



eco-logue

*"Not blind opposition
to progress, but opposition
to blind progress."*

ROCHESTER REGIONAL GROUP

Volume 30, No. 2
Mar/Apr 2000

Thursday, March 16th, 7:15pm at Third Presbyterian Church

BOTANICAL CURIOSITIES: PLANTS' WILD INVENTIONS

An Illustrated Talk by Prof. Bruce Gillman

Over millions of years wild plants have developed a most unusual array of survival techniques. These range from fantastic to amazing. Some plants survive by using various colors, others use antifreeze, and some produce those wonderful smells to attract pollinators. Other plants, which grow in poor environments, have evolved the trick of getting their necessary nutrients by eating flesh!

Professor Bruce Gillman, PhD, a botanist who has taught at Finger Lakes Community College for 24 years, will present

a talk accompanied by his beautiful slides to illustrate the unusual features and abilities plants use for survival. His slides include wildflower illustrations, a feast for our winter starved eyes. He will discuss sundews, pitcher plants and other marvels of plant adaptation.

This Sierra Club membership program is free and open to the public. Third Presbyterian Church is at the corner of Meigs & East Ave.

7 pm, Thursday, April 6, First Unitarian Church

SECOND ANNUAL ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

Sponsored by the Sierra Club

••• SPEAKERS ••• AGENDAS ••••• DISPLAYS ••••• NETWORKING ••• PLANS ••• RECRUITING •••

Keynote address by Professor James Buchanan

"Rethinking The Environment In An Information Age"

Environmental groups, and concerned conservationists are invited to gather with the regional environmental community.

For the second consecutive year Sierra Club will sponsor an Earth Month Environmental Forum at which all regional environmental groups and concerned conservationists are invited to present their agendas, express issues and concerns, put up table displays, recruit new members, and share information. Last year this was one of our most successful events. Over 15 groups plus a host of individuals presented issues and shared concerns.

James Buchanan, Ph.D., the Caroline Werner Gannett Professor, R.I.T, will deliver a challenging address inviting

environmentalists to broaden their thinking on the future of environmental activism, considering the new age. His talk is entitled, "Rethinking the Environment in an Information Age." He will discuss such diverse subjects as suburban sprawl, metropolitan unity, and genetic engineering. Professor Buchanan has published widely on all of these topics.

The First Unitarian Church is at 220 South Winton Rd. (Come early if you have a display to set up.)

Sunday Mornings at 10 AM, March 12 and March 26 at First Unitarian Church

What is Responsible Consumption? Sustainable Living? Choice?

10 AM, Sunday March 12

What do these concepts tell us about appropriate life styles for our planet? Come to the First Unitarian Church Forum on Sunday March 12 and Sunday March 26 to participate in two lively discussion on this theme. These events will be held from 10:00 -10:55 AM in the Forum room, first floor, First Unitarian Church, 220 South Winton Road.

Will responsible Consumption Lead to Sustainable Living?
Presenters include: (1) Bob Fussell, attorney, author, and Co-Chair of a ZPG Population Awareness Committee; (2) Hal Bauer, who owns a small family farm producing and marketing food products grown without the use of pesticides, fertilizers or herbicides; - continued on page 2



FROM THE CHAIR

by Hugh Mitchell

One of the great strengths of Sierra Club is our efficient and impressive national electronic network. Even the average member has access to many specialized information streams, much of the club news, policies, trip information, and other activities. And in this regard recently we have been fortunate to have Frank Regan, a local environmental webmaster, join our Communications Committee. He will work on publicity and the local web site. In addition Frank brought with him his own environmental web page link. Try it. You might be impressed. Check also our local, state or national web addresses. The sites are found at:

www.rochesterenvironment.com
www.sierraclub.org/chapters/ny/rochester

If you want to receive special Sierra Club information, go to the Sierra Club site (www.sierraclub.org), select "Take Action," then "Activist News," then "Sierra Club Electronic News Groups," and take your pick.

Here are some other news from the Rochester Regional Group which might be of interest to members. Because of the strong name recognition of Sierra Club and our many local environmental activities we have become a kind of lightning rod attracting information about local environmental issues well before they break into the news. Let me give just a few examples of up coming stories.

The Nextel Corporation has bought two of the huge communication towers on Pinnacle Hill. Environmental meetings have taken place on whether to publicize this fact and remind everyone that there is still a strong and well-organized group called Coalition for Pinnacle Hill Park. Sierra Club is one of the Coalition leaders and we continue to lobby for the preservation of this rare land.

