



# Meadowlark

The Newsletter of Genesee Valley Audubon Society

Sept-Oct 2020

Vol. 48, No. 1

## President's Column

### By June Summers

Hello GVAS members, we hope you all have been well. The last six months have been challenging for all of us due to the COVID-19 pandemic. GVAS cancelled our programs for March and April and all of our field trips through the summers while we learned more about COVID-19. We are looking forward to doing holding meeting by Zoom, over the internet, and doing field trips with COVID-19 protocol, social distancing and mask required.

The May/June 2020 Meadowlark newsletter was not sent out this spring because we had no field trips to offer you. A shortened version of the May/June Meadowlark was posted online at our web site [www.gvaudubon.org](http://www.gvaudubon.org) on the Discover page. If you haven't read it, please go read my Presidents column. It is on zoonotic diseases, diseases that are passed from animals to humans. As long as ecosystems are healthy and have more biodiversity, we see few new coronaviruses crossing over to humans. But as climate change and humans go deeper into the jungle, putting stress on these ecosystems, more pandemics will arise.

Over the last year, I've watched the Trump Administration pursue an anti-environmental agenda. According to a New York Times investigation, at least 100 rollbacks of environmental protections have been completed or are in progress, including removing:

- 12 protections for wildlife and animals
- 27 controls for air pollution and emissions
- 19 safeguards to protect our land and water from drilling and extraction
- 42 other rules or regulations on everything from toxic waste to infrastructure

These are a few of the wider reaching regulations that the Trump Administration has been able to roll back to make them less effective.

The **National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA)** was signed into law by President Nixon on January 1, 1970. It requires agencies to assess the environmental impacts of proposed actions prior to making decisions and allows communities to weigh in on the environmental impacts of projects and propose alternatives. On August 15, 2017, President Trump issued Executive Order 13807 requiring agencies to approve environmental reviews as "One Federal Decision," directing the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to consider revisions to modernize NEPA.

On July 15, 2020, CEQ announced a final rule which will "modernize the NEPA regulations by simplifying and clarifying the requirements" and "accelerate the environmental review and permitting processes." The rule establishes a new, two-year deadline for agencies to prepare environmental impact statements (EISs). It is also expected to limit the role of climate change in environmental assessment in several ways. For example, it eliminates the requirement for agencies to consider "cumulative effects" and restricts the analysis to effects with a "reasonably close causal relationship" in NEPA reviews, which limits greenhouse gas emission considerations. The rule also allows agencies to exclude projects using "minimal federal funding" from the NEPA review process.

**Waters of the U.S. Rule (WOTUS) was rescinded Sept. 12, 2019.** WOTUA was a rule to expand which bodies of water fall under federal jurisdiction, which are protected under the Clean Water Act. The Obama Administration wrote the WOTUS Rule to place limits on polluting chemicals that could be used near streams, wetlands and other bodies of water.

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# Programs

Sept. 22, 2020, 7:30 pm

By Zoom

## Bird-Window Collisions and Bird-safe Solutions

Bird collisions with windows are the third greatest cause of death for birds in the United States, after habitat loss and predation by outdoor cats. Peer-reviewed conservative research estimates that about one million birds



collide with windows every day—the annual estimate is 365 to 988 million. Birds understand glass as we do. They see the reflection in the window and believe it is tree and sky they can fly through. But if they hit the window by mistake it can cause concussion and other injuries.

There are things we can do to reduce the number of bird collisions at our homes. They are easy and will not interfere with your view.

John Loz will present for the Pennsylvania-based Bird-Window Collision Working Group in cooperation with Audubon Pennsylvania. Jon is also Chair of the Audubon New York Council of State Chapters and the President of the Southern Adirondack Society.

Until it is safe to meet in in groups of 10 or more, GVAS will be meeting online using the Zoom app. You need to register; email June at [summers@frontiernet.net](mailto:summers@frontiernet.net) by Sept. 20, 2020.

Oct. 27, 2020 7:30 pm

By Zoom

## The Magic of Monarchs

Monarchs are one of several migratory butterflies that migrate as far south as Mexico and the southern United States



in the fall. These butterflies add to the biodiversity of the North American habitats.

Monarchs have a fascinating life cycle to accomplish their fall and spring migration. We can't help but be fascinated when they fly by, large and brightly colored. Liz Magnanti is going to reveal the secrets of the monarch to us.

Currently Liz is the manager of The Bird House on Monroe Ave. and the President of Rochester Birding Association.

Until it is safe to meet in in groups of 10 or more, GVAS will be meeting online using the Zoom app.

## Beach CleanUp at Braddock Bay, Volunteers Needed

September 19

Join GVAS at Braddock Bay for the annual International Coastal Cleanup on Sept. 19 at 9:00 am at Westpoint Marina, 105 E. Manitou Rd. in Greece. We will meet in the public



parking loop before the Marina. GVAS has picked up over a ton of trash at Braddock Bay over the years and we need your help this year to keep the bay clean. Trash entangles wildlife and plastic bags cover the bottom of the bay, preventing plants from growing.

