



# 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 50th Year in Environmental Education**

Volume L

Number 3

June / July 2022

## Introducing John Loz, Executive Director



Hello to All!

As a lifelong resident of the Capital Region, I'm thrilled to be given the opportunity to work for and help lead such a longstanding and influential environmental and educational organization in the region. My initial exposure to ECOS was at an environmental event at Mabee Farm close to 10 years ago, when I first started volunteering for the Audubon Society of the Capital Region, I had an info table situated nearby the ECOS info booth. That is where I first learned of this great organization and the work the board and many volunteers do for our local communities and especially for young people, educating them about nature and conservation. I was impressed and 10 years later I am proud to be welcomed into the ECOS Family.

As for who I am, my main interests focus on the interaction between the natural and cultural worlds. I have a B.S. in Biology with a concentration in Environmental Science from Siena College and a number of graduate GIS and Urban Planning courses completed at the University at Albany. While attending Siena College, I was a National Parks Volunteer at the Saratoga National Historical Park in Stillwater, NY studying and censusing explosive breeding frogs and toads, and continued that data collection for another eight years with my professor. Each year presented different challenges for field work. I never knew in the months of March and April whether I would be wading knee deep through vernal pools in cold snow flurries or sweating it out on very sunny 75+ degree days looking for wood frog egg clutches! After Siena and concurrently to that amphibian research, I worked for 18 -1/2 years at an engineering marketing and media company. Among the many projects I led there, I wrote for the company's blog site and published a 16 part series on the history of the electric streetcar, mainly focusing on Capital Region trolley companies, and Schenectady in particular.

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**ECOS NEWS**

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John Loz, Executive Director

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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Rebekka Henriksen	Gillian Scott
Ed Kautz	

*Reminder*

**April was membership renewal month. If you have not done so, please renew your membership as soon as possible. Send your check to:**

**ECOS  
P.O. Box 9118  
Niskayuna, NY 12309**

**Or pay online at [ecosny.org](http://ecosny.org)**

**A Brief Update**

The board notes that our Executive Director, Catherine Quinn-Gilbert, has received an employment opportunity that she could not refuse. While we are disheartened to see her leave, we are also happy for her to pursue this exciting new opportunity. Catherine has made an incredible difference in her time with us, by streamlining operations, developing relationships with other organizations, and obtaining new streams of funding for our programs. Please join us in wishing her well in her future endeavors.

To continue the work Catherine has accomplished, the board moved quickly to fill the position. Please welcome John Loz our new Executive Director.

*—Josh Bennett, President*

**Former Director's Final Note**

Just a brief note as my tenure with ECOS draws to a close. It has been my pleasure to lead ECOS for the past five months. In this brief period, we have achieved a great deal! Launching strategic planning to ensure the relevance and sustainability of ECOS' work as we prepare the future; teeing up the proposed ECOS at Central Park initiative; preparing for ECOS' 50th anniversary; refreshing ECOS' website; updating ECOS' marketing materials; formalizing ECOS' fund development strategy; and elucidating ECOS' k-5 and community education programming - all in support of ECOS' raison d'être to serve as a catalyst for nature experiences, immersing individuals in the outdoors, promoting active learning, and fostering environmental stewardship.

As they say, when one door closes another opens. I am delighted to transition leadership to John Loz. ECOS is a mighty organization, and I am certain it will thrive under John's leadership. I'm off to start a new chapter as Major Gifts Specialist at Sunnyview Rehabilitation Hospital Foundation. It has been an honor to work with you - the ECOS community is truly an inspiration!

With kindest regards,  
Catherine Gilbert

*New Executive Director cont.*

Over the last 10 years though, I have been advocating more so for the environment outside of my day job, with birds being the 'hook.' I have been President of two chapters of the National Audubon Society in the region, the Audubon Society of the Capital Region and Southern Adirondack Audubon Society, and just finished my Chairmanship of Audubon New York's Council of 27 state chapters. Outside of the birding world, I am an aspiring Adirondack 46er with 16 peaks under my belt, a mountain biker, reader, and an avid traveler. Prior to the pandemic, my last two overseas trips took me to Costa Rica and Ecuador to explore and learn about migrating neo-tropical bird species. I also continue to have a penchant for Erie Canal history and human migrations across the United States. This interest has led me to become the Vice President of the Friends of the Mohawk Towpath Byway, a member of the National Scenic Byway Foundation.

