



# 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 4

August / September 2022

---

**Join us for our family-friendly**

## August Mix & Mingle

All are welcome, ECOS members and non-members alike.

**Thursday, August 25th 5-8pm,**

Niskayuna Community Center Pavilion, 2682 Aqueduct Rd, Niskayuna, NY 12309

**Bring a dish or appetizer to share.** Drinks and ice cream provided.

\*BYO plate, bowl, cup, silverware, napkins, and serving utensil, please.  
We're aiming for zero waste.

Activities for children. Playground on site.

Registration by August 19th required at  
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080B4EA9AA29A4FA7-august> .

Rain or shine.



**ECOS NEWS**

*Published six times per year by*

ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse, Inc.

P.O. Box 9118, Niskayuna, NY 12309

Office phone: 518-370-4125

E-mail: [info@ecosny.org](mailto:info@ecosny.org)

Web: [www.ecosny.org](http://www.ecosny.org)

Editor: Maureen Gebert

John Loz, Executive Director

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Josh Bennett, President

Sarah Celik, Vice President of Programming

Harris Eisenhardt, Vice President of Outreach

Ruth Bonn, Secretary

Mike Howard, Treasurer

**BOARD MEMBERS**

Jackie Citriniti

Lesley Cutting

Cindy Frisoni

Rebekka Henriksen

Ed Kautz

Andrew Kulmatiski

Maeve McCulloch

Arden Rauch

Gillian Scott



**Get Ready for Snow!**

**Ski and Snowshoe**

**Trail Clearing**

Featherstonough 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.

**ACCESSIBLE TRAILS IN  
SCHENECTADY COUNTY**

**HELPERS NEEDED!**

Last year, ECOS published the first installment of the guide, detailing eight trails in Saratoga County on the ECOS website ([www.ecosny.org](http://www.ecosny.org)). Work is continuing on the "Trails for All" project in August. This year, Schenectady County trails are the focus.

Carole Fraser is leading the project. She is now living in Georgia; she 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 was unable to finish.

**VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED  
in late August, early September**

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 make 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)

**Call for MHLN Nature Bus  
Ambassadors!**

The Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy's Nature Bus program seeks volunteer preserve ambassadors to help facilitate guided hikes. The Nature Bus connects residents of Albany with natural spaces via direct bus route, every Saturday throughout the summer. ECOS members with experience leading hikes are invited to sign up for any available ambassador openings here:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0e49a8a72aaaf5c34-bender>

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0e49a8a72aaaf5c34-normans>

Learn more about the Nature Bus program here: <https://www.mohawkhudson.org/nature-bus>

## Executive Director's Message

—John Loz

Happy Summer Everyone! It already been a very busy, but wonderful journey getting to know ECOS in more depth coming on as Executive Director. I was quite happy that I could join ECOS at the time when our Annual Dinner fundraiser was scheduled at the River Stone Manor right on the Mohawk River. What a beautiful setting and gorgeous weather we had to gather together to celebrate ECOS' 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year! I was pretty excited to meet and talk to everyone I could in the short few hours we had on that very celebratory evening. I soon learned that there was quite a bit more this organization does than what I knew previously. Longtime, loyal members shared with me their experiences and stories of the founding of the organization, which was some of the institutional knowledge I needed to understand the history of the organization and think about how I can start working with the ECOS Board to take ECOS into its next 50 years. Quickly I learned how many volunteers work to make ECOS a vibrant organization with so many hike and cross-country ski leaders who give up their free time to keep a steady stream of member events available to the public. I also learned how many teachers and professors volunteer their time to continue to teach adults and children about the natural surroundings around them. The evening was quite special for me to see the excitement of everyone and conversations happening with smiling faces after being 'away' so long after the worst parts of this pandemic. We're back together and proud to be part of this impactful organization. Having Judith Enck of *Beyond Plastics*, a dynamic, humorous, and passionate speaker, was an inspiration for all of us.

