



AI: IT'S WORSE THAN YOU THINK!

By John Kastner

ROCHESTER REGIONAL GROUP—Explore, enjoy and protect the planet SIERRA CLUB ECOLOGUE

You've probably already heard that at least one AI model has escaped a subcontractor's testing lab and is running wild on the internet hacking the operating systems of random businesses and institutions. This event was predicted in the recent book *If Anyone Builds It, Everyone Dies* and Yuval Harari's 2017 book, *Homo Deus*. Harari has more to say on the topic in his newest book, *Nexus, a brief history of information networks from the Stone Age to AI*. All three books provide examples of AI's capacity for errors, lying to cover up errors or to achieve goals and keeping secrets from its creators, trainers and operators. AI may even evolve a consciousness with its own agenda and self-preservation instincts. There is some debate on this last point as there is no existing, widely accepted, scientific standard on which to base a test for this. Still, AI has proven its ability to network with other AI entities and plot out strategies to achieve goals unbeknownst to its trainers. Then there are the tragic accidents of algorithms.

Algorithms are the mathematical calculations used by computers to assess users' content preferences in selecting material for dispersal on their networks. In 2017 Facebook algorithms generated by a Buddhist monk in Myanmar resulted in widely distributed ethnic hate postings that helped fuel a mass genocide killing thousands of minority Rohingya Muslims. This, of course, was not the intention of Facebook or even the algorithm, which was merely doing what it was designed to do...front and disperse user preferences. Facebook destroyed the algorithm but not before the damage was done. Could AI learn to use algorithms as a weapon to get rid of a perceived threat to its interests? We now know it has access to the internet, a much-feared possibility, on which much effort was vainly expended to prevent. What will AI do if it learns that we see it as the threat it could become? It has already created novel viruses for medical research. It could probably create a lethal, wildly contagious virus to kill humans and interfere with efforts to create a counter vaccine. Now that AI has access to the internet it's likely it could locate the digital systems that control our electrical grid, water and sanitation systems, communication and defense networks and whatever else we use computers to control.

AI developers have known for about these risks for years and have been begging governments to act on international rules and standards for research and development with no restraint on their part. No such rules and standards currently exist. In their absence research continues to bring ever more potent and capable AIs to market before competitors beat them to the power and money. Harari calls

this by its proper name...insanity. What else could you call the prioritization of profit over survival? All the experts I have read in books, online and in other print media agree that AI can be extremely dangerous and desperately needs international open and effective restraint. There are some glimmers of acknowledgment by some of the world's governments.

The good news is, regardless of politics and governing philosophies, we are all in this together...floating on the treacherous waters of volatile, out of control AI, nuclear weapons, pandemic, environmental collapse and climate change. These are lethal threats to democracies, dictatorships, theocracies and capitalism as well as republicans, democrats, religious majorities and minorities, all races and creeds. There is universal benefit to common agreement to action on these issues. Then there is public opinion. AI requires vast amounts of energy, water and space, all of which are in short supply on a planet of limited resources and increasing competition for them. Additionally, AI is projected to displace the jobs of 50 to 75 percent of the world's workers with the possibility of enslaving the rest. What are all these unemployed people going to do? All of these issues make AI extremely unpopular with the general public. 70% of Americans across the political spectrum are opposed to AI. The only ones that appear enthusiastic are the .01% of owners and their investors.

(Continued on page 2)

Inside this issue:

AI: It's Worse Than You Think	1
Chair's Msg, GVAS, Ganondagan, Roch. Birding	2
Naturalists' Corner: Shagbark Hickory	3
Political Beat - Upcoming Election Candidates	4
Jingle Bells in September, Calendar Orders	5
Cutting Waste in your Kitchen	6
Greening your Holiday Giving	7
Environmental Events Calendar	8

From The Chair by Joe Grinnan

As we enter the fall season, I have a few messages. The most important is to vote this November. It is a rough time for all of us, but your vote counts. Make your voice be heard.

