This Year’s Basha Kill Bald Eagle Got a Second Chance
by Maryallison Farley

It was a turn of events that none of us involved in this year’s Nature Watch program would have suspected. Our group monitors the nesting bald eagles at the Basha Kill and shares that experience with visitors at the boat launch every spring for 10 to 12 weeks. This year, amazingly our second year of operation, we watched as a single chick developed in the nest and grew to full size by the end of June when it was about 3 months old.

With careful monitoring by Nature Watch volunteers and friends, we learned from Basha Kill birder extraordinaire, John Haas, that the bird had fledged either Monday or Tuesday of the week before the fourth of July. John saw one of the bird’s early flights in which it crashed and recovered – typical for early fliers and generally not a cause for concern. However, by Wednesday afternoon, Gene Weinstein, long-time DEC volunteer monitor for bald eagle nests in Sullivan County, put his scope on the nest (not knowing that the eagle had fledged). He observed the immature lying down in the nest, moving its head from side to side. Also he saw that one of bird’s wings was abnormally positioned. One of the parents sat at the nest with the young bird.

Thursday morning a group of concerned volunteers and advisors gathered at the boat launch with powerful spotting scopes. Eventually they saw the young bird sit up, eat vigorously and eliminate – all positive signs. The next report came on Saturday when John Haas kayaked in the area south of the boat launch. He spotted the bird hopping on the ground not far from the nesting tree. Both adult eagles were nearby, perched on low branches.

We had been in touch with the DEC about the immature eagle when it was exhibiting distressed behavior in the nest. However, as we moved into the holiday week-end with the bird grounded and exposed to both air-borne and ground predators and with more bad weather expected, the consensus was to try and quickly assist the bird. Immediately the Delaware Valley Raptor Center (DVRC), a licensed raptor rehabilitation center in Milford, PA was contacted. They agreed to receive the bird if we could retrieve it.

Thus a small group of determined individuals undertook a rescue operation on Sunday, July 3. Gene Weinstein was in touch with the DVRC while remaining at the boat launch with Patricia Diness and Linda Bartle. John Haas, Michael Rider, another volunteer, and I kayaked and canoed out to the nesting tree area to try to find the bird and then attempt the rescue. John immediately spotted the bird. In the (continued on page 2)
Bald Eagle Rescue (continued)

pouring rain, Michael and a co-rescuer were able to capture her. We then raced to shore with the bird carefully confined. Patricia Diness and Louann Lewis were waiting at the boat launch so that they could transport the bird to a DVRC volunteer waiting in Port Jervis. He completed the last leg of the rescue trip to the rehabilitation center in Milford.

Within two hours, Bill Streeter, Director of the DVRC, called with his report about the bird. From -rays, he observed a broken radius or wrist bone at the tip of one wing. That was the injury to an otherwise very healthy, 13 lb. female bald eagle. Bill Streeter said that she was an impressive specimen for her age - at the large end of the scale for females, who at maximum grow to a weight of 14 or 15 lbs. His decision was to keep her quiet in a small enclosure so that her injured wing would be kept as immobilized as possible. He hoped that the fracture would heal but gave no promises that she would be able to fly again. He estimated a 4 to 6 week recovery period at the DVRC.

And so the Nature Watch group and friends waited anxiously. Nature Watch members in particular took a personal interest in the bird that they had watched develop. They picked a name for her, calling her Atkina, the Greek word for radius. And the Nature Watch volunteers as a group, made a generous donation to the DVRC to support its ongoing work with eagles and other raptors. The call came August 11 from Bill Streeter who felt the bird was ready to be released back at the Basha Kill the next day. She was flying well in a larger enclosure and he did not want her to injure herself in captivity.

Bill Streeter showed the immature bird to the small group gathered for her release. He showed us the great length of her outstretched wing (about 3.5 feet). Our Basha Kill bird fooled us all by flying away from the wetland. We had few confirmed sightings until the week-end of August 26 when first Scott Baldinger and then John Haas spotted, as they call it, a first year bird at the Basha Kill. John feels that it's very likely to be the Basha Kill bird since migrants have not started their annual migration.

As Bill Streeter said to us on the day of the release, "this bird was given a second chance." Those of us in the BKAA's Nature Watch program and our friends and advisors are thrilled to have been a part of this bird's recovery and release. She was rescued on the 4th of July week-end and is showing herself to us as we approach Labor Day week-end. She's truly a wonderful symbol for all of us in these difficult times, both by her survival and her recovery!

Updates by Paula Medley

Yukiguni Maitake (YM) Recent newspaper articles indicate YM’s plans to submit detailed construction drawings and subsequently obtain a building permit, thereby enabling groundbreaking on the pilot plant this winter. The BKAA intends for Andy Willingham, our consulting engineer, to first review the drawings for compliance prior to town action on the permit. There is nothing new to report on 7 Peaks, Commerce Park at Wurtsboro Airport, or Basherkill Subdivision.
White Ibis at the Basha Kill by John Haas

On July 28 I was busy counting and photographing marsh birds at the Basha Kill when a bird suddenly flew past me as I stood on the bridge at Haven Road. There have been three Green Herons hanging out there, and I just gave a quick glance, expecting it to be one of them. I promptly did a double-take when I saw a bright white rump on the bird that passed. Within seconds, the bird banked and what I was seeing was a juvenile WHITE IBIS!! I followed the bird as it flew out the channel, curving to the right and landing in one of the big dead trees on the pine-covered peninsula to the southwest of Haven Road.

I excitedly made a number of phone calls to alert people of the bird’s presence. I then jumped into my kayak and headed out the channel to try to get a photo of this extreme rarity. What is all the excitement about? How rare is this bird in New York? The answer is VERY rare. It is a New York State Avian Records Committee review species and there are only a few records ever of this bird in New York. It was a new state bird for me as well as a first record for Sullivan County.

You might wonder where it is from and what it is doing here. The bird is a regular breeding species in the state of Florida and northward into Georgia and South Carolina. In years of severe drought, as this has been, some species of birds make a dispersal northward to look for appropriate sites with ample water. This year, White Ibis did just that. There has been one (perhaps the same bird) in Orange County at the Walkkill National Wildlife Management Area, another on Staten Island, two at Cape May, New Jersey and yet another in Eastern Pennsylvania. This is a major influx for this species.

I was able to reach Arlene Borko, who came over and got to see the bird as well. I got a number of so-so photos of the bird, but they were good enough to identify it as to species. A White Ibis stands a little over two feet tall and has a wing span of over three feet. A juvenile has brown wings and neck, white belly, underwings and rump and a long curved bill that is orange in color. An adult is all white with a bright red bill.

We were able to view the bird for about an hour and a half before it flew southwest and went down in the marsh about halfway to the Main Boat Launch on South Road. Though we didn’t see it again that day, Scott Baldinger found it again at Haven Road early the next morning. Interestingly, the bird that had been being seen regularly in Orange County wasn’t seen for five days, only to turn up again on July 31. We sure are glad it decided to explore for a while. Once again the Basha Kill has worked its magic and provided us with another great rarity and wonderful experience.

Mailbag

August 27, 2011

Dear Paula,

I met you this morning after my son, Kyle, and I went walking with Gary [at the Sunrise Walk on August 27]. Gary was full of information and very personable. We enjoyed the walk very much. Thank you and others for your time and effort to take care of this special place in our “backyard” and share its beauty and wonder with others. I have taken my children there many times and look forward to many more. This time I can share with them some history and more information about plant and animal life which I learned from the walk this morning with Gary.

May you enjoy many more seasons at the Basha Kill

Warm regards,
Christine Venter
A Volunteer’s Day at the Wolf Conservation Center
by Erica Ward-Gonzalez

Being a volunteer is an important role at the Basha Kill, The Wolf Conservation Center (WCC) and in the wild because I can give time, knowledge, and support in educating people. I chose to get involved with these organizations because of my personal interest in threatened and endangered species. Also, wolves and eagles are two of my favorites because they do not get enough credit as to how beneficial they are to our ecosystem.

As a volunteer at the Wolf Conservation Center, I help to increase the understanding, appreciation and conservation of wolves. Becoming a volunteer is more than a great opportunity to learn about wolves and their place in the world; it is a means of helping the cause of wildlife conservation and promoting the welfare of wolves in the wild and in captivity. I chose to volunteer here and other places because the world is not a perfect place, and many wild species need our help. Governments and professionals try to meet everyone’s needs, but it’s impossible for them to do it all. This is also a great opportunity for me to gain valuable field experience and references while also discovering a new talent and meeting new people. For me just hanging around wolves is exciting in itself.

The Wolf Conservation Center is a not-for-profit environmental and conservation education center which helps educate the public about one of the most critically endangered species, the wolf. Founded in 1999, this center is now one of the largest holding facilities in the US for the Mexican Gray Wolf. The WCC’s mission is to help educate the public about wolves, their relationship to the environment and how we as the public can help protect them from extinction.

They also play a vicarious role in the SSP program (Species Survival Plan). This plan is to help ensure the survival of certain selected critically endangered species such as the wolf. The master plan sets breeding goals and makes recommendations to obtain the best variations of genetic diversity and create stability for a species. The Wolf Conservation Center currently houses 25 wolves -- 16 Mexican grays, 6 Red Wolves, 1 Arctic Gray (Atka) and two new Canadian Rocky Mountain pups, Alawa and Zephyr. The pups are a new addition to WCC this past spring.

