



# ECOS NEWS

*ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse*



ECOS provides environmental experiences and education for youth and adults to develop enjoyment and understanding of the natural world and foster action to preserve it.

**Celebrating Our 49th Year in Environmental Education**

Volume XLX

Number 1

February/March 2022

## *2022 Annual Meeting*

**Thursday, March 17 at 6 PM via ZOOM**

**Vote on new board members, meet Catherine Gilbert, Executive Director, budget report, followed by a presentation at 7 PM by Lovin' Mama Farm on Intensive No-till Regenerative Farming**

### *Director's Note*



Hello! And Happy New Year. I'm delighted to be joining you as the newly appointed Executive Director of ECOS. By way of introduction, I am a Niskayuna resident and have spent the majority of my professional career working in the

museum field. Trained in education, I have spent my career seeking to excite curiosity and fostering inquisitiveness through hands-on, minds-on learning opportunities. My vision is to encourage students (of all ages) to learn to learn, feeding their curiosity and mentoring their pursuit of individual aspirations.

Most recently I was the Executive Director at the Children's Museum of Science & Technology in Troy. Our purpose there was compelling, to engage little hands in doing real science. Providing children and their caregivers the opportunity to discover the world around them through the lens of science, technology,

engineering, the arts and math; encouraging inquisitiveness while growing self efficacy.

I'm delighted to be joining ECOS as I see a true kinship with my passion for fostering curiosity. If these many, many months of the pandemic have taught me one lesson, one truth which has been reinforced is my great affinity to the outdoors. Be it running, cycling, skiing, rowing, hiking or simply rambling with our pup I am at my best when immersed in the outdoors.

I believe that activating community engagement and support is paramount to putting our mission into action. To that end, I look forward to meeting you and glean your ideas and aspirations for this wonderful organization. As a participatory leader, I encourage creativity, discovery and discussion from board members, staff, stakeholders and friends and truly welcome your perspective.

*Ms. Gilbert has her Masters of Arts in Museum Education from Tufts University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art History from Marist College.*

**ECOS NEWS**

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Catherine Gilbert, Executive Director

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*2021 Annual Appeal*

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*New Board Member*



Lesley Cutting earned a Bachelor’s degree in Anthropology with a minor in Environmental Studies from SUNY New Paltz. She has experience in program coordination, outreach, and education primarily in materials management with Cornell Cooperative Extension, the New York State Association for Reduction, Reuse and Recycling, and the Social Enterprise and Training Center/ YouthBuild Schenectady (as an AmeriCorps

VISTA). Recently, she ran the Electric City Food Co-op’s online marketplace. In her spare time, Lesley is involved in The Climate Reality Project’s Capital Region NY chapter and the Junior League of Albany, but she is most at home spending time with family and friends and hiking, kayaking, and cross-country skiing.

*Many thanks everyone who responded to our Annual Appeal. Your support makes ECOS’ work possible.*

## *PRESIDENT'S PIECE*

This year, 2022, is our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, and we are planning to celebrate! Plans are underway for a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event in the late spring, to be held outside. We are counting on Covid and the weather to cooperate so we can finally meet in person and celebrate ECOS' 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary together. A history of ECOS over the last 50 years is being written. Other plans are underway....This is a very exciting time for ECOS!

Big news!! We are very excited to welcome Catherine Gilbert to ECOS, as our Executive Director. She brings to ECOS a wealth of experience with non-profits and with program development. She was, most recently, executive director of the Children's Museum of Science and Technology (CMOST) in Troy. Previously, she worked with a number of museums and heritage organizations in Miami, Boston and locally, developing programs and educational resources. She also loves to be outdoors and active—a good fit for ECOS!

More exciting news! ECOS, in cooperation with the Upper Union Neighborhood Association, has submitted a proposal to the City of Schenectady for the creation of "Iroquois Lake Environmental Center" to be housed in the "Casino" building in Schenectady's Central Park. This would provide a new home for ECOS, centrally located in Schenectady with easy access to the natural areas of Central Park. The location in Central Park has high visibility and would enable ECOS to reach a wider, more diverse audience of youth and adults than our present location in Niskayuna does. We are also reaching out to another local environmental organization, Schoharie River Center, and discussing ways we could share the space and work together. Below, I have copied the abstract of the proposal submitted to the city.

ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse and the Upper Union Neighborhood Association propose the conversion of Schenectady's deteriorating Central Park Casino building into an environmental education center. The center will sponsor programming targeted to area youth and provide them with access to a healthy natural environment to offset the isolation and other social impacts of the pandemic. Participants will have the opportunity to experience the outdoors and learn how society affects the natural environment. The center will be operated by ECOS, a local non-profit that has provided environmental advocacy and education in Schenectady County for 50 years. It is expected that hundreds of kids will participate in ECOS programs each summer, and more through coordination with schools during the school year. Kids will meet at the center for fieldwork in Central Park, which will serve as a living laboratory for the program. The project is intended to be net-zero, with all energy used in the building provided by a rooftop solar installation. The center will feature exhibits on recycling, composting and other sustainable practices. The building will also contain office space for ECOS staff (executive director and part-time support staff) on the second floor and provide community meeting space on the first floor.

The possibilities are exciting. We have dynamic new leadership, important collaborations, and the potential of a new home. ECOS may grow and change over the next 50 years, but our core mission of providing environmental experiences and education, and advocating for the natural world is unchanged. In the next years, our goal is to reach many more children and adults, and to raise awareness and appreciation of the natural world and the need to act to protect it.

### *Passings Noted*

Florence (Flo) Bigelow passed away on November 21, 2021 at age 91. She was one of the "Newsletter Ladies" who helped fold, label, and, prepare the newsletters for mailing until Covid. Her husband Edwin (Win) who predeceased her, was also an active member leading many of ECOS' nature walks.

Judith Winchester passed away on January 7, 2022. Judith served as President from 1985-1986 and was a longtime board member of ECOS. She also lead many nature walks sharing her love for and knowledge of the environment. She was 95.

## NEW FROSTBITE CHALLENGE

—*Zinnia KarDi*

ECOS is sponsoring a new Frostbite Challenge to encourage everyone to get outside this winter. This challenge is three miles along the Mohawk Hudson Bikeway Trail from Gateway Landing Park to Lock 8 with parking on both ends. We encourage you to try out this new path in addition to the other Frostbite Challenge featured in the previous newsletter. During my winter break, I completed this challenge with my older sister.



Bundling up with hats, coats, and mittens we set out in the cold winter weather to walk the path. We both had a good time talking and spending time with each other, something we haven't had the time to do in a while. Looking at artwork hanging along the path and meeting new dogs was the highlight of our walk, brightening my day.

The paved path itself is a little bit challenging due to



the narrow size and slippery spots. However, with a little bit of careful maneuvering, you'll find that the path is perfect for casual walks since it is well maintained with minimal hills. The trail travels right along the Mohawk River and features beautiful views of the river.

Visiting Arthur's Market afterwards was a warm reprieve from the icy wind outside. The mint tea and cinnamon roll I ordered from the cafe were perfect after a chilly walk. I highly recommend visiting here after completing the challenge. With a free cookie for kids under 14 who complete the path and a stocked cafe for adults, it provides the perfect end to a winter walk.



Azaliea, Zinnia's sister, at Arthur's Market

For more information on the Frostbite Challenge and to send in photos from the challenge please visit the website at

<https://www.ecosny.org/frostbite-challenge-2022/>. We are excited to see you off on this new adventure!

### **An overview of the Frostbite Challenges:**

Vischer Ferry General Store is, once again, partnering with ECOS to lure kids away from indoor screens and get them moving outside during the winter months. A second Frostbite Challenge has been added this year in Schenectady, with Arthur's Market in the Stockade District offering a cookie for the kids completing that walk. Check the details of both Frostbite Challenges on our website: [www.ecosny.org](http://www.ecosny.org). The free cookie rewards are for kids under 14, but these two beautiful walks alongside the Mohawk River can be enjoyed by all!

### **Want to participate in a Ski Outing/Trip?**

For Tuesday Ski and Snowshoe Outings contact Roy and Sue Keats at 518-466-8544 or email [royskipaddle@gmail.com](mailto:royskipaddle@gmail.com).

For Saturday Ski Trips contact Andy Kulmatiski at [kulmatiski@gmail.com](mailto:kulmatiski@gmail.com).

