



# SOUTHEAST SIERRAN

News of the  
Southeast Gateway Group  
of the Sierra Club

AUG-OCT 2020  
VOLUME 39, No. 3

The Sierra Club has extended its COVID-19 operational response through Monday, August 31. All national, chapter, and shared offices will remain closed, with rare exceptions, for urgent business continuity needs. Travel, in-person meetings, public events and outings will also remain on hold through at least August 31. For updates on outings please see our website, Facebook, Instagram, and Meet Up pages. Sign up to receive monthly SEGG E-news updates by emailing [melissa.warner3@a2q.com](mailto:melissa.warner3@a2q.com).

From the  
Co-Chair  
by Tom Rutkowski

## PAYING ATTENTION



*Still Life with Skull*, Philippe de Champagne, 1671  
Public Domain via Wikipedia

The memento mori, a reminder of death, has been helpful throughout history to make people wiser, more humble, more considerate. In Bhutan, consistently ranked as one of the happiest countries in the world, people believe that thinking of death five times a day helps to put troubles in the proper perspective. To share that purpose with Americans, someone developed an app, playfully called We Croak, an app that randomly sends you five quotations about death throughout each day. As an experiment I downloaded the app and regularly received such reminders.

Not that in our time death is a distant, abstract thing. This spring we saw images of mass graves and refrigerator trucks serving as makeshift morgues parked near hospitals. We saw the video of Ahmaud Arbery gunned down in the street and then the whole world watched another video of George Floyd being slowly murdered. Soon the names of other Black victims of police violence were written on the streets and on protest signs. All of those visceral, immediate deaths didn't make us any happier; we'll see if they made us any wiser.

One thing I learned from We Croak is that people have many things to say about death; most of them are easily forgotten. There was, however, one message that stayed with me, a message that seemed to say something essential in seven words that appear even more resonant in this time of great suffering, and change: **“Everything is connected. Everything changes. Pay attention.”**

**Everything is Connected.** The idea that we are intimately connected to everyone and everything else in the world is a concept most likely familiar to environmentalists and, in particular, Sierra Club members. It can be found in an often repeated quote by the founder of the club, John Muir, “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.”

Such a connection was made profoundly clear with the Covid 19 pandemic. An invisible sequence of genetic code, in this case a strand of RNA, mutates and leaps from an animal to a human on the other side of the globe and quickly spreads everywhere, exposing a range of vulnerabilities and triggering responses both apt and inept. The unseen virus reveals the great inequality in the world and the extent of racial disparities in health care and income in our own country.

In a matter of weeks the virus forced a reevaluation of what is truly essential and nonessential in our lives. With travel reduced, city skylines became more clear than people can remember. The resulting cleaner air saved ten times more lives in China than deaths caused by the pandemic. At a time when scientific understanding and the advice of experts was crucial, the pandemic revealed just how degraded our public discourse has become and how polarized we remain.

*Con't. on page 3*

# GET INVOLVED → START HERE!

August Online Program:

## A Wealth of Nature: Parks & Natural Areas in SE Wisconsin

Presented by Eddee Daniel, author and photographer

Sponsored by: Kenosha County Parks Department, the Kenosha Photography Club and Greening Greater Racine

**Thursday, August 20 at 6:30 PM via online link**

For invitation to join, please email Tom Rutkowski: [natom@wi.rr.com](mailto:natom@wi.rr.com)



Eddee Daniel will discuss a project he directs for Preserve Our Parks, Inc., called "A Wealth of Nature: Parks and Natural Areas in SE Wisconsin." Preserve Our Parks is a non-profit organization dedicated to preservation and promotion of parks and open space in the Milwaukee area. The mission of the project, A Wealth of Nature, is to promote the enjoyment of local nature and develop support for parks and preserves in our region.



Panorama of Caledonia Conservancy's King's Corner, Photo by Eddee Daniel

As project director and photographer, Eddee has been traveling throughout the six-county region of SE Wisconsin documenting the abundance of nature and recreational opportunities that can be found here. He has created a series of components to promote the project, including a website, display and Powerpoint presentations featuring beautiful images of local natural areas.