Recently the WCC’s Curator received great news that they will be hosting two Mexican Wolf Breeding Pairs in 2012. This will surely enhance the Mexican Wolf Program enabling the species to have a better chance of reintroduction to the wild and overall survival.

Spending time at the WCC is a great opportunity to learn about wolves and their place in the world. When I am there, I am an educator and guide. To help me better educate the public, our ambassador wolves Atka and our two new wolf pups are available on site to teach as well. A session starts in the classroom discussing some very important topics such as how wolves do not make good pets and how they fear the human population. We also discuss how wolves are an integral part of an ecosystem as a top tier predator.

It’s the “Yellowstone Story,” is an amazing story that tells us how the ecosystem was rejuvenated after the reintroduction of wolves in 1995-1996. Wolves were originally exterminated in the 1920’s. The session ends with me and other volunteers leading the public to the wolves to view the beautiful species and informing them how they can help to ensure wolves get the fair treatment they deserve. Spreading the word does great wonders. Wolves cannot advocate for themselves, so we must do it for them. This is a truly remarkable experience.

Wolf Conservation Center, P.O. Box 421 South Salem, NY 10590-1123 Phone: (914) 763-2373 www.nywolf.org

Erica is a BKAA Member, Nature Watch Educator, and NYS Licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator

Photo by Erica Ward-Gonzalez
**Herp Walk 2011 by Bill Cutler**

Sometimes a small but dedicated group of herpers proves best. Our annual BKA Az Hero Walk started out with just six individuals on Sunday, June 5. The weather was fine — warm, overcast and calm. We started out by taking a fine mesh dip net to a nearby pond to check for developing amphibians. The valley endured a cold (and wet) spring this year, which could delay amphibian reproduction somewhat compared to warmer periods. With water levels still high in most of the surrounding vernal pools, dipping produced several Jeffersons and Spotted Salamander larva, plus Spring Peeper and Green Frog tadpoles. Larva were quickly returned to the water after a brief look. Soon, Pickerel, Green, and Bull Frogs, plus one Gray Tree Frog were heard calling throughout the morning from the adjacent wetlands. Not a bad amphibian start to the morning!

A quick search of requisite turtle nesting areas along Haven Road produced evidence that several snapping turtle nests had already been raided by hungry opportunists — which in the Bash can mean bears, coyotes, skunks, opossums, raccoons, dogs, foxes, mink, and even brazen crows. Turtle eggs offer lots of energy in an easy-to-get form, so nesting stakes are high for chelonians — with hatching success surprisingly low.

Snappers nested first this year, followed by painted turtles almost two weeks later. In some years snappers and painted turtles lay their eggs at almost the same time, but for some reason the environment produced distinct nesting periods for these turtles this year. Not to be outdone, a female Musk Turtle scurried across the road right under our noses, perhaps in search of a nest site of her own.

Naturally our attention focused on reptiles as we strolled along the Haven causeway. It wasn’t long before someone spied a Northern Water Snake basking in dense vegetation beside the road. Water Snakes will bite in self defense if molested but they are certainly not dangerous animals. Unfortunately our native Water Snakes are too often killed when mistaken for Water Moccasins, a majestic venomous species from the distant Southeastern United States (and certainly not found anywhere near New York State).

Fortunately, snake bite itself is actually extremely rare in the field, and other injuries and diseases claim many more victims than envenomation. Venomous snake bite in the US — and NY in particular — is highly preventable and seldom lethal. Please be sure to know and respect wildlife in all its denominations, and work to protect as much of our spectacular environment as possible. If you are fascinated by the natural world around us, and are not already a member of the BKA or other local environmental organization, please consider joining today!

**Stinkpot Turtle Assisted in Crossing Haven Road**

*Photo by Bill Cutler*

**Webelos Study Wetlands by Mike Medley**

On June 2, I met with a group of Webelo scouts and their leaders at Chase Elementary in Wurtsboro. The purpose was to provide instruction to help the scouts meet requirements for a naturalist badge.

The topic was aquatic ecosystems and wetlands in our area, and the Basha Kill was our focus. How wetlands play an important role supporting life cycles of wildlife and humans, and why it is important to protect and conserve wetlands, were issues discussed. Birds, animals, reptiles, plants, and especially the bald eagle were all themes of interest.

Each Webelo gave a lengthy oral report on a subject provided by the leaders. One report was on Mountain Gorillas, the other on Tasmanian Devils. I was impressed at the enthusiasm of the scouts and by the leaders’ adherence to the high standards necessary to acquire achievement awards — naturalist badges. Good job, Webelos!
Gas Drilling Update
by Dave Colavito

The prior Guardian update reported on: the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) "Draft Natural Gas Development Regulations" for the Basin (Draft); New York State Attorney General, Eric T. Schneiderman’s notice to sue the federal government unless it commits to perform a complete environmental review of the impacts High Volume Hydraulic Fracturing (HVHF) may have on the Basin; and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) schedule for releasing its Final Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement (FSGIEIS), the guiding document for regulating HVHF in NY.

DRBC continues to review public comments on the Draft. As of this writing, a call placed with them requesting an update hasn’t been returned. AG Schneiderman’s May 31, 2011 press release announced his intention to make good on filing his lawsuit against the federal government. [Correction: The prior issue of the Guardian contained an editorial error stating AG Schneiderman was himself a member of the DRBC – he is not.]

In July, DEC released more than 1100 pages of its "Preliminary Revised Draft SGEIS" (prDraft) on HVHF for public review. As of this writing the prDraft remains incomplete, with the Socioeconomics Analysis scheduled for release before the end of August. A 60-day public comment period is scheduled to begin once the complete prDraft is released. Although some at DEC suggest the FSGIEIS may be available before December of this year, it’s difficult to envision that happening in such short timeframe without any understanding of the extent and substance of public comments on the prDraft.

Communities Can Say No to Gas Drilling
by Marcia Briggs Wallace

On August 13, some 20 people gathered to hear two talks on gas drilling and fracking. The event was co-sponsored by the BKAA and the Cragsmoor Association. The BKAA Board was represented by Paula, Jon Reed and me. Additional BKAA members in attendance were Dave Colavito and Christine Saward.

Annie Lenihan, an activist with the Chenango Delaware Otsego Gas Opposition Group (CDOG), the first organization to call for a ban on fracking, began the evening with her presentation, "Annie’s and Leaf’s Trip to the Gas Fields of the U.S." Her talk was informative as well as sobering; the skillfully photographed images she showed spanned the country, from Pennsylvania to New Mexico and the West Coast, documenting the "slash and burn" carnage, both human and environmental, caused by gas drilling, fracking and the installation of requisite pipe lines.

Next up was Nastassja Noell, a post-baccalaureate student at Evergreen State College in Washington. She movingly spoke about the social and economic devastation of traditional village culture caused by oil and gas drilling in the coastal regions of Ghana, in her presentation entitled "Trading our Future for Some Plastic Beads." The coastal populations, which for generations have lived off the land and sea have become industrial refugees, as she put it, due to the destruction of the very land and sea that has served as a basis for their livelihood. What does this have to do with us, she asked? The parallels are clear as we consider the millions of acres of land traditionally farmed or ranched that have been destroyed by the contaminants and pollutants routinely used in gas drilling and fracking, as documented in the Lenihan presentation. As we had just seen, abandoned homes and towns testify to our own industrial refugees.

The evening closed, however, with a message of hope. According to Ms. Lenihan, legally, communities can ban gas drilling and fracking. And professional legal advice is available for any group deciding to pursue this course of action. A handout was distributed listing the following sources for help:

Annie Lenihan -- alenihan@frontiernet.net (607) 843-8870
Helen Slottje,Community Environmental Defense Council, Inc. -- http://cedclaw.org/
Ben Price -- http://celdf.org/

As the handout explained, the “Community Environmental Defense Council, Inc. (CEDC) is a non-profit public interest law firm based in Ithaca, New York.” Donations to CEDC are tax deductible. CEDC is dedicated to using the power of law to help communities and citizen groups in New York protect their land, air, health, and quality of life.
Mohonk Consultations Honors Laura Heady by Jackie Broder

On June 7, 2011 Mohonk Consultations honored Laura Heady with their 2011 Environmental Distinguished Achievement Award. The purpose of Mohonk Consultations is to bring about a clearer understanding of the interrelationships of all life on earth, to emphasize the need for sustainable use of all the earth’s resources, including humans, and to support the development of practical means to do so. Their Environmental Award celebrates what is possible when a dedicated and committed force is willing to devote the time, energy, and passion to protect our environment.

Since 2006 Ms. Heady has been Outreach Coordinator for the NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program in partnership with Cornell University. She works toward educating a vast array of groups from municipalities and planning boards to citizens’ groups about the importance of integrating biodiversity and habitat protection into community planning and development.

Ms. Heady’s work spans every county in the Hudson River estuary and has seen great success, especially in areas like Greene County where 12 agencies from all levels (including development, government and environmental groups) set up zoning, design standards and review processes for all new projects. Her talent for bringing these groups to the table has proven that people can work together as a cohesive unit for the common good of all.

