



ECOS NEWS



ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse

Celebrating Our 47th Year in Environmental Education

Volume XLVII

Number 1

February/March 2019

From the President's desk . . .

Our December holiday party was well attended and continues to be an occasion for ECOS supporters to socialize in a setting away from hiking trails or announced programs.

Roy and Sue Keats have again organized what we call "Ski & Snowshoe Trips" for Tuesday mornings in January and February. Global warming may force us to change the heading, as there have been several times in recent years where we have cancelled for lack of snow. We also have hiked sometimes when the snow failed us. Our hearty efforts to get outdoors and enjoy the fresh air continue. Our website Facebook, email blasts to select members, and Monday afternoon office voice mail confirm the plans for Tuesday morning. For the latest and most reliable information, I suggest you join the email group for event news. Contact the office and we will add you to our list. And by the way, if you are a cross-country ski or snowshoe enthusiast and suffer for lack of local snow, Maple Ridge ski area in Rotterdam is closed on Monday and Tuesdays for downhill skiing, but will allow you access to their snow from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. for \$5. Check their website for details.

Thank you for your support of our annual appeal again this year. Totals at the time I write this are nearing \$5,000. ECOS is also honored to have recently received \$1,000 from the John C. and Susan K. Hubbard Foundation, \$3,000 from the Fairbanks Family Charitable Foundation, and \$806 from the Benevolence Fund of Christ Community Reformed Church of Clifton Park.

The Board works to spend money judiciously and to promote programs that support environmental education and awareness. If you have ideas on how we might reach others in new or more effective ways, please contact me at any time.

Our website has a new breath of life and we thank Jim Ormsbee, Steve Jones, and Melinda Perrin for their efforts. Expect more improvements in the future, and a more reliable listing of our calendar events.

The annual meeting for ECOS will be held Wednesday, March 13, in the Niskayuna Recreation Center building at 2682 Aqueduct Road.

Lastly, I ask that you make special note of two other articles in this newsletter. One mentions the date for our annual dinner at Schenectady County Community College on Tuesday, April 16. Please plan on attending. The other explains the Board's decision to change the entire membership renewal date to the month of April. This year Earth Day is officially April 22. We want to end the monthly efforts of sending out renewals and follow-up efforts for those who for whatever reason did not reply when first contacted, and draw attention to our purpose, past and future, by piggybacking on people's interest in Earth Day with a reminder to renew their membership with ECOS. I hope you will choose to respond to this new effort in a timely manner. If you can encourage others to join ECOS, it is a local way to say that you care about the environment, believe in clean water and clean air, want people to be aware of global warming, and so forth. There may be a glitch or two with this transition, so I ask for your patience, and that you let the office know of your particular issue if one should arise.

—William Seyse

ECOS NEWS

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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.

ECOS ANNUAL MEETING

Wednesday, March 13, 2019

5:30: Meeting

6:30: Social

7:00: Program

Alexander Lykins, Sustainability Coordinator at Union College, will discuss the efforts Union College has made towards its carbon neutrality goal, building ties to the community through Sustainability, and how Union is using its sustainability initiatives as a teaching tool both inside and outside of the classroom.

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBER

The ECOS board has been joined by another former member, Janet Hollocher. Janet has a background in geology and has taught English to adult speakers of other languages. She has worked on recycling, solid waste, land use, and environmental policy with the League of Women Voters, ECOS, SCEAC, the Niskayuna Conservation Advisory Council, and the Unitarian Green Sanctuary Committee. Her current focus is climate change.

