

# Fresh Air

The Quarterly Newsletter of the  
Atlantic Chapter Mid-Hudson Group



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Mid-Hudson Sierra Club  
P.O. Box 1012  
Poughkeepsie, NY 12602

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## Chair's Corner

Joanne Steele

**T**hank you for working to reduce your environmental impact! Have you been thinking that maybe it's time for you to participate even more, though? I have identified eight main conservation issues for our Mid-Hudson Group. Pick one to start, and join with us to improve our collective environmental health. Keep in mind that we often act with other environmental groups, here's the Mid-Hudson Group's list (all co-equal): Trans-Pacific Partnership, the "Belleayre Development in Catskills Park", Water Quality, Pipelines and Petro Transport, Power Lines, Energy Democracy, Closing Indian Point, Land Over-Development. Personally, I would add Population, Vegetarianism, and Public Transportation. The Atlantic Chapter (<https://atlantic2.sierraclub.org>) has committees on all these topics. They meet and share information statewide. Here's where you come in: take charge

of one of these topics, check out what is happening in our area, and keep the rest of us up to date, perhaps also joining an Atlantic Committee. We each can do *something!* C'mon, now, step right up! Contact out Volunteer Coordinator, Marie Caruso, [mariehv@verizon.net](mailto:mariehv@verizon.net). You can also call Marie at (845) 217-5236. Your participation will help us to move forward.

I want to thank Dawn Osselman, again, for her financial help. It's because of that help and the work of volunteers in our big September Tag Sale fundraiser that we are able to financially support our issues. New is our help for the Article 78 lawsuit of the Catskill Heritage Alliance vs. DEC, described in detail in the Conservation Report, which follows. Thank you ALL for what you do and please tell the others!

## Conservation Corner

Joanne Steele

**Y**our Mid-Hudson Group of the Atlantic Chapter Sierra Club (our official name) is donating \$2,000 to help Catskills Heritage Alliance (CHA) with its legal and public outreach efforts to oppose the construction of the full build-out of the "Belleayre Resort at Catskills Park". Their lawsuit is described further below by Kathy Nolan, CHA President. Immediately below is a short history of Sierra Club's involvement in the review of the project.

1999: Crossroads Ventures proposes "Belleayre Resort at Catskills Park"

2001: Crossroads files application for special use permits and site plan review in Shandaken and Middletown

2003: DEC as Lead Agency issues Notice of Complete Application under SEQRA

2004: Legislative hearings and written comment in which Sierra Club participates as part of the Catskill Watershed Alliance

2005: Sierra Club receives Full Party Status and participates in Issues Conference. Stated focus: "The Sierra Club's concerns include (1) impacts to the forest preserve caused by the influx of people occasioned by the proposed project;

(2) stormwater runoff impacts both during construction, such as turbidity, and after construction, such as pesticide and nutrients from the proposed golf courses; and (3) impacts to trout habitat."

2006: Sierra Club participates in mediation efforts, with adjudicatory hearings suspended

2007: Sierra Club, along with CHA, Friends of Catskill Park, and Pine Hill Water District Coalition, declines to sign Agreement In Principle

2008: Sierra Club serves as Friend of the Court in Article 78 action against DEC brought by CHA

2005 - 2013: Discussions with CHA and Save the Mountain at various levels within Sierra Club about ongoing issues in relation to project

2014: Sierra Club filed a letter with DEC's Office of Hearings and Mediation Services (OHMS) addressing scheduling issues

2015: Sierra Club (Mid-Hudson Group) assists with outreach and sharing of information (newsletter article about status of project)

## Catskill Heritage Alliance Lawsuit

by Kathy Nolan, President, CHA

**L**egal papers from all parties in the Article 78 action filed at the end of 2015 by the Catskill Heritage Alliance are due this month, putting everything in place for an independent judge to determine whether New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation acted improperly in refusing to restore review of the proposed Crossroads project to a previously assigned adjudicatory hearing under an Administrative Law Judge. The Catskill Heritage Alliance contends that proper review requires full consideration of a much smaller,

one-hotel option at the base of Belleayre Mountain.

Meanwhile, Planning Boards in Shandaken and Middletown have jumped ahead by issuing special use permits and site plan approvals, requiring the Catskill Heritage Alliance and its allies to consider whether additional legal action is necessary. Lawyers and teams of volunteers are reviewing documents and analyzing options, while others question why Governor Andrew Cuomo has decided to ignore climate predictions and pledge \$75 million to expand Belleayre Mountain Ski Center rather than invest in other, more sustainable approaches to economic development in the Catskills.