Paula Medley and I joined approximately 50 others, including Glenn Hoagland, Director of Mohonk Preserve, Cara Lee, Shawangunk Ridge Coordinator for the Nature Conservancy, and Annie O’Neill, board member of Friends of the Shawangunks, in celebrating Ms. Heady’s accomplishments.

The welcome by Mohonk Consultations board members Kitty Brown and Brad Berg and the nominating speech given by DEC, Region 3 Director, Willie Janeway, eloquently proved how much Ms. Heady is admired and loved, not only for her passion and commitment to the environment but also for who she is as a person. We congratulate Laura Heady and thank her for her work and the inspiration she gives us all.

New City for Mamakating Update by Anita Altman

There has been no apparent activity at the former Homowack Hotel site since the Mamakating Zoning Board of Appeal rejected the request of the owners for a zoning variance that would enable them to legally operate a residential camp in that building. Any passerby will see that the building and grounds have been left untended, and at this point constitute not only a major eyesore but potentially hazardous conditions. Formal requests for the Town Engineer to do an inspection of the building have been left unheeded.

The message is clear — we cannot rely on our town to enforce its own laws, regulations and board resolutions when it comes to these 500 acres. We must be vigilant, and continue to monitor the situation at the Homowack. Moreover, this November we have an important opportunity to make our voices heard, namely the election for the town Supervisor and seats on the town board. Your vote is your most powerful vehicle for expressing your views on whether you think our local government is operating in the best interest of its residents. Please make sure to vote!

If you observe any activity or learn anything new, please do contact me at: valley209keeper@yahoo.com.

DEC Contacts:
Forest Ranger: Jason Seeley 845-240-6792 (cell)
Environmental Conservation Officer:
Tim Canfield 845-733-4669
**Casino Update**

**by Dave Colavito**

Guardian readers may recall that two separate tracks exist for pursuing casinos in Sullivan County – Federal for Indian and State for non-Indian.

In June, Larry Echohawk, head of the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs, announced the rescission of the 2008 rule restricting off-reservation Indian casinos to close proximity of their existing reservations. It’s not clear what this will ultimately mean for Sullivan County, but plans of several tribes previously in the running for very-far-off-reservation casinos here could be reactivated.

In August, the New York Times reported that Gov. Cuomo is weighing the legitimization of commercial non-Indian casinos in NYS. Although New York already has several Indian-run casinos, limited electronic gambling at racinos, and the state lottery, the State Constitution prohibits other forms of commercial gambling. So it’s fair to ask why the state shouldn’t endorse the expansion of casino gambling. Amending the Constitution would be the biggest roadblock because passing an amendment requires approval from two consecutive Legislatures, followed by a public referendum – our local state representatives have already taken the first step by introducing legislation towards that end.

Irrespective of touted casino-related jobs and revenues, policy makers have proved unwilling to adequately address costs to local communities, and instead focus on schemes to increase the state coffers. Those costs have been well-established, not to mention the range of environmental impacts.

Professionals find that casinos generate the bulk of their revenues from a relatively small percentage of their patrons who become problem gamblers. Our communities can expect about a 1% increase in the number of new problem gamblers with the advent of a casino. Costs resulting from their contribution to increased rates of addiction, bankruptcy, and crime range from $10,000 to $80,000 annually per new problem gambler. With anywhere from 70,000 to 80,000 full-time residents here (and many more part-time), well, you do the math. Even putting aside social and environmental concerns, in the long run such misadventures don’t pay for themselves and will require the rest of us to do so. That’s money drained from our communities redirected away from responsible programs and projects.

---

**BKAA's 40th Anniversary!**

**Share Old BKAA/Basha Kill Photos & Memorabilia**

**by Paula Medley**

A retrospective, highlighting major BKAA milestones and featuring wetlands images through the years, is planned for next summer. This event will be one of several held in 2012, commemorating the BKAA’s 40th anniversary, a significant achievement for an all-volunteer organization. We anticipate partnering with the Mamakating Historical Society in producing an impressive show.

Its success, however, depends upon the generosity of members and friends willing to loan their BKAA/Basha Kill treasures for others’ enjoyment and enlightenment. If interested in joining this exciting venture, contact BKAA via email — info@thebashakill.org; snail mail — BKAA P.O. Box 1121, Wurtsboro, NY 12790; or voice mail — Paula Medley 845-754-0743. **Deadline for conveying intent is October 31, 2011.** Presently, we need to know only the type and amount of material potentially available. We will not take possession of anything at this point. An anniversary committee will review and organize and present submissions. We hope to have many participants!

---

**40th Anniversary Committee Needs: Ten Hardworking, Committed, Team-Playing Volunteers**

**by Paula Medley**

A committee will be formed to organize all functions celebrating the BKAA’s 40th anniversary in 2012. Besides the historical retrospective, several other activities have been discussed and are likely prospects. The BKAA board will determine committee members, who will work closely with organization leaders throughout the year’s festivities. **If interested, notify the BKAA by October 31, via the contacts outlined above. We look forward to a great response!**
Trail Conference Sells Two Large Land Parcels to NYS
by Georgette Weir

On June 3, representatives of the Trail Conference and the New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC) met at the trailhead of the Minisink Trail on Route 6 in Greenville, NY (Orange County), to mark the transfer to the state of 389 acres on the Shawangunk Ridge and the expansion of recreational trail opportunities in the region.

This was the second transfer from the Trail Conference to DEC this year, successes that are a tribute to the persistence and persuasiveness of volunteers and staff of our Conservation Committee. Both parcels were purchased by the Trail Conference in 2006 with funds donated by members to our Land Acquisition and Stewardship Fund (LASF) with the expectation of eventual state purchase.

The earlier land transfer occurred in March, when New York State fulfilled a promise made 5 years ago to secure protection of a Long Path corridor in Greene County. Money for the $217,000 buy came from the state’s Environmental Protection Fund land acquisition budget, which is funded by real estate transfer fees and was staunchly defended by the Trail Conference and others during tough state budget negotiations the past two years.

The Trail Conference purchased the 205-acre parcel, which was subdivided off of a larger parcel to provide a buffer to the Long Path as it moves from the Catskills north toward the Mohawk River and ultimately the Adirondacks. It marks the culmination of a 10-year cooperative effort with the DEC to protect open space and a route for the Long Path in this area.

The land on the Ridge was acquired by the Trail Conference as part of its efforts to create a protected corridor for the Shawangunk Ridge Trail. DEC will add the acres to Huckleberry Ridge State Forest. Money for the $1.5 million purchase also came from the EPF open space program.

The parcel already features a beautiful 5-mile loop hike built by Trail Conference volunteers in 2007. (Find directions to the trailhead and a description of the hike on our website, www.nynjtc.org — type "Minisink Trail" in the site’s search box.) Following brief remarks by officials from both organizations, Trail Conference volunteers led a group of hikers on an exploration of the trail.

Just a decade ago, no state forest land existed on the Shawangunk Ridge in Orange County. With this land transfer, Huckleberry Forest now has nearly 1500 acres.

The Trail Conference was instrumental in creating this forest, working closely with the Trust for Public Land, DEC and the landowner on the first 527-acre buy nearly a decade ago. The Conference later bought another 980 acres in this region using funds from its LASF; 958 of those acres have been transferred to New York State, nearly tripling the size of the Huckleberry Ridge State Forest.

Protecting this land is key to the Trail Conference’s goal of protecting the 43-mile long Shawangunk Ridge Trail, built in 1992-93 to connect the Appalachian Trail in High Point State Park NJ and Sam’s Point Preserve in Cragsmoor, NY. In doing so, the Trail Conference also aims to create a recreational and wildlife corridor between the two largest

(continued on page 10)
Land Acquisition (continued)

conservation areas in the region – the Catskill State Park and the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.

The Minisink and Lenape Ridge Trails offer the opportunity for a 5-mile loop hike with many great view points. The Lenape Trail leads into Port Jervis and connects with the Delaware River Heritage Trail. Following this trail will lead hikers to the Port Jervis Metro-North train station located near the corner of Pike and Front Streets. In the future, the Trail Conference hopes to connect the Lenape Ridge Trail to the Shawangunk Ridge Trail through Huckleberry Forest.

The Trail Conference created its Land Acquisition and Stewardship Fund to permanently protect the four long distance trails that its volunteers maintain: Shawangunk Ridge Trail, Long Path, Highlands Trail, and Appalachian Trail. The fund is completely financed through donations. In less than 10 years, the fund has been used to protect many miles of trails, 2,439 acres through direct acquisition, and 2,205 acres through due diligence, purchase options, and other on-the-ground assistance.

The Open Space Institute, The Nature Conservancy, and the Orange County Land Trust have also been instrumental in preserving thousands of acres on and near the southern Shawangunk Ridge as well as the Shawangunk Ridge Trail.

NYS DEC Commissioner Joe Martens marked this latest state acquisition by stating, “The Shawangunk Ridge is listed as a priority project in New York State’s Open Space Conservation Plan in recognition of its unique and outstanding array of natural resources, abundant recreational opportunities and scenic significance. The ridge’s 50-mile span is a major east coast flyway for migratory birds, and its forests are habitat for bobcats, black bears, timber rattlesnakes and more than 200 species of nesting birds. We are indebted to the Trail Conference for all their help in protecting and preserving this and other critical parcels on the Shawangunk Ridge.”