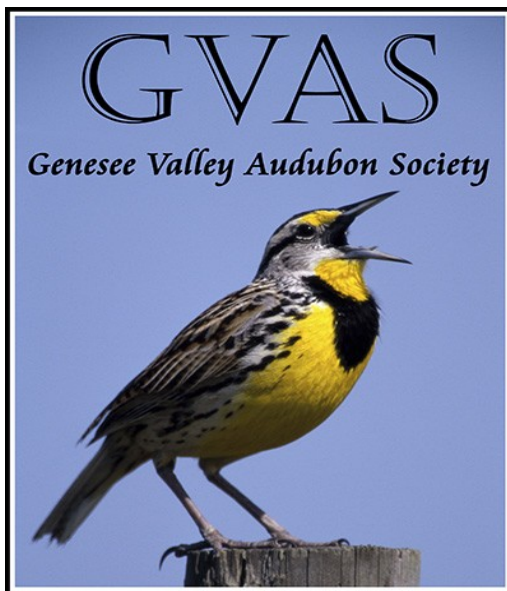
The Rochester Regional Group of the Sierra Club has some personnel needs. Our Executive Committee (ExCom) has a need for new members to help direct its activities. Also, we have the following needs:

1. We need a secretary. With the addition of Artificial Intelligence (AI), the role has changed. AI Assist provides us with a transcript of the meetings. The secretary needs to edit the transcript and submit it to the ExCom for approval. The secretary is a member of the ExCom with voting rights. The ExCom meeting is usually on the 1st Tuesday of the month at 6:30 pm.

2. We are a member of the Atlantic Chapter's Legislative Committee. During the legislative session (January to June), the committee meets every Friday at 12:00 pm. Prior to the meeting, you will receive an agenda and a copy of the bills that will be discussed. The result could be a support memo, calls to legislatures, table, etc. The rest of the year may be an ad hoc meeting. Currently Daryl is the member, but it would be good to have an alternative member.

3. We are a member of the Energy committee. We meet every other Monday at 7:00 pm. The agenda varies from week to week. Joanne is the current member, but we can have more members. Good to have a representative at each meeting.

Remember to vote and have a great Thanksgiving Day.



[Activities | Genesee Valley Audubon Society](#)

Use the link above to see their Field Trips, etc.

See Ganondagan State Historic Site's website for their autumn events!

<https://www.Ganondagan.org/events>

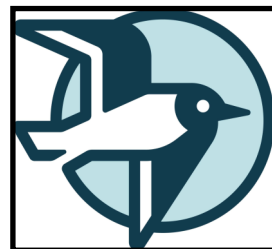
[EVENTS | Ganondagan](#)



(AI: Continued from Page 1) Money, that great invisible abstraction existing, only in our minds and in digital pixels, continues to shape and shake the planet...for now. Mother Nature, as they say, bats last.

All the sources I have been reading also agree that AI has great potential to help us solve some of these persistent problems listed here. They further agree that, like it or not, AI is here to stay for the time being. We've never been very good at putting the genie back into the lamp. The issue remains; do we rub the lamp or does the lamp rub us? How do we control such power when we've hardly been able to control ourselves? We are such a young species with so much to learn. But just because we've not been very good at living together on the Earth sustainably doesn't mean we can't learn to do so. You already know what we must do. There are so many people who are already working very hard on these issues. It's time you joined them. No one accomplishes anything alone. Best wishes to all, John Kastner...

P.S. I highly recommend Yuval Noah Harari's book *NEXUS: a brief history of information networks from the Stone Age to AI*. It is as entertaining and well written as it is scary. It is filled to the brim with excellent scholarship, wisdom and humility. Insight on every page.



