



PLANT A TREE FOR THE PLANET

by John Kastner, jkastner@weeblax-uzzl.com

ROCHESTER REGIONAL GROUP—Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

SIERRA CLUB ECOLOGUE

While the Covid Pandemic continues to rage across the world capturing headlines and striking fear among mortals, climate change continues its progress unabated toward eliminating humanity and a good share of the rest of life on earth. While we can wash our hands, wear masks and become social hermits to defeat the virus, many of us feel powerless or otherwise disinclined to confront climate change.

We are not powerless. If we want to survive, we can fight. We can vote, demonstrate, organize, enlist in one of the army of organizations working on the issue such as the Sierra Club or, if we crave more simple solutions, we can plant a tree or two...or three. The Rochester Regional Group of your Sierra Club has set a goal of planting 1000 trees on Saturday, October 24th. Originally planned as a family/community event in Genesee Valley Park, the pandemic has forced a redesign of the project. We will now be distributing the trees, along with biodegradable deer sleeves, cedar stakes and planting instructions, free of charge at two locations, Seneca Park and Genesee Valley Park on the same date from 10:00AM to 3:00PM. We will be setting up self-serve stations for people to pick up their free trees and materials. The trees must be planted on the participant's own property or other private property with the permission of the owner. Left over trees will be planted by Club volunteers at the original site in Genesee Valley Park set aside for this purpose by our event partner, the City of Rochester Department of Forestry.

We are asking for your help to make this event a success.

First, come pick up as many trees as you would like to plant on your own property. We are offering red oak, red maple, white pine and tulip trees, all native, local species.

Secondly, get the word out to your friends, families, church groups and other interested parties with land where trees could be planted.

Thirdly, we will need volunteers to staff the distribution sites...bagging trees, replenishing self-serve stations, answering questions and setting up directional signs.

Fourth, we are still accepting donations to help pay for the trees and materials.

Lastly, we will be needing help planting left over trees in Genesee Valley Park, which will probably take place the following Saturday. Mask wearing and social distancing will be observed throughout all activities.



This event is part of a global effort to plant one trillion trees which will remove about 30% of atmospheric carbon over the next twenty to thirty years. We would like this to become an annual event which will expand in scope with each succeeding year. Your participation, which will only require a few hours from pick up to planting, will go a long way toward

making this happen. It's one simple, easy thing you can do for your planet and your children. **If interested, please call John Kastner at 585-461-4701 or email: jkastner@weeblax-uzzl.com.** Thank you. **PLEASE WATCH FOR POSSIBLE UPDATES REGARDING THIS EVENT.**

Inside this issue:

Plant a Tree for the Planet	1
From the Chair; Naturalist's Corner	2
Moth-Eaten Again	3
Sierra Endorsement of LSR Energy Projects	4
Public Transportation and Effects of COVID	5
Climate Action Made Easier	6
2021 Sierra Club Calendar Order Form; FORUM	7

Remaining Virtual through February 28, 2021

Beginning March 16, Sierra Club, like many organizations throughout the world, suspended all in-person meetings, events, and outings due to COVID-19. This directive has now been extended through February 28, 2021.

The rest of the Rochester Regional Group's executive committee members and I fully support these measures. The health and safety of everyone is far more important than any gathering, and we still are not in a place where we can be sure of being safe. However, this extension has made me think about how much we miss interacting with you and the rest of our community.

April – October have traditionally been active months for us, starting with our annual Environmental Forum on or around Earth Day. Postponing this year's forum was a big loss for us, because we've been wanting to make environmental justice a focus area for the Rochester Regional Group and engaging the public on this topic was to be a huge part of that. You can read more about our plans for the forum on page 7 of this issue.

Aside from the forum, we've also missed getting to see you at festivals and events where we usually have a table set up so people can drop by and talk to us. Every year, we look forward to participating in events such as Ganondagan's Indigenous Music & Arts Festival (formerly the Native American Dance & Music Festival) and Adirondack Mountain Club's ADK Expo. The fact that these events couldn't be held this year has been a big loss to our community.

Then there are the periodic outings our committee members have offered, leading groups on walks through local trails or gathering for bike rides. We've missed these opportunities to interact with you on a more personal level. Our main outings leader, Peter Debes, has a wealth of knowledge of wildlife that he shares on his walks, and I'm disappointed that our members have not had the opportunity to learn from him this year.

