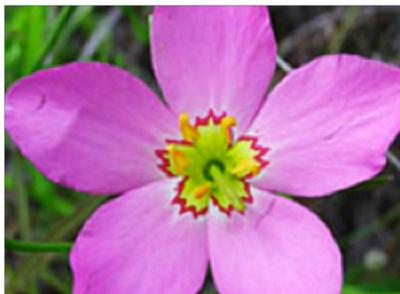


Biodiversity Information for your Town

What rare and endangered animals and plants are found in your town, and where? What do these animals and plants look like, and what are their habitats? Where are the significant ecosystems and natural areas in your town? Even without conducting surveys, information already exists to start answering these questions and is readily available to CACs, EMCs, municipalities, and citizens – for free! This information is essential to sound comprehensive planning, open space and natural resource inventories, environmental reviews, and the education of residents about their local environment. The New York Natural Heritage Program has this information and wants you to have it. In addition to receiving information directly from NY Natural Heritage, you can access much of it through three web applications developed by NY Natural Heritage and NYSDEC: New York Nature Explorer, Environmental Resources Mapper, and Conservation Guides. The New York Natural Heritage Program maintains the most comprehensive information on the locations of New York State's rare animals, rare plants, and significant natural communities.



Sea-pink (*Sabatia stellaris Pursh*)

that have been found in your town. This will give you a first look at some of the biodiversity resources in your town and their general locations.

What if the list includes something you don't know much about? Click on the name of the species or community type, and a set of links will pop up that will take you to more information about it, such as a NYSDEC Endangered Species Fact Sheet or a Natural

Heritage Conservation Guide. The list resulting from a town search, however, may not return all rare species; locations of plants and animals that are vulnerable to collection and disturbance are considered sensitive and are not included in town lists. For any CAC interested in a complete list of rare species for their town, and more detailed locations, especially if currently engaged in an NRI or open space plan, contact the NY Natural Heritage and we will provide a customized list and map with that information.

What Data is Available?

NY Natural Heritage manages information on more than 10,500 locations of species of rare animals and plants. These species include both those formally listed as Endangered and Threatened by New York State, and those which have not yet gone through the regulatory listing process but which Natural Heritage biologists have determined to be imperiled in the state. The Heritage has also documented more than 1,800 locations of significant natural communities including wetlands, forests, grasslands, ponds, streams, and other habitats and ecosystems.

How can You Get and Use Natural Heritage Data?

Let's suppose your CAC is planning to conduct a Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) of your town. A good place to start for biodiversity information is New York Nature Explorer, an interactive application on the NYSDEC website. You can select your town, and Nature Explorer will then return a map of your town showing the specific locations of significant natural communities and generalized (imprecise) locations of rare plants and animals. It will also return a list of animals, plants, and natural communities

CACs are often asked by Planning Boards to comment on potential environmental impacts of a proposed development project or other action. Here again, Nature Explorer can provide an initial indication of rare animals and plants possibly in the vicinity of the project site, especially using the option for the user to define their own search area. Another web application on the NYSDEC website, the Environmental Resource Mapper (ERM), also displays general areas where rare animals and rare plants have been found and specific locations of significant natural communities. While ERM does not provide species names, and is limited to searching only at a single point, it does include other natural resources that are regulated or protected by the state, including freshwater wetlands and classified and protected streams. Like Nature Explorer, ERM provides a first look at a given project site, and can identify areas where Natural Heritage has no data. When a more thorough and detailed assessment of a project site is needed, especially where Nature Explorer or ERM identify the potential presence of rare species, just contact NY Natural Heritage, and we will screen the site against our database and respond with a report specific to that site.

(continued on page 2)

Natural Heritage data is intended to be accessed not just by CACs and municipalities, but by the project applicants and their consultants in preparing their project packets and permit applications. For proposed development projects that require a Full Environmental Assessment under SEQR, Natural Heritage data is the recognized first source to answer question 11 in Part 1A of the Full Environmental Assessment Form regarding the presence of endangered and threatened plants and animals.

For those towns and agencies with GIS capacity, a GIS data layer (ArcGIS shapefile format) of NY Natural Heritage's documented significant natural communities for the whole state is available for download from the NYS GIS Clearinghouse.

More about New York Nature Explorer

With New York Nature Explorer, users can choose a county, town, or watershed, or define their own area of interest on a map. Nature Explorer will then return a map of the queried area showing the specific locations of significant natural communities and generalized (imprecise) locations of rare plants and animals, and a list of animals, plants, and natural communities that have been found in the queried area. All maps and lists can be printed or saved in an easily read format.

Users may choose a specific animal, plant, or natural community type, and get a list and map of the counties, towns, or watersheds throughout New York where it has been found.

For all returned lists, links from many of the species and communities listed lead to details of specific observations, such as the date last documented and a description of the habitat. Links to more information about each species are also available. Since the lists generated for towns in Nature Explorer may not include all the sensitive rare species, I again encourage you to contact me for a complete list of rare species for your town.

