



From the Chair: OUR NEWSLETTER IS GOING DIGITAL

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ROCHESTER REGIONAL GROUP—Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

SIERRA CLUB ECOLOGUE

For decades, the Rochester Regional Group has mailed the *Ecologue* to the doorstep of every Sierra Club member in our area. We appreciate these opportunities to connect with our members, and we hope that you've found value and enjoyment in our newsletters over the years. This issue you're reading now is special: It's our last printed newsletter. Starting next issue, we're going digital! Here's the scoop:

How you'll receive the newsletter going forward – and how to opt in for a printed newsletter:

We'll email a PDF of the newsletter to all of you, using the email address that is on file with the national Sierra Club. You'll receive it around the same time you typically receive your newsletters now – probably a few days earlier. *If you want to continue to receive a printed copy of the newsletter, cut off the top section of page 4 containing your address and mail it to us, OR to keep your Ecologue intact, mail us a photo copy of page 4.* We'll still be printing a number of copies of each newsletter so we can hand them out at events, plus we know that many people prefer reading on paper rather than on a screen.

Why we're switching to a digital newsletter:

- 1. Cost:** National Sierra Club has typically reimbursed us for portions of our newsletter. Since only specific types of content can be reimbursed due to 501c3 guidelines, that means that National needs to manually review every newsletter, then determine what percentage of the newsletter can be reimbursed. This is a process they have to go through for every single newsletter any group throughout the Sierra Club produces. That's a lot of work, and it has become more challenging for them due to changes at the national level. At this time, National is over a year behind in payments. As a small group working with a limited budget, fully funding the newsletter on our own is not a sustainable practice for us. When addressing this issue, our executive committee had some discussions around what we'd like our funds to go toward in general. We determined that our money would be best spent investing in

educational events such as our environmental forums and supporting causes close to our hearts, such as environmental justice. By switching to a digital newsletter, we're giving ourselves an opportunity to make further investments in those areas.

- 2. Environment:** The idea of switching to a digital newsletter has popped up many times over the past few years due to environmental reasons. While we print our newsletters on recycled paper and use soy-based ink, there's definitely a footprint involved that can't be ignored. One could argue that switching to digital also has a footprint, but especially considering how constantly connected we are in this day and age, it's (somewhat) negligible. This is a bit of a "practice what you preach" move for us, identifying and acting on an opportunity to reduce waste.

Thank you to all of you for your ongoing support of our organization, and for taking some time out of your day to read our newsletter. If you do want to continue to receive a paper copy, please don't hesitate to fill out the form and send it in to us. Our number one priority is to ensure that this content is delivered to you in the way you prefer.

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WITH NO SIERRA EVENTS TAKING PLACE

IN THE NEAR FUTURE, IT LEAVES US WITH

NOT MUCH TO WRITE ABOUT IN THIS ISSUE.

Genesee Valley Audubon Society Autumn Trips

Genesee River Trailway, Petten Road to Turning Point Park, Monday, September 13, 2021, 10:00am – 12:00pm, We will meet at the marina on Petten Road off Lake Avenue south of the O'Rourke Bridge (Pattenwood) we will walk to the end of the boardwalk at the bottom of Turning Point Park and back and enjoy the sights and sounds of the Genesee River in late summer. Hopefully we will get one last look at our favorite migrant birds before they head to their winter-feeding territories. This is an easy walk except for a slight slope from the trail down to the boardwalk and back up again. For questions or to register email Loretta Morrell at loretta.morrell.gvas@gmail.com Register for this event no later than Saturday, September 11, 2021.

Yanty Creek Nature Trail at Hamblin Beach Park, Monday, October 11, 2021, 10:00am -12:00pm, located on the east end of Hamblin Beach State Park an easy looped trail of 1 mile with a variety of ecosystems to observe wildlife complete with a ADA accessible bird watching platform and boardwalk. Parts of the trail could be muddy after heavy rain, so appropriate footwear is highly recommended. Binoculars will enhance your enjoyment. For questions or to register email Loretta Morrell at loretta.morrell.gvas@gmail.com Register for this event no later than Saturday, October 9, 2021.

Genesee River Trailway, Petten Road to Turning Point Park, Saturday, October 15, 2021, 10:00am – 12:00pm, We will meet at the marina on Petten Road off Lake Avenue south of the O'Rourke Bridge (Pattenwood) we will walk to the end of the boardwalk at the bottom of Turning Point Park and back and enjoy the sights and sounds of the Genesee River in early fall. This is an easy walk mostly on tarmac and boardwalk. For questions or to register email Loretta Morrell at loretta.morrell.gvas@gmail.com Register for this event no later than Saturday, September 11, 2021.