## GO SOLAR WITH THE SIERRA CLUB

**T**he Sierra Club has partnered with Sungevity for solar panel installations. When you go solar with the Sierra Club, you are joining more than 1,200 who have chosen to move toward a clean-energy future. Feel confident about going solar with Sungevity, a company that is a trusted partner of the Sierra Club. When you go solar, Sungevity sends \$750 back to your local Sierra Club chapter and Group to continue the important on-the-ground work that Chapters and Groups are doing every day to explore, enjoy, and protect the planet. As utility rates continue to rise, solar leasing offers a way to lower your electric bill and help your environment. To find out more visit: <http://content.sierraclub.org/solar>

## Teatown's Eagle Fest

by Shelley Bance

Sierra Club members who boarded our Mid-Hudson Group-sponsored Metro North "Eagle Train" in Poughkeepsie on February 6th didn't have to arrive in Croton before getting all the facts about—and even glimpses of—the majestic bald eagles that roost along the Hudson River. During our ride, well-known birding expert Richard Guthrie informed us about these regal predators that build nests in large trees in the Lower Hudson Valley from December to March. Several hundred eagles have been counted in the area, with the best viewing sites between Garrison and Croton.

The Eagle Fest is an annual day-long event sponsored by Teatown Lake Reservation, a nonprofit, environmental education organization with a 1,000-acre nature preserve and hiking trails. Collaborating partners for the Eagle Fest included the Mid-Hudson Sierra Club, Riverkeeper, Scenic Hudson, and a host of other organizations.



At Croton Point Park, packed crowds enjoyed live bird shows in the Eagle Theater, live music on the Eaglet Stage, and outdoor bird walks. Most thrilling were the hourly programs inside the

large tent theater where experts introduced a variety of eagles, owls, peregrine falcons, vultures, and red-tailed hawks. Cameras clicked for close-up photos of raptors on the arms of experts who provided commentary on their hunting and nesting habits. "Talons! A Birds of Prey Experience" by Lorrie Schumacher had us ducking for cover as she released predators that flew around our heads before landing back on her gloved arm—a rare chance to get up close and personal with these winged creatures.

The Eaglet stage hosted singer-songwriters Tom Chapin and Annie DiRusso, while an "Eaglet Nest" provided children's activities such as nature art. Experts educated us about identifying

predators and taking steps to preserve their habitat. Though bald eagles declined years ago in the Northeast, due to DDT and pesticides, their numbers are up again and they're no longer endangered. Mature eagles build nests in large trees near rivers or coasts during winter months and they mate for life (15 to 30 years). The couple uses the same nest (an "eyrie") each year, adding to it with large sticks around a soft center cushion of moss and pine. At 5 to 8 feet wide and 6 feet deep, it can weigh up to 800 pounds.

Female bald eagles are larger than the males, but both sit on top of the food chain. The wingspan is 6 to 8 feet and they weigh 10 to 14 pounds. Full-grown bald eagles have white heads and tails, with a straight-wing profile that distinguishes them from vultures. They prefer the unfrozen waters of the Lower Hudson River for their diet of mainly fish (and carrion), which are often dazed by the warm waters near Indian Point and are an easy catch. Their eyesight is six to eight times better than a human, enabling them to see prey up to one mile away.

Birds of prey are important to the health of the ecosystem by controlling insect, rodent and small bird populations that contribute to disease and agricultural damage. They decrease competition for food among prey by weeding out sick, weak and old animals. Considered an "indicator species," their presence and health reflect the impacts of environmental concerns like pesticides, drought and habitat loss. Lead bullets are poison to eagles and it's illegal to use lead shot in New York State. Eagles are protected by federal laws and have become tolerant of people and boats on the Hudson River. Their body parts are also protected, though feathers can be used in Native American ceremonies. Croton Point and Dover Plains are prime eagle viewing sites along the Hudson River. Eagles roost overnight in trees on east/southeast-facing slopes with warm early morning sun. Scan the tree line for "baseballs in the trees" to spot perching birds and use binoculars or spotting scopes to view from a distance. The key to successful viewing is patience!

For inquiries about eagles or to share photos, send an email to: richardpguthrie@gmail.com.

For eagle viewing sites, go to: [www.dec.ny.gov](http://www.dec.ny.gov)



## Public Programs

JoyAnn Savino

*PROGRAMS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBIC. BRING A FRIEND!*

*Visit our website: [sierraclub.org/atlantic/mid-hudson](http://sierraclub.org/atlantic/mid-hudson) for more details.*

### Thursday, April 7th, 7:00 pm Organic Gardening

*Join in the fun of learning how to grow your best garden ever!*

We welcome all gardeners from experts to beginners. Come and share your knowledge, expertise, experience and seeds!!

Learn the ins and outs of organic gardening. What natural and safe fertilizes and pesticides to use and when to use them. How to prune your fruit trees. How leaves, chestnut hulls even water chestnuts can help deter pests from eating your prized tomatoes! Composting at its best. How to spot GMO seeds and plants. Planting different varieties of kale for all the seasons, yes, eat kale in the spring! Learn all these things and more!

**Please RSVP for programs: [mhsierraprograms@yahoo.com](mailto:mhsierraprograms@yahoo.com)**

**Location:** Boughton Place, 150 Kisor Road, Highland 12528.

**Directions:** From the NYS Thruway, drive East on Route 299, 2.7 miles. Look for Raizman Auto Sales on your right. Turn right onto Kisor Road. From Route 9W, drive West on Route 299, 2.5 miles. Turn left onto Kisor Road at Raizman Auto Sales.

