



June July August 2024
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Another 2,000 Trees...

By John Kastner

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Another 2,000 trees found homes in Rochester and Monroe County neighborhoods on Saturday, 4/27 in our fourth annual COOL THE PLANET WITH FREE TREES FROM SIERRA CLUB event. That's 7000 trees total so far with the potential to sequester 336,000 tons of carbon annually. We also collected about \$1000 toward next year's giveaway.

Despite chill winds and cold rain, a steady stream of cheerful people turned out at our four locations to claim their trees. Three of our distribution sites, Northampton, Seneca and Webster Parks, dispensed all of their trees. Thank you to site captains Daryl Odhner, Joe Grinnan, and Linda Isaacson Fedele and their volunteers. Genesee Valley Park gave out all but 50 of their 500 trees. Despite the stellar efforts of my valiant crew: Dave Ferguson, Peter Debs, Bob Good, Janet Siegel, Jack Spula, Hugh Mitchell, Amy Kastner, Zuza Kwon and her children, we finished last in the running but had a great time. Twenty-five of the fifty were given to the Seneca Park Labor Center for planting on their land and REI volunteer, Mike Hodgekiss, helped me plant the last twenty-five at the Genesee Land Trust's Brookdale Reserve. The planet is still losing trees faster than we are replacing them, but we are gaining traction on the problem as more people become active in saving one of our most valuable resources in addressing the climate emergency.

While this event represents a significant community effort toward solving the climate crisis, there is much more that can be done. In addition to getting our personal lives on a sustainable track, we can join organizations like Sierra Club and the others who partnered with us, to lend some of our precious time giving back to the planet in gratitude for all that it's given us. We can also keep pressure on elected officials to prioritize legislation reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

We would like to thank our partners and sponsors for their contribution to another successful effort: Wegmans Food Markets, the City of Rochester Department of Forestry, Monroe County Parks Department, Climate Solutions Accelerator, Citizens Climate Lobby, Abundance Cooperative Market, and the members of the Rochester Regional Group Sierra Club. To all those who came to take our trees and all those who lent their time and energy to the success of this project, we at Sierra Club extend our grateful thanks. We look forward to seeing you all again next year.

From the Chair: We're ready for a change. Are you interested?

By Jessica Slaybaugh

I joined the RRG's executive committee in 2010, becoming chair in 2017. I've loved my time with the Sierra Club and will continue to serve on the committee, but it's time for me to step aside and give another avid environmentalist the opportunity to lead this wonderful group of volunteers. Could that be you, or someone you know?

We're looking for someone who can bring fresh ideas and energy to the committee, someone who's interested in helping us define and act on a vision for our future. As a group that focuses on supporting and engaging with the communities we serve, there are dozens of opportunities we can get involved in, yet, we need to be selective about which opportunities we invest our time and resources in. Do you have ideas as to how we can best support our communities? If so, the chair position might be perfect for you!

The chair isn't all about high-level planning. Primary responsibilities also include: **1.** Leading our executive committee meetings (6:30 – 8:30 p.m. the first Tuesday of every month, conducted virtually via Zoom). **2.** Appointing/reappointing committee chairs and members, in consultation with the executive committee. **3.** Leading the executive committee voting process when something arises that requires a majority vote to move forward with. **4.** Making decisions when needs arise that don't require a vote, typically in consultation with the executive committee, but sometimes independently when a swift response is required. **5.** If you so choose, being the primary "voice" of the Rochester Regional Group when requests for statements, interviews, etc. are requested (there are others who can take this on if you aren't comfortable doing this).

In terms of time commitment, it varies with what we have going on and personal preference and bandwidth. You could devote a few hours a month to Sierra Club work, or a few hours a week – it's up to you. We understand that everyone has outside obligations and will work to ensure that you receive the support you need.

If you are – or might be – interested in taking on this role (or in simply joining our committee as a general member), **we encourage you to join us at one or more of our executive committee meetings to meet us and get a feel for who we are and what we do. Email me or any other member of our executive committee to express your interest and we'll send you the meeting details** and add you to the agenda so we can ensure we set aside some time for introductions. Our contact details are on the last page of this newsletter.

I will step down from this role at the end of the year (or earlier if we find someone who's eager to take over sooner). Thank you for your support over the years, and a special thanks to our ExCom. I've been extremely fortunate to work with a team of kind, generous, driven and passionate environmentalists who work together to make a difference.

Environmental Writer, David Wallace Wells, Speaks at MCC

By John Kastner JohnKastner49@gmail.com

On May 4th, I seated myself in a sparsely filled auditorium at Monroe Community College to hear Mr. Wells speak about climate change. You may recall that he wrote a book published in 2019: "The Uninhabitable Earth" which I reviewed here. It was a grim forensic of the climate emergency and what it portends for our food, water, health, and social and political order. Unfortunately, things have gotten worse, largely because of a woefully inadequate response.

First, he gave us the good news. Everyone knows about climate change and almost no thinking person denies that it is real and caused by the way we humans have chosen to live on the planet since civilization and industrialization. All of the world's major scientific institutions and most of its nations agree that climate change is a serious threat to our existence and much of the rest of life on earth as well. Secondly, renewable energy has gathered enough momentum that it has become an unstoppable part of our future...despite the fossil fuel industry's attempts to kill it. Nevertheless, they continue to drill, dig and market their poison aggressively.