There are many boots-on-the-ground conservation projects I've led, which include hands-on youth education efforts, promoting accessibility to nature for the mobility impaired, and community building volunteer projects, and I look forward to sharing them all with you as I get to talk with you at future ECOS events. I'm a great listener, too and love to put ideas into action and bring them to reality, so please don't hesitate to reach out to me, members of the ECOS Board, and each other. I LOVE collaboration and what we all can do to bring great ideas to fruition. Let's move forward together to do great things for conservation, the environment, and the community at large. Talk to all soon and Thank You again for welcoming me into your flock!

—*John Loz*



**NEW BOARD MEMBER**

Harris Eisenhardt



Hi! My name is Harris, and I am an electricity market design specialist for the New York Independent System Operator (NYISO). I have lived in the Capital Region for nearly four years, and I am excited to be joining the ECOS vision. I'm passionate about conservation, climate justice, energy access, preservation of wild spaces, and responsible recreation in nature. On the weekends and after work you can find me cooking, trail running/paddling/skiing in the Adirondacks or Catskills, playing drums, or spending time with my girlfriend and our cat. I have a BS in Sustainable Energy Management from the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, and I'm a few semesters away from an MS in Energy Policy and Climate from Johns Hopkins University. Very much looking forward to meeting and working with everyone at ECOS!

As for my role as VP of Outreach - ECOS already had such a diverse network of partner organizations throughout the region, so I am planning to maintain those relationships. I am also excited about the prospect of building new connections, specifically to open ECOS to new opportunities to support work on trail maintenance, climate change mitigation, outdoor recreation, and environmental education. I am hoping to expand the reach and accessibility of ECOS activities to new communities and groups that may not know about ECOS today. Please feel free to contact me with suggestions and ideas for how you'd like to see ECOS grow.

## President's Message

—*Josh Bennett*

I am honored to serve as the president of ECOS as we enter our landmark 50th year. While I have met many members at activities over the past few years, this will serve as an introduction to most.

Before I introduce myself, I'd like to take a moment to appreciate the leadership of our outgoing president, Ruth Bonn. She led the organization through a difficult time. Shutdowns, quarantines, and isolation are particularly impactful in an organization such as ours that is focused on group activities. Ruth successfully pivoted to virtual meetings and led us to produce safe and socially distanced programs and outdoor activities. She led the drive to hire an executive director. We currently stand stronger as an organization, and Ruth deserves credit for her significant contributions.

For those who have not met me, you'll most often find me somewhere in the woods on a trail. I'm an avid mountain biker, hiker, skier, and paddler. I've also recently taken up the challenging (and some would say pointless) hobby of mountain unicycling. While the physical challenges of these activities are a significant draw for me, I find that simply existing in a natural environment is restorative. There is a visceral, innate draw to head into the wilderness with some essential gear stuffed into a backpack, bike pannier, or kayak dry bag. I can't think of a better alarm clock than the call of a loon over a mist-covered, glass-smooth Adirondack lake.

Unlike many of the ECOS leaders, I do not have formal education in the natural or environmental sciences or environmental education (I'm an engineer, specifically a metallurgist). So I have found the educational focus of many ECOS activities to be incredibly informative. I am continually impressed with the incredible, deep level of knowledge of many of our members. I look forward to learning more.

I know that I'm not alone in a primarily experiential relationship with nature. So I believe that outreach is the best avenue to spread the message that the environment is worth protecting. The human connection to nature is so innate that simply getting people outside breeds advocacy for preservation. Hence ECOS's strong focus in activities and programs that immerse participants in the natural world.

