



# 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 5

October / November 2022

## *Rachel Carson Celebration*

**Tuesday, November 29, 2022**

**5 PM—8 PM**

We return to SUNY Schenectady after a long absence. This year our dinner will be buffet style, and SUNY is working on a special menu for us. More information to follow.

### **Annual ECOS Rachel Carson Award Nominations**

ECOS is seeking nominations for our annual Rachel Carson Award presented each fall at the Rachel Carson Celebration. The nominee should exemplify the life and values of Rachel Carson.

Award based on the following criteria:

- ⇒ creation of awareness about the environment
- ⇒ concern and stewardship of the environment
- ⇒ embodies the characteristics of courage, perseverance, tenacity and vigilance

The nominee does not have to be an ECOS member, but should reside in the greater Capital Region. Submit nominations to [info@ecosny.org](mailto:info@ecosny.org) or by mail.

**For photos of the Mix and Mingle go to page 3.**

**ECOS NEWS**

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**Remembering Jo Anne Moore**

Jo was a longtime volunteer with ECOS assisting with the stuffing, folding, and labeling of the ECOS newsletter. She entertained the group with stories of Girl Scouting adventures from when she was young up until the mailing of our last newsletter. We mourn her passing. She will be greatly missed.

**2022 Ski and Snowshoe Trail Clearing**

Featherstonaugh State Forest, Duanesburg

Tuesday, October 11, 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Help clear trails for our winter ski trips. Bring loppers and/or a small saw. This area can be wet, so boots are recommended.

Meet trip leader Will Seyse at the corner of Lake and Hardin Roads in Duanesburg at 9:30 a.m. If you have questions, please call Will at (518) 369-4254.

***Executive Director's Message***

—John Loz

Happy Autumn Everyone!

I don't know about you, but after this particularly hot summer, I am ready for the cool temperatures of fall. Despite the heat, I've enjoyed the summer, getting outdoors hiking under the cool, dense, shady trees of our local preserves, as well as exploring the wildlife refuges along the coast of Rhode Island for birding, and enjoying the sandy beaches and swimming in the ocean waves. Ah, nature reinvigorates the soul. I am nonetheless quite ready for the cool, crisp air of fall though and basking in the colorful leaves of this special season.

ECOS has been very busy during the dog days of summer and into the fall. Other non-profit boards may take the summers off from meetings, but I have found our ECOS committees and board to be very active and always thinking 'What can we do next?' and I must admit, I feed off that!

Our VP of Programs, Sarah Celik, launched our ECOS To-Go lessons with the topic "Your Trees" engaging with the students from Schenectady City Schools through their summer enrichment program. I had the pleasure of assisting our ECOS lead instructor, Sarah Celik, and our other instructor, Steve Jones, who worked hard creating, preparing, and delivering ECOS' first set of six outdoor enrichment classes to Schenectady middle schoolers on some very hot days!

Later in August, I enjoyed meeting more ECOS supporters and donors at our 'Mix & Mingle' picnic at the Niskayuna Community Center pavilion behind our ECOS office on a beautiful warm summer evening. What a great way to bring people together to share their summer picnic dishes at our potluck event, play games and really enjoy each other's company. I loved being able to get to know more of our long-time members in a relaxed setting and seeing everyone having a great time. I learned a lot from the picnic-goers that evening and picked up some more ideas on what else they'd like to see ECOS take on.

We will soon release a new Natural Area Guide, this time focusing on Schoharie County. This project, spearheaded by Peter Tobiessen, will complement our Natural Areas Guides of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady counties. We are planning digitize these guides so that users can access them more easily in the future.

—continued p.3

As I mentioned, our board members have been busy pursuing new initiatives. Our VP of Outreach, Harris Eisenhardt, is investigating how ECOS can bring the CDTA Nature Bus to Schenectady County. Living on the western edge of Albany County near the Schenectady county line, I have seen how the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy has brought the Nature Bus to people who have limited access to transportation to get to natural areas of Albany County, and it is FREE! This idea fits with what ECOS is all about. Our Seven Preserve Challenge has the Schenectady County natural area locations already plotted to support a route throughout the county and Harris is continuing his volunteer work to see how ECOS can be the sponsor for the ‘Schenectady County’ Nature Bus.