Edward Goodell, Trail Conference executive director, says, “By protecting the steep forests that comprise this wildlife and recreational corridor, the DEC is demonstrating once again that it is possible to simultaneously promote local economic development, provide healthy recreation and protect the environment.”

Financial support for Trail Conference work on Shawangunk Ridge comes from Environmental Protection Fund and NYS Conservation Partnership Program in collaboration with the Land Trust Alliance and the state DEC.

A guided hike through Huckleberry State Forest will be among the BKAA’s 2012 educational offerings. Ed.

BKAA in the Community by Paula Medley

4/9/11 BKAA reps participated in an Earth Day celebration at SUNY Orange in Middletown.
6/3/11 BKAA reps attended ceremonies marking enlargement of Huckleberry State Forest in Greenville via transfer of land ownership from NY/NJ Trail Conference to DEC.
6/7, 7/3/11 Water-testing committee evaluated various Bash Kill sites.
6/15/11 BKAA reps networked with other Sullivan County not-for-profits during coffee hour at Cornell Cooperative Extension in Ferndale
7/3, 8/12/11 Rescue and release of Bash Kill eagle.

7/7/11 BKAA rep attended Sullivan County Legislative Committee on Community and Economic Development where the completeness of the public access resolution was addressed.
7/9/11 Organization reps educated visitors about the wetlands and BKAA during Wurtsboro’s Founder’s Day.
8/12/11 BKAA rep led a family group from PA and Switzerland on a Bash Kill tour.
July, August, September 2011 Six educational walks and outings conducted by local nature experts Gary Keeton, John Haas, Scott Graber and Michael Medley.
Sullivan County Not-for-Profit Workshop by Alva Jones

This past March 4, the first annual Sullivan County Not-For-Profit Leadership Summit was held at the Bethel Woods Art Center. Attracting 140 participants, the Summit was attended by Jackie Broder, BKAA Board Member and chaired by Amanda Speer, Director of Programming at the Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE). All participated in panel discussions and idea-sharing pertinent to non-profits’ roles and futures. It was also decided to plan subsequent local workshops on these and other topics. Such a workshop was held on June 15.

Again chaired by Amanda Speer and this time held at CCE, the meeting was attended by BKAA President Paula Medley, by this member, and by many representing local not-for-profits. The BKAA table was visited by interested people, attracted by our pamphlets, the Bash Kill Wetlands Field Guide, and by lovely photographs taken by BKAA members. A number of persons were unaware of the Bash Kill’s existence, and were excited by the prospect of visiting it.

The not-for-profits in attendance were a diverse group working in such areas as sustainable development, growth of healthful local farm products, youth clubs, drug abuse treatment centers, and day and residential centers for the developmentally challenged. SUNY Sullivan, the Literacy Volunteers, Inc., the Center for Workplace Development & Dispute Resolution, and the Federation of the Homeless were among other representatives whose tables we visited.

The participants then broke into smaller mixed groups; introductions were made and overviews given of each organization’s problems and aspirations. It became apparent that the shrinkage of funding was a common concern, leading to cutting of staffs and constriction of services.

Ms. Speer then introduced the main speaker, Evadne Giannini, principal of Hospitality Green of Mountaingale, whose goal is that of thoughtful sustainable development. She addressed problems common to not-for-profits. Leading the list was that of survival in today’s slumping economy, since the yearly influx of federal and state aid has steadily lessened, with no reversal in sight.

Ms. Giannini stressed the importance of all present working as a community, communicating effectively, pinpointing common problems and sharing solutions. She recommended the formation of focus groups in areas of grant-writing, environmental awareness, well-being issues, and in board-training. It was further urged that a change should be sought in our not-for-profits’ culture of waste and individual operations, to one of community cooperation and scrutiny of possible areas for future economies. The pooling of resources, bulk purchasing, and local shopping were cited as examples of maximizing efficiency in lowering operational costs.

A common ethic of creating a workplace, education and home environment supportive of people’s health and well-being was seen as a shared goal and value. Leadership Sullivan is currently offering training classes in that area, teaching skills necessary in reaching such goals. (Call 791-4200 for info). Future not-for-profit gatherings and a 2012 Leadership Summit will further ensure these organizations’ survival and success.

Wurtsboro Renaissance by Jon Reed

Sullivan Renaissance 2011 concluded on Monday night, August 8 at the Monticello High School auditorium. A Wurtsboro Renaissance volunteer received the scholarship award, as did a volunteer from the Town of Mamakating. Phillipsport Community Center received a maintenance grant. Notably, Wurtsboro Renaissance had already received a Community Development grant of $8000 in April to mark the D&H Canal through Wurtsboro.

On August 21, Wurtsboro Renaissance held its annual fundraiser, the Duck Race, which was started nine years ago in memory of Charles Gutke Kunst. This year was the most profitable yet! The first place prize of $200 was won by Bill Maher, President of Wurtsboro Renaissance, the second place prize of $100 by Ann Filosa of New Jersey, the third place prize of $50 by Barbara Gutke Kunst, and the last place prize of $10 by Lisa Justus. Maher, Gutke Kunst, and Justus all turned their winnings back to Wurtsboro Renaissance.
Looking Back, Looking Forward: Lee Rosenthal
by Susan Erny

How did the Fairleigh Dickinson University professor of Engineering Technology Lee Rosenthal find his way to the Bash Kill Area Association? Overlooking a seven-acre lake at his home beneath the Shawangunk Ridge, Lee explained how it came about. It was the influence of two men which led him to our beautiful region and our association.

First, there was Lee’s father, a foreign language teacher at Erasmus High School in Brooklyn. Since Lee was three years old, his dad packed up the family and their two steamer trunks and rented a cottage on a lake or pond for the summer because he believed in being outdoors and getting plenty of sunshine. Thus, Lee gained a love of nature and waterways. He discovered that the most interesting part of nature was around water. So connected to water did Lee become that he said, “I don’t feel as though I know a body of water until I’ve put my feet in the bottom.” This affinity for water continued into his adult life when Lee took summer refuge in an old log cabin on a lake in Sharon, CT where the morning fog was dense and dreamy.

In the late 1970’s, Lee came into contact with the second influential man, Rob Honders. Rob taught Engineering Technology at Orange County Community College in Middletown, NY. Lee wanted the two-year (A.A.S.) students at OCCC to transfer into Fairleigh Dickinson’s four-year program. As it happens, Rob Honders was a BKAA Board member. When Lee told Rob that he was interested in moving out of New York City and wanted to find a secluded house on a lake, Rob helped Lee find his dream home in Greenville. It was around 1978 when Lee Rosenthal also found the BKAA and became a Board member himself. So it was Lee’s love of water which he gained from his early experiences with his father and his friendship with BKAA member Rob Honders that brought Lee full circle to our organization.

Lee spoke fondly of the early BKAA Board meetings that were first held in co-founder Louise Briggs’ living room. He also enjoyed Elizabeth Pollock’s gorgeous old house that was filled with many antiques. He remembers talking about the Bash Kill to the children at the elementary school in Cuddebackville and leading walking tours for students and adults as well.

Lee had much to share with others because he spent so much time on the Bash Kill himself. He often paddled through the “windy, serpentine channels” and even went swimming from his canoe. One time he poled his canoe all the way up to Route 17. That’s quite a feat if you’ve ever been on that end of the kill. He sometimes picnicked on the island south of the current Nature Watch site. (The island is now off limits due to the nesting eagles.) It was always a thrill for him to see the unusual Purple Gallinules and the Bald Eagles and the Great Blue Herons which had a rookery in the trees to the west of the island. An avid bicyclist, Lee cycled the bumpy railroad bed along the kill. This adventurous man was also a spelunker who explored Surprise Cave which he described as having many levels, tunnels, and squeezes. (It is now closed for the protection of the ailing little brown bats.) He was an avid fan of the Bash Kill and a great advocate, too.

In 1999 Lee moved to the hamlet of Walkill. Naturally, his home is on a lake which he swims, canoe and skates, depending on the weather. Since moving to Ulster County, he and his wife, Angela Sisson, became very involved with another grassroots environmental organization, Save the Ridge. This group was instrumental in stopping the major development that was planned for 2,600 acres on the Shawangunk Ridge. The struggle emerged in 2002 and the proposed development was successfully halted in 2005 when the Awoing Reserve officially became part of the Minnewaska State Park Preserve. Praise for NYS Representative Maurice Hinchey’s support of the Save the Ridge project was voiced by Lee and echoed by me for Hinchey’s help with the BKAA’s work. We are indeed fortunate to have such an enlightened representative. Save the Ridge and BKAA have joined the Shawangunk Ridge Coalition, an alliance of organizations whose mission it is

(continued on page 13)
Lee Rosenthal (continued)

"to promote the common goals and objectives of its member organizations and to pursue strategies for protecting and preserving the entire Shawangunk Ridge". Lee's love for nature is evident in his ongoing participation in environmental groups that seek to preserve our unique and pristine natural surroundings.

Lee's final comment was, "It's wonderful what the BKAA has been doing." It is his hope that the association will continue its advocacy for the protection of our precious wetlands. We, in turn, thank Lee for his work on behalf of the Kill and the majestic mountains that tower over it.

