



# 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

June/July 2021

### **ECOS WALKS & HIKES BACK IN BUSINESS**

—Steve Jones

After a year's absence our Tuesday morning spring walks have returned, with limited registration but much enthusiasm. Due to Covid we have officially limited participation to those who pre-registered, for a total of around 10 people per walk, although each of the first two walks incorporated one or two extras who showed up on site. Though not a prerequisite, all participants have been fully vaccinated, which has helped to make the atmosphere more relaxed and ECOS-familial.



Inaugurating the new schedule was a walk near Lock 7 in Mohawk River State Park on April 27, led by Board member Ed Kautz. It was followed two weeks later by a walk in Joralemon Memorial Park near Ravena, led by Ruth Brooks. Both Ed and Ruth have contributed self-guided walks for our website. The other walks are Reist Sanctuary on May 18 (led by Nancy Slack and Kathie Armstrong), Limestone Rise on May 25 (Ed Kautz again), and Hop Field Trail at Thacher Park on June 1 (Nancy Engel).

Right on the heels will be the Seven Preserve Challenge Preserve walks, also on Tuesday mornings. Judging by comments so far, people are really delighted for these opportunities.



Dutch Breeches

Red Trillium



### **Seven Preserve Challenge 2021**

#### **Family-friendly Walks**

Explore seven beautiful local nature preserves with ECOS guides. Once you've visited all seven preserves, with ECOS or on your own, complete the Seven Preserve Challenge form and receive your free patch.

All walks will be on **Tuesdays at 9:30 a.m.** and will last 60 to 90 minutes. They're suitable for all ages! Wear sturdy footwear and dress for the weather. Covid protocols will be followed – 10 participants, social distancing and masks. Pre-registration is required. Include your phone number in case the walk has to be postponed. Email Andy Kulmatiski at [kulmatiski@gmail.com](mailto:kulmatiski@gmail.com)

**June 8**—Indian Kill Preserve with Steve Jones  
Hetcheltown Rd., Glenville (just north of Glenridge Rd.)

**June 15**—Bozen Kill Preserve with Darwin Roosa  
Westfall Rd., Altamont (.2 miles north of Bozenkill Rd.)

**June 22**—Lisha Kill Preserve with Andy Kulmatiski  
2518 Rosendale Rd., Niskayuna

**June 29**—Christman Sanctuary with Ed Kautz  
3281 Schoharie Turnpike Delanson

**July 6**—Plotter Kill Preserve with Will Seyse  
Mariaville Rd., Rotterdam (2.3 miles west of Putnam Rd.)

**July 13**—Sanders Preserve with Will Seyse  
Sanders Rd. (Between Gower and Washout rds.)

**July 20**—Sch'dy County Forest with Andy Kulmatiski  
Lake Rd., Delanson (2.9 miles south of Mariaville Rd.)

**ECOS NEWS**

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**BITS AND PIECES**

**ECOS Speaker Series: Thursday, June 17 at 7p.m. by Zoom** (last talk of the series)

Sarah Walsh, Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy's Conservation Director will talk about "**The Mohawk Watershed: A Pathway from the Catskills to the Adirondacks.**" This is the title of an \$88,744 grant MHLC and the Nature Conservancy have been awarded. The grant is directed toward identifying "pinch points" across the larger landscape of Schenectady County and Montgomery County and building the case for a conservation vision. To learn more about pinch points and just how MHLC and TNC hope to address these areas, join us on June 17<sup>th</sup>.

**We have a summer intern!**

From Matt: "Hello! My name is Matthew Tate and I am a senior at Boston University majoring in Environmental Analysis and Policy. I am from Niskayuna and I am very excited to be volunteering with ECOS this summer! In my free time, I enjoy going on runs, spending time with family and gardening."

Matt will be taking the lead on organizing several bike trips or walks that will feature local environmental infrastructure such as water treatment plants or solar installations, as well as assisting with other programs. Specifics about the infrastructure outings will be posted on the website and sent by MailChimp.

**The Stewart's Foundation has awarded ECOS a \$1,000 grant!**

The grant will enable us to present a series of family programs entitled "Connecting Children and Nature." More about these in the August Newsletter.