Eddee Daniel is a Milwaukee-based photographer and writer whose practice explores the intersection of nature and human culture. He is the author of *Urban Wilderness: Exploring a Metropolitan Watershed*, as well as many self-published photographic books. He has a record of unusual Artist Residencies, including in Milwaukee's Menomonee Valley, in the Harbor District, and his current residency in the Milwaukee River Greenway under the auspices of ARTservancy. He currently serves on the boards of Preserve Our Parks and Friends of the Hank Aaron Trail. He has written a column called "Urban Wilderness" for *Milwaukee Magazine* and is the curator and regular contributor to the blog, *The Natural Realm*. More at [awealthofnature.org](http://awealthofnature.org) and [eddeedaniel.com](http://eddeedaniel.com).

Week-long Programs:

**CLIMATE ACTION WEEK: Aug. 3-7**

**ECO ANXIETY WEEK: Sept. 21-27**

Join us for two weeks of virtual programming through Facebook and Instagram where we will be providing tools and resources to aid YOU in your quest for better personal and environmental health.

See pages 3 & 5 for details.



Image adapted from Denpotisev/istock.com

From Patagonia's Creative Action Network



October Online Program:

## The Environment & The Election

**Thursday, October 15 at 6:30 PM via link**

Please check our website and Facebook pages for details

We're gathering a panel of environmental leaders to discuss what's at stake in November's election. After three years of aggressive environmental deregulation there is much at stake for the United States and the world. We'll also discuss important local issues.





Continued from page 1

PAYING ATTENTION by Tom Rutkowski

**Everything Changes.** In weeks the world as we knew it changed and then changed again more quickly than we ever imagined it could. One week we were attending meetings and public events and then we were sheltering at home. One week everyone is working together to limit the virus and the next week we are once again divided and masks become political statements that spark verbal and sometimes physical confrontations. We could expect that the video of George Floyd would spark demonstrations and maybe even some changes in the Minneapolis Police Department, but who could have predicted that substantive conversation about criminal justice and policing would take place around the world, that statues that have stood for over a hundred years would topple?

**Pay Attention.** We live in an attention economy where demand for our attention pulls us in many directions, where what is essential is often overwhelmed by misinformation and distraction, where conspiracy theories compete with the advice of scientists. The pause in long established routines brought about by the pandemic has given us a chance to pay closer attention to what matters most, allowing us to reset our priorities. We need to pay closer attention to the source of information and guard trustworthy sources. We need to attend to essential workers and support their work. We need to attend to injustice and inequality and the erosion of civil rights.



The Sierra Club is now engaged in examining and correcting racism within their own structure, recognizing that racial injustice and environmental degradation arise from similar causes. At the same time we need to pay attention to the relentless unravelling of environmental protections. We need to pay attention to the coming tidal wave of climate

change that will make this pandemic appear like a ripple. Recent temperatures in the Arctic were over 100 degrees and for the second year forest fires burned millions of acres over the region. These events only seem to be far away and unrelated.

We know that all of these issues are connected and that the changes to come can be shaped toward a more just, sustainable future. Viruses have been around longer than humanity and have intimately shaped our biological and social evolution. Through its commitment to environmental justice, its protection of the natural world, and its efforts to restore our democracy, the Sierra Club is working to shape the new world that will emerge hopefully wiser than before.

### STAY CURRENT

Sign up to receive our Monthly SEGG E-News filled with upcoming SEGG programs, events, meetings & other local happenings by Emailing: [melissa.warner3@a2q.com](mailto:melissa.warner3@a2q.com)

# Coal Costs Us

**It costs us our health, our economy, our climate, and our environment.**

Commit to action that will help to bring about a more stable climate, cleaner air and water, and a transition to cleaner renewable energy in Southeast Wisconsin, take action during this year's **Week of Climate Action** as people from around the state work for retirement of the six remaining coal plants in Wisconsin.