Reservations are required to be included. In the event there is no snow, the group will walk using traction equipment.

## ECOS' Speaker Series

As winter continues to limit some of our activities, ECOS is pleased to offer virtual presentations through March. Our series has been very successful again this year. Virtual technology has afforded us the ability to remain connected socially, raise a glass of cheer for the holidays and be enlightened on various environmental topics. They not only pique our interest, but often encourage our involvement in various causes and projects. Please join us the third Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm for the following presentations:

February Topic - **Attracting Birds to Your Backyard** with presenters Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner, award-winning nature photographers.

We all enjoy the birds in our own backyards. In this slide-illustrated program, they will cover the basics of attracting birds with food, water, and shelter. They cover types of feeders and feed, plantings and cover for birds, and common questions regarding squirrels and hawks. Photographs show many of the common and less common backyard visitors to the northeast. Enjoy the show, and bring your questions!

To see more of their work or to purchase prints, please visit them at [www.naturelogues.com](http://www.naturelogues.com) or look for Naturelogues on Facebook

March Topic - **Intensive No-till, Regenerative Farming** - with presenters from Lovin' Mama Farms.

They will discuss how their no-till system pumps out massive amounts of food and flowers using deep organic methods. This system regenerates the soil while sequestering atmospheric carbon and producing tons of food so that our community has access to delicious, organic produce and the farmer has great yields with a low overhead (no tractor required!). You'll leave the presentation with the hopeful knowledge that healing, regeneration, and renewal are possible for our troubled climate, environment, and social communities.

These presentations are virtual and the Zoom links will be emailed to all active members before the event. Thank you for your interest and attendance - Cindy Elsenbeck, VP Programming

## Report on Tuesday and Saturday Snow Outings

We had our first Tuesday event of the season at the Five Rivers Environmental Education Center. There was basically no snow anywhere locally, so we decided to explore the center's trails. We had a total of 15 people and split up into two groups. One was led by Karen Wang and Sue Keats and the other by Ed Kautz and Roy Keats. We first took the Beaver Tree Trail which circled around a large pond, and then continued onto the Vlomankill Trail which followed along an interesting brook with several bridges. We then circled back to explore the new Education Center Building using the North Loop Trail for a total of almost 3 miles. We did not even need traction devices! By the way, the new Education Center Building is far more extensive than the original and is well worth exploring on its own.

—Roy Keats



The day, the views, the interlacing snow tracks from different critters - recreated like a crime scene by Ed Kautz with his wildlife biology background - were all spectacular in the Albany Pine Bush Saturday. But I noticed that - aside from the group on the ECOS-led walk - we didn't pass a single soul on the well-kept trails of this open space gem. We admired the view from the top of one of the sand dunes looking towards Crossgates Shopping Mall (which took over and developed a big chunk of this rare inland pine barren). It occurred to us that, in contrast, the adjacent mall was probably full of people on this gorgeous, sunny, Saturday.

And switching that paradigm, even just a little bit - a crowded shopping mall next to an underused public open space - is at the heart of what ECOS is all about.

—Sarah Celik

## Nature-based Solutions for Biodiversity and Climate

—Janet Hollocher

"It is the nature of complex systems that they have unexpected outcomes and thresholds, but also that the individual parts cannot be managed in isolation from one another." (IPCC-IPBES Workshop Report on Biodiversity and Climate Change, 2021).

International experts recognize that biodiversity is essential to achieving a stable climate and a good quality of human life. Yet biodiversity is declining. Globally, the causes of biodiversity loss are habitat stress, over-exploitation of natural resources, pollution, invasive species, and climate change. In New York State, illegal collection is added to the list, and although New Yorkers have protected many of our resources, we do participate in the over-exploitation of lumber, minerals, and agricultural land by importing the products of these practices from other states and countries.

Although biodiversity is harmed by climate change, some methods addressing the climate crisis can harm species, habitats, and the livelihoods of people who live off the land. For example, ecosystems are degraded when trees are planted as large monocultures, even with the aim of extracting carbon from the atmosphere or producing bio-energy crops. Planting trees that are not native to a location, or in places where trees have not grown before, can reduce biodiversity.

Although we need batteries, magnets, and electronics for wind turbines and electric vehicles, mining for the lithium and rare earth minerals of their components can destroy habitats and displace indigenous people from traditional land.