Contact the BKAA:
Paula Medley 845-754-0743 between 10 am & 8 pm
Email address: info@thebashakill.org
Website: bkaa@earthlink.net

Sullivan Leadership Visits the Kill by Michael Medley

On May 25, Leadership Sullivan County sent 13 prospective leaders to the Bashakill to learn about aquatic ecosystems and wetlands in our area. I gave them a 45-minute introduction to the Bashakill, including a collage of the Kill in all seasons provided by Jim Carney.

The group then departed for a tour of the Bashakill, starting at the boat launch. Ed Morse introduced them to our resident eagles and answered questions related to bird life.

We then went on a short hike to a nearby observation site. Many had never been to the Bashakill and were very pleased by the efforts made to protect and conserve a valuable natural resource, so important to the county. A short visit to the Bashakill Winery ended their day.

OSI Acquires Three Miles of Rail Trail

In celebration of National Trails Day, June 4, Open Space Institute announced the acquisition of 3 miles of rail trail along the old O&W rail bed in Mamakating.

The trail was acquired by OSI's land acquisition affiliate, the Open Space Conservancy, and runs north from Sullivan Street in Wurtsboro to Route 209 and the D&H Canal Linear Park. This allows for the development of a nearly 8-mile-long loop for hikers, walkers, bikers and other recreational users.

From one end, the trail will head north from Wurtsboro along the historic O&W rail bed before doubling back to the south along the historic D&H Canal Linear Park and canal path. The new stretch of trail links Wurtsboro with the Wurtsboro Ridge, Roosa Gap and Shawangunk Ridge state forests.

"OSI's acquisition sets the stage for a recreational corridor that connects the village and the state forests, with beautiful wetlands along the way," said Ed Goodell, executive director of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference.

OSI envisions that today's acquisition will one day help complete a 140-mile-long interconnected rail trail network that would run from southern Dutchess County, through Ulster, Sullivan and Orange counties on to the southern and western Catskills.

Several pieces of the proposed network have already been acquired. In 2009, OSI and Walkill Valley Land Trust acquired 11.5 miles of railroad bed in Rosendale and Ulster, Ulster County. Once this trail is open, it will extend from the town of Shawangunk to the city of Kingston, expanding the Walkill Valley Rail Trail to nearly 24 miles.

In 2001, OSI acquired nearly 2 miles of trail on the west side of the Shawangunk Ridge in the town of Wawarsing. OSI is currently negotiating to buy an additional 2.1 miles in Wawarsing, to add to the regional network.

Other portions of the trail network are already publicly owned and maintained, including the Dutchess Rail Trail, Walkway Over the Hudson, the Hurley Marbetown Rail Trail and the Accord Rail Trail. As a unified system, the trails would link some of the most well-known, picturesque and historic landscapes in the state.

"The Hudson River Valley and the Catskills are blessed with some of the most beautiful rail trails in the state of New York," said Kim Elliman, OSI's president and CEO. "These trails run through our most bucolic landscapes, connecting towns, villages, parks and rivers... Recreational rail trails offer a boost to local economies and communities while preserving local land use and heritage. As we have seen elsewhere, everyone wins from access to rail trails."
Architectural Tour of Phillipsport by Bill Lucas

On June 18, a bright and sunny day, the Liberty Museum held one of its architectural tours, highlighting the history and interesting architecture of the hamlet of Phillipsport.

The Museum has been hosting these tours for a number of years and through the persistence of BKAAs Anita Altman, a resident of Phillipsport, the tour was held here. In all, about 42 joined in the tour, split about 40/60 between local versus museum member attendance.

It started at the one-room schoolhouse home of Phillipsport Community Center, an historic building with roots back to the 1850's. It functioned as a school until 1956 when it was deeded to the newly formed Community Center which has now operated as a charitable support organization for over 50 years while maintaining the building and grounds.

John Conway, Sullivan County Historian, kicked off the tour with a slide show presentation on the historic importance of Phillipsport in the economic development of the Mamakating Valley as a vital transportation center, first on the Old Mine Rd, then via the Delaware and Hudson (D&H) Canal, followed by the railroad and on to Route 209.

Early goods for transit involved tannery products, bluestone, cement, and, most importantly, coal from PA. The D&H Canal was opened in 1828 after only 3 years of construction. It stretched 108 miles and had 108 locks dug by hand and black powder with primarily immigrant labor. The enterprise was, at the time, the largest private stock venture in the country with initial capital raised of over $1 million.

Phillipsport, named for prominent local businessman James Phillips, was a busy hub of activity during the canal days as a boat building and lock center, growing in prosperity to a robust population of 400, the eighth largest town in Sullivan County. By 1872 the growth included a school, church, hotel, mill and a number of stores, many of which remain today and were to be part of the walking tour.

Architect Robert Dadras, president of the Liberty Museum, then introduced the approach to the walking tour which was to include a focus on several examples of Greek Revival, Italianate and colonial styles of architecture as highlights.

After a tour of the Community Center school house (Greek Revival) with reference from Mr. Dadras as to how well the building has been restored, the tour visited the Phillipsport Methodist Church next door. A fine example of the Greek Revival, it was completed in 1823 and is the oldest Methodist church in the county. The church was built in just over 3 years (but it took another 20 to decide on the paint color) with local labor at the cost of only $675!

The church remains open today with a small but loyal following with services every Sunday (and monthly soup on "Souper Tuesdays"). The interior is preserved essentially as it was during canal era, including a divider down the middle of the original pews that separated the women and children from the men during services. Current pastor Camille Regholec gave a brief but lively history of the church. She said the only significant modification to the interior walls were two impressive Greek style columns hand-painted by an inmate from Eastern Correctional when the church was last painted in the 80's. He thought the church needed something "classical" on that wall.

The tour then moved on to the antique store in the center of the hamlet which was a general store during the canal era and an example of the colonial style. The final stop was to what was formerly known as either the Brick House Hotel or The Mayor's Hotel (lovingly restored by current Community Center president Matt Migliaccio and partner John Brown). It is a handsome example of Italianate architecture in brick with a hipped roof and two doors on the lower level still labeled as "Reading Room" and "Bar Room", forms of entertainment for travelers on the canal.

The tour finished with a trip to D&H Linear Park (entrance off 209 onto Bova Rd), site of the county's soon-to-open Canal Museum and walked the restored and maintained tow path to one of the 10 canal locks in Phillipsport. This lock (#50) is over 180 years old and in great shape demonstrating the excellent stone masonry work done by the canal builders and the wonderful restoration of many stretches of the canal through Sullivan County as linear parks with active tow paths and water in the canal. The building will be open to the public later this summer.

The group then moved back to the Community Center and was treated to a buffet by the Liberty Museum staff. A wonderful day was had by all with an appreciation for how community efforts retain the history of our towns and add to the quality and richness of our lives. The Liberty Museum is located at 46 South Main St. Liberty, NY 12754. Phone 845-292-2394.
Moonlight Walk by Jack Austin

About 50 to 60 natural history buffs gathered for a moonlight walk on July 16, starting at 8:15 pm, as dusk yielded to darkness. Gary Keeton, our guide and leader, provided his usual entertaining and very knowledgeable commentary, based upon his years of education and first-hand experience in geology, local history, archeology, fisheries biology and overall natural history; he also fielded questions along the way.

He provided an explanation about the geological development of the Neversink Valley, formation of the wetlands and work by the Army Corps of Engineers; man’s role in developing the “Old Mine Road,” D&H Canal, and O&W Railroad; and early use by the Lenape Indians and settlers. He described Basha as a Lenape Indian shaman.

We walked along Haven Road toward the rail trail, watching redwings, ducks and swallows overhead. Gary noted that populations of bats have declined seriously, by about 80%; they used to devour great numbers of insects daily.

We stopped at the bridge over the channel to watch a few fishermen, and discussed the bowfin, which has survived millennia of geologic changes, and is not as harmful to the bass as some think. He pointed out purple loosestrife, an invasive species.

As we arrived at the railroad trail, we could hear veery and wood thrushes in the nearby woods. The old railroad had provided important transport for civil war supplies. Heading north on the trail, the sky continued to darken and mosquitoes emerged from the wetlands, sensing new meal opportunities, so a variety of repellants went into action. Gary described the unique red maple swamp along the trail, and then a cluster of 5-6 white pine trees, that he surmised had grown from seeds from the same cone many years ago. A steady chorus of frogs and toads provided a nice backdrop to the walk.

Gary discussed how the Lenape would travel the ridge-tops for fewest obstructions, and come down to the wetlands for spring water and fishing. Early settlers learned the locations of these springs as well. As the sky grew darker, Gary tried to estimate when the moon would rise, as it seemed to be delaying its arrival.

We finally turned around, heading back toward Haven Road. Gary answered a question about the status of sturgeons in the Hudson River, recalling a story of early settlers hearing the sturgeons “breed” in the Hudson, mistaking them for ghosts.

He reflected some disappointment in not hearing any owls or nocturnal mammals, and in the moon’s slow arrival, but indeed, as we reached the bridge over the channel, the moon inched over the Shawangunk Ridge, casting long shadows among us. Overhead, the big dipper was easily visible, with its “pointers” directing the eye to Polaris, the north star. New acquaintances seemed to regret parting company, after this thoroughly enjoyable and informative time together. Many thanks to Gary Keeton for sharing his time, knowledge and love of the region with us.
A sunny day greeted a group of inquisitive hikers on Saturday June 18 as Mike Medley led the BKAA’s annual trek to Gobbler’s Knob. For the past few years, I had wanted to join Mike on this little trek but had not made the time to do so. This year I was determined to follow through!