## Week of Climate Action: Aug. 3 - 7

Our actions in Racine, Kenosha, and Walworth Counties will be part of a larger effort uniting people from throughout the We Energies' service territory in calling for a long overdue retirement of the South Oak Creek Plant. You can register for more information by visiting our Facebook and Instagram pages or by visiting:

[www.tinyurl.com/weekofclimateaction](http://www.tinyurl.com/weekofclimateaction)

**Monday - Learn:** Join us for an online screening of the documentary *We Neighbors*, the story of Wisconsinites living next to the Oak Creek/Elm Road coal plants, which are majority-owned by We Energies. After the documentary we will have a panel discussion featuring healthcare professionals, neighbors of the coal plant, and clean energy advocates.



**Tuesday - Share:** Tune into a podcast about coal in Wisconsin, watch heartfelt stories of personal environmental impacts on Facebook Live, share your own story and help amplify the stories that move you.

**Wednesday - Speak Up:** Testify or submit written comments about the Public Services Commission's Strategic Energy Assessment.

**Thursday - Call:** Take a moment to call your utility and ask them for a coal-free future.

**Friday - Create:** Spread the word about the need for clean energy with art, chalked messages, posters, yard signs, poetry, music and more!

## SEGG Conservation Committee Updates

### Colonial Park Restoration

Last fall **Racine Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services** (PRCS) planted over 300 whips (4-5' tall young trees) in the Colonial Park floodplain where the dead ash trees had been removed in 2017-18. In April, **Weed Out! Racine** and SEGG volunteers spent 90 hours planting 400 small trees and shrubs to improve cover and provide food for wildlife. Species included oaks, hazelnut, serviceberry, red-twig dogwood, and nine-bark.

Late spring, volunteers pulled and bagged garlic mustard and dame's rocket. This summer we are working at controlling an infestation of bitter dock spread by unfortunate mowing practices. Cutting sweet clover and burdock will complete the invasives work for summer, before returning to tackle honeysuckle and buckthorn along the banks in the fall.

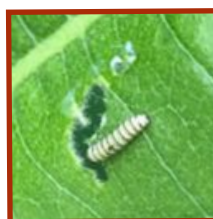
Email Melissa Warner for future Colonial Park workdays at: [melissa.warner3@a2q.com](mailto:melissa.warner3@a2q.com)

**Weed Out!  
Racine**

### Monarchs Need Your Support

We all love monarch butterflies; the story of their multi-generational migration is amazing. But we also know that their numbers are plummeting, due to habitat loss at the wintering grounds, reduction of milkweed at their summer homes, and loss of food supplies on the migration routes in between. Unusual weather events and climate change also play a part. The Center for Biological Diversity reports that the yearly count of monarch butterflies overwintering in Mexico decreased 53% from last year's count.

SEGG encourages members to plant milkweed for monarch caterpillars, and other native nectar-producing plants to feed the adults all summer and into fall. Asters, coneflowers, Joe Pye weed, blazing stars (*Liatris*), bergamot, phlox and goldenrods are recommended. Check labels when you buy plants to make sure they haven't been treated with herbicides such as nicotinamides. Avoid using herbicides yourself.



Monarch eggs are laid on milkweed leaves and hatch in just 3-8 days. The caterpillar will molt 5 times before it transforms into a pupa—and that's where the magic happens!

An  
SEGG  
Outing  
JOIN  
US!!

### Paddle Lulu Lake



**Sunday, September 6 at Noon**

Join SEGG Outings Chair, Allan Sommer, at the boat launch on Eagle Spring Lake as we canoe or kayak part way around the lake to the Mukwonago River and then on to the secretive Lulu lake and back. There are no public boat launches on Lulu lake, which is mostly owned by The Nature Conservancy. It is greatly uninhabited, protected and quiet. Detailed description at [miles paddled.com/2019/05/lulu-lake/](http://miles paddled.com/2019/05/lulu-lake/)

Go north on Rt 83 through the town of Mukwonago to County Rd LO, also called Eagle Lake Ave. Go west about 5 1/2 mi to County Rd E, turn S and look for the sign to the Eagle Springs Pub. The public boat launch is just past the pub. Please wear masks when loading and unloading boats.