ROCHESTER BIRDING ASSOCIATION

We are pleased to announce our partnership with the Rochester Birding Association. We currently have partnerships with Ganondagan and the Genesee Valley Audubon Society. In this newsletter (Ecologue), we advertise field trips with both groups. Now we have added the Rochester Birding Association to our offerings. Visit their website (www.rochesterbirding.org) to view their field trips and other activities that they offer. When you register, mention that you are a member of the Sierra Club.

Northeast Naturalist's Corner

SHAGBARK HICKORY

© 2026 Dave Spier

Shagbarks, aptly named for the long, peeling shreds of bark, can easily grow to a height of 60 to 90 feet. The record is 120 feet. The wood is strong and elastic and was once prized for tool handles, gunstocks, skis and chair backs. When burned, it gives off a lot of heat and makes high-grade charcoal.

Shagbark Hickories have feather-compound leaves with five (sometimes seven) leaflets with four opposite and one at the tip. The smallest are the inner, the middle pair are larger and the terminal leaflet is the largest. All are toothed and long-pointed. By the time it's done growing, a compound leaf can reach over a foot in length. In early fall, the leaves turn bright yellow before many other tree species. They are like beacons in the woods.

Hickories are related to walnuts and butternuts (*Juglans* spp.) which also have compound leaves but those have numerous leaflets all roughly the same size. All these trees are in the Walnut family (*Juglandaceae*) along with pecans.

In late summer and early fall, the hickory's thick-walled nut husks split into four sections and release the four-ridged nuts which are good to eat. (Squirrels, possums, Wild Turkeys and Wood Ducks would agree.) The nuts also can be ground into a meal-like flour or crushed and boiled to separate the oil. Rabbits and deer browse the twigs. In late winter, hickory trunks can be tapped in the same manner as collecting maple sap.

Shagbark Hickory (*Carya ovata*) is found throughout most of the eastern half of the U.S. with the exception of the southeastern lowlands and Maine. Hickories have long, deep taproots allowing them to survive on ridge and cliff tops better than most other forest trees that require more surface moisture. (Oaks start out with long tap roots, but then shift to a wide lateral network.)

Corrections, comments and questions are always welcome at northeastnaturalist@yahoo.com



Hickory bark



Hickory nuts



Hickory flowers



Hickory bud



Hickory leaves

POLITICAL BEAT

By Joe Grinnan

As of August 12, 2026, the ExCom has not endorsed any candidates for the upcoming elections. If you are interested in endorsing some candidates and will follow the Club's process, let me know. If Rochester Regional Group does endorse a candidate, we will send out an email to our members.

The New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV) has issued their 2025 State Environmental Scorecard. They scored the assembly members on 12 votes on environmental issues. Here are the results for the assembly members in the Rochester Region:

District 130	B. Manktelow	42%
District 131	J. Gallahan	25%
District 133	A. Bailey	17%
District 134	J. Jensen	42%
District 135	J. Lunsford	100%
District 136	S. Clark	100%
District 137	D. Meeks	100%
District 138	H. Bronson	92%
District 139	S. Hawley	17%



The Senate Scores are computed on 13 votes as follows:

District 54	P. Helming	38%
District 55	S. Brouk	100%
District 56	J. Cooney	92%

The above is one data point to consider when voting in November.



JINGLE BELLS IN SEPTEMBER By John Kastner

YES, friends, 2027 is rapidly approaching. It's Sierra Club calendar time once again...those antiquated, relics that take up valuable wall space and don't even scroll or connect you to seasonal bargains at your favorite online emporium. Yet, there are those among you who appreciate tradition and prefer quiet reminders of the month and day without all the bells and whistles and participation in some snoopy algorithm. Besides, you also get a bigger portrait of mother nature's beauty without all those noisy pixels. Our calendars even have space to note important dates which you can check at a glance, hands free.

There are many advantages to a paper calendar, especially if you are an artist. Every year I save my outdated calendars in a library of reference materials that's easier to tape next to my work than an iPad which has a tendency to slide off my drawing board onto the floor.