Our hike followed the Shawangunk Ridge Trail for nearly two miles through mainly oak forest. Though the hike is described as a "moderately difficult uphill climb," much of the trek took place along gradual uphill terrain. Steeper trail sections, which were encountered early in the hike, certainly didn’t deter our group from moving onward.

The sound of summer birds was abundant in the forest. The songs of the wood thrush, scarlet tanager, black & white warbler, cerulean warbler and brown creeper were heard as we walked along the trail. Early on, an Acadian flycatcher was heard giving its "peet-sah" song near a stand of hemlocks. A number of tiny red eft salamanders were spotted along the wet wooded trail. And lowbush blueberry bushes added some flavor to the day as they provided us with a handful of early-season ripe berries!

Once we reached our destination, the group took a well-deserved break and enjoyed the first true open vista of the day. Mike pointed out some local landmarks toward the western horizon including the valley where the lower portion of the Basha Kill makes its way south toward the Neversink River. At the Knob, we enjoyed seeing pitch pines, which are native to the rocky land of the Shawangunk Ridge. A few folks even took time to enjoy the wonderful wintergreen fragrance and taste of black (sweet) birch twigs.

Overall, the hike gained about 450 vertical feet from the small parking area at the South Rd. fishing platform up to Gobbler’s Knob, which sits at just under 1,000 feet in elevation. The hike back down to the Basha Kill was much quicker as we had the luxury of a downhill walk on our side!

Thanks to Mike and all participants for a very rewarding and informative hike. Consider joining the BKAA for the 2012 Gobbler’s Knob hike — and be sure to wear comfortable sturdy shoes and bring water.

Photo by Scott Graber

**Photo Exhibit of Birds of Sullivan County by Scott Graber**

Time and time again I’m reminded of the variety and abundance of birdlife in our county. Whether it’s a leisurely spring morning at the Basha Kill, an all-day birding expedition, or a winter hike in the Catskill Mountains, I’m always able to see birds.

During peak migration in May, an enthusiastic soul can observe over 100 different species around the county — and if conditions happen to be just right, potentially 150. In fact, I’ve actually counted over one hundred species at the Basha Kill alone — in just one day!

Recently, residents had a wonderful opportunity to enjoy a terrific display of local photographic talent — and birds! The exhibition, Birds of Sullivan County, was held at Morgan Outdoors in Livingston Manor from June 25 through July 31. The exhibit featured eight local photographers from BKAA and Sullivan County Audubon, kicking off with a reception on June 24. Being a nature photographer and long-time birder, I gladly served as the exhibition’s curator.

The exhibit featured a great assortment of local birds including warblers, sandpipers, bald eagles, hummingbirds, grosbeaks, orioles and so much more. Many of the stunning photographs were captured at the Basha Kill. In conjunction with the show, Lance Verderame and I led bird walks in Livingston Manor and along the Willowemoc Creek. Bird walk highlights included a green heron, belted kingfisher, common mergansers, chimney swifts and cedar waxwings.

Many thanks to those who stopped by the exhibit and showed support. A special “thank you” to Morgan Outdoors owner, Lisa Lyons, who envisioned the show’s theme and donated a portion of print sale proceeds to BKAA.
Nature Watch Fundraising Social & Wine-Tasting
by Maryallison Farley

The BKAA’s Nature Watch Program and Paul Deninno, owner of the Bashakill Vineyards are hosting a fundraising social for the BKAA on Saturday, September 25 from 4:00 to 6:00 pm. The fundraiser offers you an opportunity to visit Paul’s outstanding facility (on South Road, Wurtsboro, NY across from the main boat launch at the Bashakill Wildlife Management Area http://bashakillvineyards.com).

For $15 per person, you will have an opportunity to taste the Bashakill Vineyard’s award-winning wines, accompanied by Paul’s wonderful homemade brick oven pizza. This year we’re also happy to present a special program at 5:00 pm on Birds of the Bashakill with Giselle Smisko of the Avian Wildlife Center. She will be bringing live raptors & songbirds and looks forward to your questions and comments.

Fundraising efforts also include another raffle. This time we have three items, thanks to the generosity of Linda Lou Bartle and Jim Carney. Linda Lou and Jim have each donated one of their photos taken when the Bashakill eagle was released back to the wild this August after a period of rehabilitation at the Delaware Valley Raptor Center.

Linda Lou’s close-up of the bald eagle head is 11x14 matted and includes frame; Jim’s 8x8 photo of the bird going up in her first flight after rehabilitation is specially mounted and infused on aluminum which gives the image a luminescent appearance. In addition, Linda Lou has donated an acrylic painting of a bald eagle head called The Gaze (11x14, with frame 18 x 15).

You can buy $5 raffle tickets at the event. Go to www.thebashakill.org for a look at these beautiful raffle items. For folks who cannot be at the fundraiser but who would like to participate in the photo raffle, mail your checks with pertinent information to BKAA, PO Box 1121, Wurtsboro, NY 12790. BKAA President, Paula Medley, will fill out your tickets and put them in the raffle. This year with three items at raffle, please specify your order of preference of the items in case your name gets drawn and Paula has to pick for you.

For more information and to RSVP, contact Patricia at pdiness@earthlink.net 845-386-5024 or Maryallison at mfarley@hvc.rr.com 845-888-0261.

Blueberry Festival by Marcia Briggs Wallace

Thanks to the careful planning typical of Paula Medley, BKAA President, our organization was well represented at this year’s Blueberry Festival in Ellenville. The 3 BKAA tables, covered in “blueberry blue,” were set up by Mike Medley, with assistance from Phillipsport Community Center reps, bright and early on August 13. Blessed by good weather, we held out until the close of the event in the “cultural heritage area,” as dubbed by festival organizers.

We were in good company; the Community Center table was on one side of us and a public education program called “Wolf Teacher” was on the other. Nearby were setups for New York/New Jersey Trail Conference, D & H Canal Museum in High Falls, Ellenville Public Library, and Cragsmoor Free Library. Across the way, musicians played, while Cohen Bakery delighted passersby with a tantalizing array of baked goods made with blueberries.

As Paula put it, the “cultural heritage area” added to the quality of the overall experience at the festival. Attendees represented all ages. Stopping at our setup were newcomers to the Bashakill Wetlands and the BKAA, as well as tried and true members. A few in the latter group took the occasion to renew, while five in the former joined as new members.

Events like the Blueberry Festival are important in promoting awareness of our organization and our mission, not to mention the wetlands themselves. Important also is our participation in a community event like the festival, for we are, of course, part of the community. Paula, ever energetic and informed in advancing our cause, never missed a chance to greet a member of the community she knew, or to give a child a “frog pencil.”

Ably assisting Paula in staffing our tables were Jon Reed, Anita Altman and Gil Kulick; Anita and Gil were especially energetic in winning over new members. Meanwhile, yours truly assisted wherever she could while selling tee shirts and tote bags (imprinted with our logo) to a number of visitors, the income, of course, helping to fund our work.
Thank You to Recent Donors

Judith Adams - Anita Altman & Gil Kulick - Jack Austin - Lynn Barber - Edward Behrens - Katherine & Paul Beinkafner
Catherine Bergowitz - Barbara & Peter Blakey - Arlene Borko - Jackie Broder - Angela Callahan - Irwin Cantor - Yvonne Caradec
Eileen Anne Carney - Billie Mae & David Case - Dr. & Mrs. Anthony Castrogiovanni - Mary Collier - Jerre Coleman
Stephen Colman - James Corcoran - Eric & Jennifer Crane - Keith Davis - Paul Deninno - Stephen & Stefanie Dijanic
Paul DiMaggio - Mary Donnelly - James & Kim Dunmire - James & Linda Dunn - Joan Everett
Patricia, Lyndsay & Reese Fairchild - Maryallison Farley - Betty & Fred Feibusch - Jayne & William Fiero - Malka Fraenkel
Allan & Judy Frank - Jakob & Gely Franke - Loretta Franklin - Dr. Valerie Freer - Marc Fried - Alan Fried - June Goldberg
William Graziano & Kirsten Gabrielson - Walter Greenberg - Elaine Greenwald - Marilyn Gross & Kim Hausner - John Haas
Sharon Hartnett & Robert Majcher - Steve & Trish Hertel - Rosalind Hodgkins - Vera Ioannou - Gregory Jenkins & Michael Toledo
Lynne Kanter - Steve & Jennifer Kessler - Caroline Kiyabu - Jean Klaiss - Alan Kravath - Lynna Kreimann
John & Debbie Kurzejewski - Erika Labuda - Kathy LaBuda - Keith LaBudde - Marlena Lange - Linda & Richard Langseder
Louisa Lanzano - Mary Lebeau - Gene LeFebvre - Beth & Sheldon Leidner - Andrew Lewis - Monique Lipton
Susan London & Bill Bradl - Silvia-Maria Lynch - Stephen MacDonald & Priscilla Derven - Michael Maduras - Sylvia Maliga
John & Nancy Masterson - Ruth McKeon - Stephen & Mary McLaughlin - Michael & Paula Medley - Walter & Jacqueline Mehr
Jeffrey Moore - Cherie Munday - David Munford - Martin & Frances Nankin - John & Trudy Neilson - Alfonse Neidermeyer
Susan Ottopow & Stephen Chang - Angelo & Cynthia Pagano - Richard & Marcia Pavlica - Eileen Phelan - Maureen Radl
Jon & Ann Reed - Jeannette Regan - Michael & Patricia Remer - Barbara Restaino - Wyatt Richardson - Blaise Richardson
Michelle & Clark Rothauera - Alan & Sayada Rothschild - Mark & Barbara Rubin - Jon Rubin & Gail Vachon
Lois & Ernest Ruckert - Janet Sack - Charles Sajeva - Terry Saturno - Christine Saward - Pamela Shimer - Bob Shulman
Ruth Shursky - Dr. & Mrs. Richard Silverman - Malcolm Spector - Robert Speziale - Carol Springer - Mort Starobin
Jeannette Stollar - Yvonne & Michael Sturm - Tomas Sullivan - Nina Sullivan - Carmen Sylvester - Dorothy Szefc
Helen Tannenbaum - Glenda Teabo-Sandoe - Burt Thelanader & Anne Prather - Jonathan Tunick - Ann Vail - Margaret Valasquez
Stephen Vignet & Carol Felstein - Francis & Maeve Ciccoesto Vogan - David Wagner - Marcia Briggs Wallace
Leonard Wallace & Linda Hopkins - Sandra Wallack - Irene Warshauer - Andy & Eileen Haworth Weil
Dava Weinstein & Dorothy Calvani - John Conrad Weiser - Fred Weissman & Barbara Johnson - Charles West
Ed & Mona Wilson - Phyllis Wise - Pamela Zaitchick - Randy Zimmerman - Hugh Zimmerman