**Please call Allan Sommer at 262-716-6955 for details and let him know that you plan to attend.**

**A PERSONAL FLOATATION DEVICE IS REQUIRED FOR ALL ATTENDEES.**

### Autumn is Cranberry Time!

Fresh from a family-owned and operated Wisconsin grower, cranberries are rich in vitamins C, B-6, potassium and magnesium. Use them fresh for the holidays or keep them in the freezer for up to 12 months.

Contact Jeff Sytsma to place your order:

**262 637-6845 / [Jeff12759@aol.com](mailto:Jeff12759@aol.com)**

Berries will be available for pick up early Nov.



### Hwy 38 Clean Up

**Sat., Aug. 1 - 8:30 AM**

**Sat., Oct. 3 - 9:00 AM**

Meet at Blessed Hope Church  
at the corner of Hwy 38 & 4 Mile Rd.

Equipment is provided. Please wear good walking shoes, sunscreen and bug repellent.

Please work in pairs and at a safe distance.

Contact Jeff Sytsma for more information:  
262 637-6845 or [Jeff12759@aol.com](mailto:Jeff12759@aol.com)

### Sierra Club's SEGG is now on Instagram!!

We invite you to follow us as a way of #stayingconnected. We will share news and happenings, environmental facts and resources, sustainable tips and tricks, and actions to make a difference. Follow us today! [sierraclubSEGG](https://www.instagram.com/sierraclubSEGG)



# ECO ANXIETY

From the Co-Chair  
by *Laura Buska*



Image from [ispeakforthetrees.org](http://ispeakforthetrees.org)

Eco-Anxiety. This is a new term that encompasses the feelings of dread, doom, hopelessness, and sadness that occurs with being environmentally aware. For people who love and care for the natural environment both close to home and far away, this anxiety can become debilitating to us and the work we do. As a way to combat these feelings, we at Sierra Club SEGG are looking into healthy and effective ways to manage environmental grief and anxiety and turn it into positive action.

This August, you can look forward to a week-long virtual program through Facebook and Instagram where we will be discussing the concept of Eco-Anxiety, as well as tools and resources to aid you in your quest for personal

and environmental health. One such resource is a presentation by psychologist Renée Lertzman entitled “How to Turn Climate Anxiety Into Action”. In this talk, she explains how psychology holds a key to unlocking resources and tools to create positive action from our anxieties surrounding the environment. She begins by naming some of the largest issues we face as a species on planet Earth.

Drought, famine, fires, species loss. With each example, I found my own anxieties rise and the feelings of powerlessness begin to creep into awareness. She explains that once we are exposed to these types of problems, things are not normal anymore. How does one stay connected through these types of overwhelming issues?

Lertzman shares her experience of the first time she began to feel more hopeful about environmental problems. It occurred during a 2-month field study where she was able to discuss openly how she felt about these issues with like-minded individuals. Not one person told her to be more hopeful or more positive, and she found that this actually made her feel better. She began to think about how understanding ourselves can actually help us understand ways to move from anxiety to action when it comes to overwhelming concepts. From there she began her journey into clinical psychology with a focus on the connections between trauma, grief, and creativity. This ultimately helped her realize that there are ways to stay connected with overwhelming issues without it allowing one to break down into anxiety and fear.



She explains that there are three concepts that are game-changing in how we deal with issues such as environmental degradation. The first is that we each have a **window of tolerance**, an amount of stress an individual can undertake while remaining in touch with their feelings and thoughts. Knowing our threshold, which is fluid and changing, can keep us active as opposed to stuck in either depression or denial. This threshold is tested with every article, documentary, scientific study, and social media post we see. Collectively, if we are not aware of our threshold, these can push us outside of this window.

The second concept is the idea of a **double bind**—that feeling that we are damned if we do, and damned if we don’t take action. This creates the idea that our actions are insignificant and promotes a feeling of being stuck. This idea of one’s actions not being powerful enough can alter the desire and ability to make personal changes. Care and concerns are easily pushed away to protect ourselves. From the outside, this can look like apathy and can incite a motivational prompt from others which, unfortunately, and inadvertently only exacerbates the negative feelings. It is a self-defeating cycle.

