



# Meadowlark

The Newsletter of Genesee Valley Audubon Society

Jan-Feb 2020

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## President's Column

By June Summers

### Single-Use Plastic and Climate Change

This essay is a summary of the radio magazine Living On Earth, which aired on Nov. 15, 2019. Plastic waste from single-use plastics has been found in almost every corner of the earth. Eighty pounds of plastic was found in the gut of a Sperm Whale that washed up on the shore, interfering with its digestion. Sea birds are often found on the shore, dead from eating plastic. Studies are showing that humans are consuming a credit card's worth of plastic a week from the water, air and food.

How do we keep single-use plastic items such as bags and bottles out of the waste stream and the environment? We are lucky in New York to be one of eleven States in the USA that have a bottle bill, i.e. 5 cent deposits on bottles. Research has shown that states with bottle deposits can recycle between 60-90% of their bottles and cans. We are also one of eight states that have banned plastic bags. With luck there will be fewer plastic bag birds in the trees.

The biggest reason that the 40 other states in the Union probably don't have bottle bills is because of push back from the beverage industry that uses all those bottles, explains Judith Enck of Beyond Plastics. Judith Enck served as the Regional Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency overseeing environmental protection in NY, NJ, eight Indian Nations, Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands during the Obama administration. Currently a visiting faculty member at Bennington, she is a senior fellow in the Center for the Advancement of Public Action.

Judith says, "The beverage industry in general, and Coke in particular, have worked hard to kill any new bottle bills."

Coke is one of the world's largest brand producers of plastic waste. A recent global audit of litter conducted by Break Free From Plastic found more Coke products than the next 3 largest producers

combined. But Coke recently announced very ambitious recycling goals. Among them, to recycle the equivalent of every bottle and can they produce by 2030.

Judith says, "You have Coca Cola greenwashing, they say that they support recycling, and yet they vigorously oppose bottle bills across the world. So I think they're being, you know, very hypocritical."

Coke financially supports recycling organizations around the world. But critics allege that they use that money as leverage and get recycling groups to discourage new bottle laws themselves and spare Coke the need to publicly oppose a legislation that's been proven effective.

Coke is also a member of the Association of Plastic Recyclers as are roughly 200 other companies including Dow Chemical, the world's largest producer of plastic. Steve Alexander is president and CEO of the Association of Plastic Recyclers. He says his organization does not support new bottle bills. Bottle bills don't address the systematic change that consumers and municipalities need to make.

Senator Tom Udall (D-NM) and Congressman Alan Lowenthal (D-CA) aim to curb the plastic waste crisis with a draft bill that would ban certain single-use plastics, institute a 10-cent nationwide container deposit, and compel producers to take the lead on recycling. Senator Udall points out that a main principle of environmental law is called "the polluter pays." The producers of these products need to take on the responsibility of recycling them.

The President of the Association of Plastic Recyclers said the real problem in the way that we collect and process recyclables in this country is that there are no national or state standards. Uniformity across the nation in recycling will provide recyclers more reliable material to process. Senator Udall's bill would make recycling consistent across the Nation, increasing recycling. This bill would also ban the use of single-use plastic cutlery and Styrofoam cups.

*Continued on page 2*

# Programs

## January Program

### Freshwater: Upstate NY's Most Valuable Resource

**Tuesday, January 28, 2020, 7:30pm**  
**Irondequoit Public Library, Rm 113, Lake Ontario Room, 1290 Titus Avenue, 14617**

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) helps the public contribute to healthier lands and waters in the Finger Lakes, where harmful algal blooms now occur in all 11 lakes—from the shallowest to the deepest and most pristine. TNC is collaborating with municipalities, agencies, volunteer groups, academic researchers and farmers to reduce phosphorous and other pollutants in our waters and invest in nature's ability to help keep our waters safe.

Jim Howe, TNC Chapter Director for Western New York, will tell us how they are doing this work and how we can be a part of this movement.



## February Program

### Survival by Degrees: 389 Bird Species on the Brink

**Tuesday, February 18, 2020, 7:30pm**  
**Irondequoit Public Library, Rm113, Lake Ontario Room, 1290 Titus Avenue, 14617**

This new report from National Audubon Society offers a fresh look at the vulnerability of birds across North America to climate change based on a new, updated scientific analysis that leverages big data and incorporates the unique biology of each bird to determine its vulnerability. Come see the potential fate of your backyard birds, and come see how you can be part of the solution.

## March Program

### What's Going on at Cranberry Pond?

**Tuesday, March 24, 2020, 7:30pm**  
**Irondequoit Public Library, Rm 114, Densmore Creek Room, 1290 Titus Avenue, 14617**

Have you driven by Cranberry Pond this winter and seen backhoes in the marsh? The restoration work that we have been telling you was going to be built should be started, if Mother Nature is with us.

Andrew Hinickle, conservation biologist for Audubon New York, is going to give us the details of the design and what birds will benefit from the project. June Summers will also be there to discuss GVAS's participation in the project.



## April Program

### Nature Walk along the Brickyard Trail at the Sandra Frankel Nature Park

**Tuesday, April 28th, 2020, 7:00pm-9:00pm**  
**Meet in the front of the Brighton Library Parking Lot, 2300 Elmwood Avenue, 14618**

A casual evening nature walk to watch for birds and early spring flowers while listening for frogs and other wildlife. This short easy walk of about a mile and a half round trip will give us a chance



to explore an urban wetland at dusk. Who know what we will find? We will visit a local restaurant for hot cocoa afterwards.

### Great Backyard Bird Count 2020

February 14-17, 2020

Go to [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org) for information and data from 2019.