In addition to that accessible mass transit project, ECOS is continuing to expand our “Trails For All” initiative this fall. The purpose of “Trails For All” is to promote environmental and educational experiences focused on inclusion and accessibility, encouraging people of all ages and abilities to explore and enjoy nature and the outdoors. ECOS started this project with a number of our volunteers in Saratoga County assessing and mapping out natural areas that people of all abilities could enjoy and use to connect intimately with nature. We’re now assessing and mapping out Schenectady County trail systems for our next installment!

Through my four months with ECOS, three things have stood out about what ECOS does and is really good at – providing quality educational experiences, planning and leading safe outdoor recreational experiences, and providing accessible ways to find information about the outdoors and ways to get there. ECOS excels at making all this happen and continues to find new ways to do it. In my mind, what does ECOS do? “We Make Nature Accessible.”

How can YOU help ECOS make nature more accessible to our local communities? Those of you reading this are integral to our mission and as supporters, as part of our ECOS Nature Team, you are passionate about nature and environmental education. There are many ways our ECOS volunteers and committee members are working to make nature more accessible to Schenectady County and Greater Capital Region residents, and your support of our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Fund Drive is a big part of that. Your support of this Golden Anniversary drive will not only provide immediate support for our growing environmental education experiences for youth, but also will create a long-term Legacy Fund to sustain the new initiatives mentioned in this column.

Can you help us? Read about the details of our youth experiences and donate at this link: <https://www.ecosny.org/50th-anniversary-fund-drive/>. Or you can send a fund drive check to: ECOS 50th Fund Drive, P.O. Box 9118, Niskayuna, NY 12309. Additionally, our Rachel Carson Award Dinner & Silent Auction will return the evening of Tuesday, November 29th. We are excited to be celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> year and we would hope to see YOU there! Celebrate with us at SUNY Schenectady Van Curler Room and enjoy delicious food from the SUNY Schenectady Culinary Arts students. A wonderful keynote speaker will be announced soon. Keep your eye on our website and Facebook page for updates and sign up for this event!

I hope you enjoy the outdoors as much as I do during this colorful season. I know even as the last leaf falls from the tree by my back porch, and the air becomes cold, I always have an increasingly warm feeling in my heart as the Season of Giving approaches.



Scenes from  
**Mix and Mingle**  
August 25, 2022  
Thank you to  
Lesley Cutting



## Message from the President

—*Josh Bennett*

### Where Are We Going As An Organization?

#### The ECOS mission:

*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.*

ECOS is now fifty years old. Such milestones are great for self-reflection. Over the past two years, the board has engaged in some heavy discussions about where ECOS should be headed over our next half-century.

We started with an analysis of the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). This analysis told us that in order to function and achieve our mission, we would need to expand our staff and hire an executive director. We're now benefiting from the energy that John Loz brings to this role.

This year, we've turned our attention to a strategic plan for ECOS. The board includes a mix of members who have been involved in ECOS for many years, as well as newer members with fresh perspectives. We've had some great discussions regarding the ways that we can build on our past to enable a strong future. As currently envisioned, our draft strategic plan includes three goals:

**Goal 1: Creating Transformative Experiences** - that have real meaning in the lives of our participants.

**Goal 2: Engagement** – strategically amplifying ECOS's impact, deepening community involvement and amplifying the stewardship of donors.

**Goal 3: Fiscal Vitality** - expanding ECOS's financial capacity to ensure our future presence and influence in the Capital Region.

This is still very much a work in progress. ECOS as an organization is more than simply a board of directors. We encourage all members to participate in defining and achieving these goals. If you have input on things ECOS should be doing, we'd be happy to hear from you if you do.

ECOS has a strong group of volunteers who lead educational programs and events, but we're always

looking for more help. You don't have to be an environmental educator or hiking guide to get involved. As with many organizations, the real work gets done by committees. Recognizing this, we've slightly adjusted our committee structure to better align with our key strategic goals. Now, our challenge is to fill those committees. All the committees have open slots for members. This is your chance to ensure a strong ECOS for the next fifty years!

First, our **Program Committee**. Chaired by our VP of Programs, Sarah Celik, this committee develops our educational programs, puts on our speaker series, and arranges activities. This committee enables our first and primary strategic goal of providing transformative environmental experiences. This is our primary means of accomplishing our mission. The Program Committee is always looking for ideas (and volunteers) for programs, events and speakers.