We're still holding our monthly executive committee meetings 6:30 – 8:00 on the first Tuesday of every month, but we're now holding them virtually, via Zoom. While we're able to get our work done virtually, the great thing about our in-person meetings was that members could stop by and join us. Our meetings are still open to anyone who wants to join us, but it's a bit more difficult now. If you are interested in attending one of our virtual meetings, please contact me or another member of the executive committee and we'll send you the Zoom meeting info.

I very much hope that by the time February 28, 2021 rolls around, that the virus will be under control – primarily because I want everyone to be safe and healthy, but also because I want to interact with you again. We're looking forward to a time when we can resume hosting and attending events and having an impact on our community.

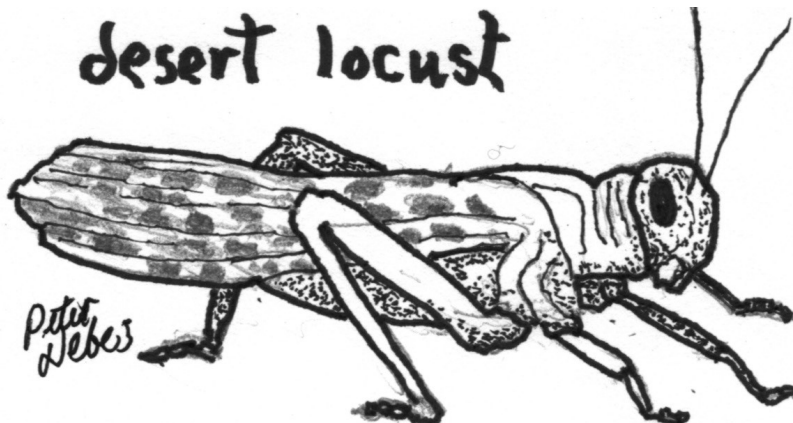
If you have ideas as to how we can interact with our members virtually, please share them with me or another member of the executive committee. We'd love to hear from you!

Naturalist's Corner by Peter Debes

A Plague Upon You! COVID? No, Locusts!

While we were engrossed with the spread of the virus, in the Spring, there was another plague happening - the eruption of hundreds of billions of desert locusts consuming crops that quickly led to severe food shortages for more than 20 million people in Africa and spread east as far as India and Pakistan.

While we escaped this plague this year, in 1988, 100 million managed to make it across the



Atlantic dropping from the sky in the Caribbean islands from Cuba to Trinidad - traveling more than 3200 miles without food or water! Fortunately, the swarm diminished and disappeared without making it to North America.

MOTH-EATEN AGAIN

By Jack Bradigan Spula

Three decades ago a large part of my beloved Rattlesnake Hill Wild Life Management Area, a state-owned refuge near Nunda, was the victim of an intensive gypsy moth attack. I won't soon forget seeing hundreds of acres, maybe thousands, defoliated on the scenic south-facing hillside of the WMA's southern flank. That sort of thing sticks in your memory.

Much the same way, I've already "filed away" some shocking pics of defoliated hills this year in and near Ontario County Park in the town of South Bristol. The view from what we used to call the "Jump-off," now officially relabeled a less compelling "Overlook," always will be spectacular, but the vast defoliated acreage I saw there has certainly marred the stored mental negatives. The countless adult gypsy moths in the air that day certainly added a touch of entomological Hitchcock, too.

Some recent walks at another beloved park, Mendon Ponds, put me on high alert, too — what with dozens of gypsy moth egg masses visible even on large shade trees near Hundred Acre Pond. I hope a strenuous county and volunteer effort will follow this fall and winter (tailor made for Sierra Club and like-minded groups) to remove these masses; at least some of next year's defoliation can be prevented, with notable tree specimens chosen first to be saved.

I've seen a big infestation coming at the county's Oatka Creek Park, too. West-siders, this one's for you.