Plans are well underway with Monroe County and the US Army Corps of Engineers to build extensive dikes to protect Panorama Plaza from Irondequoit Creek flooding. There is a new coalition of environmentalists concerned about the broader effects of further channeling the creek. The group will make recommendations on ways to both protect Panorama and work with the environment to stop floods before they start by taking flood control measures in the Irondequoit Creek watershed such as building retention ponds and encouraging wetlands. These will have the added benefit of attracting wildlife. Recommendations will also include ways to ease downstream flood risks to Ellison Park and the Irondequoit meadows, possibly by purchasing the Dolomite Mine Lake and adding it to the park as a huge flood control basin. Sierra Club is a coalition participant.

Frankly, what we lack, despite the fact our regional membership is approaching 2,000 members, is engaged volunteers to follow up on environmental issues. Why not join a Sierra Club committee such as the wetlands, population,

clean air/clean water or land use groups? We also have several positions still open on the Executive Committee level. Helping the Sierra Club preserve our precious environment is a great education. Our actions can create local, state and national solutions, and it can be fun to work together. Call us at 244-2625 or send an e-mail to hmitch@frontiernet.net if you are interested in helping to save the environment.

ENDING BURN BARRELS

by Frank Regan

There are still communities around Rochester that permit the elimination of trash in burn barrels. However, a recent Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) study should galvanize everyone to stop them. Researchers at the EPA used a fifty-five gallon drum to burn a typical mixture of household trash and found that the, "Open burning of household waste in barrels is potentially one of the largest sources of airborne dioxin and furan emissions in the U.S." It is the low temperatures at which these backyard incinerators function (between 300 to 350 Celsius) which creates such havoc. Find out if your community allows the private open burning of trash and encourage those in charge to stop. Encourage them to increase the efficiency of their recycling policies and decrease the cost and inconvenience of their present trash removal plans that drive homeowners to compete with industry in polluting our air.

MARCH OUTING

The Nature Conservancy owns a parcel of land near Naples called West Hill Nature Preserve. It's a beautiful area, with very nice trails and the definite possibility of seeing wildlife. We will meet at the parking area at 10 AM on Saturday, March 11. Call Shawn Coffey at 393-9064 for directions. Our hike will go into the afternoon, so you will need to bring a lunch. Please be prepared for some strenuous climbing and dress accordingly. Additional optional things to bring are a winter tree identifier or guide, and binoculars. [For those of you who haven't been on one of Shawn's outings, you have no idea how fortunate we are to have his leadership. He won't be with us very much longer, so a word to the wise.... -Ed.]

SUSTAINABLE LIVING - continued from page 1
 (3) Colby Shultz, who lives with his family in a rural post and beam house with no electric service or petroleum based heat; and (4) Bill LaBine who owns Renewable Energy Works in Avon and is helping to bring sustainable energy to western New York State.

10 AM, Sunday March 26:

"Barriers to Family Planning"

The presenter for this program is Steve Aronson, Director of Public Affairs Coordinator for Planned Parenthood of the Rochester & Syracuse areas.

Miracle Grow, Fish Kills, and the Usual Suspects by Ted Christopher

A sequence of recent articles in *Scientific American* portrays the large and growing global use of synthesized nitrogen fertilizer and a dramatic example of its potential for adverse effects. In the July 1997 issue, Vaclav Smil in the "Global Population and the Nitrogen Cycle" describes the history and rationale for our increasing reliance on manufactured nitrogen fertilizer. Philip and Phylis Morrison offer a concise take on this topic in their aptly titled commentary, "Dining on Ammonia," in the August 1999 issue.

Nitrogen has long been recognized as a fundamental limiting factor in plant growth and thus food production. The vast pool of nitrogen in our atmosphere is in the form of N₂ and is rarely split or "fixed" to allow for its uptake by plants. In nature this fixation is performed by lightning and certain bacteria including those that exist symbiotically with leguminous plants.

Traditional (organic) techniques for providing crops with additional nitrogen have included recycling crop residues, recycling human and animal wastes, and alternate usage of leguminous crops. Smil describes the increasing scramble in densely populated areas for still more nitrogen by the end of the nineteenth century. Bird guano and nitrates were mined and subsequently exhausted from remote South American locations.

A breakthrough occurred in the early part of the twentieth century as Carl Bosch and Fritz Haber of Germany invented and then made practical the synthesis of ammonia (NH₃). The growing use of this process was essential to the quadrupling of global population during the twentieth century. In arable land-scarce countries with large populations such as China, Egypt, Indonesia, and Bangladesh, it provides sustenance for a large fraction of the population. In overfed countries such as our own, it provides for livestock feed. Smil estimates that globally about 1/3 of the protein consumed by humanity depends on Haber-Bosch synthesized fertilizer. Smil also lists the wide range of harmful side effects associated with the excess nitrogen. One dramatic, harmful effect believed to be facilitated by our growing use of synthetic nitrogen fertilizer is fish kills caused by the microorganism *Pfiesteria*. The remarkably deadly and complex workings of this microorganism are chronicled in JoAnn Burkholder's August 1999 *Scientific American* article "The Lurking Perils of *Pfiesteria*." Nitrogen and phosphorus-rich agricultural runoff allows for large *Pfiesteria* populations in coastal waters which then can transform themselves in the presence of schools of fish into extraordinary toxic killers (killing 1 billion fish in an episode off of North Carolina). Burkholder's tale of *Pfiesteria*'s remarkable persistence, selective toxicity, and perhaps most troubling, its ability to inflict long-term insidious health effects on fish and people (including those studying it) has the makings of a blockbuster Hollywood suspense thriller.