Second, our **Outreach Committee** is chaired by our VP for Outreach, Harris Eisenhardt. This committee enables ECOS to fulfill our role as a clearinghouse by partnering with numerous like-minded local organizations. We can more easily accomplish our mission when we work with other organizations to magnify our strengths. Our membership represents a vast network of contacts with other organizations, but we can't leverage that network without knowing it exists. We'd love to hear about contacts with other organizations and ideas for working together.

To achieve the goal of fiscal viability, we've added a **Development Committee** to focus on fundraising. This committee is chaired by board member Maeve McCulloch. We can not achieve our mission without a solid funding stream, and expanding our programs and staffing requires an increase in funding. The committee is pursuing additional sources of revenue. We currently receive the majority, approximately 60%, of our funding from member donations. Approximately 32% comes from corporate donations, and about 8% from paid educational programs.

Finally, our **Finance Committee** is chaired by our Treasurer, Mike Howard. The committee is charged with assisting Mike and John in drafting the budget, maintaining our finances throughout the year, and filing the required submittals.

So, how can you contribute? For more information or to volunteer, I encourage you to contact me at [president@ecosny.org](mailto:president@ecosny.org) or our Executive Director John at [director@ecosny.org](mailto:director@ecosny.org).

**Schenectady Summer Enrichment Program**

During the first week of August, three ECOS instructors had the pleasure of presenting the new “Your Trees” program to Schenectady school kids at each of the 3 three middle schools. Sarah Celik, Steve Jones, and John Loz introduced Summer Enrichment Program students to the trees that they walk past every day on their own school grounds.

The 6th, 7th and 8th graders took on the role of an urban forester as they figured out how we all benefit from trees, marked maps, identified species, used a Biltmore stick, and incorporated STEM skills into resource management.

ECOS would love to do more of these programs! Check out our website at [www.ecosny.org](http://www.ecosny.org) to view our new suite of “Lessons To-Go,” to order a lesson to be delivered to your school, scout group, camp, 4-H club, library or after-school program in the Capital District area.



**ACCESSIBLE TRAILS IN SCHENECTADY COUNTY**

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!**

Carole Fraser, who is leading the project and is now living in Georgia, will be coming to Schenectady specifically to work on this project. The project was begun by Claire Schmitt, years ago. Carole is dedicated to completing the project that Claire Schmitt was unable to finish.

Volunteers will walk easy trails with Carole to assess their accessibility. The helper's job is writing down the data as Carole does the assessment.

This is a great way to get outside for an easy walk, in good company, and also a contribution to furthering a very worthwhile project! Scheduling is flexible.

To volunteer or to get more information---email: [ruthbonn47@gmail.com](mailto:ruthbonn47@gmail.com)

**Fall Speaker Series**

By popular demand our Speaker Series via Zoom will be resuming on the 3rd Thursday evening of each month at 7 PM! Please join us by marking your calendar and checking our website and upcoming email reminders for the Zoom link.

**Thursday October 20th 7 PM with Bob Wick:**

Many easterners are not familiar with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). This little known agency is our nation’s largest land steward and manages one of every ten acres in the U. S., almost entirely in the western states and Alaska. For more than thirty years, Bob Wick helped oversee the bureau’s conservation programs. Bob was also the BLM’s defacto landscape photographer, a collateral duty that has taken him to many crown jewels and hidden landscapes on public lands throughout the West.



Bob grew up in Western Pennsylvania and earned both an undergraduate and a masters degree in forestry in the East before taking a position with the BLM in Colorado. He immediately fell in love with the West, and particularly the lesser-known BLM public lands. Calling attention to the values and beauty of the little known and often overlooked landscapes of these lands became a career-long passion for Bob. His reputation as a photographer grew quickly when the Department of Interior began hosting social media platforms. His work has been featured on CBS evening news, postage stamps commemorating America’s wild and scenic river system, and numerous private media publications such as the New York Times, Washington Post, Outside Magazine, and Backpacker.