Wurtsboro Founder’s Day by Monique Lipton

A “re-designed” Wurtsboro Founders’ Day Street Fair was held on July 9. Instead of closing Sullivan Street, the vendors and attractions were located on side streets near Veteran’s Park. The effect was to create an intimate, less “overwhelming” atmosphere where visitors could meander through the side streets and enjoy the many vendors and organizations which participated. By keeping the main thoroughfare open to traffic the fair also allowed for maximum exposure to those who may have been travelling through the area.

Members of the BKAA were on hand to participate in this community event and to educate the public about the Basha Kill, which is an important part of the local environment. The weather couldn’t have been better and the “foot traffic” was high and sustained throughout the day.

Ray DePrado and Mike & Paula Medley were first on the scene to set up the BKAA tables, joined shortly thereafter by Jon Reed and Marcia Wallace who brought BKAA merchandise to sell. Recently purchased T-shirts in new colors seemed to be a big hit with the crowd.

Anita Altman and Gil Kulick arrived later and stayed several hours to help staff the BKAA site. Their usual passion and commitment concerning the Basha Kill attracted many passers-by and was a key factor in signing 8 new members. When Jon Reed left, it was my turn to lend a hand to Paula and Marcia and to help close up at the end of the day’s festivities.

All agreed that the fair was a great success. It was encouraging to see so many of the local organizations out supporting the community, including many which the BKAA has partnered with over the years, such as The NY/NJ Trail Conference. Also nearby was the local Cub Scout troop which Mike Medley had assisted with its “Naturalist Badge” program. Local businesses and vendors also added to the atmosphere of energy and vibrancy which was perceptible by those who attended the event.

Hopefully the good vibes generated by the fair will inspire those visitors who were new to the area to come back again to explore the beauty and wonder of the Basha Kill.
A Walk on the D&H Canal With Gary Keeton
by Linda Lou Bartle

It is the year 1848 and you are boating coal on the Delaware and Hudson Canal; this is all you know, having worked since you were a boy of ten when the canal was built in 1825. The highlight of your youth was when the bones of a mastodon were found in a peat bog between Red Bridge and Wurtsboro in 1827. You were asked to help with the removal of the earth the scientists were digging out.

Starting as a mule rider and now the captain of your own boat, you can remember so many different people of every race and creed. You know many by name and the towns they were from and some by their boat names. The names came from every imaginable subject and most times with no regard for appropriateness. Considering the filthy canal water and the fact that you used mules that knew, better than a horse, not to drink the water, flower names became a favorite.

Your fellow canallers are a hard-working, hard-drinking, and hard-swearin lot, but not devoid of a sense of poetry. Many boats had verses painted on their bows for the entire world to see. Your boat expresses the sentiments of most…

“My God above send down a dove/With wings as sharp as razors/To cut the throats of those dam roughs/That cut down a canaller’s wages”

It’s getting late and you will have to stop for the night. The boat basin at the Basha Kill is ahead and it is one of your favorite, with its hay sheds and goods that could be traded for coal. Even if it wasn’t your coal to trade, after 23 years of living on the canal you are immune to all the bickering between canal folks and the locals of every area you pass. In some places if it wasn’t for the coal you traded, the locals would have not made it through the winter.

Because of this “trade” agreement tonight’s dinner will be a feast — ham and cabbage instead of beans and flour. “No one goes hungry on the canal but no one ever needs to go on a diet,” comments your second man. Your other boatman chimes in “Eat more ham and cabbage if want to live to be eighty!” By law there are three of you on every boat and tonight you have enough for seconds.

That’s the way it was for many of the boatmen who did stay and work their whole lives, 65 years not being uncommon. Many who stayed said “We didn’t make much money but we lived.”

I attended both D&H canal walks that Gary Keeton gave this summer, each time with a different group of roughly 20 people. Gary does this with a great sense of knowledge, and makes everyone feels welcome, as if you have just entered his house and you should make yourself at home. Attentive to our questions Gary tells us the facts of life from before the time of Queen Basha up until the recent conservation of wood ducks and how the black ducks saved the Basha Kill.

Gary informs us: “The local people were hired in every town by the company the Wurts brothers started, using only picks, shovels, horses, wheelbarrows, a little dynamite and a lot of back-breaking labor; they began the work in 1825 and completed it by 1828. Try doing that today! The D&H Canal proved so successful that it was enlarged a couple of times in the mid-1840s and the early-1850s.”

I took some of the information that Gary gave me and used it in my opening passage along with my own reading experiences with the hopes of inspiring your imagination. Today we look to preserve this area for our appreciation of its natural beauty as well as its very colorful past. This is not a new idea; when the canal was in still in operation some city people actually took pleasure rides on it, and for some time after it was no longer in use. Time passed; the canal was closed. It was drained and the canal land was sold. Though many portions have been destroyed, much of it remains.

It is the goal of the BKAA and the DEC to preserve what we can and make it available, once again, to serve the needs of the wildlife and educate the public. If you have never walked the towpath at the Basha Kill, any time of year is great, my husband and I have biked in the spring and summer, walked our dogs in the fall and snowshoed in winter. I do see people cross-country skiing as well!

I have only touched on a few things that Gary discussed, and that’s why I’m looking forward to attending again next year. Hope to see you at Gary Keeton’s Natural & Manmade History of the D&H Canal walk.
Come Clean 2011 Project by Patricia Diness & Cathy Dawkins

The BKAA Come Clean Team undertook a new project this summer. In keeping with the environmental beautification mission, Come Clean targeted a business property in the Village of Wurtsboro for a custom garden makeover. The building on Sullivan Street that houses the Laundry, Catskill Soap Company, the Custom Tailor Shop is directly across the street from the Village Veteran's Park.

With permission from the property owner, the Come Clean Team visited the site, assessed site characteristics, any existing plants that could be integrated into the revised garden plan, water needs and availability, and general layout.

Next the team created a garden master plan that identified key plants to be used, layout of the garden, and color schemes. The team re-dug the entire garden area, removing garbage, weeds, and rotted weed-cloth. During this preparation phase, the team moved large plants, such as red barberry and mature hydrangea to conform to the master plan and extracted healthy hosta for re-planting at a later date.

Finally, after the property was prepared, the real fun began. The team purchased and planted new herbs, shrubs, grasses, and annuals. In keeping with the theme of the Soap Company, one side of the building features herbs, including lavender, sage, scented geranium, and Greek oregano.

During the planting activities, the team realized that the porch area is a community gathering area. The master plan was quickly modified to include a bench for people to enjoy the garden.

The bench sits in front of the stone wall between the laundry and tailor shop. This stone wall is home to the main feature of the garden - a trellis and pink clematis.

Early in the project, property neighbor, Mr. Gary Dodd, became actively involved. Mr. Dodd offered his personal assistance in installing a rain barrel for watering. Before this work was done, Mr. Dodd not only installed the rain barrel, but he also rerouted the existing gutter, provided a second rain barrel, and provided a magnificent custom black iron trellis for the clematis. Mr. Dodd’s advice, creativity, and generosity were instrumental in making this garden project a reality. The picture below shows the garden in August, 2011. We look forward to seeing the mature plants next summer!

John Winkler Memorial Water Testing Committee by Jackie Broder

The John Winkler Memorial Water Testing Committee reports continued testing of the chosen sites, however, slowly due to minor technical difficulties. All has been remedied, thankfully, and we are excited to be bringing on some new members to our committee. We were very happy to have a response to our request for volunteers in the last Guardian and I will be contacting them shortly. Anyone who is still interested is more than welcome! An extra special thank you goes out to all original members. It has been a slow and sometimes frustrating learning process for us all and your dedication and perseverance are appreciated!
Special Protection of the Environment for the County of Sullivan (SPECS Inc.) is a not-for-profit, grassroots environmental organization concerned with preserving the beautiful natural resources of Sullivan County. We believe that a clean environment is closely related to good health and quality of life.