The bad news is that the carbon load of the atmosphere continues to grow to the point where the aggregate of all those tiny little lung clogging, heat trapping particles now literally outweigh everything we humans have ever created on the earth. That's all hanging up there in the sky right above us. Now, there's something to think about.

Climate change, with its attendant droughts, floods, fires, heat waves and super storms has already killed tens of thousands of people, untold millions of domestic and wild animals, fish and micro life that make the oxygen we breathe. It has racked up 38 trillion dollars in damages worldwide. Our own EPA way underestimates our share of this debt at around three to four trillion dollars against which we have pledged 17 million to fund climate preparedness in the underdeveloped world. No sign there that we are taking this global threat seriously yet.

Mr. Wells writes regularly on the environment for several publications, including the New York Times. He has been doing this for much of his forty-one years. He looked a little worn, but as a young father he did his best to sound upbeat. He pleaded with the tiny audience to become more involved and engage respectfully with their fellow human beings to become more active on this crucial issue. It is still too far down on our priorities relative to its importance to our collective futures. And now....

PART II...BIG OPPORTUNITY To DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS LOCALLY



There is a rapidly growing local movement, currently headed by Metro Justice, to replace RG&E with a publicly owned and operated energy utility. There are about 3000 municipal power utilities in the United States. Around 2000 of these are owned by the people they serve, clear evidence of their popularity and performance. These communities typically pay 13 to 30% less for their energy than do the customers of private for-profit entities. More relevant to the previous article, public power utilities get 40% of their energy from renewable sources. This is certainly in line with New York's push to convert homes in our state to 100% electric power. This would put a big dent in our carbon emissions.

Of course, no good idea ever comes along without a great deal of well organized, well-funded, self-interested opposition. Iberdrola, RG&E's

Spanish, multinational overlord, has certainly been busy in that department. Every year it draws \$100,000,000 out of the local economy and moves it to Spain and its shareholders. Imagine what that money could do toward decarbonizing our power grid.

While Rochester's, city council has authorized \$500,000 for a feasibility study of public power, the Monroe County Legislature has twice voted down the proposal. The last time it did this with just two Democratic votes in concert with a solid Republican vote. This sorry debacle was accomplished in a legislature with a Democratic majority and a Democratic County Executive. Why would these three people who represent us not want complete information on which to base a decision so important to their constituents and to the issue of climate change? It seems, that for no clear reason, they just don't want a public power utility regardless of the public's views on the matter.

This is where you come in. Please gather your neighbors, your clubs, your church groups, your local garden and environmental organizations and go to www.metrojustice.org. Click on Rochester for Energy Democracy (RED) to learn more about the issue and what you can do. Contact Michelle Wenderlich (michelle@metrojustice.org) for detailed information about upcoming events.

This is a fight we can win. The movement for a public energy utility is very popular and won't go away. If you want to do something really significant to advance renewable energy in our area (and reduce your utility bill), this is it. Also, be sure to contact your city, town and county legislators and let them know how you feel about this issue. Tell them you are watching how they vote on it. Democracy relies on everyone's participation.

Something more to think about: As you contemplate the ocean, the sky, the view from the top of the mountain or the vastness of the Cosmos, perhaps reflecting on your own insignificance, remember that the totality of all you observe is composed of infinitely tiny particles much smaller than you are. Nothing is insignificant and neither are you. Get busy.

GENESEE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY SUMMER FIELD TRIPS, etc.