Save the Date for the
Annual Dinner
April 16, 2019
Details to follow

SKI AND SNOWSHOE OUTINGS

Our first outing was at Maple Ski Ridge on January 8. It was cancelled at the last minute due to weather concerns. However, two folks went anyway, skied for a couple of hours and had a great time. We will be running the trips similar to the past couple of years, which means that different people will volunteer for certain days to lead a trip. At this point, we have volunteers for Jan. 22, 29 and Feb. 26. We need more volunteers for February Tuesdays. Outings will be at locations within the Capital District similar to what has been on our outings list for many years. If anyone would like a pdf copy of the Outings location sheet with carpool parking areas for different destinations, and/or to volunteer for a Tuesday, please contact Roy and Sue Keats at roysueski@yahoo.com or 518-466-8544. Outing locations are chosen based on what we can learn about ski conditions each week.

Trip information will be emailed to those who are on our email list by 3 p.m. Monday for the Tuesday trips. (Or please call ECOS at 518-370-4125 after 3 p.m. the day prior to the trip.) Information may also be posted on the ECOS Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/ecosny/>). To be assured of the latest information regarding each outing, including cancellation, sign up for email notification through ECOS at info@ecosny.org. Please note: ECOS participants **MUST** stay with the group. Bring your own water and snack and dress in layers.



Participants in the January 15th walk/ski through the Sanders Preserve where they met a porcupine!

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL POLICY CHANGE

The Board has decided to move all membership renewal dates to April 1, in celebration of Earth Day. Members will normally receive a renewal letter in late March, with membership rates for the coming year. We do not anticipate any change in membership rates for the coming year. We expect that this process will be very easy to administer once we have completed the transition. The transition, however, will be a bit complicated. Changing to a common renewal date could result in lost revenue for ECOS, but we know that our members are loyal and we hope that you will help us out where you can.

If your membership renewal date is currently in January, February, or March, you will not receive a renewal letter until the mailing in late March 2019. At that time, you will receive a renewal letter with the membership rates for April 1, 2019 – March 31, 2020. You will also receive information on the monthly rate for the missed months. While you will not be obligated to pay for the missed months, we hope that those of you who can will do so.

If your membership renewal date is in April through December, and you are up-to-date in your dues, you will not be asked to renew until April 1, 2020. That will result in some missed months. For example, if you renewed in June 2018 for the period June 2018 - May, 2019, you will not have paid for the period June 2019 – through March 2020. When you receive your renewal notice in March 2020, you will be advised how many months have been missed and you will be offered the opportunity to include payment for those months when you send in your renewal. You will not be obligated to do so, but we hope that you will if possible.

We ask for your patience as we transition to the new system. We know that it may be confusing, and we are happy to respond to any questions you may have. Please e-mail info@ecosny.org or call the office at (518) 370-4125 if you have questions. Thank you for your continued support.

ECOS EVENTS

The Promise of New Programs

Any organization that is going to last for 47 years, as ECOS has, must have the ability to adapt to its times, its community, its membership. And that's exactly what ECOS is trying to do now, as it decides what programs to offer in 2019.

For the past month and a half, the Program Committee has been assessing the programs ECOS already offers and brainstorming possible new ones. At a meeting on Jan. 15, shortly before this newsletter went to press, the committee discussed its program options, prioritized them, and agreed on which ones to pursue for the coming year.

We are excited about these programs, especially the new ones, but that doesn't necessarily mean they will happen. It will depend on whether the full board approves them, and whether we can find volunteers to develop and deliver them.

The Program Committee wants programs for adults as well as kids, programs that will provide outdoor recreation and education and involve gardens, woods and water. So we plan to continue ECOS' spring and fall walks, as well as its winter snowshoe and cross-country ski outings. And we would like to make greater use of Vale Park — working with adults and children at the Vale Urban Garden, and using the park's trails and ponds as a classroom. As part of this effort, and to extend ECOS' outreach to Schenectady's inner-city children, we want to "adopt" the existing 4H programs at the Bornt and Mont Pleasant library branches.