She compares this to the idea of discussing feelings of being trapped with your therapist, and instead of listening they begin to yell at you for not seeing what is happening or for not trying harder. She clarifies that we need to instead practice attunement. This is a feeling of acceptance with where we are, even when the stakes are high. We need to feel accepted, heard, and loved without judgment. She explains that when we are in tune within our window of tolerance, we are more capable of solving problems.



Artwork by Paloma Callo for Charlatan.ca

*Con't on page 6*

## Healing Body, Healing Earth *By John Berge*

Are you one of the (older) SEGG members who remembers fellow member Elizabeth McGowan? She was a very active member of the SEGG during the 1990's, especially in outings. She and her husband, Don Looney, participated in canoeing, hiking, biking and rafting with our Group as well as in various service projects.

McGowan was a reporter for the Racine Journal Times from 1993 to 1997 and they both were caretakers at the Lulu Lake Nature Preserve from 1997 to 2001. They moved to Washington, D.C. in 2001 so she could assume greater challenges and opportunities in writing about environmental issues alongside co-workers at Inside Climate News. It was there that she won a 2013 Pulitzer Prize



Elizabeth McGowan and her bike of 4,250 miles

for her series of articles on the oil spill in Michigan, "The Dilbit Disaster: The Biggest Spill You Never Heard Of." Because of her writings, we have heard about this disaster caused by a burst Enbridge pipeline. (Dilbit is a contraction of diluted bitumen coming from the tar sands of Canada, and a term she added to our lexicon.)

But to backtrack in this story, when here in Wisconsin, Elizabeth McGowan suffered more than ten years of medical and surgical treatments fighting what turned out eventually to be a victory over melanoma that had spread far from the skin it is normally associated with. To celebrate that

victory and raise funds for Waukesha Memorial Hospital at which she fought this battle, she biked from the west coast in Oregon to the east coast in Virginia, a total of 4,250 miles! And now she has written a book about that battle and trip which she would like you to know about, to buy and to read.

She describes *Outpedaling "The Big C" — My Cross-Country Cycle Across America* as "an adventure about grit, fear, recovery and discovery." Carl Zimmer described it in the *New York Times* as "A powerful, rollicking adventure that takes us across America and deep into one person's life-and-death experience."

About the trip and the book, McGowan writes, "All of that riding is just one layer of a deeper and more arduous journey. Before, during and after my medical treatments, I had volunteered time on weekends using saws, loppers, prescribed burns and herbicides to remove invasive plant species from a giant nature preserve in Wisconsin. As I pedaled through this country's wildlands, I realized my doctors had deployed the equivalent of those tools with the immunotherapies, chemotherapies and surgeries aimed at keeping my invasive melanoma at bay. I, too, began healing and flourishing, just like carefully tended pieces of prairie and oak savanna where native grasses and flowers thrived once again."

McGowan's book was to be published by Bancroft Press in Baltimore in June of this year, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, its release was pushed back to September 6, which fits our Southeast Sierran printing schedule. Southeast Sierrans may find this a good read because it "blends memoir, travel and nature while carrying readers along on a journey that immerses them in the geographies and characters that make up this country we all call home."



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Con't. from page 5 **Eco Anxiety** by *Laura Buska*

To practice attunement, we need to know first how we are feeling. These are difficult issues, and we are not bad people. We need to look at environmental problems with a healthy dose of curiosity and compassion in every step of our work whether it is one-on-one, in the classroom, in groups, campaigning, and everywhere else we are. This is a higher level of functioning where we can feel calm because we are being understood without judging or judgment.



Illustration by Samantha Nickerson

Third, we need to lead with this attunement. We need to show up as real individuals and accept that we are human and scared of what is happening. She reminds us that it's okay to express that we don't have all the answers, but that we are here and in this together. That we have the tools to create the conditions that allow us to be our best selves, and to maintain the capacity to meet challenges and to do so in support of one another. She closes by asking us to "take a deep breath, and have compassion for ourselves, and one another in this moment, so we collectively process these painful truths. Let's do this together. The world is ready for us to do this, and we can do this."