A Spring Bouquet of Birds: A Sit and Bird event PREMIER

Lakeview Community Church, 30 Long Pond Road

Saturday, June 1, 8:00am-9:30am

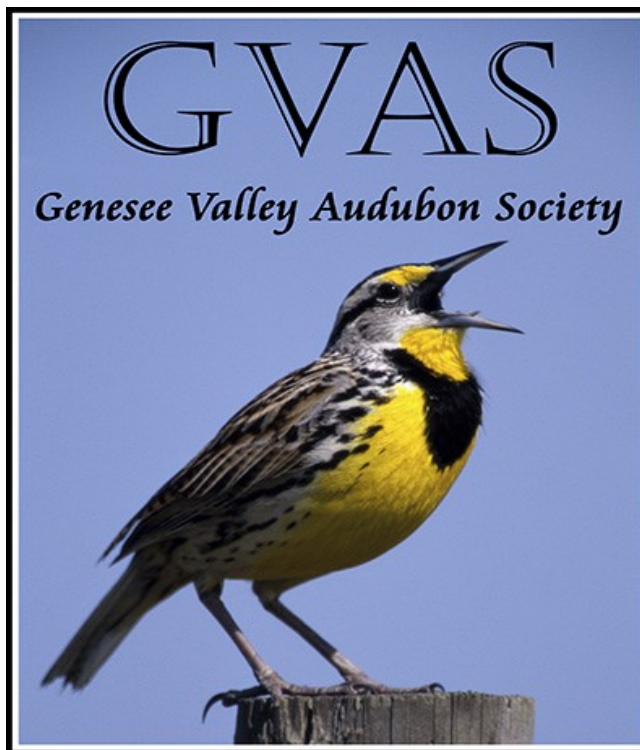
Come join us in a new birding opportunity from GVAS for all abilities as we host our inaugural Sit and Bird event. Some call it Slow Birding, Some Call it Mindful Birding. Most just call it bird watching. We are inviting you to bring a chair, your binoculars, the non-alcoholic beverage of your choice, and spend a quiet morning just sitting in nature enjoying the birds. The southern shore of Lake Ontario is along the Atlantic flyway. The geography of central and western New York concentrates large numbers of birds as they travel up to their summer breeding grounds. On a beautiful day in June we will have the opportunity of seeing many different species of birds all in their brightest breeding plumage. It is a feast for the eyes and heart even if you don't know a robin from an eagle. GVAS volunteers will be on hand to help with the names of the birds if you care to learn. Prompts will be suggested to allow you to just view, breath in, and hear nature. There will be time to share and time to just sit and soak it all in. We hope this is an event that you will enjoy and invite friends and family to at future events. We will be setting up along a parking area. Sunscreen, hat, and water bottle are highly recommended. Sorry, but there are no public facilities available at this site. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to reach out to Loretta at loretta.morrell.gvas@gmail.com.

Registration is required no later than Thursday, May 30 at <http://tinyurl.com/3yvnaa7r>

Nature Walk at Tinker Nature Park 1525 Calkins Road Saturday, June 8, 2024, 9:00am

Come join GVAS Saturday, June 8th at 9:00am for an early summer morning walk along the trail at Tinker Nature Park, an accessible area that features a crushed stone and grass trail that circles the perimeter of the park and is 1.2 miles long. Be aware that there are gentle slopes. We will park in the paved 1525 Calkins Road lot where there are accessible designated spaces and a bathroom available. We will discover what wildlife waits for us around a pond, wetland, open field, and woodland. We should see many spring migrants and birds that come visit for short period every summer to brood and raise their families. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to reach

out to Loretta at loretta.morrell.gvas@gmail.com. For more information about this trail we invite everyone to check out the details on Birdability.org, <http://tinyurl.com/4uuse77n> Registration is required no later than Thursday, June 6 at <http://tinyurl.com/mrycztb7>



The NY HEAT Act Would Secure Affordable, Clean Energy for New York Households

By Joe Grinnan

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A new report shows that if the full NY Home Energy Affordable Transition bill (NY HEAT Act) were passed in this year's NYS budget, the 25% of New York residents who have high energy burdens would cut their bills by over 44% and save an average of \$136 a month. The report, released by NY Renew, a statewide coalition of over 370 environmental justice, faith, labor, and community groups, includes an analysis of potential savings for households in each region and county of the state, with dramatic implications for highly burdened households. Households with energy burdens above 6% are considered highly burdened.

Ninety-two percent of the households who would see bill reductions from NY HEAT are low or moderate-income. They would have their bills cut by 53% on average. The New York State Senate passed S2016B/A4592B, the "NY HEAT Act." In passing it again this year, the Senate has demonstrated its ongoing commitment to address energy affordability and climate crises. With an impressive 76 Assembly sponsors, endorsement of key provisions from Governor Hochul, and passage in the State Senate, it's time for the Assembly to get on board. Time to call your Assembly representative and urge them to pass the bill.

Rochester Regional Group of the Sierra Club

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WE WELCOME YOUR FEEDBACK AND IDEAS

www.sierraclub.org/atlantic/rochester; Find us on **Facebook** and **LinkedIn!**

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Opinions expressed via the articles within are those of the authors and are not necessarily an official Sierra Club position or policy.

Summer 2024 Calendar			SIERRA CLUB and other environmental events	
DATE	DAY	TIME	MEETING/EVENT	LOCATION
June 4th	Tuesday	6:30- 8:30 pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Via ZOOM, not in person; SC Members are invited
July 2nd	Tuesday	6:30-8:30 pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Via ZOOM, not in person; SC Members are invited
			*We don't always meet over the summer.	*We may have a picnic somewhere instead.
August 6th	Tuesday	6:30—8:30 pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Via ZOOM, not in person. SC Members are invited
Summer Market	Sundays	9 am to 1 pm	Brighton Farmers Market; accepts SNAP	Brighton HS Parking Lot, South Winton Road
All year	Every day	8 am - 8 pm	Abundance Coop Food Market: local, organic, sustainable food, open to public	571 South Ave., Rochester, NY in South Wedge (585) 454-2667 www.Abundance.coop
SEE PAGE 3	FOR GVAS	FIELD TRIPS, etc.	BE SURE TO REGISTER IN ADVANCE	WE ALL ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE

Watch our Facebook page for information on upcoming community meetings, outings & other activities

All Committees are local volunteer groups of the Rochester Regional Group of the Sierra Club.

Follow us on Facebook to keep up-to-date on new events throughout the year—www.facebook.com/SierraROC

Executive Committee meetings are open to Sierra Club members. All other meetings are open to everyone.

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