Soon after the dinner at River Stone Manor, I made sure to attend an ECOS-led hike to the Sanders Preserve in Glenville with hike leader Andy Kulmatiski. Longtime ECOS members, as well as a couple of new members who only discovered ECOS couple months ago, had a nice adventure exploring the trails. It was fun to get to know the members on that hike while identifying forest wildflowers along the way and happen upon an eastern phoebe nest with nestlings about to fledge at the lean-to in the upper park of the preserve. Being a birder, just that simple encounter fueled my passion and energy to advocate for the environment and find ways to educate the people I encounter on the trail. I'm not going to be bashful about quoting another organization's tagline that is so appropriate for what we do – 'Conservation Through Education.'

With that, I am excited to be assisting our ECOS VP of Programs Sarah Celik and longtime ECOS educator and hike leader Steve Jones, lead a program for kids of the Schenectady City Schools in August. The topic will be on "Your Trees" and will be the first of five lessons to launch the new 'ECOS Lessons To-Go' initiative created by Sarah Celik. Thanks Sarah!

I am excited and still a bit humbled to be helping lead ECOS during this historic Golden Anniversary celebration. There's a lot to celebrate and also, a lot to start working towards, one being, developing a Strategic Plan for the next 50 years. The ECOS Board has started discussions on formulating the first five years of that plan at recent board meetings and it's coming along well. I have also heard from ECOS members and had phone and email discussions talking about how ECOS can be a more progressive organization and modernize some of our outreach, and processes surrounding our relationship with our loyal membership. There are some great ideas and working forward with the ECOS Board, see how we can enhance what ECOS is already doing and have a broader and more impactful reach in our greater Capital Region communities. Do you have ideas about how you'd like to see ECOS move forward in the next 50 years? I'm here to work for you and see if we can incorporate your ideas into our new Strategic Plan. I and the ECOS Board would love to hear from you. E-mail us at: [info@ecosny.org](mailto:info@ecosny.org)

As big part of building more ECOS environmental education infrastructure to have a broader impact in our Capital Region communities moving forward, we launched our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary \$50,000 Fund drive at our annual meeting, and are looking for support from corporate donors and individuals with a passion for environmental education. Do you know anyone or any businesses that would be a great partner to support our efforts? Email me at [director@ecosny.org](mailto:director@ecosny.org) to share. There are a couple very exciting projects ECOS and our partners have in the pipeline, which will require some significant financial investment as the projects come to fruition. To make it easier for supporters of our mission, we have created a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Fund Drive donation page on our ECOS website that you can find under our 'Support' tab where you can read more about our initiatives. Here is the link: <https://www.ecosny.org/50th-anniversary-fund-drive/>

There will be more news to share soon!

For now, I wish you all a safe and healthy summer full of fun with family and friends. With this warm weather – Let's Go Outside! - John

## Message from the President

—*Josh Bennett*

On the last day in June during a hot, buggy 1810 summer, DeWitt Clinton and a small group of New York dignitaries boarded Robert Fulton's newfangled steamboat in New York City for a trip up the Hudson. After disembarking in Albany, they had to travel by carriage around the falls and shoals to the "quite dull" town of Schenectady. Clinton much preferred the "thriving" Utica. Over the course of the next month, the group traveled by water and over land to the Mohawk River headwaters, then to the small Lake Erie town of Buffalo. After nearly a decade of subsequent political battles, their route became the path of the Erie Canal.

Even as a child growing up in Michigan, we routinely sang the song in elementary music class. If that triggered some nostalgia, I recommend checking out Bruce Springsteen's version from the Mike Seeger sessions. Thank me later.

