



IROQUOIS

MESSENGER

Explore, enjoy, and protect the planet

After 25 years is it time to act???

by David William Fischer

25 years ago, scientists from NASA, NOAA and other institutions told the U.S. Congress (June, 1988) that global warming was no longer just theory, but reality. We must reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, they said, or face a future climate that would threaten human civilization.

In 1988, atmospheric CO₂ was about 350 ppm. Now it's about 400 ppm: we have increased emissions to drive a present growth rate of about 2 ppm per year. We chose to believe that we'd find a way to cheat the laws of nature while we continued fossil-fueled "business as usual". Now we have unprecedented droughts, heat waves, storms, and floods, and Earth's perennial ice is rapidly melting.

Who predicted these phenomena? The same scientists who say the primary culprit is CO₂ emissions from burning fossil fuels.

Climate is changing much faster than predicted. The Arctic Ocean will be at least briefly ice-free in late summer within a few years — possibly this September — although the IPCC asserted in 2001 that this would not happen until around 2100. We are already seeing the weather impacts. For several years, as heat rushes toward the North Pole, our weather will be dramatic and chaotic. Major crop losses are likely.

Locally, Oneida Lake barely froze over in 2011–12; by about 2020, it may have seen its last major freeze. This year's Memorial Day weekend snowstorm in the Adirondacks hints at the climate chaos we might expect over the next few years. Natural ecosystems and our agricultural systems are in great peril.

Additional climate change is unavoidable because CO₂ lasts for centuries. We can only work to limit the extent. Anyone concerned about climate change should tell their U.S. senators and congressional representatives, because very few people actually do so.

Adaptation to change is important, but without emissions reductions, adaption is temporary because climate change will accelerate as CO₂ accumulates.

Many scientists and informed climate activists expect that political will for climate-change mitigation will rapidly mushroom as we suffer the consequences of our inaction. As this happens, it is essential that governments react with policies that will truly effective. Citizens Climate Lobby (CCL) and many others are convinced that the most effective option is a revenue-neutral, market-based carbon fee with 100% dividend fully rebated on a per-capita basis. It would reward every successful strategy for reducing emissions, and has a surprising level of bipartisan support.

Sierra Club member David William Fischer, a mycologist who lives in North Syracuse, blogs at GlobalEcologist.org

Party for the Planet At the zoo



Once again the Iroquois Group went to the Zoo on Earth Day. It is a fun event :lots of kids; parents; live animals; people animals and like-minded exhibitors. It was not easy as we also were walking the Honeywell Lake site on the same day.

As before we had a tree identification game , a backpack raffle and our usual information on how to "enjoy, explore and protect" the planet. Check out the photos and maybe join us next year.



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IROQUOIS MESSENGER IS PUBLISHED SPRING, SUMMER, FALL & WINTER

We're always looking for great stories from our members, so let us know if you'd like to write an article or book review, or have questions for us!

News to your inbox:

If you join our Iroquois "news list" you will get updates, information and reminders of our events. Frequency at most is 3-4 per month, often less. You can unsubscribe at anytime. It is a closed listserv so your address is not visible, or ever shared.

If you or your friends want to be on this listserv, send an email to lro-group@newyork.sierra.org with the words "News List" in the subject line.

FROM THE CONSERVATION CHAIR

by Linda A. DeStefano

GOOD NEWS:

The towns of Dryden and Middlefield withstood the appeal by a gas company and landowner to overturn the town bans against fracking for gas. This is the second level of court which has upheld the right of municipalities to ban fracking. Since the court decision was unanimous, the highest court in NYS may choose to let it stand rather than hear the case. Meantime, more and more municipalities continue to pass bans.

Sierra Club and several other environmental and animal protection organizations won a victory for sharks when the NYS legislature unanimously passed a bill to prevent finning of sharks. This is a barbaric practice in which the fins of the sharks are cut off (for the luxury food trade) and the animals are thrown back to die a painful death. As of this writing, we are waiting for Gov. Cuomo to decide whether to sign the bill into law.

A school in NYC recently became probably the first public school in the US to provide vegetarian food exclusively every day, including vegan food exclusively at least twice a week. The environmental connection is that animal agriculture is much harder on the environment than plant agriculture - causing more pollution of air, water and soil and destroying more natural areas and animal habitat.

Iroquois Group Chair Martha Loew had a letter published in the Syracuse POST-STANDARD about a Sierra Club initiative, "Renewable Energy Week." One of the activities the Group did to celebrate this week was to organize a presentation by Greening USA about the "12 traits of sustainability" for Syracuse and other communities.

NOT SUCH GOOD NEWS:

The negative consequences of fracking are already being felt in NYS because of our proximity to Pennsylvania, where extensive drilling is taking place. Water has been drawn from the community of Painted Post to be used for fracking in PA. The Sierra Club successfully sued to stop this but the stealers of our water are appealing.

Three landfills in NY currently accept drill cuttings (solid drilling waste) and fluids from fracking operations in PA. This deposits toxic chemicals and radioactive waste on our land.

