolink.
Bottom right: selective mowing

The next talk was Friday, July 23 at 5 pm at the Schenectady County Composting and Recycling Center led by manager Nick Klemczak. The next talk will be the topic of Niskayuna’s developing Water Resources Recovery Project. It is scheduled for August 13th at 6 pm, location TBD.

ECOS NEWS

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New Family Programs Planned for Fall

Due to a generous grant from the Stewarts Foundation, ECOS is introducing a new program this fall "Connecting Children to Nature". This program is for children ages 6-12 (with children under 10 accompanied by a caregiver), and will be led by Rebekka Henriksen. It will be held in four sessions, two this Fall and two in the Spring. The first sessions will run on Saturday September 18th and Saturday October 16th, from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm in an area park or preserve (location TBA). Each gathering will feature a hike where we look for and explore native plants, insects and animals, a nature-based craft/activity, and outdoor play. More information to come in September...be on the lookout!

BIKES AND BOATS!

The No Octane Bike and Boat Sale on Saturday the 17th of July was a big success in spite of occasional downpours, thanks to the work of a number of members. Thanks also to all those who donated boats or bikes for the sale.

Major credit goes to Josh Bennett, our Outreach VP, who organized the event. Dozens of bikes are now out of basements and garages and ready to be ridden thanks to his efforts picking them up and often repairing them.

Will Seyse and Steve Jones did yeomen duty transporting boats as well as helping at the sale. Mike Howard, Sarah Celik, Penny Bennett and Ayla Celik also helped with setting up, selling and taking down. If you missed the sale, and want a bike or a boat, check our website...there might still be some available.

Summer con't

Not only has she coordinated it all, she is also teaching about bees two mornings a week for the five weeks of the summer session. Thanks also to our other instructors: ECOS members Steve Jones, Ed Kautz, Arden Rausch Darwin Roosa, and to Matt Tate, our summer intern. And many thanks to the other ECOS members who are coming as they can, to help the instructors.

ECOS PRESENTS ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS IN THE SCHENECTADY SUMMER SCHOOL in CENTRAL PARK

The Summer Program at Central Park is going well as of this writing (only a week into it at this point). Six different topics are being presented on Tuesdays and Thursdays twice each day. Approximately eighty, city third and fourth graders, are



being introduced to environmental concepts each session using fun, hands-on activities. Activities include: Gardening, Fun with pH, Nature Scavenger Hunt, Honey Bees Up Close, Stream Study, and Animal Migration.

The program is volunteer intensive and requires a great deal of coordination with the City School District to make it work. This year, because of the Covid shut-down and the continued need for precaution, it has been especially challenging. Cindy Elsenbeck, our Program VP, deserves a huge amount of credit for persevering and managing to make it happen.

con't



PRESIDENT'S PIECE

—*Ruth Bonn*

We, in North America, have just experienced the hottest June on record...hotter by 2 degrees Fahrenheit than the 1991-2020 average. California and the West are in a historic drought, with accompanying intense forest fires. According to climate scientists, still hotter and drier conditions are ahead before a peak is reached...even if atmospheric CO2 is reduced. The recent heat wave in the Pacific Northwest was, according to researchers, virtually impossible without climate change. In New York State, climate change effects are less dramatic. The state has seen a temperature increase of over 2 degrees since 1970; spring arrives about a week earlier than in the 1950's. Precipitation in has increased 10% since the late 1800's. Precipitation from heavy storms has gone up 70% since 1978. On July 8 of this year, New York City subways were flooded due to heavy rain from Tropical Storm Elsa. Exacerbating storm effects in the city is rising sea level. Since 1880 it has risen 8-9 inches; the rate is now 1 inch every 7 to 8 years.