Climate and biodiversity are so closely intertwined that they are not two problems, but one. Our best strategy is to pursue nature-based solutions to protect, restore, and manage ecosystems while also serving human needs. To improve biodiversity, reduce global warming, and adapt to a changing climate, individually and collectively, we can:

Protect local ecosystems by supporting the sustainable uses of nature preserves, and by identifying areas in need of restoration

Create green infrastructure in cities, such as using native vegetation to slow stormwater runoff and reduce flooding and pollution, or assisting residents in selecting native trees and shrubs for shading and cooling

Restore native vegetation to residences, parks, and larger properties to replace non-native and monoculture landscaping and reduce water pollution from fertilizers and pesticides

Buy fewer unnecessary products and consider shopping second-hand to reduce the impacts of resource exploitation, shipping, and waste; shift to more plant-based diets, and toward sustainably produced or harvested meat, fish, or dairy products

Promote denser, walkable and bikeable communities, and use public transportation to reduce the land used for parking, the energy required for transport, and the habitat fragmentation of new roads, while improving the quality of life.

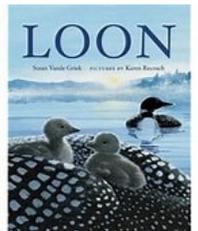
Organizations like ECOS can offer positive experiences with nature to children and adults in our community, regardless of age, ability, or income, and without the need to drive. Education on biodiversity and climate can make it possible for everyone to appreciate the beauty of the natural world, its species, habitats, and ecosystems, and the ways we depend on them for human well-being.

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### *Loon* by Susan Vande Greik

The haunting call of a loon is quintessential summertime for many people. These majestically beautiful birds breed on northern lakes during the spring and summer, and when fall arrives they migrate to open coastal waters. Young loons stay on the ocean for three or four years until they mature and their gray feathers molt, turning to the beautiful black-and-white patterned feathers by which they are known. At this point they return to an inland lake to find a mate and have their young.

This gorgeously illustrated prose poem follows two baby chicks through this cycle. We witness their birth, and how they learn to swim, find food and avoid predators such as snapping turtles and big bass, and the possible danger of boaters. In the fall they imitate their parents as they learn to fly and are eventually large and strong enough to make their own migration to the coast.



Available at Open Door

2021 & 2022 CALENDAR

February

- Tues, February 1—Ski and Snowshoe Outing
- Sat, February 5—Weekend Ski and Snowshoe trip
- Tues, February 8—Ski and Snowshoe Outing
- Sat, February 12—Weekend Ski and Snowshoe trip
- Tues, February 15—Ski and Snowshoe Outing
- Thurs, February 17—Speaker Series
- Sat, February 19—Weekend Ski and Snowshoe trip
- Tues, February 22—Ski and Snowshoe Outing
- Sat, February 26—Weekend Ski and Snowshoe trip

March

Thurs, March 17—**Annual Meeting**—Zoom followed by—Speaker Series

Ongoing

- Frostbite Challenge
- Seven Preserve Challenge

March is membership renewal month. When you receive our dues letter that month, please be sure to renew your membership. Your continued support of ECOS' mission is needed.

For addresses and additional details on walks or other events visit Upcoming Events on our website: [www.ecosny.org](http://www.ecosny.org)



**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

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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](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.



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

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

## Connecting Children to Nature Spring Session

## *Holiday Party Raffle Winners*

Due to a generous grant from the Stewarts Foundation, ECOS' family program "Connecting Children to Nature" will continue this spring. This program is for children ages 5-12 (with children under 10 accompanied by a caregiver), and will be led by Rebekka Henriksen.

The sessions will run on Saturday, April 23rd and Saturday, May 21st 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...be on the lookout!



- King Arthur Gift Card—Kathy Fisher
  - Tough Traveler Backpack—Anita Lay
  - Honey Basket—Josh Bennett
  - Carved Bowl by Stan Blanchard—Dana Simson
  - Kitchen Composter and Shop Rite Gift Card—Rebekka Henriksen
  - Basket Vase by Pat Schuff—Juliana Post-Good
  - Stained Glass Hanging by Bert Longbotham—Denise Cashmere
- Thank you to all who donated and to everyone who participated.

*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.*