Multiple recent ECOS activities have centered around the Erie Canal, and I'm in the midst of planning a personal early fall four-day end-to-end ride. As part of ECOS events, we've biked and hiked along the former towpaths and canal courses, and kayaked around former aqueducts. In particular, David Brooks, Schoharie Crossings Education Director, provided a wealth of history at the recent Trails Day events. It's very easy to live around the former canal and let it fade into the background. Some of us travel over parts of the canal on our daily commute without giving much thought to the role the canal played in the development of the state. In fact, many of us can trace our presence in the Capital District to the canal. In my case, Thomas Edison saw the industrial base along the canal in Schenectady as a great place to build a factory.

With the state of the roads in upstate New York in 1820, it would take five horses to haul a ton of goods to market. Four feet of water allowed a barge carrying ten tons to be pulled by a single horse. Costs of transport decreased accordingly. This artery of transportation allowed farmers around the great lakes, and factories in Detroit and Rochester, to easily trade through the port of New York City. This enriched the state, and turned New York City into the largest trading port in the world.

Later, railroads and highways supplanted the canal system. The canal today is now almost exclusively used for recreation. Thus we still enjoy the benefits today. Those benefits, however, did not come without a cost. Building the canal required draining of wetlands, and flooding areas that were dry. Source water was needed to fill the canal, so multiple natural watersheds were diverted. When completed, the canal became a highway for invasive species to travel across the state. Of course the general development that grew up around the canal replaced forests and marshlands with sprawling suburbia.

This situation represents what economists call an externality. We benefit from the canal -- our livelihoods, leisure, and property are enriched -- while we bear little of the costs. The Erie Canal as an example of an environmental impact externality may seem rather silly, but think of the numerous cases where our predecessors took the path of short term gains over long term costs. Be it burning dirty fuels, clear-cutting agriculture, or driving species to extinction, this seems to be a persistent human endeavor.

On the other side, policies that attempt to ban the continuation of such actions can lead to a sense of unfairness. Those who stand to benefit from short-term gains may view policies as hypocritical when imposed by others who have already reaped the benefits of similar actions. The U.S. built our industrial might burning cheap coal, yet we (rightly) push to force developing nations to use cleaner energy, even if incurs higher costs.

The best science-based policies are often clear. The challenge is coming up with creative solutions that balance shared costs and avoid saddling the least fortunate with externalities. Sometimes this is complicated; optimal solutions are elusive. I certainly don't have the answers. But I'm confident that the same incredible human ingenuity that carved a 360-mile canal with 19th century technology can be brought to bear. I remain hopeful.

Recommended reading:

<https://www.canals.ny.gov/reimagine/TaskForceReport.pdf>

[Wedding of the Waters: The Erie Canal and the Making of a Great Nation](#), by Peter L. Bernstein

## 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner, June 8<sup>th</sup> River Stone Manor

—*Ruth Bonn*

### AN ENJOYABLE EVENING AND A THOUGHT-PROVOKING TALK

The evening could not have been more lovely—perfect temperature, no rain, no bugs! The setting along the Mohawk was gorgeous—a lush lawn edged by large trees, gradually sloping toward the river, which was gleaming in the evening light. Everyone was in a festive mood, delighted to see old friends and acquaintances and to meet new people. The social hour was very lively, and the dinner did not disappoint.

Judith Enck, the evening's speaker, is an influential environmental leader. She served as the Regional Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for NY, NJ, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands and eight Indian Nations under President Obama . Currently, she is a Senior Fellow at Bennington College and President of *Beyond Plastics*. She is also, a regular panelist on WAMC's Roundtable discussions.

Her talk, "Moving Beyond Plastic Pollution" gave an overview of the many complex issues surrounding our increasing use of plastics...and some steps individuals can take.

#### Not-so-Fun facts:

- The U.S. contains 4% of the world's population, but consumes 24% of the world's natural resources and contributes 12% of the world's solid waste.
- \*Plastic waste has doubled since 2002. \*Fifteen million tons of plastic enter the oceans every year.
- By 2025 there will be one pound of plastic for every three pounds of fish in the ocean.
- Sea birds are starving because their stomachs are filled with red or orange bottle caps they mistake for shrimp.