This is not cheerful. A bit of good news is that President Biden, unlike several previous presidents, takes the threat of climate change seriously; he has termed it "an existential threat" and has set a goal of reaching carbon neutrality by 2050. On Earth Day he announced a new target: a 50-52% reduction from 2005 levels in economy-wide net greenhouse gas pollution by 2030. Taking a whole of government approach to climate change, he has made addressing climate change through every sector of the economy a priority. An executive order, "Climate-Related Financial Risk," issued in May, directed government officials to assess and disclose the risks that climate change and climate related disasters pose to federal assets and revenue and sets the stage for the US federal government, including its financial regulatory agencies, to begin to incorporate climate-risk issues into financial regulation, an important step.

Leadership from the White House can make a huge difference, but work at all levels--individual to international--is also needed. There are actions that we, as individuals, can take to make a difference to the climate. Reducing fossil fuel use is the most important one...(maybe an electric car?)

We can also plant trees! We can encourage reforestation of our towns and cities. Trees lower air temperature in city neighborhoods by up to 10 degrees. Trees have been called "the most effective strategy...to guard against heat in cities." They also reduce air pollution, absorb CO2, reduce the demand for air conditioning (and electricity), absorb storm water runoff and affect people's feeling of well-being. In spite of trees being "the only infrastructure that add value over time," urban forests are declining.

**"What Technology Could Reduce Heat Deaths? Trees;" New York Times. 07/02/2021*

We can reduce our lawn size by planting trees and shrubs. We can encourage large organizations and institutions to do the same. There is a heavy carbon cost associated with lawn maintenance from lawn equipment and synthetic fertilizers. Gas powered lawn mowers produce 5% of total air pollution in the U.S. according to an EPA study. Fertilizer produces nitrous oxide, a potent greenhouse gas.

We can reduce food waste. Thirty percent of the food produced on farms is wasted. It never leaves the farm, is lost or spoiled in distribution, or is thrown away in restaurants, hospitals, schools, grocery stores, or in home kitchens. Kudos to the Hannaford grocery chain which announced it has reached its goal of zero waste to landfills in 2020. Rotting food in landfills produces methane, a more potent greenhouse gas than CO2. Hannaford's excess food was diverted for hunger relief, to farms for livestock food and to Agri-cycle for conversion into energy.

The ECOS logo, the hour glass, reminds us that time is running out... But small steps add up. What small steps can you take?

We Welcome Newest Members

Elizabeth Stehl

Kathleen Toucher

Joyce Foster

Marjorie Hyland

Recycling with Terracycle

—Gillian Scott

One of my main methods for dealing with plastic pollution has been to recycle more. For several years, I've been sending hard-to-recycle items to Terracycle. The company works with corporations, who sponsor "brigades." Colgate, for instance, sponsors a brigade that recycles used toothbrushes, empty toothpaste tubes and other oral care items. Recyclers join a brigade, collect items, then request a free mailing label once they've filled a box. Many brigades award points to collectors who sent in shipments of a certain weight, and points can be redeemed for donations to non-profit organizations. I'm currently collecting to benefit CREATE Community Studios, a local organization promoting art-making.

The list of items Terracycle will take is long — and growing. Anyone can create an account and sign up for a brigade. Some brigades have long waiting lists, but savvy recyclers can join a Facebook group, such as TerraCycle Collection Community, and request a mailing label to any brigade. Usually at least one Facebook group member will be in the brigade that takes the items you're looking to recycle. It also helps (a lot!) to work with others in the community to collect items together, instead of working alone. According to my Terracycle account summary, over the years, community members and I have removed more than 18,000 items from the waste stream and raised about \$150 for CREATE. The list of items I collect is too long to print here, but includes:

- Cosmetics packaging
- Skin care packaging (such as moisturizer tubes and lip balms)
- Oral care products
- Swiffer products
- Rubbermaid (and similar) glass and plastic food containers

If you're interested in recycling through our Terracycle brigades, contact me at gvscott07@verizon.net and I'll send you a more complete list of eligible items. You can learn more about Terracycle at www.terracycle.com.

Leader's Favorites

Family-friendly Walks

During Covid, we have all come to really need walks in nature to keep us healthy. Our walk leaders will show you their favorite places in this series of two to three hour walks. Suitable for all ages! Wear sturdy footwear and dress for the weather.

