



IROQUOIS

MESSENGER

Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

HOW I SPENT MY SUMMER VACATION

By Jack Ramsden

Almost immediately after the explosion and fire on BP's Deepwater Horizon drilling rig, the federal agencies charged with protecting the wildlife refuges and national park areas along the Gulf Coast started mobilizing personnel to confront the pollution that was headed towards them. As the oil poured out of the well and the enormity of the disaster grew, management of the response became larger than current employees were able to handle and still maintain normal functions at their home stations.

Through the Incident Command System (ICS), the call went out for citizens and retirees with certain skills to make themselves available. As a former National Park Service employee who had been involved in both support and operations on forest fires and search and rescues during my career, I offered to assist. ICS dispatch notified me to report for duty in Mobile, Alabama, on June 23rd. My job would be in the Finance Section far away from the hot, oily beaches.

All personnel responding to work in the Mobile Sector would report through our office in a hotel conference room. We would track their time and then process them off the incident after their tour of duty. Most deployments were for 14 days, however, extensions were pos-

sible for up to 60 days in 14 day increments.

For my first month on duty, the oil gushed uninhibited into the Gulf. The sense of crisis was pervasive. There was no end to this disaster in sight—much like an out of control forest fire with no rain in the forecast.

After the flow was capped, the situation became more complicated as tension developed between BP and the resource protection agencies. The people I processed out of the incident all knew there was still oil impacting the coastline and barrier islands and would be for a long time. However, the decision makers could now theorize about “having it under control” or the “impacts minimized.”

This is sad. The impacts will last for decades just as they continue to

impact Prince William Sound more than twenty years after the Exxon Valdez disaster. Natural resource and environmental protection groups cannot allow BP or the government to determine an “end” to this disaster.

After my third extension and a total of 63 days, I left Mobile to return to CNY. However, the impact of my experience leaves little doubt that our society has to come to grips with our appetite for fossil fuel and the risks associated with drilling, mining, and transporting oil, gas and coal.

I will be talking more about my experience and the ramifications of this disaster on September 29th at 7:30 p.m. at the University United Methodist Church on West Genesee Street. Please attend and bring any questions you might have. ■

REPORT FROM THE CONSERVATION CHAIR

by Linda A. DeStefano

Hydrofracking

Our Group continues to work with many other organizations throughout New York State trying to protect our beautiful upstate area from becoming an industrial wasteland if large-scale horizontal, high-volume hydrofracking (“fracking”) is practiced here. And it isn't just upstate New York that is at risk. New

York City government and many residents understand that the threat to their water supply is serious because of the water pollution that has been observed in states where this method of drilling for natural gas is done. We were one of the groups organizing a well-attended showing of the award-winning documentary “GASLAND” at the Palace Theatre. Josh Fox, director of the film, participated in a panel after the showing. We have also had public

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NEW PUBLICATION: “Climate Change: How Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions Strengthens New York Business” is a 12 page publication from Environmental Advocates of New York, 353 Hamilton St., Albany 12210, www.eany.org.

REPORT FROM THE CONSERVATION CHAIR (CONT'D)

education programs on the topic, explaining how air, water and natural areas would be impacted.

Groups we have worked closely with on the fracking campaign are Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation (NOON), People for Animal Rights, Citizens Campaign for the Environment, and the Izaak Walton League. In addition, there is a new umbrella group called Shale-shockCNY, which meets regularly at Marcellus Library. You can become involved by requesting a lawn sign, button, or bumper sticker, joining a listserv to stay informed or by coming to meetings. Please contact me at ldestefano3@twcny.rr.com or (315) 488-2140 between 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.

On the legislative front, the New York State Senate passed a bill that would prohibit the issuance of permits for fracking until May 15, 2011. As of this writing, the Assembly has not voted on a companion bill.

Will 72,000 Cattle Come to Oswego County?

Bion Environmental Technologies is proposing a huge operation to use cow waste for energy in a closed-loop system. As part of my work as Chair of the Chapter Biodiversity/Vegetarian Outreach Committee of the Sierra Club, I have been one of the Sierrans who is consulting with and supporting a grassroots effort which has emerged to fight this proposal. Publications from the committee are available at: newyork.sierraclub.org/conservation; click on “Biodiversity/Vegetarian Outreach.” Hard copies are also available from me (see contact information above). For additional information, see: www.phoenixtalks.com or my

article in the spring 2010 issue of the *Sierra Atlantic*.

newyork.sierraclub.org/documents/Vol37_Spring2010SA.pdf.

New State Laws on Environment and Health

The following is a summary of information received from Assemblyman Robert Sweeney, Chair of the NYS Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee.

- **Electronic Waste:** Beginning April 1, 2011, manufacturers of electronic equipment must accept back products at no charge to the consumer. The hope is that manufacturers will try to make products that are easier to recycle and contain fewer toxic materials if they are responsible for them at time of discard.
- **Pesticides:** Pesticides applications will be banned on school or daycare center grounds unless the state departments of Environmental Conservation, Health, Education, county health department or school board determine an emergency application is necessary.
- **Heating oil:** After July 1, 2012, home heating oil must have a lower sulfur content so air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions are reduced.
- **Phosphorus:** Reduction of phosphorus in household products and fertilizers will be required to lessen algae and weed growth in waterways.
- **Bisphenol A:** This plastics additive from children's products will be banned because it has been linked to health problems. ■



FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Tree huggers,

My observable yard was different in July and August. I was fortunate to spend those months in the Adirondacks on a large lake. The space was often filled with “relative” species on short visits with me and each other. Observable nature items —the water was warmer than anyone remembers, days were hotter, the woods were lush, and the rain was mostly at night. All making for a great time.