Our 50th anniversary is a time to be introspective, but also a time to look forward. One of my priorities for the coming year is to increase awareness of the programs that ECOS provides. To that end, I encourage all members to be ambassadors. Attend an ECOS hike, bike ride, or paddle. Help lead an educational program. Share your knowledge. In short: Get outside. Advocate. Be an example.

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## THE HISTORY OF ECOS

### ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse

1972 – 2022

#### OUR FIRST FIFTY YEARS

By **Margaret (Peg) Reich**

Researched and written by long-time ECOS member Peg Reich, this 24-page booklet follows the story of ECOS from its very beginning to the present day. The dedication and commitment of our members over the years is fascinating and inspiring.

Peg's research revealed the key people involved and their accomplishments. Peg, with succinct contributions from Ruth Bonn, has produced a document that will make members proud.

Details on its release have not been determined as of this writing, but it is expected to be available later in June.



# Canal Sweep

—Gillian Scott

Thank you to the ECOS members who volunteered for Canal Clean Sweep. The cleanup on the bike trail in Rotterdam, organized by the Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, drew two dozen volunteers from across the community who collected more than 40 bags of garbage!



Canal Clean Sweep takes place each Earth Day and is hosted by the NYS Canal Corporation and Parks & Trails New York. Volunteer groups across the state spend the weekend spring-cleaning sections of the Canalway Trail, in canalside parks, and in other public areas throughout the Canal corridor.

*Volunteers carry bags of trash on the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail during this year's Canal Clean Sweep event. Photo courtesy of PTNY*

# ECOS at Niska Day

A beautiful spring day and ECOS members volunteered their time to represent ECOS at Niska Day. Highlight of the booth was Ed Kautz's interactive demonstration identifying the animal tracks using sand to make the footprints.



Many thanks to Josh Bennett, Leslie Cutting, Sarah Celik, Ruth Bonn and Ed Kautz.

## And on the other side of town. . .

Also noteworthy is Bruce Bonacquist's mission, with assistance from Will Seyse, is to educate the people of Rotterdam about the aquifer that lies beneath the town. Bruce and Will are currently in the planning stage. Kudos to Bruce and Will!

# Connecting Children to Nature

This year ECOS ran four sessions of the "Connecting Children to Nature" program, funded by a generous grant from Stewart's Shops. Nature educator and ECOS Board Member Rebekka Henriksen led groups of children from around the Capital District on adventures through Schenectady's Central Park. We discovered wonderful native flowers like false Solomon seal, trillium, Canada flower and other spring ephemerals, while noting the growing problem of knotweed (although we also learned that tender knotweed roots are pretty tasty when pickled, and some people think they might offer some protection against Lyme disease). We collected pokeberries and carefully mashed them into a mixture we used to paint with. We made finger bowls out of mud collected from the creek, discovered bird nests, lichen, mosses, ferns, worms and other interesting critters we might miss while in the middle of a city. Nature scavenger hunts, learning how to "fox walk", building temporary forts from fallen branches, crossing the creek on a log, rabbit tag and other fun games made for a 2 hour program that flew by. We hope we have the opportunity to hold additional sessions of this special program in the future.



Crossing a creek on a log

Looking for lichen and moss

A fund day enjoying nature





Photo credit:  
Karen Hess

## THE FINAL WALKS OF THE SEASON

Saturday June 4 at 10:30 am\*  
Schenectady County Forest, with Bruce Bonacquist  
Lake Rd, Rotterdam. 2.9 miles south of Mariaville  
Rd.

Tuesday June 7 at 9:30 am\*\*  
Lock 4 Canal Park with Jackie Donnelly  
947 Stillwater Bridge Rd., Schaghticoke

Saturday, June 11 at 10:30 am\*\*  
Bozen Kill Preserve with Darwin Roosa  
Westfall Rd., Altamont. 2 tenths of a mile north of  
Bozenkill Rd.

Saturday, June 18 at 10:30 am\*\*  
Sanders Preserve with Andy Kulmatiski  
Sanders Preserve Glenville. Between Gower and  
Washout Rds.