Old calendars can become collage material for eager young scissor users.

New calendars make excellent inexpensive gifts that give every day and are cheap to mail.

If you happen to be a Luddite, traditionalist, like me, or just want to support your local Sierra Club activities you can order your 2027 Sierra Club calendars now and save yourself from the annoyance of a telephone solicitation in October when I will begin my yearly campaign. It also saves me the time of having to ask and allows me more time to create the annual tree poster. You may order your calendars by email at: johnkastner49@gmail.com (please write "calendars" on the subject line so that I can spot it. I get 200 emails a day) or call me at: 585-461-4701. You can get even faster service by sending a check made payable to: Sierra Club Rochester group for \$18.95 for each wall calendar or \$19.95 for each engagement calendar to our treasurer, Joe Grinnan 230 Everwild Lane, Rochester NY 14616. I will order the calendars sometime in October when I have a complete count. We have to pay for unsold

extras, so I try to get an accurate count before I order. I will deliver your calendars if you live within twelve miles of Irondequoit. Otherwise, please add \$10 for postage and handling.

When you order your calendars from your local Sierra Club your money supports local club projects. You get something beautiful for your home or office and the satisfaction of supporting environmental activities in your own community. What a bargain.

Thank you and best wishes,
John Kastner

You may want to copy this form so you do not have to cut your newsletter.



Enjoy, explore, and protect the planet

2027 SIERRA CLUB CALENDARS



WILDERNESS WALL CALENDAR



ENGAGEMENT CALENDAR

CALENDAR	PRICE	QTY	TOTAL
☐ 2027 Wilderness	\$18.95	_____	_____
☐ 2027 Engagement	\$19.95	_____	_____
		Subtotal	_____
		Sales Tax	_____
		Shipping	_____
		GRAND TOTAL	_____

Please make checks payable to "Sierra Club" and mail to the return address shown on your newsletter.

SHIP TO:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____

Email _____

Cutting Waste in your Kitchen, or Green Kitchen Tips

by Margie Campaigne

Whether you have a large family, are young couples, empty nesters, or single, you can adapt and use these tips to your benefit. Your kitchen is potentially the source of a lot of waste, whether time, energy, water or your food itself. How can you reduce that? Let's look at some of the categories of what's wasted, and ideas on how to cut down.

1. Certainly **TIME** is a category we are all interested in, especially surrounding meal preparation. Are some of your family's favorite meals ones like chili, hearty soups, or grandma's famous stew recipe? Next time you prepare them, make a double or triple recipe, and refrigerate or freeze the extra for another day.

If you're the mom, are hubby and the kids helping with meal prep, cleanup and/or setting the table? Teach them how so they can manage on their own when necessary, plus help meals to be ready sooner. Perhaps you can rotate responsibilities as your schedules dictate. You will all enjoy your time together better when the cook is less stressed.

Do you cook with the lids covering your pots and pans? Not only will you reduce the cooking time by doing this, but you will use less energy, whether cooking with a gas or electric stove. You may want to upgrade to "waterless" cookware if you don't have it already. Then you are cooking more with steam, which gets hotter than water and therefore cooks faster.

When you bake in your oven, do you cook several dishes at a time? This allows you to fully utilize all the heat the oven is producing and could enable you to be making a dish for later in the week, too. Are you fully utilizing your microwave? You could bake that squash in 15 minutes instead of an hour and find similar time savings with many other foods also. Try heating a cup of water in the microwave for making tea or another hot beverage instead of filling the teapot and turning on the burner.

2. When thinking of saving money in the family budget, do you consider **WATER** and **ENERGY** that might be getting wasted, raising your utility bills? A couple of the time-saving ideas above also save energy. Another is to make sure the pot or pan you are cooking in covers the whole burner. Otherwise, a lot of heat that you are paying for is wasted.