Preregistration is required. Limited to 10 people. Include your phone number in case the walk has to be postponed. Email Andy Kulmatiski – kulmatiski@gmail.com

Sunday, September 12 at 2 pm

Indian Kill Preserve with Steve Jones
Cliff-like dunes and gorges lead to a broad and beautiful creek with numerous wildflowers; some stretches are steep, others a bit muddy.
Hetcheltown Rd., Glenville

Sunday, September 19 at 2 pm

Christman Sanctuary with Rebekka Henriksen
120-acre preserve known for a 30-foot waterfall and plantations of locust, cedar, spruce and pine
3281 Schoharie Turnpike, Delanson

Saturday, September 25 at 10 am

Albany Pine Bush with Andy Kulmatiski
Diverse forest communities, pitch pine-scrub oak barrens, and native prairies adorn rolling sand dunes including the Great Dune.
Great Dune Trailhead #8, Willow Street, Guilderland

Saturday, October 2 at 10 am

Lake Bonita Leader TBA
Lake Bonita is a 50 acre reservoir with extensive marshes and mature forest.
Wilton Mt. Road, Wilton

Saturday, October 9 at 10 am

Hennig Preserve with Andy Kulmatiski
Preserve contains eskers and lush hemlocks with views of beaver meadows, creeks, and ponds.
Centerline Road, Town of Providence

Favorites continued p.5

Lymantria Dispar, AKA Gypsy Moth

—Will Seyse

From the DEC web site we quote: “The gypsy moth (*Lymantria dispar*) is a non-native insect from France. In New York, gypsy moth caterpillars are known to feed on the leaves of a large variety of trees such as oak, maple, apple, crabapple, hickory, basswood, aspen, willow, birch, pine, spruce, hemlock, and more. Oak is their preferred species.”

Gypsy moth populations rise and fall in cycles, varying over the years from very few and not noticeable (most years) to large numbers and very noticeable leaf damage and tree defoliation. Gypsy moths have "naturalized" in our forest communities and so they will always be around. In New York, we tend to see an outbreak, or large spike in population numbers, every 10-15 years. These outbreaks are usually ended by natural causes such as disease and predators.

Gypsy moths were accidentally introduced in 1869 when they were brought to the U.S. in the hope that they could breed with silkworms to create a hardier variety of silkworm and develop a silk industry in the US. Even though they failed as a textile producer, some of the gypsy moths escaped and established their first U.S. population in Medford, Massachusetts.”

Portions of Schenectady and Saratoga Counties have been hit very hard this year from the caterpillar destroying the leaf canopy of some of our popular hiking trails. The Plotterkill and Sanders Preserve in particular have suffered, and will likely continue to suffer for several years.



Caterpillar



Male

The life cycle is fairly brief. The caterpillar becomes a pupa, in a few days time a moth appears.....the white moth is the female, the brown moth the male, and after mating the female deposits an egg mass that is light yellow or tan in color. It contains 400 to 500 hundred eggs that will hatch the following spring after the trees have returned to full foliage. The male moth can actually fly, while the female cannot.



Female

There appears little one can do to fight this problem in our forests. An individual homeowner can take some efforts to protect some trees if they are vigilant and persistent throughout the life cycle. Caterpillars, pupa, moths, and egg casings can easily be killed with a broom, or by stepping on them.

Egg casings can be scraped with a putty knife, preferably into a soapy water solution. There are of course chemical sprays and other approaches to interrupt the life cycle. Some tree wraps may prevent the caterpillars from climbing the tree, but no effort will completely eliminate this pest. Other states and different regions have been hard hit in the past. We happen to be the unlucky area that will suffer this year, and we may see the death of large stands of forest if the trees are completely de-leaved for two to three years in a row.

“Gypsy Moths” will be renamed by the Entomological Society to stop using an ethnic slur. For now their name is “*Lymantria dispar*.”

Favorites, continued from p.4

Saturday, October 16 at 10 am

Moreau State Park Leader TBA

The park contains a lake amid hardwood forests, pine stands, and rocky ridges. Be aware this walk has almost 900 feet of elevation gain.