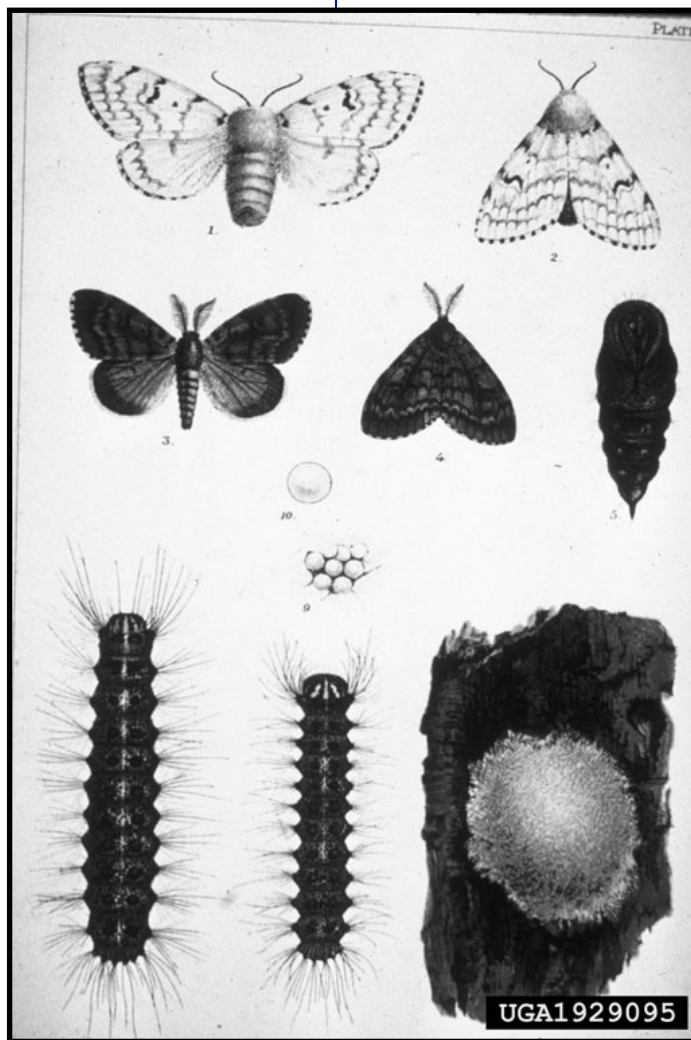
Some googling will yield many sharp images to help with identification of eggs, caterpillars and moths. And Cornell Cooperative Extension provides some useful info for those anticipating an infestation:

"Hardwood trees (oaks, maples, hickories, etc.) may be able to survive two or more years of defoliation, if they are in good health to begin with. Evergreens on the other hand are likely to die after one year of defoliation.

"This caterpillar usually hatches in April and May, but with [2020's] cold spring many didn't hatch until mid-May with some not until early June. When they first hatch they are a quarter inch in size, black and fuzzy. They will hang from a silken thread and be windblown to the next branch or another tree nearby. They go through five or six growth stages depending on the sex of the caterpillar. At about one inch in size five pairs of blue dots and six pairs of red dots begin to appear on the back of the caterpillar and the hairs get longer.

"When full grown they are two to two and a quarter inches long and about as big around as a pencil. The caterpillar stage lasts about seven weeks from the time of hatch to the time of pupation (cocoon stage). Moths emerge in July and August. The male is brown with black markings and flies in a zig zag fashion. The female is white with dark markings and does not fly. Mating and egg laying occurs during this same time period. Each egg mass contains several hundred eggs. These eggs overwinter and hatch the following spring starting the cycle over again."

I've spent tiring but satisfying hours in years past scraping egg masses off trees in my own woods. I urge you to become a scraper, too! It's vital, though, to destroy the eggs properly, not just let them fall to the ground. The City of Toronto has published a valuable mini-guide on how to accomplish this in a natural way:
[https://www.toronto.ca/wp-](https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/8b15-european-gypsy-moth-resident-locate-destroy-egg-masses.pdf)



Various stages of Gypsy Moth life cycle

[content/uploads/2020/02/8b15-european-gypsy-moth-resident-locate-destroy-egg-masses.pdf](https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/8b15-european-gypsy-moth-resident-locate-destroy-egg-masses.pdf)

Best to mount your attack organically, of course! Beyond Pesticides has provided a detailed factsheet to get you started.
<https://www.beyondpesticides.org/assets/media/documents/alternatives/factsheets/Gypsy%20Moth%20Control.pdf>

Well, now you have something to fill those lazy fall and winter days ahead. But don't wait too long to inspect the parks and woodlands. The task is probably going to be monumental.