**ECOS and the Reist Preserve**

ECOS is currently working with the Hudson Mohawk Bird Club, owner of the Reist Preserve, on developing plans and objectives for the management of the Reist Preserve.

ECOS has volunteered to assist with maintenance and clean-up work in the preserve. A walk-through took place with key people at the end of May.

**NO-OCTANE BOAT AND BIKE SALE**

Got an old canoe gathering dust in your garage? Or a bike that your kids have outgrown? Or perhaps you're looking to buy a used kayak.



The ECOS No-Octane Boat and Bike sale returns on Saturday, July 17, 2021. The sale will be held on the grounds adjacent to the Niskayuna Community Center, 9:00 am to 3:00 pm.

We're looking for items to donate. Please ensure they're in working order. The sale is a fundraiser for ECOS, so 50% of the proceeds go to ECOS. Email [info@ecosny.org](mailto:info@ecosny.org) with subject line no-octane to donate an item. If possible, please provide a photo to post on the website, and indicate whether you can transport the item to the Niskayuna Community Center on Friday, July 16. See the ECOS website ([ecosny.org](http://ecosny.org)) for more information.

We're also looking for volunteers to transport items and help run the sale.

## PRESIDENT'S PIECE

—*Ruth Bonn*

Spring is here! The woods are sprinkled with ephemeral spring flowers. Yards are punctuated with the bright yellows and reds of spring bulbs. It's past time to get outside to work in my gardens!

This year, inspired by Cindy Elsenbeck's bee talk at the Annual Dinner, I've decided to focus on adding pollinator-friendly plants to my yard. I already am (almost) organic, and I inherited a lot of native plants when I bought my house, but I've never systematically assessed the yard from a pollinator's point of view. Are there flowers for nectar and pollen? Will there be food all season? Are there places to rest and to nest?

Native bee populations are in decline due to the loss of habitat, the resulting loss of diverse pollen and nectar sources for food, pesticide use (neonicotinoids, in particular), weather extremes resulting from climate change, and disease. Of the seven types of bumblebee found in New York, two are seriously threatened. The American bumblebee has seen a 99 percent decline in New York in the last 20 years, and the Rusty Patched bumblebee a 50 percent decline since 1974.

What can we do? Improved and expanded habitat is essential. Suburban yards can be made more bee friendly by reducing lawns and increasing plant variety. Agriculture practices can be modified to increase bee habitat. Pesticides like neonicotinoids must be avoided. Leaf litter, a prime denning spot for insects can be left in many places until spring. Delaying mowing in the spring allows lawn and field flowers to bloom and provide nourishment for bees. I plan to update my flower beds with bees' needs in mind.

Most of the 4000 or so bee species in the U.S. are solitary. Only honeybees and bumblebees are social. Unlike honeybees, bumblebee colonies do not overwinter. Bumblebees develop small colonies in a hollow log, a hole in the ground, under rocks, or in an abandoned bird nest, but only a fertilized queen will survive the winter.



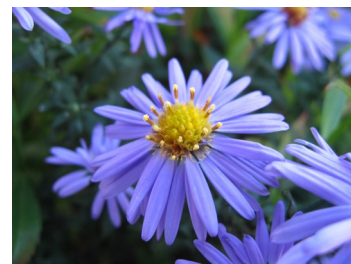
She spends the winter in a shallow hole in the ground or under leaf litter, and in early spring emerges to start a new colony.

Bumblebees, of which there are 49 species in the U.S., are important pollinators. Able to fly in cooler temperatures and lower light levels than many other bees, they emerge earlier in spring and fly later into fall. They also perform a behavior called "buzz pollination," in which the bee grabs the flower in her jaws and vibrates her wing muscles to dislodge pollen from the flower. Many plants, including a number of crops like tomatoes, peppers and eggplant benefit from buzz pollination. Since I grow all three, bumblebees are very welcome in my garden!

The solitary Mason bees are especially effective pollinators of fruit trees and berries. Their method of nest building gave rise to their name. After mating, the female bee looks for a hollow stem or other tube-shaped hole to lay her eggs in. She creates sections within the tube, first collecting pollen and placing it in the tube, then laying an egg and sectioning it off with mud. She repeats this pollen, egg, mud pattern until the tube is filled (about five to six eggs). A female will lay around 15 to 20 eggs in her lifetime. Mason bee houses can be made or purchased to encourage them to stay near the garden.