Plastic pollution is insidious. Plastic does not biodegrade. Even when it breaks down, small plastic particles remain in the environment. Microplastic (pieces less than 5mm in length) are everywhere-- in the atmosphere, the soil, our water. We breathe it; we eat and drink it. Microplastics have even been found in human placentas.

The U.S., due to hydrofracking, is the largest producer of oil and gas in the world. Oil and gas companies, threatened by the transition away from fossil fuel to greener energy sources, see increasing the use of single-use plastic as their "Plan B".

Plastics are made from fossil fuels. The fossil fuel producers view plastics, especially single use plastic, as a replacement market.

Recycling is not a solution. Plastic recyclability is a myth heavily promoted by petrochemical companies. Only 9% of plastic ever made has been recycled. Because there are hundreds of different kinds of plastic which can't be melted down together, recycling of most plastics is impractical. Sorting the many plastics is cost-prohibitive. Plus, chemically, plastics degrade as they are recycled. Manufacturing new plastic is cheaper. Judith advised that #1 and #2 are the only plastics that are actually recycled. To stop plastic pollution, we need to stop making plastic.

#### What can we do?

Reduce our personal and household plastic use as much as possible. As a small example, Judith is no longer buying orange juice for her husband in large plastic bottles. She's buying frozen juice in little cans instead. Low or no-plastic alternatives exist to big plastic jugs of laundry detergent as well. Carry a refillable cup; don't buy bottled water! No plastic wrap! Urge your local *Meals on Wheels* program to shift to reusable packaging from single use plastics.

Voice your support to your legislators for S984 and HR2238, the *Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act*. This bill would hold companies fiscally responsible for collecting, managing or recycling the products they create, reduce the production of single-use plastic products and packaging, and improve labeling regarding if it can be composted, recycled, etc. *Legislation to reduce plastic pollution is essential.* Support Beyond Plastics and the great work they are doing. [www.beyondplastics.org](http://www.beyondplastics.org)

Many thanks to Cindy Frisoni and her committee for organizing the event, and for all the little touches that made it special. Thanks, also, to Paula Shaw and her violin students for providing music during the social hour. Kudos as well to Peg Reich who researched and wrote: Our First Fifty Years, the ECOS history available at the event and by request from the office.

**Sunset Kayaking Trip**

—*Harris Eisenhardt*

ECOS will be offering a beginner/intermediate kayaking experience for interested members! Come explore Vischer's Ferry Preserve on a guided trip led by certified kayaking instructor Collin Borzell. Please bring your own kayak and equipment. This trip will be on Friday, August 5, from approximately 5:30PM to 7:30PM, from the bridge parking lot at the intersection of Riverview Road and Van Vranken Road in Rexford. If you are interested in joining, please email [sarahjcelik@gmail.com](mailto:sarahjcelik@gmail.com) and be on the lookout for a mail chimp invite!

**2022 Fall Nature Walks**

—*Steve Jones*

*Our Tuesday guided walks continue this fall. Meeting times are 9:30 a.m., and walks usually last around 2 hours. There is no pre-registration, but we may need to follow covid recommendations of the time. For information email [doniphin.jones@gmail.com](mailto:doniphin.jones@gmail.com). Cancellations or changes may be found at [www.ecosny.org](http://www.ecosny.org) or [www.facebook.com/ecosny](http://www.facebook.com/ecosny).*

**AUG. 30: Winn Preserve, Knox.** Debra Barnes, leader. This is a beautiful wooded preserve with low to medium-effort trails that wind through ferns and shady forests. Limestone fissures, rock outcroppings, and cliffs demonstrate the limestone karst geology of the Helderberg Escarpment. *Directions:* From Altamont, follow Rte. 146 (NOT Rte. 156), which turns north onto Maple Ave. in the village, then turns west in one block and proceeds approximately 4 miles to a Y intersection just past Township Tavern. Take the far left fork of the Y intersection onto Street Rd., and proceed past the Knox Transfer Station to the kiosk and parking area on the left. ([www.hilltowns.org/winn-preserve.html](http://www.hilltowns.org/winn-preserve.html))