Sierra Club Endorsement of Utility-Scale Renewable Energy Projects

by Ellen Cardone Banks, Atlantic Chapter Conservation Chair
(reprinted with permission from Sierra Atlantic newsletter)

Many Sierra Club members are familiar with the carbon reduction standards in New York State's 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA): 85% reduction in greenhouse gases from 1990 levels by 2050, 100% carbon-free electricity by 2040 and 70% renewable energy in all sectors by 2030. Now that these goals are codified in state law, how are we going to reach them? Rooftop solar, efficient transportation, and energy conservation are all necessary but not sufficient; utility scale renewables, including land-based wind, offshore wind and large-scale solar, are essential, as Jacobson and co-authors' calculations demonstrated in 2017.[1]

The Atlantic Chapter, in line with national Sierra Club policy, takes an affirmative stand supporting utility-scale renewable projects unless there are significant, evidence-based reasons to oppose them.

In line with this policy, a group of volunteer leaders and David Alicea, New York lead organizing representative from the Beyond Coal Campaign, have developed an assessment instrument to evaluate large-scale renewable projects with regard to:

- Impact on Wetlands and Forested Areas
- Impact on Birds and Wildlife
- Impact of Food Production and Workers
- Community Benefits: Tax Base, Local Labor Agreements, Community Engagement and Listening / Wider Community Benefits

Each topic and the subtopics of Community Benefits are to be rated on a 0, 1 or 2 scale, based on review of project proposal documents and discussions with developers, local elected officials and local residents (including local Sierra Club members), labor leaders and other community groups. Ratings and supporting data will be presented to the local group for approval and then will be reviewed by a Working Group of volunteer leaders from the chapter (Chapter Chair, Conservation Chair and Energy Chair, one leader from the local group, and a staff person from the Beyond Coal Campaign).

Of a maximum 16 points, 9–16 points would generate a formal endorsement, with 13 or more earning a stronger endorsement; 6–8 points would lead to

discussions with developers to suggest siting improvements and a possible later reassessment, and 3–5 points would withhold endorsement, pending major site changes and other improvements. The Working Group has the ability to override a "Serious Concern" recommendation from a local group if a supermajority (2/3) of the Working Group so decides. If any single category receives a zero score, even if the other categories are satisfactory, the decision would be delayed until concerns are resolved.

A positive decision from the Working Group would mean that the project is endorsed by the Atlantic Chapter.

The endorsement would then be communicated to our members, to the community where the project is proposed and to other interested parties. Endorsement would not be the end of Sierra Club engagement as local volunteers could continue to monitor the process, advocate for improvements when possible in categories that earned less than two points on the zero to two scale, and hold developers accountable for the highest environmental and community involvement standards.

We think this process of evidence-based and quantifiable review of siting proposals is a first for the Sierra Club nationally. **A recent pilot test of the procedure in the Rochester Group's region, with Frank Regan in the lead, has worked well and has led to a rounded score of 14 out of 16 points. The Atlantic Chapter working group therefore endorsed Apex Clean Energy's Heritage Wind project in the town of Barre, Orleans County.**

Under the 2020 Accelerated Renewable Energy Growth and Community Benefit Act, a new Office of Renewable Energy Siting is expected to resolve the extreme delays and multi-agency fragmentary reviews that have been impeding utility-scale renewable projects. Our new chapter review process should be able to assure our members that the Sierra Club's endorsement of these projects will be consistent with our values of environmental protection and environmental justice.

Notes

[1] <https://web.stanford.edu/group/efmh/jacobson/Articles/CountriesWWS.pdf>



PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND EFFECTS OF COVID

By Patrick Suter

Noted eco-pragmatist and polemicist Stewart Brand contends that urbanization – the proliferation of population density, the concentration of opportunity, wealth and creativity – and its associated benefits including the preservation of existing green spaces, is an invaluable tool in the fight against anthropogenic climate change. But in this brave new COVID-19 world, urbanization faces a new threat: fear of public spaces. Suddenly, we are reminded, as we were in 1918, that the things that make cities models of efficiency and convenience are the very things that contribute to the spread of disease.