Main Entrance Gate Parking Lot,
605 Old Saratoga Road, Gansevoort

Saturday, October 23 at 10 am

Wolf Creek Falls Preserve with Darwin Roosa

The preserve contains streams and waterfalls, a wetland, and numerous old stone walls.

Between 774 and 816 on the north side of Bozenkill Road; the parking lot is between them on the south side of the road. Town of Knox, 3 miles from Altamont

Tuesday Morning Nature Walks

ECOS Fall Walks 2021

—Steve Jones

Our Tuesday spring walks were booked solid. Again we will keep the number of participants to around 10 people, with **pre-registration necessary**; email doniphin.jones@gmail.com (not the ECOS office email) in order to register. Be sure to include your telephone number, so we can notify you of any cancellation or change. Those without computers may register by calling 518-381-1826 (not the ECOS office); texting is not available. Meeting times at the trailhead are 9:30 a.m., and walks usually last around 2 hours.

SEPT. 7 Champlain Canal Park at Lock 4.

Leader: Jackie Donnelly. Canal Park offers wooded trails along both the Hudson and Hoosic rivers, home to many interesting and even rare plants. The birding here is also great. (Eagles! Ospreys!) Directions: Take Rt. 146 north (east) to Mechanicville, veering right to follow N. Main St. (Rt. 4) north along the Hudson to Stillwater. Turn right onto Stillwater Bridge Rd. Follow the park's signs east across the bridge to the entrance road leading south to the lock.

SEPT. 14 Vischers Ferry Preserve. Leader: Elizabeth Collins. An easy walk with mostly level terrain and autumn foliage and waterfowl along the old canals. Many vines and shrubs will have their autumn fruit forming. Directions: Following Balltown Rd. over Rexford Bridge, turn east at Stewarts onto Riverview Rd.; bear right at the firehouse in Vischers Ferry and continue on Riverview Rd. until you see the preserve sign at the junction with Van Vranken Rd., with parking near the Whipple Bridge.

SEPT. 21 Pine Hollow Arboretum. Leader: Sigrin Newell. Explore various plant regions from Europe to Asia to America in a mix of woods, meadows, and ponds right here in Delmar. Easy hiking, mostly level, though it might be muddy in wet periods. Directions: Take Rt. 890 east to the NY Thruway; get off at exit 24 and proceed on Rt. 90, taking exit 4 to Rt. 85. Continue on Rt. 85 until the left turn onto Maple Ave. The arboretum is on the left.

taking exit 4 to Rt. 85. Continue on Rt. 85 until the left turn onto Maple Ave. The arboretum is on the left.

SEPT. 28 Strawberry Fields. Leader: Nancy Slack. Strawberry Fields is a wonderful preserve with fringed gentians, lobelias, and a large variety of asters and goldenrods as well as ponds for water birds. Directions: From Scotia go west on Rt. 5 about 8 miles past the western end of Rt. 890, turn right onto Cranes Hollow Rd. and continue 0.7 miles, looking for a sign on right: "LEON 240 Private Road." Turn right and go up the very steep driveway to reach the parking area on the left near the house.

OCT. 5 Nature Center Trails at Thacher Park.

Leader: Nancy Engel. Enjoy fall foliage and late blooming wildflowers on trails through fields and forest. We'll also visit the native plant gardens at the Nature Center and the shore of Thompson's Lake. Directions: From the west drive through Altamont on Rt. 146 but do not follow it as it turns right onto Maple; instead keep to Main St. (Rt. 156) and continue about 2 miles up-hill to turn left onto Old Stage Rd., which joins Thompson's Lake Rd. (Rt. 157). From this take the left onto Ketcham Rd. (Rt. 256) and the next right onto Nature Center Way; we'll meet in the parking lot on the right.