So join us on Sept. 19. Register with June at [Summers@frontiernet.net](mailto:Summers@frontiernet.net), or call (585) 355-1824 to let me know you are coming. Mask required and social distancing will be required.

For the most up-to-date information, please visit our website, [gvaudubon.org](http://gvaudubon.org), or our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/gvaudubon/>.

*President's Column, continued from page 1*

The Trump Administration has worked to weaken or undo almost every part of WOTUS over the past two and a half years. Those efforts have focused heavily on eliminating restrictions on fossil fuel pollution, including coal-fired power plants, automobile tailpipes and methane emissions, but have also touched on asbestos and chemical hazards like pesticides.

The immediate effect of the clean water repeal is that polluters will no longer need a permit to discharge potentially harmful substances into many streams and wetlands. It is only a matter of time before we see the results. This has implications far beyond the pollution that will now be allowed to flow freely into waterways.

The **Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)**, a century-old regulation to protect birds, was weakened by the Trump Administration in the spring. The Interior Department has redefined the take (killing) of birds resulting from an activity is not prohibited by the MBTA when the underlying purpose of the activity is not to take birds. For example, the guidance said, a person who destroys a structure such as a barn knowing that it is full of baby owls in nests is not liable for killing them. "All that is relevant is that the landowner undertook an action that did not have the killing of barn owls as its purpose." People have always been held accountable for killing birds in the past. The Administration has shifted the meaning of this regulation from protecting birds to weakening the protection to make development easier.

The **Endangered Species Act** has been weakened to making it more difficult to protect wildlife from long-term threats posed by climate change. The new rules would make it easier to remove a species from the endangered list and weaken protections for threatened species. The Act for the first time allows regulators to conduct economic assessments of projects — for instance, estimating lost revenue from a prohibition on logging in a critical habitat — when deciding whether a species warrants protection. This will go into effect in September.

Over all, the revised rules appear very likely to clear the way for new mining, oil and gas drilling, and development in areas where protected species live.

## Field Trips

**We are limiting the number of people on field trips so that we can keep a safe distance apart. Registration is required.**

### **GANONDAGAN STATE HISTORIC SITE**

**Saturday, Sept. 26, 2020, 9:00 a.m.**

We will look for sparrows in the brush and other migrating birds near the parking area, and then walk about two miles round trip on the Seneca Trail beside fields and in the woods along Trout Brook. We will meet in the



main parking lot off County Road 41/Boughton Hill Road at 9:00 a.m. The lot is situated below the SACC at 7000 County Road 41, Victor, NY 14564. (From Rt. 444 from Victor, turn right onto Boughton Hill Road and go down the hill. The main parking lot will be on your right.) From there we will carpool down Rt. 41 about 0.5 mi to a small parking area on the left.

Go to Rochester Birding Association web site to register, <https://rochesterbirding.com/events/category/field-trips/> Mask must be worn, and social distancing will be observed.

**Leader: Amy Kahn 585-310-2330 and co-leader June Summers 585-355-1824.**

### **SAVE THE DATE**

### **MENDON PONDS PARK**

**November 14, 2020, 9:00 am**

Come and join Joni & Jon Dubner for a walk in the

woods; no more than 2 hours in

Mendon Ponds Park. Walk a trail and feed the chickadees, tufted titmice & nuthatches while enjoying nature. Fun for the whole family!! All are

welcome to participate in this outdoor

adventure. Registration is required as well as face covering.

**We will meet Saturday, November 14, 2020 at 9:00 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.) Seed will be provided – donation optional.

Register to attend and obtain information about the event from Joni at 585-338-3712.



# 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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## Board of Directors

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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.

## Rochester falcons 2020

Our downtown Rochester Peregrine falcons, Beauty and Dot.ca, raised three young falcons (eyases) this summer but sadly lost one. Hundreds of falcon fans followed their adventures on the GVAS-sponsored [rfalconcam.com](http://rfalconcam.com).

The first egg was laid on a cold and windy March 23 and the fourth on March 30. The first eyas hatched on May 1, quickly followed by the other three. One of the eyases died on May 20, possibly from parasites.

There was no banding this year because of the pandemic. Without the usual colored bands it was harder to tell the juveniles apart. Roc was the only male, smaller than his sisters, with bluish feet and a dark head. Hope, a female, had yellow feet and a light head. Geraki, another female, had yellow feet and a darker head.

Roc fledged on June 11 and soon all three were practicing flying around the downtown area. At the time of this writing they were taking short trips away. Soon they will be off on their travels—remember, “peregrine” means traveler. Because they are not banded, we probably will never find out where they end up nesting and settling down. We can only hope that they continue to fly free and prosper.