We will also start planning programs for a new partnership that ECOS is entering into with the Schenectady Jewish Community Center. This partnership initially calls for ECOS to deliver 10 programs this spring to the JCC, at its onsite after-school program for elementary students and at various elementary schools in Niskayuna where it runs afterschool programs. There's also a chance of ECOS providing programs at the JCC's highly regarded summer camp, which hundreds of children attend. Offering summer programming in conjunction with the Schenectady City School District, similar to what ECOS did two years ago in Central Park, is another possibility.

The Program Committee will also recommend that ECOS restore its popular Mohawk River program, which it offered to schoolchildren for half a day each spring until funding for bus transportation dried up in 2010. (New sources of funding for these trips have since become available.) With this program, ECOS volunteers took kids on a guided walk along the river near Lock 8, identifying trees and shrubs, talking about the river and aquifer, showing the remains of old Lock 23, teaching about the canal, and visiting the pump stations that supply water to the city and some Schenectady towns.

But the river is not just for kids. The Program Committee also envisions programs for adults, including kayak outings where they would learn about the ecology of the river and historic sites along it, with stops at some of the islands near the Western Gateway Bridge along the way.

Anyone for a community bike ride? The Program Committee is proposing one for late May or early June. It would start at Schenectady County Community College and go along the bike trail to Lock 8 and back, a distance of five miles. There would be free bike tune-ups offered before the ride and a little picnic at Lock 8. And plenty of support would be available, with volunteers riding in the lead, middle and rear. A nice, slow ride that kids, adults and families can handle and enjoy.

The Program Committee also proposes talks and programs on climate change and invasive species. And a series of walks in the preserves included in ECOS' Seven Preserve Challenge, where ECOS volunteers would educate hikers about the preserves' history and ecology. We also recommend having ECOS "adopt" a preserve, which means maintaining its trails and keeping it clean. And we want to work with underserved groups, such as those with alcohol and substance abuse problems, getting them out in nature with walks in those preserves and elsewhere.

There are some other ideas, but these are the main ones, the committee's priorities. What do you, as members, think about them? And do you have expertise and skills to help us make them a reality?

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You can let us know with an email to Vice President for Programs Art Clayman at (artclayman@gmail.com), or the ECOS office (info@ecosny.org). What program or programs are you interested in? How would you like to be involved? If you don't want to volunteer for particular programs, perhaps you would like to take on the role of volunteer coordinator, helping to recruit volunteers, train, organize and communicate with them. That's a crucial role, and one that is currently unfilled.

If you aren't ready to answer now, you'll have more opportunities to do so, because we will be asking these same questions on our Website and Facebook page, in our e-newsletter, and at our annual dinner in April.

This is a pivotal time for ECOS — and for the environment. We want to stay relevant, reach new people and get new members, and to do so we need our current members' help. New programs, with a renewed commitment from the board and members, should result in a healthy, vibrant ECOS for many years to come.

Besides Art Clayman, the Program Committee consists of board members Steve Jones, Arden Rauch, Darwin Roosa, Bruce Bonacquist, Jen Insull, Alexander Lykins, Aaron Mair, and two non-board members, Kathy Palmieri and Cathy Kuzsman.

PARTNER EVENTS

THACHER PARK NATURE CENTER

February 2, 6am – 1pm: Ice Fishing Contest at Thompson's Lake--The ice conditions are looking good for our Ice Fishing Contest at Thompson's Lake Campground. Cash prizes will be awarded, with 3 categories of fish. Live bait will be available to purchase onsite. Registration begins at 5:30am, fishing begins at 6am and ends at 1pm. Registration fee is \$10 per person, free for kids under 12 years old. Call 518-872-1237 for more information.

Saturday, February 2, at 2pm: "Out on a Limb: The Ecology of Arboreal Animals"--Tree dwelling animals must be able to collect food, evade predators, migrate to new habitats, and attract mates, all while navigating a complex three-dimensional world up in the trees. Biologist Dr. Greg Byrnes will describe how animals cope with the challenges of arboreal life with examples from a variety of organisms including squirrels, gliding mammals, and snakes.