OCT. 12 Mohawk State Park. Leader: Ed Kautz. A beautiful hardwood and hemlock forest where the trails are hilly; we'll follow the edge of a steep ravine formed by a stream that drains from Blatnick Park into the Mohawk. Directions: From the junction of Balltown Rd. and River Rd., drive east on River Rd. for 2.6 miles to Whitmeyer Dr. Turn left (north) on Whitmeyer Dr. and follow it to the gate at the end. We'll meet at the small parking lot on your right.

Jackie has described her site in a blog at <https://saratogawoodswaters.blogspot.com/2020/09/rare-plants-along-hudson-and-hoosic.html>. You can go on the web to learn more about the other parks or for alternative directions. Elizabeth also recommends that you google the website for Meadowbrook Preserve in Glens Falls, which was almost another one of our walks.

Volunteers are needed for the 4H after school program at the Bornt Library on State St. Mondays at 6 pm. The dates for fall are Sept. 13 & 27, Oct. 11 & 25, Nov. 8 & 22, and Dec. 13. No experience required! If you're interested please contact Steve Jones at doniphin.jones@gmail.com or 518-381-1826.

2021 CALENDAR

August

Summer program continues
August 13, 6 pm, Niskayuna’s Developing Water Resources Recovery Project. Location TBD

September

Sept 7: Champlain Canal Park at Lock 4 walk, 9:30 am
Sept 12: Indian Kill Preserve walk, 2 pm
Sept 14: Vischers Ferry Preserve walk, 9:30 am
Sept 18: Connecting Children to Nature, 10 am
Sept 19: Christman Sanctuary walk, 2 pm
Location TBD
Sept 21: Pine Hollow Arboretum walk, 9:30 am

September continued

Sept 25: Albany Pine Bush walk, 10 am
Sept 28: Strawberry Fieldswalk, 9:30 am

October

Oct 2: Lake Bonita walk, 10 am
Oct 5: Thacher Park Nature Trail walk, 9:30 am
Oct 9: Hennig Preserve walk, 10 am
Oct 12: Mohawk State Park walk, 9:30 am
Oct 16: Moreau State Park walk, 10 am
Oct. 16: Connecting Children to Nature, 10 am
Location TBD
Oct 23: Wolf Creek Falls Preserve walk, 10 am
Oct 21: Rachel Carson Celebration

April was membership month. If you have not renewed your membership we encourage you to do so by using the form below.



MEMBERSHIP FORM

**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
- \$10 Student \$500 Patron

Please make your check payable to ECOS.

Name _____ Phone _____

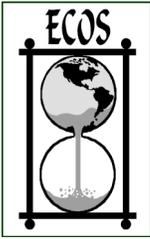
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As a current GE employee my contribution is eligible for GE Foundation Matching Funds. I have registered with GE for the matching gift by computer at www.gefoundation.com. If you do not have computer access, call customer service at 1-800-305-0669.

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

Oh Deer!

—Maureen Gebert

City dwellers have minimal contact with wildlife. There are squirrels, chipmunks, the mice who winter in the basement and, in our case, the resident groundhog who tends the garden.



The Gardener



Mulberry branches

Checking on the groundhog's daily mischief, there was a rustle in the low hanging mulberry branches. I looked up just as a deer was leaping over the

fence. Initially I was very worried about a deer in the city but after a week it didn't seem all that important ... until the deer appeared again! I reached out to Ed Kautz, who teaches a class in animal migration at the ECOS Summer Program. The following was his response.

Response

—J. Ed Kautz

Deer are present in lots of suburban/urban places in the Capital District. In Schenectady, I've seen them or their sign in Vale cemetery/park, Central Park, Schenectady Municipal Golf Course, etc. Deer can easily jump over most fences, and the back yards in many neighborhoods are continuous open space.



The 4 foot high fence

The stream that runs from Stratford Rd through Jackson Garden also provides a corridor to move into a large area. The stream gives access to large properties in the GE Plot, including Steinmetz Memorial Park. If your home is in that area it is possible deer are there too. Is there lots of open space among the houses in your neighborhood? Hopefully the deer don't get abundant enough to become pests.

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.