Natural gas pipelines are proliferating in NYS, including one proposed to travel from Binghamton to the Town of Onondaga. The Sierra Club is one of the organizations challenging some of the pipelines.

Continued on next page

FROM THE CHAIR,

Dear Tree Huggers,

Do you suppose we are creating people-dependent or lazy birds? All the natural food choices must be out there as all is in bloom, growing etc. My feeder clients do not seem diminished from the winter months (except thankfully the squirrels). Guess the free lunch is more interesting than working for it. Like packaged food is for us?

A good no-kill winter except for one unobservant Cardinal who became a Cooper's Hawk lunch.

Lots of spring mating games, especially with the Red-winged Blackbirds. Grackles appeared this year, new visitors with spectacular iridescent heads and clever stance to avoid the "foil the large bird" feeder lever.

Garlic Mustard!!! It is all over and when pulled it brazenly reveals next years crop getting a head start. I hope all persevere in the attack as it really is unhealthy for our forest floors. There are recipes for garlic mustard pesto, but who can use that much pesto? Just my small yard yield was 10 super-sized yard bags full. They all went to the incinerator as my gurus say that compost heat will not kill the seeds.

Have a great summer, and save the milkweeds from your local highway department's ditch trim. Their blades and poisons kill the Monarch Butterflies' Bed and Breakfast.

For the earth and all its critters,

Martha Loew



Conservation chair continued...

On another front, there is a proposal to allow high-level liquified nuclear waste to travel from Canada to a US Department of Energy facility in South Carolina - over 1,000 miles. These shipments would travel through NYS and other states - posing the extreme danger of accidents and terror attacks. One of the several points of concern is that the intense radioactivity of the fission products generates heat.

In addition, the presence of weapons grade uranium could lead to an accidental chain reaction (called a "criticality" accident). Together, these factors may conceivably breach the container and allow the liquid waste to leak out. If you'd like to know more about these challenges and what people are trying to do about them, contact me (see pg. 2).

BOOK REVIEW By Rocki Malamud

"In February 2010, an unprecedented rainfall brought down mudslides and catastrophic flooding on the Mexican mountain town of Anganguero. Thirty people were killed and thousands lost their homes and livelihoods." That statement, which is not fiction, begins Barbara Kingsolver's Author's Note in her latest novel. "Flight Behavior."

In her usual lyrical prose she has written a book that no one who is concerned with our planet's future should miss.

Her protagonist, a farm wife in the author's native Appalachia, comes upon a local valley which seems to have been transformed into a "lake of fire." From here, we accompany Dellarobia Turnbow as she and her friends, family and community are swept up into interactions with sightseers, journalists, the ever present opportunists, students, and biologists. Without preaching she seamlessly intertwines the personal lives of her characters with the most pressing problem of our time: climate change. Along the way you learn a lot about butterflies.

As usual, the people jump off the page, her writing is crystal clear, and her word choices always precise and seemingly inevitable. You wouldn't have thought of using that particular one in that way but it's a perfect fit.

Don't miss this one. She wrote it for us.



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OUTINGS

SEPT 22, Sunday, 2:00PM

Explore the Rand Tract.

Hike this unique area in Syracuse's Valley neighborhood. An important habitat for animals such as fox, mink, raccoon, and deer, this property was designated a "forever wild" area in 1973.

Take Valley Dr. (NYS Rte. 80) south, passing Webster's Pond and St. Paul's Church, which are both on the right. Turn right into the first cemetery entrance (not the barn entrance driveway) and drive straight back and park along the edge of the woods. Look for Sierra Club sign.

OCT 6, Sunday, 2:00PM

The Trees of Oakwood Cemetery

Walk this historic cemetery with distinguished professor Don Leopold, as he introduces us to the wide variety of old and beautiful trees found here.

Follow the signs from the cemetery entrance in the 900 block of Comstock Avenue, Syracuse, and meet at the Chapel on the west side of the cemetery.

PROGRAMS

OCT 23, Wednesday, 7:30 PM

"Storms of our Grandchildren's Grandparents: What to expect from Earth's New Climate"

Join us for this informative and timely presentation by Citizens Climate Lobby representative David W. Fischer.

University United Methodist Church, 1085 E. Genesee St., Syracuse

THANK YOU, SCOTT WEBSTER

When Scott came to town and answered the call for a webmaster we were so fortunate. How could you miss with a Webmaster named Webster? And it was true. Postings were fast, accurate and just plain well-done on a good-looking site.

Scott got his love of the outdoors growing up in the Midwest with family camping trips. Trips that went all the way to California to visit his Grandfather.

In high school he joined Sierra Club and participated in two service trips, the Weminuch Wilderness in Colorado, and Needles in Wyoming.

As a Professor in the Whitman School of Management at Syracuse University he also was recipient of the Chancellor's Citation for Excellence, 2012. Only 5 such Citations are awarded each year. Scott is also author of 3 college textbooks.

Iroquois Group will miss you, and wishes you all the best in your new job at Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.

The Messenger is now printed on 100 % post consumer recycled paper!
The paper is also chlorine free, and FSC certified. If you would like to purchase some of this paper for your own use, contact Martha at: mloew@twcny.rr.com.