Tinker Nature Park, Monday, November 15th, 1525 Calkins Road, Pittsford, NY, 14534 10:00am -12:00pm, Though we don't hear much bird song this time of the year and our winter residents are still out and about. We have a walk through this beautiful park woodland and wetland and see what birds remain with us during these cold and sometimes snowy months. Bring binoculars if you have them. Wear warm and sturdy footwear to protect your feet from getting wet and cold. For questions or to register email Loretta Morrell at loretta.morrell.gvas@gmail.com. Register for this event no later than Saturday, October 13, 2021

Facing Climate Change: Ten Reasons Why Americans Find it Difficult to Address the Climate Crisis

by Hugh Mitchell

Prof. Michael Ross of UCLA will be teaching a course this fall on why it's so difficult to address climate change. I'd like to suggest ten of my own thoughts on this important subject.

1) Life stage focus. The median age of Americans is currently 38.4 years. Typical challenges and concerns in this life stage are on family, job and immediate life needs. People are so busy there's very little free time or energy left to think about the future of the climate.

- 2) Earth for us.** J. E. Steiguer in his book Age of Environmentalism points out, "The environment is regarded as a neutral entity without moral standing and is available for humans to use to attain their {own} ends." This is an anthropocentric view of nature in which Earth is regarded as an endless warehouse available to provide raw material for human use without consideration of any ecological cost. To address the climate change issue would require changing an anthropocentric world view.
- 3) Business-as-usual.** In 1988 James Hansen coined a term describing ignoring action on climate facts as "Doing business as usual." Now more 33 years later we're still dodging action on the facts. Things may look bad on the news but actual day-to-day daily life isn't so bad. It's easy to avoid facing the frightening climate facts and delay taking the kinds of radical actions needed to reduce the current level of 409.8 ppm of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which is the highest it's been in the last 800,000 years.
- 4) Spiritual drift.** Much of the Western world is spiritually adrift. The opinion has been expressed that 'soulless materialism' has replaced a previous communitarian spirit as was seen in WWII. The consumer culture, so loudly blasted out by advertising, claims you can be better off and happier by buying more things. This kind of head wind hampers the development of a healthy eco-based spirituality which has respect for the interdependent web of life of which we are a part. Facing climate change is difficult because the philosophic cultural bias is toward the material rather than toward shared sacrifice for the welfare of the ecological community of earth.
- 5) Lacking understanding or ignorance of science.** 28% of Americans currently qualify as scientifically illiterate. 70% of adults can't read and understand the science section of the *NY Times*. Further, according to one study, half of U.S. adults can't read a book written at an 8th grade level. Is it any wonder that this lack of basic literacy in science and reading makes it difficult for many Americans to understand or address climate change?
- 6) Economics, property & politics.** It's not just corporations that value property and profits over community needs; a lot of individuals focus on growth of profits, politics of business and a healthy 401(k) plan. But the future of the climate challenges the whole idea of profits and a growth-based economy. Further, the last four years under Trump have blind-sided national climate concerns and his administration has hampered, rejected or denied the importance of action on climate. Facing climate change means governments, corporations and individuals have to face major economic and attitude changes about profits and property. Is it any wonder that facing the climate crisis is difficult?
- 7) Short-term pleasure.** The 'pleasure – pain' principal holds that the individual will seek pleasure and try to turn away from pain. There are a lot of painful implications in looking at climate heating. Millions of 'normal' people choose immediate pleasures such as sports or socializing over facing the facts on what the future of the climate will mean for our own children.

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- 8) **Rampant Individualism.** I think some people misinterpret the US Constitution. 'The right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness' shouldn't be used to support the idea that the individual, in the pursuit of happiness, has a right to ignore all community needs which aren't specifically spelled out in law. (A recent example is seen in the 'Anti-vaxxers.') Addressing climate change means a singular belief in the supreme rights of the individual needs to be modified. In a crisis the rights and needs of the community must be considered at least as important (or more important). When we consider the survival of the entire ecological community of earth may be at stake, communitarianism becomes an essential value.
- 9) **Fear of death and fear of climate change are similar.** Americans are basically a forward-looking, optimistic people who have built the country on effort, activity and hard work. The idea of death is associated with endings finality, no longer being active or achieving anything. We all have a primal fear of dying. The facts on the climate crisis point to the possibility of global disaster. In effect, thinking about the death of the planet as we've known it is too frightening to consider and too closely linked to thinking about one's own personal death. The topic and facts are rejected.
- 10) **Nimbyism. (Not In My Back Yard)** Maybe we environmentalists are Nimbies? It's not just conservatives who resist change. It's difficult for persons of all political stripes to accept the need to make the kinds of radical political and social changes which the future of the climate demand. These changes need to be led by environmentalists, but are we really there? I find it difficult to distort the view-scape of this beautiful upstate New York environment by erecting huge windmills in Lake Ontario or ruin farm fields with metallic solar panels. Are we Sierra Club members ready to face painful environmental changes which we demand of others? Is there any time left for balanced solutions which can accommodate both beauty and utility?