**For more resources like this, connect with us on Facebook and Instagram, and join us for a full week of Eco-Anxiety programs: September 21-27. We look forward to working with you towards better personal and environmental health.**





Your donation helps us continue to "Explore, Enjoy and Protect" SE Wisconsin. Checks can be made out to *Sierra Club SEGG* to be used towards any purpose, or to *Sierra Club Foundation* to be used strictly for educational programs and activities. Please mail donations to our treasurer:  
**Jeff Sytsma, 3508 Washington Ave, Racine WI 53405**



SEGG encourages you to *WRITE* to your legislators on the issues you care about.  
 Find your representative at **legis.wisconsin.gov**

**Senator Stephen L. Nass**  
*Senate District 11 (R - Whitewater)*  
 State Capitol Room 10 South  
 P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707-7882  
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 Sen.Nass@legis.wisconsin.gov

**Senator Van H. Wanggaard**  
 Majority Caucus Vice-Chair  
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**Senator Robert W. Wirch**  
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**Representative Cody Horlacher**  
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**2020 Southeast Gateway Group Leadership**

**Executive Committee**

- Tom Rutkowski (*Co-Chair/Programs*).....natom@wi.rr.com
- Laura Buska (*Co-Chair/ Programs*).....lauraannbuska@gmail.com
- Zack Van Den Berge (*Vice Chair*).....vande104@rangers.uwp.edu
- Laura Schultz (*Secretary/Programs*).....schulz@uwp.edu
- Lisa Selje.....lisas2259@gmail.com
- Allan Sommer (*Outings Chair*).....sommerallan4@gmail.com
- Andy Hayes.....hayes.andy.m@gmail.com

**Other Group Leaders**

- Joe Dubaniewicz.....joeduban@yahoo.com
- Jeff Systma (*Treasurer*).....jeff12759@aol.com
- Laura Feider (*Conservation/Racine*).....lfeider@hotmail.com
- Barry Thomas (*Conservation/ Kenosha*).....bthomas6@wi.rr.com
- Melissa Warner (*Editor, E-News*).....melissa.warner3@a2q.com
- Mary Schroeder (*Hospitality*).....ilovedogsandcats2@yahoo.com
- Jessica True (*Outings*).....jessicatrue@yahoo.com



The newsletter of the Southeast Gateway Group is published quarterly by Group members. Please send articles, event submissions, photographs, corrections and/or comments to:

**Nicole Reid - nreid23@wi.rr.com**  
 Please use subject line: *SEGG Newsletter*

**Deadline for Nov-Jan Issue:**  
**Friday, Oct. 9, 2020**

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[www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/southeast-gateway](http://www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/southeast-gateway)

## Enter the SEGG Members' Nature Photography Contest

You've no doubt traveled less in the past four months. Hopefully this has lead you to explore our many local parks and natural areas. Maybe you've taken a camera along or pulled out your phone to capture spring flowers blooming, a scenic view, or even a shot of local wildlife.

The Southeast Gateway Group is sponsoring a contest of local nature photos taken by you, our members. The contest will complement our August program featuring photographer Eddee Daniels' work and his Wealth of Nature Program.



We have prizes for first, second, and third place finalists. Members of the SEGG executive committee and the Kenosha Photography Club will be judging.

All photos should be taken in either Racine, Kenosha, or Walworth Counties. **Email up to three digital photos by August 17 to [natom@wi.rr.com](mailto:natom@wi.rr.com).** Please identify the locations for each photo in your email. Winners to be announced at the Aug. 20 program. (See page 2)



W.R. Wadewitz Nature Camp in the Village of Rochester  
Photo by Eddee Daniel, our August program speaker and the director of A Wealth of Nature—a Preserve Our Parks project that works to promote and preserve natural areas in SE Wisconsin for all.

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