Flower beds for bees and other pollinators should provide continuous bloom from March to October. Native flowering plants are ideal if available. Varieties of flowers with open centers allow bees easier access to pollen and nectar than double ones (think single marigolds, zinnias, and dahlias.) In earliest spring, flowers like snowdrops, winter aconite and hellebores provide food. In the fall, native asters and perennial chrysanthemums can be used to continue to provide bee nourishment after frost.



Now, time to get back to planning my bee-friendly garden! I'm looking ahead to a very buzzy summer!



## Refuse Plastic: Finding Alternatives in Everyday Choices

— *Maeve McCullough and Gillian Scott*

Like many of us, we have been trying hard to reduce the amount of plastic we buy and use. But plastic is nearly everywhere and it's easy to get discouraged. Even if we do still have to buy *some* plastic, every item we can replace with a non-plastic alternative is a win. Here are a few of our favorite purchases that moved us away from plastic:

**Shampoo/Conditioner:** Use up the last of your bottled product and move to shampoo bars. There are many options available online and in stores, including *Suds & Co*, *Ethique*, and *Love, Beauty and Planet*, but there are also local options. *Filthy & Company* shampoo bars are made in Burnt Hills, for example. They're available at The Schenectady Trading Company. If you are tied to your liquid shampoo and conditioner, try Plaine Products, a refillable option, or fill up a container at Honest Weight Food Co-op.

**Laundry detergent:** Filthy & Company also makes a powder detergent (sold in a cardboard container) along with biokleen sold at Honest Weight Food Co-op. These often come packaged in a plastic bag within the cardboard container though. You also might want to try Tru Earth laundry strips, a completely plastic-free alternative and a rival to the effectiveness of Tide! Pro-tip: Cut or rip strips in half (or smaller) depending on the size of the load.

**Hand/Dish Soap:** There are several alternatives to buying soap in plastic bottles. Switch to bar soap or refill glass jars with soap at Honest Weight Food Co-op. They even sell a foaming hand pump mason jar attachment if you don't want to make your own! You can also make your own soap with castile soap, distilled water, and essential oils if desired. However, castile soap often comes in a plastic bottle.

**Deodorant:** You don't have to go far to find deodorant that's not in plastic packaging - it's right in with the other deodorants at Target! Companies like Raw Sugar, Native and even Old Spice and Secret now offer deodorants in cardboard tubes. For a budget friendly option, you can make your own! Save your plastic deodorant tube for easy application or simply a glass jar to store your deodorant. Keep it in the fridge to prevent it from turning to liquid in the summer

DIY Deodorant:

1/3 cup coconut oil (melted/liquid)  
1/4 cup baking soda  
1/4 cup cornstarch  
6 to 10 drops of essential oils, if desired  
Mix well and let sit to solidify

**Food Storage:** Relying on those trusty plastic tupperware containers to store leftovers are great, but next time you need to invest in containers we recommend choosing a glass option. Avoid plastic sandwich bags by investing in the unbeatable Stasher Bags available online and in stores at Honest Weight Food Co-op and Whole Foods. You will be kinder to the earth and your wallet! Avoid plastic wrap by choosing to store food in containers, silicone bags, or simply covering with a towel or another plate.

**Miscellaneous:** For anything not on this list (trash bags, toothbrush, toothpaste, razors, etc.) check out online stores like Zero Waste Store and The Package Free Shop with alternatives for just about everything you use! You can also follow and join Zero Waste Capital District to follow local efforts to reduce plastic and overall waste.

Look for information on **Terracycle** plastics recycling, and how you can participate, in the next Newsletter.

## Drive as if your kids live here

—*Art Clayman*

The Safe Streets Schenectady initiative is gaining momentum. Spearheaded by Cycle Schenectady and Schenectady United Neighborhoods (SUN), which is an umbrella group of neighborhood associations, it has gained the support of several local community organizations including ECOS, Proctors and Hamilton Hill Arts Center, as well as government agencies.