Perhaps no place on Earth has buckled under the weight of growing pushback against shared urban spaces than the world's de facto financial capital. In a viral self-published essay, author, comedy club owner and former hedge-fund manager James Altucher infamously proclaimed, "New York City is dead forever," referring to the swift decline of the City's greatest assets: business opportunity, culture and food. Conspicuously

missing from his analysis (which I find objectionable on many levels, including that NYC flirted with financial ruin in the 1970s and rebounded spectacularly), is the massive toll that the pandemic has taken on the City's bus and rail network. The Metropolitan Transit Authority, which administers the nation's largest public transit system, is currently surviving on debt and government bailouts.

According to Bloomberg News, MTA faces a potential \$10.3 billion budget deficit for 2021 and sharply declining ridership, not to mention intangibles like declining public confidence in the safety and reliability of public transit. I concede that with its superlative scale and rapidly aging infrastructure, MTA is an outlier. But I believe that what's happening to MTA is emblematic of a growing trend to eschew public mass transit in favor of alternatives perceived to be safer, such as taxis, ride hailing apps, traditional and e-bicycles, and privately-owned vehicles.

Cities throughout the world quickly emerged as epicenters of the pandemic, but to what extent did trains and buses contribute to the spread? The answer is unclear. While MTA ridership remains about 20% of pre-pandemic levels, new studies in France, Japan and Austria, places that largely eradicated the virus, demonstrate that not a single infection cluster in those countries has been linked to public transit. Yet, another study by University of Virginia economist John McLaren attributed reliance on public transit as a contributing factor to higher infection and death rates due to COVID-19 among African-Americans, even after controlling for income and other factors.

How are transit agencies combatting the threat, real or perceived, of trains and buses as vehicles (no pun intended) of disease

and death? When the magnitude of the pandemic materialized in early April, Regional Transit Service, Rochester's bus and para-transit operator, quickly announced a number of health and safety-oriented measures including sanitizing buses daily, wiping down the Transit Center 3 times a day, mandating masks and encouraging social distancing among passengers. RTS initially stopped collecting fares, in part to prevent riders from entering and leaving from the front of the bus, thus exposing the driver to streams of passengers. That policy was lifted on July 15th (although fares are still free for veterans) and every bus has since been retrofitted with a plastic shield to protect drivers. Despite their efforts, a Para-Transit driver fell ill with COVID-19 on March 19. Since then, there have been no reports a case linked to RTS. In addition, RTS's planned rollout of its redesign initiative, Reimagine RTS, has been pushed back. Planned changes under the initiative, including replacing direct lines to the suburbs with on-demand service within 'Community Mobility Zones,' were scheduled to take effect June 29th.

While the threat of an outbreak looms large, transit authorities face another challenge that transcends public fear of shared spaces: declining ridership due to workers opting to work from home. At the moment, RTS ridership is down nearly 50% but it's hard to predict where that number is headed in the long term. That will depend largely on the behavior of the cohort of people who are not beholden to public transit, who have access to a vehicle but choose to take the bus as a matter of principle or preference. Count me among the privileged former bus riders who were able to work from home, first out of necessity, later by choice. Many wage workers in food service, hospitality and healthcare, often people of color, depend on public transit to meet their basic needs. Incidentally, this is the same group that was deemed 'essential' when the state declared a State of Emergency back in March. This is also the group stands to gain the most from cleaner, safer and more reliable public transit.

In the short term, public transit needs generous financial support from governments. The Federal CARES Act, signed into law on March 27, provided \$25 billion in support to transit agencies, including \$1 billion to Amtrak to help "offset their extraordinary costs and lost revenue related to COVID-19" (American Public Transit Association). Time will tell if the Fed's infusion of money is enough to avoid massive

layoffs and service cutbacks. In the meantime, we must continue having dialogues about the importance of making public spaces safer and more equitable. As we reevaluate our relationship to the built environment, we must consider the role that public transit plays in alleviating poverty, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and strengthening our collective humanity.



New York Subway mosaic-tile tablet and medallions for 116th Street – Columbia University Station. The Subway's operator, MTA, relies on fares for 40% of its revenue. MTA faces a financial crisis due to sharply declining ridership (Courtesy of Togzhan Seilkhanova).



Houston's METRORail Red Line, southbound on Main St. The COVID-19 public health emergency presents new challenges for transit authorities nationwide, which had been struggling since the inception of Uber and Lyft about 5 years ago.