CLIMATE EMERGENCY TORPEDOES TREE GIVEAWAY...But fails to sink it

By John Kastner

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Three months ago, I described, in this newsletter, the success of our first annual tree giveaway and announced plans for our second event. Then tragedy struck. It wasn't exactly the bootleg fire in Oregon that destroyed over 400,000 acres of forest, or the catastrophic floods in Germany that carried away whole villages. Nor was it the 120 plus degrees of heat that invaded the rainforest states of Washington and British Columbia. But it was a reminder that nowhere is safe from the climate emergency and that such disasters could happen anywhere, even New York. In fact, they already have. Witness the August floods in Steuben County, the central New York floods of 2018 and 2019 and hurricane Sandy in NYC.

Though all our tree giveaway suffered was a pushback from October 2021 to May 2022, it was the changing climate that delayed the required dormancy of the trees so that they could not be harvested safely. None of the bare root seedling providers I spoke with could guarantee us trees in the fall, despite this being the best time to plant young trees. The arrival of winter and spring are now much harder to predict. This has serious implications for all planters and planners.

There have been other setbacks for our project as well. We have received ZERO in requested donations to help purchase the 2000 trees we want to give away.... not one dollar.... nothing. This contrasts with the several hundred dollars we received in advance of last year's event before fund raising even began. Potential sponsors pay attention to these things when they ask "how much have you already collected from your members?" Nor did any volunteers come forward with offers to help organize and staff the new effort.

I understand that we're all tired, financially and emotionally stressed and beset with requests for our time and money. I get a thousand emails a day and my mailbox is stuffed with bills and pleas for money. But this is the home team, folks. We are talking about a relatively easy way to do something important and effective in addressing the climate emergency in our own backyard. If we don't

care, who will?

Here's a little stat (I love apocalyptic stats, don't you?). It's from *Harper's*... estimated area of lost natural forest worldwide that has been regrown since 2000...217,414 square miles...estimated permanent tree cover loss over that same period... 583,014 square miles. News like this depresses the hell out of me. It leaves me with a sense of futility and despair. It would be so easy to just give up, look the other way...and I want to...but I can't. Every child, every newborn, every smiling toddler I see is relying on me (us) to do something to give them a chance, the same way we relied on adults when we entered the world. Who are we to betray that trust? I still believe that a small core of dedicated, committed people with blood in their veins and strength in their limbs to do some small thing is powerful enough to engage the rest of us to pull off the miracle we need. We could fail, but the outcome is certain if we do nothing.

The numbers say that we can cool the planet and keep our cities livable if we plant enough trees, save enough green space and practice agriculture more sustainably. We need to do a lot of other things, too, but let's get the low hanging fruit first. I want to see the Sierra Club mailbox stuffed with checks. There are over 3,000 of us in the Rochester group. We only need a couple of dollars from each of you. I want to hear my phone ring off the hook (I'm old) 585-461-4701, with volunteers ready to offer a few hours of their time picking up, moving stuff and staffing distribution sites. I read about environmentalists all over the world who are dying, giving up their precious lives, to protect some vulnerable, vital part of Mother Earth. I'm just asking for a few dollars and a couple of hours of your life. I helped stop fracking in New York. I'm not giving up on Earth. Don't you give up, either.

Make your checks payable to: Sierra Club Rochester Group.
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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.

Autumn 2021 Calendar			SIERRA CLUB and other environmental events	
DATE	DAY	TIME	MEETING/EVENT	LOCATION
September 7	Tuesday	6:30- 8:30 pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Via ZOOM, not in person
October 5	Tuesday	6:30—8:30 pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Via ZOOM, not in person
November 2	Tuesday	6:30—8:30 pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Via ZOOM, not in person.
May 9 -Nov. 21	Sundays	9 am - 1 pm	Brighton Farmers Market; accepts SNAP	Brighton HS parking lot, 1150 Winton Rd S, 14618
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
SEE PAGE 2	FOR GVAS	FIELD TRIPS	BE SURE TO REGISTER IN ADVANCE	WE ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE

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.

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