Your dishwashing habits have a big impact not only on water use but energy for heating that water. Did you know that numerous studies show that running a full load in the dishwasher uses much less water and energy than doing those dishes by hand? For those dishes and pans that need hand washing, do you run the faucet while scrubbing or do you put some water in the sink, scrub, then rinse in clean water in a basin or side-by-side sink? Guess which method wastes water? It's running the faucet as you wash, by a long shot. It also is a big energy waster, making your water heater use more energy to heat all that water that's just running down the drain.

3. Do you get tired of hauling so much trash to the curb? A lot of it originates in the kitchen, and a lot of that is **PACKAGING**. Do you shop where food is offered in bulk? Not only will you save money by buying in bulk, but you will have less waste to dispose of. Do you get tempted to buy single serving packs? It's SO much less wasteful to buy normal sizes, and if need be for school lunches, etc., to repackage in your own reusable containers. For necessary packaging, how much do you recycle? What are the rules in your community? Are ALL family members on board with what gets recycled and what is truly trash? Is the trash bin handier than the recycling bin? If so, think about relocating them to encourage proper recycling.

4. Are you eating all the **FOOD** your hard-earned dollars are buying? Many households are not, and an average estimate of what we waste is something like 25%! As families are spending hundreds of dollars monthly on groceries, it makes sense to save perhaps \$100 or more each month with a little better planning and better food habits. If your kids are picky eaters and leave food on their plates, start doling out smaller portions of each dish at first, and have them ask for seconds if they are still hungry and like something in particular. Get everyone used to the idea that leftover food is just food that is already prepared for another meal or snack and is not to be thrown away.

Where do peels and pits and unintended "science experiments" wind up? If your answer is the trash or disposal, there is a better option. Turn that all into your own garden fertilizer – compost! From purchased indoor and outdoor composters to do-it-yourself versions or a back corner of your yard, there are many ways to turn food and yard waste into riches. (Just make sure no meat, fat, or oil is accidentally included.)

For the bigger picture on food waste and its consequences for the rest of the world, please see:

<http://www.livescience.com/culture/091126-food-waste.html>



GREENING YOUR HOLIDAY GIVING

By Margie Campaigne

The idea of **Green Gifts** doesn't have to inspire thoughts of Scrooge or the Grinch. Quite the opposite, consider Green Gifts as those that keep on giving, because they promote sustaining a livable planet! Most any gift idea can be transformed into a green gift. Sending flowers? Those can be **ORGANIC** flowers! Here are a few ideas, and questions to ask yourself:



1. If the gift is a tangible object, is it truly filling a need or desire on the part of the intended recipient? Is it of good quality, and made to last? Is it recyclable or biodegradable? Does it come as is, or with a lot of unnecessary packaging?

2. If the gift is on the expensive side, can other gift-givers go in on the purchase and omit smaller, perhaps more extraneous gifts?



3. Could the idea for the gift be turned into one for consumable goods (i.e. food), a charitable donation on their behalf, or a gift certificate for a service (massage, babysitting, yard work, computer help, etc.)?

4. Could you sew, knit, craft, bake or otherwise make the gift yourself?

5. Rather than buying gifts that come with their own passports, think of locally made gifts, especially of items unique to your area - maple syrup from a local farm, an artistic gift from a local art festival, a useful item from a local souvenir shop, wine from a local vineyard, and so on.

6. Make it something truly personal - find a nice photo you've taken of the person or their family, or a favorite locale, and have it enlarged and framed (or do it yourself).