CLIMATE ACTION MADE EASIER

New Program “Color Your Community Green”

Looking for a way to get involved in climate action in your very own community? Looking for a way to make a difference on a larger scale than your own personal energy efficiency and composting? It’s actually easier than you think with Rochester People’s Climate Coalition’s (RPCC’s) new program “Color Your Community Green” (CYCG).

First, why and how did CYCG get started?

“There’s no more meaningful place for you to take action, than in your own town, village or neighborhood. When you act locally, you have an opportunity to make a direct impact in your community, on behalf of people you know – your fellow residents and neighbors.”

-Allen Hibner, Color Penfield Green member



Well, your local municipality (town or village) is a small but mighty building block in our region and state. Our towns and villages possess a great deal of authority and autonomy in “home rule” New York, meaning that much of the climate progress needed in our region can only happen when municipalities take action.

That’s why RPCC mobilizes climate action across the nine-county Genesee-Finger Lakes Region through the Color Your Community Green initiative. Inspired by RPCC member organization Color Brighton Green, CYCG aims to connect and organize concerned individuals, by municipality or neighborhood, to form a network of climate-focused citizen action teams that will:

- identify locally-relevant, high-impact climate solutions and develop strategies to move those solutions forward using the CYCG “Toolkit”;
- advocate for environmental justice and equitable climate solutions to be implemented at the municipal level;
- determine the best path forward for their community, with support from RPCC, fellow CYCG teams, and other climate organizations in the region.

CYCG’s roots grew two years ago in parallel with an effort to support a local climate solution: At about that time, Al Hibner formed a team in his hometown of Penfield to advocate for Community Choice Aggregation (CCA), a program through which municipal governments can negotiate affordable renewable energy plans for all their residents. A year later, Katie Rygg joined the team and shared her idea to create a website that would cover all things related to sustainability in Penfield. After months of lobbying the town board, the CCA legislation successfully

passed in May 2020. The next step was to educate the public and Al and Katie wanted to be a part of that. Color Your Community Green gave them the tools to do this, and Color Penfield Green was born.

Katie quickly realized that the website and newsletters offered an easy access point for any resident. They offer resources for people to start making small changes in their lives at home, information on what other local climate groups are doing, educational workshops and events, and action opportunities such as emailing the town board or signing on to give support to local initiatives.

As part of another campaign they are working on, Color Penfield Green is also promoting electric school buses. They have been reaching out to the Superintendent and the School Board to advocate that the district’s new bus garage be built for EVs, and that some of the new buses brought in for the 2021-22 school year be electric. The progress that Katie, Al, and other Penfield residents are making clearly demonstrates the power of strategic, collaborative citizen advocacy at the municipal level.

In addition to Penfield, CYCG teams are beginning to spring up in Fairport, Pittsford, Irondequoit, Henrietta,



“Color Your Community Green is a great program for someone thinking about getting into climate action. They provide tools to help identify how and where to start—even as an individual—and they help leaders find allies in their community. The toolkit includes suggested actions and campaigns in detail that will have meaningful impacts on reducing carbon emissions. Most importantly, CYCG connects newcomers to a whole network of others in the climate movement in this region who can offer support, empowerment, and camaraderie.”

-Katie Rygg, Color Penfield Green member

and Spencerport/Ogden. **For more information on CYCG, including a webinar, a toolkit for municipalities, and an interest form for you to fill out to get involved in your community, check out RPCC’s webpage:** <https://tinyurl.com/rpcc-cygc>.

RPCC, its members, and the CYCG teams believe that by bringing people and organizations together, through coordinated, collaborative action, we can end our region’s dependence on fossil fuels and move quickly towards carbon neutrality.

In times like this, we’re reminded of how interconnected we all are, and how much of a difference we can make if we all work together.