Earlier this year, the Schenectady City Council passed a resolution endorsing the Safe Streets Coalition's call for a 25 mph neighborhood speed limit. And, the coalition has been successful in working with the Schenectady Police Department to target speeding and dangerous driving in several problem areas in the city.

But more needs to be done. Too many busy intersections in the city lack painted crosswalks or proper traffic controls to slow cars. The city has virtually no painted bicycle lanes, even as bicycling has become so popular that bike stores are sold out for months to come. And in Central Park, Schenectady's "crown jewel," cars are allowed to zip through with no regard to children or dog walkers.

If you live in the city and are concerned about traffic safety and the lack of modern traffic control facilities, let your elected officials know. Tell them you endorse the Safe Streets initiative, and that you want to see traffic slowed so it's safe to walk and bicycle. While you're at it, tell them you support implementation of the bicycle master plan, which calls for bike lanes, neighborhood greenways, and other traffic-calming measures.

And, whether you live in the city or elsewhere in the county, there is another way to make your voice heard on this matter. The county has recently held some workshops with the idea of taking a coordinated, intermunicipal approach to Complete Streets. A Complete Street is one designed for the use of cyclists and pedestrians, not just cars. In short, it is a Safe Street — one that also promises social, health and environmental benefits. Contact your county elected officials and tell them you are for Complete Streets.

Tom Carey (Schenectady United Neighborhoods President) and  
Art Clayman (Cycle Schenectady President)



—*Cindy Elsenbeck*

The emergence of COVID-19 this past year resulted in several programming challenges for ECOS. However, it was not enough to keep us from providing innovative ways to continue to present programs to our members.

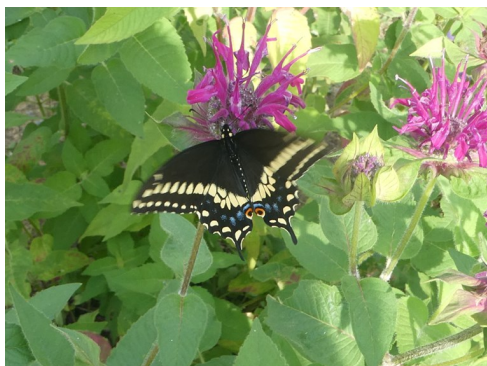
The virtual Speaker Series began October 2020 and provided a series of interesting and thought-provoking presentations. The recordings of all the speakers are available on the website. This includes Matt Lowry, guest speaker at our first-ever virtual Rachel Carson Dinner.

In addition to the Speaker Series and Rachel Carson Dinner, we also provided virtual programming for our annual Holiday Party, where members shared pictures and conversation. Our annual meeting and dinner were also provided virtually and we were able to elect and welcome new board members.

The final talk will be June 17th and feature Sarah Walsh of Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy. She will discuss the new grant the conservancy received and what actions they will be taking to preserve land in Schenectady. The series will not continue through the summer, as we are hopeful to be able to participate in live programming.

If you are interested in the virtual Speaker Series continuing in the Fall, please email us suggestions for speakers, possibly yourself. You can email us at [info@ecosny.org](mailto:info@ecosny.org).

We hope that you enjoyed this alternative programming and we look forward to seeing you soon!



## *Pollinator Family Event*

—Cindy Elsenbeck

ECOS is very excited to partner with Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy and Jeff Leon, Strawberry Fields Nature Preserve, to provide a family event on pollinators. Due to COVID-19 restrictions there will only be 15 people per group, practicing social distancing. There will be two simultaneous groups, so that the event can be open to 30 people.

It will be necessary to register for the event which will take place at Strawberry Fields on July 10th at 10 a.m. Individuals will be divided into two groups. One group will go on a one-mile nature walk with Jeff to observe and discuss pollinators. The other will meet at the picnic tables with Cindy Elsenbeck, ECOS board member, to learn how to make a bee hotel for mason bees, for facts and pictures on native pollinators and, finally, a discussion on the honey bee. There will be a safely sealed observation hive to allow individuals to witness honey bee activity and a portion of their home. The groups will then switch. The entire program will be approximately two hours.

This event will be promoted by MHLC and ECOS. Sign-up information will be available on the ECOS website when it is closer to the date of the event.