Nick Conrad
Information Resources Coordinator
518/402-8944
nbconrad@gw.dec.state.ny.us

Web Site Addresses

New York Nature Explorer
www.dec.ny.gov/animals/57844.html

Environmental Resource Mapper
www.dec.ny.gov/animals/38801.html

Natural Heritage Conservation Guides
www.guides.nynhp.org

Significant Natural Communities GIS data layer available from NYS GIS Clearinghouse at
<http://gis.ny.gov/gisdata/inventories/details.cfm?DSID=1241>

New York Natural Heritage Program
www.nynhp.org

Town of Montgomery Conservation Advisory Council Rainbarrel Workshops 2012 Special Project Award

At the 2012 Conference on the Environment held October 10 - 13 at the Syracuse Center of Excellence, the Town of Montgomery Conservation Advisory Council was awarded a NYSACC Special Project Award for their Rainbarrel Workshops.

With stormwater pollution as a serious threat to clean water, the Town of Montgomery Conservation Advisory Council became interested in promoting rainwater collection as a way to cut down on overflow. Moreover, they felt it would also appeal to homeowners who want to reduce their summer water bills. Most commercial rainbarrels are prohibitively expensive, so the idea of making your own from a recycled barrel seemed even more enticing. The CAC envisioned it as a way for people in the community to get together, help each other and the environment at the same time.

CAC members visited Cornell Cooperative Extension in Dutchess County to pick up some demo barrels and collect advice from their staff. For promotion of the events, they displayed the barrels in the library and at the Town Hall. Two local artists decorated barrels to be displayed and later raffled off.

The CAC planned on four workshops of 15 participants each in the three villages and the Town. Each participant had to sign up ahead of time with the Town Clerk at a charge of \$15. Each workshop was sold out and the CAC had to get two additional barrels. As a result of the project, 62 homeowners are now collecting rainwater and reducing the impact of stormwater on local streams and rivers.

Members of the Council include Patricia Henighan, Chairperson and co-grant applicant, Gary Leather, co-grant applicant, Heather Barnum, Brant Winum and Richard Phelps.

For further information contact Patricia Henighan at phenighan@yahoo.com

NYSACC News

Arlene Kaufman, Editor
Joy Squires, NYSACC President

Newsletter Office
3 Andover Drive
Port Jefferson Sta.
NY 11776

631-928-3277

Teach23456@gmail.com

NYSACC website - www.nysaccny.org

NYSACC Office
P.O. Box 1732
Huntington, NY
11743

631-368-6949

joyssq@aol.com

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For additional copies of NYSACC News and address changes, contact the Newsletter office.

A Wake-Up Call

As 2012 fades into memory, we can remember it as the year of Superstorm Sandy, the year that an area of Arctic sea ice larger than the United States melted, a year that permafrost continued to thaw, a year of wildfires and severe drought in the West and Midwest, torrential rains on the Pacific Coast, and a year that saw record temperatures across the country and in Europe. Ocean temperatures continue to rise as the ocean acidifies and deoxygenates, endangering corals and sea life; ice sheets and glaciers are retreating; and carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere at 394 parts per million are the highest in at least the past 800,000 years. January to November 2012 were the warmest of any year on record for the contiguous United States. May was the warmest on record for the Northern Hemisphere and the 327th consecutive month in which the temperature of the entire globe exceeded the 20th century average.

Cause for alarm? Not for talk show pundits like Rush Limbaugh who blithely proclaimed, "If there is scientific proof – and see, I don't need scientific proof because to me the people who are promoting manmade global warming are a bunch of frauds." A recent Walt Handelsman editorial cartoon shows a man in the shattered window of the Climate Change Deniers' Association offices covered with downed trees labeled Sandy and Irene and Extreme Weather ironically proclaiming, "We're losing power!" It gets harder and harder for climate change deniers to maintain that we are not living on a warming planet. As old Henry Thoreau noted, "Some circumstantial evidence is very strong as when you find a trout in the milk."

The deniers aside, there is little disagreement among serious scientists that global warming, climate change, a warming planet, or whatever else you want to call it, is a real and present danger and that education and action are needed to control carbon emissions and the concentrations of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere. An international goal of keeping global temperatures from rising more than 3.6° Fahrenheit above preindustrial levels seems unrealistic when temperatures have already risen 1.4°. A recent projection by the World Bank had temperatures increasing to 7.2° by 2100. Continued rises in sea level, with more severe storms seem inevitable. Massive investments in clean and renewable energy seem unlikely.