February 3, at 10am: Snowshoe Walk--Join us on a winter walk through woods and fields on Nature Center trails. We'll look for signs of wildlife. Bring your snowshoes or rent a pair of ours. If we don't have snow, we'll take a winter walk.

February 9, at 2pm: "Massive Volcanic Eruptions: Regional to Global Impacts"--Extreme volcanic eruptions wreak havoc on human culture and bring ecological devastation. An eruption of the Yellowstone supervolcano could devastate modern civilization. Dr. Chuck Ver Straeten, NYS museum geologist, will discuss these massive eruptions, including those that happened in the eastern U.S. during

The formation of Thacher Park's rocks, about 400 million years ago.

February 10, at 10am: Snowshoe Walk to High Point--Join a snowshoe walk to High Point on the Fred Schroeder Memorial Trail. The 3-mile loop includes moderately steep slopes. Bring a snack along for a break at the cliff view point. If there's no snow, we'll enjoy a winter hike. Snowshoes are available to rent and may be reserved in advance. Meet at the Nature Center and carpool to the trailhead.

February 16, at 2pm: "Moths, Birds, and Landscaping"--Far from being just little brown nuisances, moths play a key role in the functioning of our plant and animal communities. Catherine Klatt will introduce moths, in all their diversity and beauty, explore the tight links between moths and birds, and explain the unexpected ways that our home landscaping choices affect bird populations.

February 16, at 5pm: Moonlight Snowshoe Walk--Enjoy a walk in the light of the almost full moon. With a clear sky and snow-covered ground, the moon will light the way. In case of cloudy skies, bring along a flashlight. Snowshoes are available to rent or bring your own. Open to adults and children 12 and older. Space is limited and preregistration is required.

February 17, 1pm – 2:30pm: Backyard Birds and a Winter Walk--Join us for the Great Backyard Bird Count! Get tips for identifying birds and for using a field guide. Learn about

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PARTNER EVENTS

unique winter birds, test your bird ID skills, and then head outdoors for some birding. Adults and children ages 6 and up

February 23, at 10am: Beautiful Bald Eagles—Bald Eagles have nested on the shore of Thompson's Lake! Come and learn about these majestic birds of prey and their success in raising two juveniles during 2018. Learn a bit about Bald Eagles' courtship and nesting habits, and then take a walk to view the nest and hopefully see the adults! This program begins with a brief indoor presentation, followed by a short trail walk. Appropriate for adults and children ages 5 and up.

February 24, at 10am: Snowshoe Walk—Shake off the cabin fever and come up for a snowshoe walk. If we don't have snow, we'll take a winter hike. Snowshoes are available to rent.

Please call the Thacher Park Nature Center at 518-872-0800 for reservations for all programs except the Thompson's Lake Ice Fishing contest. Call 518-872-1237 to learn more about the fishing contest.

LANDIS ARBORETUM

Second Sunday Snowshoe, February 20, 1-3 PM at the Landis Arboretum

Join us for an invigorating day of winter fun. Adults and families are all invited to learn about the different types of snowshoes and practice the basic skills you need to enjoy the serenity and unique beauty of winter on snowshoes on the Arboretum trails. If there's no snow, we'll still be here—there is nothing better than a snowy hike in the crystal clear air of winter!

There are a limited number of snowshoes available for sizes from toddler to teens and adults. Everyone will get a chance to try out the snowshoes, but arrive early if you need them, or bring your own.

We will all meet back at the Farm House for hot cocoa and coffee. Dress appropriately for the weather and wear a sturdy pair of boots.

Arboretum Members: \$5 person, \$15 family
Non-members: \$15 person, \$25 family.

continued.

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MOHAWK HUDSON LAND CONSERVANCY

Climate Panel and Annual Awards Dinner with the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy

Sunday, February 24 at 2:30 PM; River Stone Manor, Schenectady

How does local conservation contribute to the global climate crisis? Join the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy for a discussion on conservation and climate change in the Capital Region. We'll enjoy dinner, discuss the Conservancy's successes over the past year and plans for the future, and ask questions of a panel of climate experts. Dinner and refreshments will be served. Tickets can be purchased at www.mohawkhudson.org or by calling the office at 518-436-6346.