## **Schenectady School Summer Program**

—Cindy Elsenbeck

In the past, ECOS has worked with Schenectady City School District to provide presentations for its summer enrichment program. These programs took place in Central Park, where children were bussed in and given a variety of activities in addition to ECOS presentations.

Last year, due to COVID-19, they were unable to have their live program. They did provide virtual programming and ECOS was able to participate minimally.

This year, Schenectady Schools are proposing a live program utilizing various sites in Schenectady. The current plan is for ECOS to provide five different programs, two days a week, twice a day in Central Park. The programs will involve active education such as stream life and animal tracks and other instruction regarding pollinators, to mention a few.



The program will be from July 12th to August 6th. We are looking for members who are willing to volunteer to assist the program leaders. You do not need to volunteer for all four weeks.

This is an opportunity to expose the children of Schenectady to the wonderful world of nature and ecology. If you are interested, please email: [info@ecosny.org](mailto:info@ecosny.org).

## 2021 CALENDAR

### JUNE

**June 1, Hop Field Trail in Thacher Park,  
Nancy Engel, leader**

**June 8, 7 Preserve Challenge in Indian Kill  
Preserve, Steve Jones, leader**

**June 15, 7 Preserve Challenge in Bozen Kill  
Preserve, Darwin Roosa leader**

**June 17, Speaker Series with Sarah Walsh,  
Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy**

**June 22, 7 Preserve Challenge at Lisha Kill  
Preserve, Andy Kulmatiski, leader**

**June 29, 7 Preserve Challenge in Christman  
Sanctuary, Ed Kautz, leader**

### JULY

**July 6, 7 Preserve Challenge in Plotter Kill  
Preserve, Will Seyse leader**

**July 13, 7 Preserve Challenge in Sanders  
Preserve, Will Seyse, leader**

**July 16, No –Octane Boat and Bike Sale load-in**

**July 17, No-Octane Boat and Bike Sale**

**July 20, 7 Preserve Challenge in Schenectady  
County Forest, Andy Kulmatiski, leader**

**Details at [www.ecosny.org](http://www.ecosny.org)**



## MEMBERSHIP FORM

### ECOS Membership

### ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse

Please check your membership contribution level.

<input type="checkbox"/> \$40 Individual	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Donor/Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150 Sustainer
<input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Family	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Supporter	<input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Benefactor
<input type="checkbox"/> \$10 Student		<input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Patron

Please make your check payable to ECOS.

Name  Phone

Address

Email

☐ 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](http://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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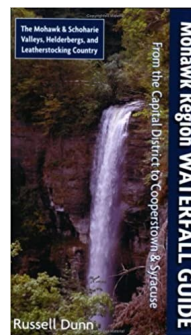
ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse is located in the Niskayuna Community Center, 2682 Aqueduct Rd. Niskayuna, NY.

## *Will Seyse Award*

At the Annual Virtual Dinner held on March 15, the newsletter ladies were honored for their dedication to mailing the ECOS newsletter in a timely manner. Those receiving the award were Flo Bigelow, Margie Litwin, Jo Moore, Arden Rauch, Harlene Smalkin, and Judy Smith.

The gatherings also provided a time to share plans, ideas, and news. On one occasion, they were joined by a gentleman from out of town who accompanied his daughter and grandson to the weekly pre-K gathering. After a short time with the toddlers, he decided to join the mailing party because, "It looks like you're having more fun."

We thank the ladies and hope we will be able to continue the tradition soon.



Albany writer Russell Dunn's *Mohawk Region Waterfall Guide* treats the reader to 79 cool cascades, from the Helderbergs escarpment on the outskirts of Albany and magnificent Cohoes Falls near the confluence of the Mohawk and Hudson rivers, through the storied Mohawk Valley

out to Utica, past the farmlands and historic villages of Schoharie Valley (the breadbasket of the American Revolution), out to Cooperstown and the legendary Leatherstocking Region, and along scenic Route 20 all the way to Syracuse. Dunn's thorough research provides a wealth of historical and anecdotal material, and his detailed directions and maps make locating the falls easy. Illustrated with 70 antique postcards and 20 maps.

*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.*