Our purpose is to promote and enlighten the public as to sound and prudent environmental practices and the prevention of unsound or harmful ones.

We do this by attending public meetings to monitor activities that affect the environment, and express opinions. We attend health fairs and school activities to maintain environmental awareness, research issues, publish newsletters, disseminate informational research, send letters and correspondence on specific issues in the community, and conduct monthly meetings.

We began with opposition to Calpine Corp’s 500-megawatt power plant to be situated in Monticello, which would have emitted hundreds of tons of chemicals into the atmosphere. After two years of village, town, and county meetings, which we attended, Calpine withdrew its proposal.

SPECS took on the fight against importation of garbage and the anticipated expansion of the landfill. With hard work and factual information, we convinced our elected officials that importation was an unwise policy and it was stopped. With the help of a neighboring community, SPECS also successfully fought the landfill expansion.

In 2004, SPECS sponsored a program on “Zero Waste” with Dr. Paul Connett, Chemistry and Toxicology Professor from St. Lawrence University in Canton, NY. He gave an excellent presentation about how countries around the world are reducing, reusing, recycling and composting their waste materials into reusable products.

SPECS hosted four different events on composting at the Ted Stroebele Recreation Center in Monticello, with master gardeners.

In 2009, members of SPECS, along with Sullivan Alliance for Sustainable Development (SASD), started the Conservation Education Network to work with other groups to educate the public about ways to conserve precious resources. With BKAA, Catskill Mountainkeeper, Delaware Highland Conservancy, Sullivan County Department of Planning & Management, Sullivan County Office of Sustainable Energy, and Sullivan Renaissance, we provided workshops on community power, green building, solar, heating, and recycling and composting.

Members of SPECS serve on different boards throughout the county and beyond, including the Sullivan County Recycling Advisory Board, Sullivan County Solid Waste Task Force, Apollo Development Task Force, DEC Round Table Discussions, Thompson Conservation Advisory Council, Mounta indale Fire District, Rails to Trails, the Green Team, and more.

SPECS organized several trips to Rockland County’s Materials Recovery and Educational Facility, and Greenway’s Composting Facility at Vassar College, providing transportation for the public as well as village, town and county officials. Demonstrations of successful recycling and composting projects were observed.

SPECS says, “Don’t think garbage, think resources.” When recyclables go into the garbage, money is being thrown away – that’s the reality! SPECS can teach you how to have a greener lawn and garden with your own compost.

Landfills produce methane, which is 50 times as potent as carbon dioxide in warming the planet. If we compost and recycle, and make manufacturers responsible to take back what is not recyclable, we wouldn’t need landfills, a waste of land that pollutes our air, water and soil.

SPECS provides reusable shopping bags. Fish, birds, deer, and other animals are ingesting the plastic and being harmed by it. There’s just too much of it!

We are fortunate in Sullivan County to be just two hours from one of the world’s major metropolitan areas, and still be blessed with clean air and water, natural beauty, peace and quiet, and freedom from “sprawl.” These natural resources are too precious to threaten with unwise development. A healthy environment is linked to human health and quality of life.

We invite you to attend our monthly meetings. Let’s work together to keep our county a beautiful, safe and healthy place to live, work and raise our families. You can contact us at SPECS, P.O. Box 1515, Monticello, NY 12701
Happy Campers
Joseph Harding

Upon my arrival at DeBruce Environmental Camp, I was assigned bunk 36 in the all-boys cabin Big Indian. The other guys were in Sugar Loaf and Mongaup. The girls stayed in Beaverkill and Neversink. Sunday was mainly a get-to-know everyone day. The highlights of the week included a night hike involving a sleepover in a tent in the woods with a camp fire (the only negative was I only got one s'more); a 7.5 mile round-trip hike up Turkey Vulture Ridge to see a spectacular view of the mountains; and to top it all off, a full day of Hunter Safety Education courses resulting in a certificate that qualifies me to purchase a hunting license.

During all of these fun activities and the games we played we were exposed to flora and fauna identification plus the concepts of protection and preservation of the environment. As a result, I will be more aware (and encourage my grandparents and parents to be more aware also) of the 3R’s of environmental conservation—Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.

I want to thank the BKAA for the opportunity to not only learn about the environment but to also have tons of fun and make new friends from all five cabins.

Big Indian-My Home Away from Home for the Week

Nora Brusinski

Thank you for sending me to Camp Colby. I had a wonderful time. Despite having been to a different DEC camp last year, I was still able to learn new things.

One of my favorite things activities at Camp Colby was the night hike. After dark, we went for a walk in the woods, where we learned about the way our senses react to the darkness. It was amazing to see how much of a difference night vision makes.

Another thing I enjoyed about camp was swimming. Camp Colby is right next to a beautiful lake. Every morning, at 7 o’clock, I went for a swim. This meant I was eligible for the Polar Bear Club, which was for kids who swam every morning. I also went swimming during electives.

At the end of the week, I was chosen to be a potential vol. Vols, or volunteers, are sponsored by the camp to come back and help. Campers who are very enthusiastic and dedicated are chosen as potential vols.

Once again, I would like to thank the BKAA for giving me the chance to go to Camp Colby. The scenery was beautiful, the activities were fun, and I made lots of new friends. This has been a great experience.

Calendar Reminder
Tree & Shrub Walk with John Kenney
Sunday, October 2 at 10 a.m.
Walk through the woods and view the fall colors.
For information, contact John at 436-6046

Welcome to New Members
Warren Bergstrom - Galen Booth - Tracy Callard - Paul Comstock - Kay Crozier - Keith Davis
Stephen & Stefanie Dijanic - Mary Donnelly - Ed Duffy - Kelly Edkins - Malka Fraenkel - Jeffrey Furman
Donna Gaffigan - Lawrence Goodrich Jr. - Suzanne Gould - Bill Herrmann - Mary Kahn - Annie Lenihan
Peter McGinnis - Ruth McKeon - James McMahon - Thaddeus Mikelwicz - Nastassja Noell - Linda Renner
Alan & Sayada Rothschild - Jon Rubin & Gail Vachon - Elizabeth Schettke - George Siotos - Liz Soldano
Carol Springer - Marilyn Stern - Cody Stinehour - Jim & Donna Stout - Burt Thelander & Anne Prather
Francis & Maeve Ciccotosto Vogan
JACK ORTH MEMORIAL BKAA
$300 SCHOLARSHIP

Sullivan County Community College seeks a student who is:
1) a resident of Sullivan, Orange or Ulster County;
2) a full-time student at Sullivan County Community College
   pursuing an education in Science, Natural Science or Environmental Science;
3) an eligible incoming freshman or returning student.

The student must:
1) submit one letter of recommendation from a high school teacher or adviser,
   college faculty member or a community member familiar with student's interests and goals.
2) submit a 250-word typed essay on his/her ultimate scientific career goal and why
   OR
   present the details of an environmental project the student has
   completed or would like to complete.
3) File a completed
   SCCC Foundation Scholarship Application and mail with essay/project to:
   SCCC Financial Aid Office,
   112 College Rd.
   Loch Sheldrake, NY 12759

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF COMPLETED APPLICATION
HAS BEEN EXTENDED TO OCTOBER 15, 2011

NOTE: All matters relating to this scholarship must be referred to:
Cindy Bennedum Kashan at the SCCC Foundation Office:
845-434-5750, ext. 4377

tell a friend about the basha kill area association, Inc.

Have your friends fill out this coupon for membership or more information. P.O. Box 1121, Wurtsboro, NY 12790

Yes, I'm interested in the environment and wish to become a member of BKAA. Enclosed is:
   _____$10.00 for membership _____Other donation _____Please send more information.

Name__________________________________________Phone______________________________

Address________________________________________Email__________________________
   (for action alerts)
39th Annual Meeting by Paula Medley

Celebrate this year’s notable accomplishments at the organization’s annual meeting, to be held on Saturday October 15, 2011 at the Phillipsport Community Center, 657 Red Hill Road., in the hamlet of Phillipsport, located several miles south of Ellenville off Route 209. Registration, along with light refreshments, begins at 9:30 a.m. Call to order occurs promptly at 10 a.m. Membership dues may be paid during registration and only “solvent” members will receive a ballot.

We should have an informative, lively meeting with interactive discussion of the year’s highlights, election of officers and board members, presentation of the Elizabeth Pollock Great Blue Heron Award to Lorraine Haring (the BKAA’s most prestigious honor); as well as awards to Bob & Marilyn Fiore, longtime organizers of our annual cleanup luncheon; Hattie Grifo, BKAA alerts coordinator; and Phillipsport Community Center, an invaluable BKAA partner. We are also thrilled that Robert K. Anderberg, Esq., VP and General Counsel of Open Space Institute (OSI), will be our guest speaker. Bob will offer a power point presentation, highlighting OSI land acquisitions in the Shawangunk Ridge region, including properties in the Basha Kill area. As usual, the finale will be a drawing for intriguing door prizes (all donated).

Any questions? Email info@thebashakill.org or call me at 845-754-0743. See you on the 15th!

Next Year’s 40th Anniversary Celebration
See page 8 for advance information about next year’s 40th anniversary celebration!