Bob retired at the end of July 2021, and has offered to share some of his favorite photographs of the National Conservation Lands, a collection of protected areas managed by the BLM with a combined area larger than the entire state of New York. As part of his presentation, Bob will share some tips that will help participants improve their own photo skills whether using a smartphone or professional camera.

**Thursday November 17, 7 PM with Betsy Henry:**

Betsy Henry, PhD, is Principal Scientist at Anchor QEA where she specializes in site characterization, ecological risk assessment, and restoration of contaminated sites in terrestrial and aquatic environments. She helped found Schenectady Greenmarket and leads ReTree Schenectady, an all-volunteer organization which has planted 3,000+ trees in Schenectady in the past 30 years.

## Celebrate the Erie Canal Now!

—*Nancy Papish*

The year 2025 will mark the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the opening of the Erie Canal. Many events are being planned for 2025 between Albany and Buffalo and beyond to celebrate the canal's completion. Declared the eighth Wonder of the World by many at that time, this gem sits in our very own back yard. But you don't have to wait until 2025 to enjoy tours and shows. A free, self-guided tour already exists called the Mohawk Towpath Scenic Byway. The Byway is a federally recognized, 26 mile drive between Waterford and Schenectady showcasing sites and sounds and a wide variety of activities.

If you have never seen the 70 foot Cohoes Falls, go look at it after a really good rain storm. Follow the Mohawk River down to the junction with the Hudson River in Waterford. There see the remains of the Champlain Canal which was completed in 1822, before the Erie Canal. Then check out the Waterford flight—five locks lifting the Barge Canal 169 feet in just 1 ½ miles to circumvent the Cohoes Falls. Above the falls, head north to Crescent and cross the Mohawk River on the Route 9 bridge. At this very spot, the Erie Canal crossed the Mohawk River on a huge 1,137 foot long stone bridge with 26 spans—the longest aqueduct on the entire canal system. For the next 13 miles to the west, the Erie Canal hugs the Mohawk's shore through southern Saratoga County. Here along the Byway you can discover a preserved lock, a Whipple Truss bridge, three ferry landings pre-dating the canal, a birding sanctuary and several nature preserves, plus places to fish or launch canoes and kayaks. There are plenty of opportunities to park your car and walk miles of trails. Some are along the shore of the barge canal; some are, in fact, on the original towpaths of the Ditch and Enlarged Canal still filled with water. Drive through the village of Vischer Ferry with its beautifully maintained canal-era homes and quaint general store. Then cross back over the Mohawk River on Route 146 at the canal town of Rexford. The Rexford Bridge is in the same spot where a second stone aqueduct carried the Erie Canal back to the south side of the Mohawk. After crossing the bridge, from a park just east of the traffic circle, you can see a few remains of the 14 original stone spans of the 610 foot aqueduct. Following Aqueduct Road to the west will bring you to Erie Boulevard in downtown Schenectady. This wide road is actually the canal filled in and paved over.

Special road signs mark the entire Byway route; maps and information available at mohawktowpath.org show the more than 30 designated stops where you can listen to audio descriptions of the history that happened here.

What are you waiting for? Let's celebrate the opening of the Erie Canal now!

## ECOS Kayak Outings Past and Future

In August, ECOS hosted an evening paddle at Lock 7, riding down through the lock and exploring the hydroelectric dam beneath. In September, a kayak outing was hosted in Saratoga County at the DEC Hudson River Corinth Boat Launch.

Our next kayak outing is scheduled for Saturday, October 1st at 4 PM at the Klam'r Tavern and Marina in Halfmoon. For those that don't own a kayak, here's your chance to rent one! Six kayaks are available at the on-site self-serve kiosk and they are rented in pairs, ahead time, so reserve early!

Join us to explore the Mohawk River on a guided trip led by certified kayaking instructor, Collin Borzell. Arrive a little early to prepare your gear, whether you're renting or bringing your own. Feel free to linger afterwards for a bite or drink together at the Klam'r Tavern.

For those that need to rent, here is the link to go online to the Upstate Kayaks website, and choose the "Klamsteam Kayak Launch" location:

<https://upstatekayakrentals.com/self-serving-rentals-charters.html>

Please RSVP to [celikecos@gmail.com](mailto:celikecos@gmail.com) so that any weather-related notifications can be sent.