Observations by a local weekly: the reason we all head for the lakes and hills is that we are programmed to do so. As a species we have to have water to drink and green trees and forest to provide food. We are still going there, sort of as a bird migrates. That is our inherited software. Now I know I am not wired wrong.

Now to the lake. The ducks, mergansers, and mallards make a daily morning trip along the shore, grazing for food and stopping at

available docks to rest, socialize, preen, and decorate the surface. The duck count always equals the number of white splats.

At the beginning there was a small flock of two adult Canada Geese, eight young and two very large white swans. A look at the guide book has not really helped a lot. Kind of like mute swans. Later only one swan and by end of July the swans were no longer there.

By mid–august the large flock, mergansers and mallards, forty plus, had dwindled to a lonely twosome, then just one. Either the predators were especially good or the weather sent them further north. Any answers to these puzzles, share them by writing to the editor.

We had two lonely loons in the evening. They do not come near shore. Other birds of interest—a bald eagle makes one fly by occasionally, and there is a blue heron in a nearby bay.

Now to the roadside. Not very native: Queen Anne's lace, purple loosestrife, daylilies, mullins, crown

vetch, chicory, butter and eggs, burdock (my apologies to those who think in Latin). On the other side of the road however, wild raspberries, milkweed, both ordinary and swamp, red Columbine (spring), black-eyed Susan, golden rod, wild ginger, Virginia creeper, poison ivy.

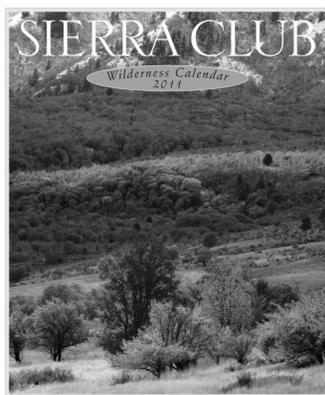
My at home chipmunks must have spread the word, as there were many locals storing nuts at a mad pace from the most abundant supply of on the ground pine cones I have ever seen.

I hope you all had a great summer and are ready for the Fall hydrofracking season. Check out the report from our Conservation Chair, Linda DeStefano (*starting on page 1*), for how to get involved and up-to-date news.

For the earth and all its critters,
Martha Loew

P.S.—check out the good deal we have on gorgeous Sierra calendars.

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SEASONAL EVENTS

Sierra Club Indoor and Outdoor events encourage us to Explore, Enjoy and Protect the Planet. They are free and open to everybody. Parks may charge entry fees.

ExCom meetings—October 13, November 10, December 8 (*tentative*) at 7:15 PM at the Jamesville train station. Sierra Iroquois members only, business and strategy sessions.

INDOOR EVENTS

Indoor programs are held the *fourth* Wednesday of the month at 7:30 PM, at University United Methodist Church (UUMC), 1085 E. Genesee St. Park and enter on University Ave.

Updates, cancellations and information at newyork.sierraclub.org/iroquois or 492-4745.

GULF OF MEXICO OIL SPILL— SEPTEMBER 29

For 63 days this summer, **Jack Ramsden** was back at work with the National Park Service in Alabama dealing with the Deepwater Horizon (MC252) Oil Spill. He will share some thoughts on his experience and answer questions about his assignment.

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES AHEAD FOR RECYCLING—OCTOBER 27

Learn about new electronic waste regulations, zero waste initiatives, and changes in recycling (#5!) at a session with representatives from OCRRA.

NOW THAT EVERYONE IS ELECTED—NOVEMBER 17

With elections behind us, what's next? **Roger Downs**, Conservation Program Manager, Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, will talk about hydrofracking, the EPA, and other legislative issues.

OUTDOOR EVENTS

Unless otherwise noted outdoor programs are on Sundays at 2 PM at various interesting locations.

Field guides for birds, plants and trees will be available. **No RSVP necessary.**

MASON HILL—OCTOBER 3

Join us at Mason Hill, a 2004 Central New York Land Trust acquisition. Our hike starts at a steep walled stream ravine at the western edge and mounts up slope to a rocky ridge on the eastern edge. The

majority of the gradual slope is filled with open fields, second or third growth forest and old maple trees along the hedge rows and fence lines. From Jamesville head South on Apulia Rd. about 8 miles. Right on Eager Rd. Third house on the right says "Earle/2886" on mailbox. Park in the lot to the left of the house driveway.

BEAVER LAKE—NOVEMBER 7

Explore the trails at Beaver Lake with Sierra Club Outings leaders or participate in a walk guided by a Beaver Lake naturalist (the topic of the day is *Nests and Dens*). For additional information about the latter, please contact the Beaver Lake Nature Center at 638-2519. ■