Save the Date - Monday, Nov. 23, 2020 - Environmental Forum Live on YouTube

Last April, the Rochester Regional Group of the Sierra Club had developed a ground breaking program for our annual Environmental Forum. We gave a preview of the program on the Evan Dawson Connections program on April 16 (go to the WXXI website). We had to postpone the Forum and hoped to hold it in the Fall. Since public gatherings are still too risky, we have decided to do the Forum live on YouTube. Our mission statement acknowledges the following:

Climate change worsens all injustices. It directly impacts the health, environment, and economics of our communities. Throughout 2020, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and comprehensive movement that educates, responds and benefits all. You will be introduced to each of our presenters who will speak to the issue of climate change from the perspective of the group they represent. This program will be available free and will offer live opportunities for questions, comments and answers. Mark your calendars and watch for Sierra Club email updates. For more information, please go to our website: <https://www.sierraclub.org/atlantic/rochester>

ANNUAL SIERRA CLUB 2021 CALENDAR FUNDRAISER

Once again it's calendar time, your local Rochester Regional Sierra Club's biggest fundraiser. You get a wall or desk calendar with breathtaking images of our beautiful planet and space for daily planning and the Club gets the funds we need to run our local programs and pay our bills. We depend on your generosity to get things done. Please send your check payable to Rochester Regional Sierra Club indicating how many and which kind of calendars you want to:

Rochester Regional Group Sierra Club
P.O. Box 10518
Rochester, NY 14610-0518

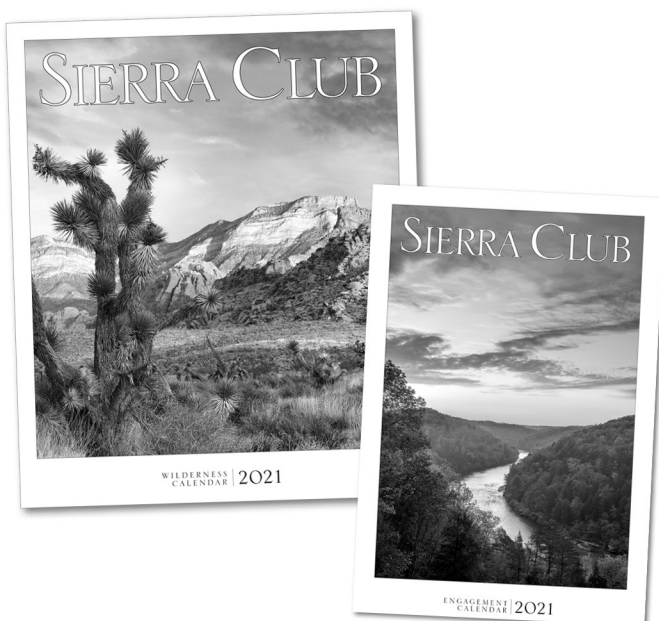
They make great holiday gifts. Thank you for your continued support.

PLEASE NOTE: If you live in the city of Rochester, your calendar(s) can be hand-delivered, contact-free, at no charge. If outside the city, please include \$8.00 extra per calendar to cover shipping. Add correct sales tax please.



Enjoy, explore, and protect the planet

2021 SIERRA CLUB CALENDARS



ORDER FORM

ITEM	COST	QTY	TOTAL
Wilderness Calendar	<input type="checkbox"/> \$14.95	_____	_____
Engagement Calendar	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15.95	_____	_____

Subtotal: _____

Sales Tax: _____

Shipping: _____

GRAND TOTAL: _____

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

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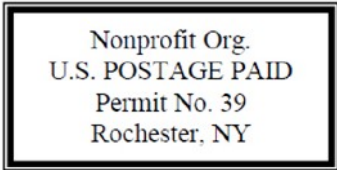
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The opinions expressed in the articles within are those of the authors and are not necessarily an official Sierra Club position or policy.

Summer 2020 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
October 6th	Tuesday	6:30—8:30 pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Via Zoom, not in person
October 24th	Saturday	10 am-3pm	Plant A Tree for the Planet (TENTATIVE)	Pick up at Genesee Valley Park or Seneca Park
November 3rd	Tuesday	6:30—8:30 pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Via Zoom, not in person. REMEMBER to VOTE!!!
November 23rd	Monday	TBA	2020 Annual Forum: Climate Justice	Live on YouTube - watch for details on our website
All year	Every day	See Facebook for COVID hours	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
May 24-Nov. 22	Sundays	9 am—1 pm	Brighton SUMMER Farmers Market	Brighton HS parking lot, 1150 Winton Road South www.Brighton FarmersMarket.org

Watch our Facebook page and website 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 Eco-Logue is printed on 100% recycled paper with green plant-based toner by ACCELERATED MAILING