\*Make reservations at [kulmatiski@gmail.com](mailto:kulmatiski@gmail.com)

\*\*Make reservations at [doniphin.jones@gmail.com](mailto:doniphin.jones@gmail.com)

## What's New with Programs

### **Kayak Outings**

ECOS is looking for some member volunteers to lead summer kayak outings this summer. If you're willing to lead a group of 10 on your favorite local kayak outing, please email Sarah at [sarahjcelik@gmail.com](mailto:sarahjcelik@gmail.com)

### **To-Go Lesson Plans**

Coming this summer! To help us better achieve our mission and reach more youngsters, we are in midst of developing a suite of five "To-Go Lesson Plans." These active-learning lesson plans, ranging from "Tremendous Trees!" to "Migration," will each be described on our website and have a purchase request form. They will be suitable for local schools, after-school programs, camps and other groups, tie in with the New York State Curriculum, and be led on-site with an ECOS Education volunteer. Our goal is to create a structure that will enable consistency of content and experience.

### **Schenectady Summer Enrichment Program**

In May, ECOS submitted a proposal to the Schenectady School District to partner with them in their Summer Enrichment Program and bring our expertise in environmental education to three Schenectady Middle Schools in late summer. As of this newsletter's printing, we are waiting for Schenectady to review our proposal and finalize their decisions.



## 2022 CALENDAR



### June

Sat, June 4—7 Preserve Challenge

Sat, June 4—National Trails Day, Schoharie Crossing

Tues, June 7—Spring Walk

Weds, June 8—**Annual Dinner celebrating 50 years**

Sat, June 11—7 Preserve Challenge

Sat, June 18—7 Preserve Challenge



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

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\$500 Patron

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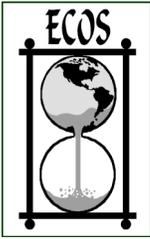
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As a current GE employee my contribution is eligible for GE Foundation Matching Funds. I have registered with GE for the matching gift by computer at [www.gefoundation.com](http://www.gefoundation.com). If you do not have computer access, call customer 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  
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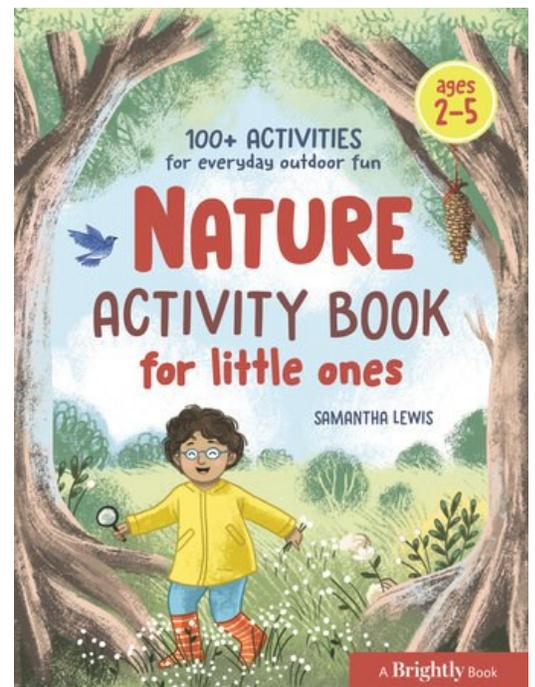
## Nature Activity Book for Little Ones

By Samantha Lewis

Give your child all the benefits of nature with this activity book designed for children ages 2-5. Whether you're planning an afternoon in a local park, a day in the backyard, or a morning hike in a nature preserve, you will find more than 100 ideas in these pages for observing, exploring, creating, and playing in nature.

- **100+ outdoor activities** for kids ages 2-5, geared toward their interests and developmental milestones.
- **Bonus activities** for additional learning, including numbers, letters, shapes, and colors
- **School prep:** the activities teach problem-solving, communication, and responsibility, important skills for school success.
- **Less screen time and more nature time together** to fuel your child's curiosity and creativity and help them build an early connection with nature.

Best of all, this entertaining book provides more than a hundred ways to keep your child moving and occupied and for you to bond with your child, all in nature!



*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.*