Smil suggests possible technical developments to reduce our growing nitrogen addiction. These include the long-standing practice of developing nitrogen-fixing capabilities in non-leguminous crops and more efficient fertilizer application techniques. The big-picture solution, though, would be "an early stabilization of population and the universal adoption of largely vegetarian diets [to] curtail nitrogen needs."

ON THE INTERNET

Frank Regan, a new member of our ExCom this year, maintains an environmental web site with all the environmental news, scheduling, documents, and services on the Internet for Rochester. It's updated daily and well worth a visit: <http://RochesterEnvironment.com>. Another site, called Green Solitaire, is a resource directory for all environmental activities on the Internet. It's at <http://greensolitaire.bizland.com/>

And while you're at your computer, don't forget our Group web site, expertly maintained by Erv Schroeder:
www.sierraclub.org/chapters/ny/rochester

CARING FOR CREEKS CONFERENCE

The Rochester Area Community Foundation (RACF) is sponsoring a 2-day Watershed Education Symposium entitled "Caring for Creeks 2000" on Friday and Saturday, April 28-29. It will be held at the Genesee Country Village in Mumford. On Friday, the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Task Force will give a Keynote Presentation, followed by presentations on five important area creeks given by citizens and municipal officials: Oatka, Irondequoit, Northrup, Black, and Allens Creeks! (with special presentation on Allens Creek given by students of the Harley School!)

Saturday will be devoted to hands-on, family-oriented water education activities held throughout the area. These activities include: interpretive hikes along each of the five creeks featured on Friday, a freshwater lab and Lake Ontario simulator at Rochester Museum and Science Center, the stream-bank erosion project at Powder Mills Park, "Your Home, Your Water, and You" at Cornell Cooperative Extension, a watershed "Mystery Tour", a tour of Long Pond wetlands, Monroe County Community Water Watch Training, and more.

Details are still being determined, but the fee for Friday will be approximately \$11 (lunch included). Saturday will be free. Call Evan Lowenstein at RACF for more information: 271-4271 x 4305, or e-mail to elowenstein@racf.org

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 of the Sierra Club
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CALENDAR

Mar. 2	Thursday	7:00pm	----- Clean Air/Clean Water Committee -----	6 Sibley Pl.
Mar. 5	Sunday	1:30pm	Population Committee	6 Sibley Pl.
Mar. 9	Thursday	7:15pm	Ex-Com meeting*	St. John Meadows**
Mar. 16	Thursday	7:15pm	----- General Meeting (see page 1) -----	Third Presbyterian Church
Mar. 11	Saturday	10:00am	Outing, West Hill Nature Preserve (see page 2)	***
Mar. 12	Sunday	10:00am	----- Forum on Sustainable Living (see page 1) -----	First Unitarian Church
Mar. 16	Thursday	7:15pm	Wetlands Committee	495 Antlers Dr.
Mar. 26	Sunday	10:00am	-- Forum on Barriers to Family Planning (see page 1,2) -----	First Unitarian Church
Apr. 2	Sunday	1:30pm	Population Committee	6 Sibley Pl.
Apr. 6	Thursday	7:00pm	---- Second Annual Environmental Forum (see page 1) -----	First Unitarian Church
Apr. 6	Thursday	7:00pm	Clean Air/Clean Water Committee	6 Sibley Pl.
Apr. 13	Thursday	7:15pm	----- Ex-Com Meeting* -----	*St. John Meadows**
Apr. 15	Saturday		Eco-logue deadline	
Apr. 20	Thursday	7:15pm	----- Wetlands Committee -----	495 Antlers Dr.
Apr. 28-29	Fri.-Sat		Caring for Creeks 2000 (see page 3)	Genesee Country Village
Apr. 30	Sunday	7:00pm	----- Eco-logue Mailing -----	6 Sibley Pl.

* Ex-Com meetings are open to members. Call Hugh Mitchell at 244-2625.

** Call Ginny Tyler, 244-4084 for directions (members invited)

***Call Shawn Coffey at 393-9064 for directions.

Visit our web site at www.sierraclub.org/chapters/ny/rochester

Also worth a visit: www.ggw.org/rochesterenvironment

To add your name to our e-mail list, send your address to: hmitch@frontiernet.net