## Last Fall Walk

### **OCT. 4: Escarpment Walk, Thacher Park.**

Nancy Engel, leader. Enjoy fall foliage and views from the cliff top, look for migrating hawks overhead and hopefully waterfalls below. We'll meet at the park Visitor Center and walk along the Escarpment Trail, then descend the Indian Ladder Trail to walk along the base of the cliff, bringing us back to the Visitor Center. There are staircases at each end of the Indian Ladder Trail; for an easier walk, participants can return to the Visitor Center from the Escarpment Trail. *Directions:* We can meet and carpool or caravan to the Visitor Center from the Stewart's at the west end of Rt. 146/Main St., Altamont. To meet at the Center pass Stewart's and take Rte. 156, turn left/south on Old Stage Rd. and continue where it joins Rte. 157; at the next intersection turn left to continue on Rte. 157, which leads to the Center. **Meeting time is 9:30 a.m.**

## 2022 CALENDAR

- Saturday, October 1, 4 pm—Kayak Outing, Halfmoon
- Tuesday, October 4, 9:30 am—Fall Walk, Thacher Escarpment
- Thursday, October 20, 7 pm—Speaker Series, Bob Wick
- Thursday, November 17, 7 pm—Speaker Series, Betsy Henry
- Tuesday, November 29—Rachel Carson Dinner**



### *Our First Fifty Years*

Written by Margaret "Peg" Reich This is a history of ECOS from 1972 to 2022. Peg spent countless hours researching old files stored in the office, and in the state archives at the University Albany, and interviewing people involved over the years. She created a portrait of the people and passions that formed ECOS and its many accomplishments over fifty years.

If you would like to receive a copy contact, ECOS at [info@ecosny.org](mailto:info@ecosny.org) or call 518-370-4125 to make arrangements.

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



## MEMBERSHIP FORM

### ECOS Membership

### ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse

Please check your membership contribution level.

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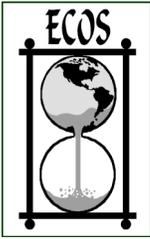
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My employer will match my contribution. I've enclosed my matching gift form.

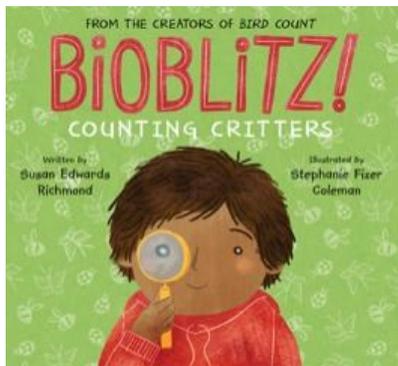
I would like to be a volunteer. Please send me more information.



**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.



“Bioblitz” by Susan Edward Richmond is set in a local park which turns out to be rich in wildlife. Two young “community scientists” learn from a day of organized observation and discovery. Joining teams of volunteers led by expert naturalists, cousins Ava and Gabriel compete for sightings as they comb open woodlands and underbrush for animal species. Young readers will have no trouble following along and understanding the rules and procedures, not to mention keeping track of finds, because along with many having their names called out in the dialogue, each accurately rendered bird, insect, and other creature is numbered in the pictures and identified in a running side list. By day’s end, 84 types of animals have been cataloged, from a mosquito and pillbug (“It’s a crustacean. Did you know some bugs are related to lobsters?”) to white-tailed deer and an elusive blue-spotted salamander. Along with a version of the list broken down by category

(amphibians, reptiles, birds, etc.) that serves as an index, Richmond appends both expanded nature notes and an invitation to take part in similar community “biodiversity counts” (also referred to as “Bioblitzes”), explaining that they are “important tools for learning about the health and biodiversity of an area.” Ava and Gabriel are brown-skinned; the human figures in Coleman’s expansive outdoor scenes are diverse.

Susan Edwards Richmond is the author of Bird Count and a Mathical Honor Book. A passionate birder and naturalist, Susan teaches preschool on a farm and wildlife sanctuary in eastern Massachusetts. and is an award-winning poet with five collections of nature-based poetry for adults. She is happiest exploring natural habitats with her husband and two daughters, and learns the native birds wherever she travels.

**Open Door Bookstore** will host a book signing on Sunday, October 23 from 12—1:30 pm.

*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.*