Hurricane Sandy should have been a wake-up call; yet, outside the scientific and environmental communities, there seems to be no sense of urgency about curbing global warming. Delegates to the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change in December seemed more concerned with airing the concerns of poor and rich countries for financing controls to limit carbon emissions and on extending the Koyoto Protocol to 2015 and paving the way for a new global treaty in 2020. The Koyoto accord did not include the world's biggest emitters, the US and China, and New Zealand, Canada, Japan and Russia have indicated they will not make commitments to a new treaty. The outlook for international action is grim.

Even grimmer perhaps are events in the developing giants China, India, and Brazil. Over 1,200 new coal burning plants are planned worldwide, with most in India and China. Even though China will use cleaner technology

in many plants, there will be an overall increase in carbon emissions. More startling is the urbanization of the Amazon region of Brazil. New cities are growing rapidly to accommodate hydroelectric, energy, mining, and industrial projects. The population of the Amazon will reach a startling 25 million in cities such as Maraba, Le Doca, and Parauapebas which few of us have ever heard of. The rainforest is a priceless carbon sink, absorbing atmospheric carbon dioxide. A loss of even 15% is said to be the equivalent of the carbon output of every vehicle on earth.

On the home front, President Obama has been talking the talk about global warming. In his inaugural address he pledged, "We will respond to the threat of climate change, knowing that failure to do so would betray our children and future generations." Walking the walk, however, he will face a difficult path with a reluctant and antagonistic Congress. A few strides have been made with fuel efficiency standards and controls on power plant emissions, and the President's latest proposal to use two billion in funds from oil and gas leases to seek ways to replace hydrocarbons as a primary fuel are signs of hope. Looming is a decision on the XL pipeline which would bring tar sands oil from Canada to the Gulf Coast for refining. Both extracting and processing this oil are carbon intensive activities. Will the environment or the oil interests win out? Can Congress be moved to act?

There is a carbon superstorm brewing in the atmosphere and the United States and the nations of the earth are ill-prepared for it. CFC bulbs and higher mileage autos are not going to hack it.

Alex McKay, Friend of the Environment
First written for the Huntington Oyster Bay
Audubon Society *Killdeer*

I Love My Park Day

I Love My Park Day is a new statewide event, organized by Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) in partnership with the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) and local Friends groups, to celebrate and enhance New York's parks and historic sites and bring visibility to the entire park system and its needs. Volunteers from across the state will participate in cleanup, improvement, and beautification events at state parks and historic sites on Saturday, May 4. They will clean up park lands and beaches, plant trees and gardens, restore trails and wildlife habitat, remove invasive species and work on various site improvement projects.

PTNY, in collaboration with OPRHP, coordinates the event, providing outreach, promotion, technical assistance and a how-to organizer's kit for Friends groups to use for their individual events. Friends groups and park staff oversee cleanup, improvement and beautification projects and work with volunteers.

More than 70 I Love My Park Day events are taking place across the state. In order to participate in an event, volunteers will need to register and complete an online form. To find a participating park and register go to www.ptny.org/ilovemypark/



President's Message

NYSACC Moves Ahead

This is the last paper newsletter you will receive from NYSACC. We are going digital. At our last Board of Directors meeting, it was decided that electronic distribution of NYSACC News is the best way to reach our audience in the future. So for those of you who are members or friends of NYSACC, please send us your email address, if we do not have it already. Send it to joyssq@aol.com.



It is with sadness that we end our long, long association with Ron Evans of Arrow Printing, at 206 N. Crouse Avenue in Syracuse. At our last Conference we honored Ron with our Friend of NYSACC Award for devoted and excellent service. If you ever need a printer, he is highly recommended.

Work is underway for the 2013 Conference on the Environment, to be held in Buffalo, NY, from Thursday through Saturday, October 3rd to 6th. The theme for this year's conference is, "A Bi-National Sustainability Summit," in which our U.S. contingency will join forces with our Canadian neighbors to the north. Activities and speakers will focus on the common opportunities and challenges faced on both sides of the border and will afford a unique and exciting environment for the exchange of ideas and information.

We thank Tom Hersey, Bonnie Lawrence, and Stephanie Ulcar of the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning and Kevin Burd and Peter Rizzo of our Board for their work in organizing this year's event.

Registration for the 2013 Conference will take place entirely online; the committee is in the process of building the conference website (coe2013.org).

We welcome Steve Schwab and Mike Froot to NYSACC's Board of Directors. Our new Directors are from Region 7. Steve is Chair of the Elbridge EAC and Mike is a long time member. They have almost perfect Conference attendance. Under their direction Elbridge has won numerous NYSACC Project Awards. Steve is a great dentist and Mike is an outstanding retired high school teacher and wrestling coach.



As I stated, we are becoming more modern and digital. With the help of our Directors Peter Rizzo and Steve and Julie Noble, NYSACC is moving appropriately into the Electronic Age. Once again, please don't forget to send us your email address to continue to receive NYSACC News electronically. While you're online, please be sure to join our new NYSACC group on LinkedIn.

See you in October,
Joy Squires