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Alternatives exist and those industries will soon develop.

What can we do to reduce plastic waste since we are responsible for the impact of plastics on the environment from the time it comes out of the wellhead and it never ends. It will be very difficult to reduce our plastic use. We use them to package our food, to make our clothes and cars and much else. We can support Senator Udall's bill when it comes up for a vote. We can reduce our use of single-use plastic bags, cutlery, carry-out boxes and anything else you can think of. Use a refillable water bottle instead of single-use bottles.

Please make suggestions on the GVAS Facebook page so we can all learn more things we can do.

## Conserving Chimney Swifts One Nesting Tower at a Time

By Janelle DiPaolo

*Chaetura pelagica*, commonly known as the Chimney Swift, is a small, slender-bodied bird belonging to the family Apodidae. Their breeding grounds exist within the eastern half of the United States and into southeast Canada. They are a common sight in the local area during spring and summer. During the harsh winter months large flocks migrate to the Upper Amazon Basin of South America.

Chimney Swifts forage for a variety of insects throughout the day, almost never perching. Their distinct chattering calls can be heard in commercial and residential areas.

Originally, these birds nested in natural sites such as hollow trees or caves. Now they primarily breed in suburban and urban areas where vertical structures with low light, such as chimneys, are readily available. Yet this very adaptation has been a key factor to their steady decline.

These cigar-shaped birds have seen a dramatic decline of approximately three percent each year for several decades. This has been mainly attributed to loss of habitat. Natural and man-made structures have both receded. Notably, deforestation of old-growth forests, chimney capping and a switch to other heating sources have left Chimney Swifts with fewer roosting sites every year.

This has inspired a new project at SUNY Geneseo to promote conservation of this species. With support

from the Geneseo Foundation, the SUNY Geneseo Office of Sustainability, and the Genesee Valley Audubon Society, a diverse team of students advised by Dr. Brandon Tate is constructing an artificial nesting tower to be placed on the university's campus. Students participating in this project are learning valuable skills ranging from writing grant proposals to basic woodworking and



*SUNY Geneseo students Brian Zapfel and Hiina Asami work on the construction of the Chimney Swift artificial nesting tower.*



## Field Trips

### Seneca Park Ramble

**Sunday, January 5, 2020, 9:00 am**

Meet at Wegman Lodge at the north end of Trout Lake in Seneca Park. We will take the River Trail. Children welcome. Call June for more information, (585) 355-1824.

### Owl Prowl

**Saturday, February 1, 2020, 3:00 pm**

Annual Owl Prowl on Nations Rd. We will meet at the Tops Market parking lot in Avon on Rts. 5 & 20. Join us on our search for Short-eared Owls, Northern Harriers and more. Call June for more information, (585) 355-1824.

### Valentines Walk in the Woods

**Saturday, February 8, 2020, 9:30am**

Joni & Jon Dubner will be partnering with the great staff from The Birdhouse to lead a hike (no more than 2 hours) in Mendon Ponds Park. Come get up close and personal with nature. We will hand-feed wild songbirds while enjoying the park. Fun for your sweetheart and the whole family!! All are welcome to participate in this outdoor adventure on Saturday, February 8, 2020. **We will meet at 9:30 am in the Nature Center Parking lot on Pond Rd off of Clover St** (the southernmost of the 3 park entrances off Clover) Dress for the weather (wear boots, warm clothes, etc.).



### WinterFest at Mendon Ponds Park

**January 12, 2020**

GVAS will be there. Come visit us!! We'll be feeding the Chickadees.



carpentry. In addition to a nesting tower, the team plans to build an on-site educational kiosk to raise public awareness of Chimney Swift conservation.

The team hopes to expand the project beyond the Geneseo campus, working with local parks, nature preserves, and landowners to place Chimney Swift nesting towers throughout the Genesee Valley.

# Genesee Valley Audubon Society

Meadowlark

P.O. Box 15512, Rochester, NY 14615-0512

GVAS: A chapter of the National Audubon Society

The vision of Genesee Valley Audubon Society (GVAS) is to promote environmental conservation. Our mission is to educate and advocate for protection of the environment, focusing on birds, wildlife and habitat.

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**Follow Genesee Valley Audubon Society on Facebook for program and field trip reminders and much more.**

## Board of Directors

### Genesee Valley Audubon Society, Inc.

**Officers:** *President*, June Summers; *Vice President*, vacant; *Secretary*, Joni Dubner; *Treasurer*, Karen Curtis.

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*The Meadowlark* is published the 1st of September, November, January, March, and April. Articles for the Meadowlark should be submitted four weeks prior to the date of publication. Send articles to Joanne Mitchell, 169 Black Walnut Dr., Rochester, NY 14615, or at [jwmitchell@rochester.rr.com](mailto:jwmitchell@rochester.rr.com).

**Meadowlark staff:** *Editor & Layout*, Joanne Mitchell; *Business Editor*, vacant; *Printing*, Minuteman Press; *Distribution*, vacant.

### Please Respect the Owls and the Property Owners

This is the time of year that many of us go out to look for Snowy Owls and Short-eared Owls in the fields in Central and Western New York. Genesee Valley Audubon wants to remind you to respect the owls by not staring at them for any length of time. It makes them feel like they are being hunted. Don't go into the fields while they are hunting. They are here to feed and rest and don't need repeated disturbance by people who want a closer look.



Respect the property owners in the area where the owls are found. Stay off of private property and everyone should park on one side of the road not both sides.

For more on birding ethics visit:

<https://www.audubon.org/get-outside/audubons-guide-ethical-bird-photography> or  
<http://listing.aba.org/ethics/>.