Visit our website at: <http://www.sierraclub.org/atlantic/mid-hudson> | Join our meetup at: <http://www.meetup.com/Mid-Hudson-Sierra-Club>

### Thursday, May 19th, 7:00 pm Invasive Species

*What is an invasive species?*

Invasive species are non-native species that can cause harm to the environment, the economy or to human health. Invasives come from all around the world. As international trade increases, so does the rate of invasive species introductions. They can be plants, insects, fish, shell fish, and mammals!

Invasive species threaten nearly every aspect of our world and are one of the greatest threats to New York's biodiversity. They cause or contribute to: habitat degradation and loss, the loss of native fish, wildlife and tree species, the loss of recreational opportunities, crop damage and diseases in humans and livestock! It's important for you to spot them and learn what you can do to remove and how to destroy them. Please join us and be part of the solution.

## Study Investigates Proliferation of Plastic in Waterways Around New York

In an article that appeared in *The New York Times* on February 18, 2016, Lisa W. Foderaro wrote, "At any given time, an estimated 165 million plastic particles are floating in the estuaries that stretch from the Tappan Zee Bridge, along the lower Hudson River, south to Sandy Hook Bay, in New Jersey. That is more than 256,000 particles per square kilometer.... Plastic pollution often goes unnoticed because water bottles, plastic bags and other large pieces quickly break down into smaller particles. Indeed, the NY/NJ Baykeeper study found that 85 percent of the particles counted were so-called microplastics, 5 millimeters or smaller, about the size of a grain of rice.... Not only do microplastics mimic plankton, an important food source for fish and seabirds, but they also absorb toxins commonly found in polluted waters, like PCBs, pesticides and flame retardants. The plastic particles slip easily into the food chain, contaminating wildlife and, possibly, humans."



Photo: Christopher Oechicone

### Outings News

Andy Moss

Outings are posted at: [meetup.com/SierraClubNY](http://meetup.com/SierraClubNY) and our group's meetup site: [meetup.com/Mid-Hudson-Sierra-Club](http://meetup.com/Mid-Hudson-Sierra-Club)

It was a gray cold day on January 17th for our two part outing: "Summit Sugarloaf Mountain and visit Kaaterskill Falls." We began the day at the Mink Hollow Road trailhead on the north side of the "Devil's Path". The trail was very icy so we opted for traction aids for our boots rather than snowshoes. After a .6 mile hike up to the col between Sugarloaf and Plateau mountains, we began our ascent of Sugarloaf. The ice was pretty thick in spots but we managed quite well until about two-thirds of the way up when we reached a short steep ascent with ice-covered rock ledges that offered little or no handholds. I decided that it was not safe to continue so we hiked back down to our cars. The group supported my decision knowing that we had another adventure to look forward to. We drove through Tannersville and down Rt. 23A to the Kaaterskill Falls parking area. The first falls, Bastion, was running quite strong for this time of year and was quite a sight. We began the half mile hike to Kaaterskill Falls and found plenty of ice on the trail. Fortunately we brought our traction aids. The falls, surrounded by beautiful ice formations, was spectacular.



The Sierra Club has posted this year's national and international trips at [SierraClub.org](http://SierraClub.org). Trips include hiking, backpacking, walking, kayaking, cross country skiing and much more. I will be leading or co-leading the following three trips this year.

#### **July 31 - Aug. 6: Music in the Mountains: Hikes and Concerts in Stanislaus and Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forests, California**

This trip features spectacular hikes in the high Sierra that feature glacial lakes and mountain vistas. During our stay we will attend evening concerts at the nearby music festival that features jazz, classical, and pop performances.

#### **Sept. 11 - 16: Hut-to-Hut Traverse of the Presidential Range, New Hampshire**

The White Mountains in New Hampshire offer the most exciting hiking in the East. We will hike across the mountains above tree line and stay in AMC huts each night where we will enjoy a hot dinner and breakfast. Our visit to the summit of Mount Washington will be the highlight of the trip.

#### **Oct. 1 - 7: Autumn Hikes and Hudson Valley Vistas in New York's Catskill Mountains**

The Catskill Mountains, although not the highest, have some of the most challenging hikes in the U.S. This is an opportunity to hike historic trails, see summit views, cruise the Hudson River, all while enjoying the comfort of local food and lodging.

### Want to Get More Involved in Environmental Issues or Learn More About What is Happening?

Sign up to receive *Sierra Club Insider*, the flagship e-newsletter. Sent out twice a month, it features the Club's latest news and activities.

Subscribe and view recent editions at  
<http://www.sierraclub.org/insider/>

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Join Us for our Annual, fun-filled  
***NEW MEMBER PARTY***  
Friday, March 11th, 2016!

If you're a new member – or even if you're not,  
come to our party 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm!  
Enjoy free food, snacks, goodies; win door prizes;  
learn about our Group;  
meet your fellow members; and have fun!

*Location:* Boughton Place, 150 Kisor Road, Highland  
Boughton Place is on Kisor Road just off Route 299.  
(Look for Raizman Automotive at the corner of Kisor Road and 299)

**READ YOUR NEWSLETTERS ONLINE**

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