**SEPT. 6: Lock 4, Canal Park.** Jackie Donnelly, leader. Located on the Champlain Canal of the Hudson River, the park offers both mixed-forest and alluvial habitats. We will see green dragon's beautiful red fruit and probably the rare creeping bush clover in bloom, as well as the endangered provancher's fleabane. Bald eagles and ospreys are often sighted here, too. *Directions:* If coming from the west, cross the Hudson River on the bridge in the middle of the Stillwater village, and watch for the entrance to Canal Park/Lock 4 on the right, immediately after crossing the river; a large parking area is adjacent to the lock. (Address 947 Stillwater Bridge Rd., Schaghticoke, NY.) **PLEASE NOTE: 10 A.M. START.**

**SEPT. 13: Bozenkill Preserve, Altamont.** Laurie Lyons-Swift, leader. An ecological and natural history walk with some historical and cultural areas. The best parts of the preserve are not until you get about a mile in, so expect a 2-3 mile hike. *Directions:* There is parking for about 7-8 cars in the preserve parking lot, plus a few places along the road. ([www.mohawkhudson.org/preserves/bozenkill-preserve](http://www.mohawkhudson.org/preserves/bozenkill-preserve))

**SEPT. 20: Woods Hollow Preserve, Ballston Spa.** Elizabeth Collins, leader. This preserve features quite a variety of habitats, from pond, marsh, and woodland to pine forest and sand dune/sandpit. *Directions:* At the north edge of Ballston Spa, turn left onto Northline Rd., and continue west to the main Preserve entrance on the right, a short distance before the intersection with Rowland St. See directions at: ([www.alltrails.com/trail/us/new-york/woods-hollow-nature-preserve-trail?u=m](http://www.alltrails.com/trail/us/new-york/woods-hollow-nature-preserve-trail?u=m))

**SEPT. 27: Five Rivers, Delmar.** Sigrin Newell, leader. Gold and purple highlight the meadows of September. Asters, goldenrod, and other composites fill the broad fields at Five Rivers. These and the surrounding forests provide exceptional wildlife habitat and a sense of the primeval. *Directions:* There are many different routes to Five Rivers, which is at 56 Game Farm Rd., off Rte. 308 between New Scotland Rd. and Delaware Ave. ([www.dec.ny.gov/education/1835.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/education/1835.html))

**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.

2022 CALENDAR

- Friday August 5, 5:30-7:30—Sunset Kayaking Trip
- Thursday, August 24, 5-8 pm—Mix and Mingle
- Tuesday, August 30, 9:30 am—Fall Walk, Winn Preserve
- Tuesday, September 6, 10:00 am—Fall Walk, Lock 4, Canal Park
- Tuesday, September 13, 9:30 am—Fall Walk, Bozenkill Preserve
- Tuesday, September 20, 9:30 am—Fall Walk, Woods Hollow Preserve
- Tuesday, September 27, 9:30 am—Fall Walk, Five Rivers
- Tuesday, October 4, 9:30 am—Fall Walk, Escarpment Walk
- TBD,—Rachel Carson Dinner

*Our First Fifty Years*

by Margaret "Peg" Reich is a history of the founding of ECOS from 1972 –2022. Peg spent countless hours researching old files stored in the office, the state archives at SUNY in 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 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.

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <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 \_\_\_\_\_

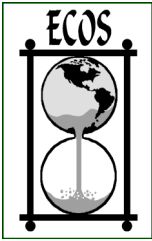
Address \_\_\_\_\_

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.



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

**Non-Profit  
U.S. Postage  
Paid  
Permit #20  
Rexford, NY**

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

## *ECOS'50th Anniversary Dinner*



*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.*