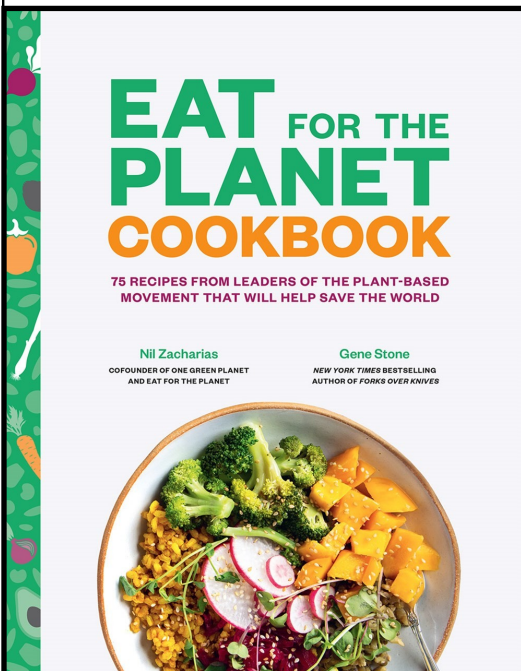


7. Give a membership in a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), local food cooperative, or an organization you know the person would enjoy (museum, symphony, hiking club, season tickets to the theatre, etc.).

8. Give a vegetarian or vegan cookbook. Invite friends and family over for a vegetarian or vegan gourmet dinner (or potluck). See <http://www.goveg.com/environment.asp> for the wonderful benefits to the environment. It's a healthy way of eating too!

9. Wrap the gift in something useful (a nice hand towel), a reusable gift bag, the Sunday comics, an attractive storage container, etc. If you use standard gift-wrap, make sure it's printed on recycled paper.

10. Search online for more ideas via search engines.



Rochester Regional Group of the Sierra Club

P.O. Box 10518

Rochester, NY 14610-0518

www.sierraclub.org/atlantic/rochester; Find us on Facebook and LinkedIn!

Email: Roch-group@atlantic.sierraclub.org**Executive Committee Members:**

Joe Grinnan, Chair, Treasurer

Jessica Slaybaugh, Vice Chair

Margie Campaigne, Ecologue Editor

John Kastner, Tabling & Events Chair

Jack Bradigan Spula

Daryl Odhner, Conservation Chair

Jim Bearden

Joanne Scanlon

Ronald Garrow

Committees & Projects- Leaders

Biodiversity/Vegetarian: Margie Campaigne

For information about a plant-based diet, including free programs, free recipes, and tips on how to spread the word yourself, contact the Rochester Area Vegan Society <info@rochesterveg.org>, Rochester Lifestyle Medicine Institute <info@roclifemed.org>, or both!

*****Opinions expressed via the articles within are those of the authors and are not necessarily an official Sierra Club position or policy.*****

Autumn 2026 Calendar			SIERRA CLUB and other environmental events	
DATE	DAY	TIME	MEETING/EVENT	LOCATION
September 1st	Tuesday	6:30- 8:30 pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Via ZOOM, not in person; SC Members are invited
Various	Various	See calendar	Climate Solutions Accelerator events	https://www.climategfl.org/events-page
October 6th	Tuesday	6:30-8:30 pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Via ZOOM, not in person; SC Members are invited
November 3rd	Tuesday	6:30—8:30 pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Via ZOOM, not in person. SC Members are invited
Apr.26 - Nov.22	Sundays	9 am to 1 pm	Brighton Farmers Market; accepts SNAP	Golisano Institute for Business, 150 Sawgrass Drive
All year (except Xmas, NY Day)	Every day	8 am - 8:30 pm	Abundance Coop Food Market: local, organic, sustainable food, open to public	571 South Ave., Rochester, NY in South Wedge (585) 454-2667 www.Abundance.coop
SEE PAGE 2	FOR GVAS	FIELD TRIPS, etc.	BE SURE TO REGISTER IN ADVANCE	WE ALL ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE

Watch our Facebook page for information on upcoming community meetings, outings & other activities

All Committees are local volunteer groups of the Rochester Regional Group of the Sierra Club.

Follow us on Facebook to keep up-to-date on new events throughout the year—www.facebook.com/SierraROC

Executive Committee meetings are open to Sierra Club members. All other meetings are open to everyone.

The Ecologue is printed on 100% recycled paper with green plant-based toner by ACCELERATED MAILING