Identifying Plants in Winter with the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy

Friday, March 1, 9 AM; Fox Preserve, Colonie, NY

In recognition of National Invasive Species Awareness Week (February 24 – March 2, 2019), this walk will feature winter plant identification of a variety of invasive species found at this preserve. All skills welcome—this will be a slow hike with a focus on identifying invasive plants in our area. In July, we'll return to the Fox Preserve to repeat the process in the summer landscape. To register for this free event, visit www.mohawkhudson.org.

VOLKSSPORTERS 5K AND 10K WALK

Empire State Capital Volkssporters (ESCV), will be holding a 5k and 10k group walk in Schenectady on March 20, 2019, starting at the Apostrophe Café in Proctor's Arcade, 432 State Street, Schenectady, at 10 am. The walk follows streets and sidewalks through the newly renovated Schenectady downtown, Union College and the Stockade Historic District. Sign in is from 9:30-9:55 and the cost is \$2.00.

PARTNER EVENTS

ANNUAL THACHER PARK NATURE ART EXHIBIT

Every year during the month of March, Thacher Nature Center undergoes a transformation from Nature Center to art gallery, and 2019 will be no different. The Nature Art Exhibit showcases the talent and creativity of our local artists with the sole requirement that the theme of their piece is ‘nature.’ Artwork of a wide variety of media is accepted, including oil, watercolor, photography, fiber, sculpture, wood, mixed media, and more.

The **Opening Reception** will be held on March 9 from 1pm – 4pm and the public is invited to come meet the artists and see their work. The Exhibit will be on display until March 27 and several art workshops will be offered on weekends. The Nature Center is open Tuesday through Sunday, 9am – 5pm, and closed on Mondays. Please come enjoy the exhibit and support our local artists! Workshops to be announced. Call 518-872-0800 for more information.



PANCAKE ICE

On a recent outing, Phil Falconer came across this unusual ice formation on the Tomhannock Reservoir in Pittstown, Rensselaer County. Pancake ice occurs when the temperature is just at freezing. As the ice begins to form, the pieces are buffeted by the wind and water movement causing the sides curl and become irregular.

REPAIR AND REUSE

Schenectady has a Repair Café. The concept began in the Netherlands in 2009, where volunteers fix or mend personal items for others. Dolls, clocks, jewelry, furniture, appliances and more are often made useable again.

This is a great effort to reduce the volume of what gets moved to our landfills, recycle items for new purposes, or fix things so that they are useable again. In some cases the owner learns how to fix the item themselves, in other cases the owner gets to say thank you to a person with skills or tools that they don’t possess.

Dave West heads up the Schenectady volunteers and they have three more scheduled “Repair Days” in 2019. They will be Saturdays April 6th, July 27th, and September 14th from 10—2. They meet in the McChesney Room at the main branch of the Schenectady Public Library.

Dave has seen an over wound antique music box restored and watched the happy owner hear an old familiar tune for the first time in decades. One may see a necklace repaired so that it can be worn again, a flat iron fixed so that it doesn’t have to be thrown away, and so forth.

The Repair Café is a great international idea that also has a new home in Schenectady, New York. What items do you have at home that are worthy of some fix up efforts? ECOS salutes this concept of repair and reuse, and those volunteers who are extending the life of ordinary appliances, family heirlooms, and more.





ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse
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ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse is located in the Niskayuna Community Center,
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ECOS Membership

ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse, Inc.

P.O. Box 9118, Niskayuna, NY 12309 518-370-4125

Please check your membership contribution level.

<input type="checkbox"/> \$30. Individual	<input type="checkbox"/> \$55. Donor/Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> \$250. Benefactor
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