YOUNG BIRDERS HELP WITH SAW-WHET OWL BANDING

See story on page 24
Photos by Truth Muller
MAIL BAG

January 15, 2013

Dear BKAA,
Your surprise package of two issues of the BKAA Guardian arrived on January 8th. Thank you.

I'm amazed at the sheer size of your newsletter and the huge number of people actively involved with the BKAA.

My friends in Stamford, NY, set up a Natural History Preserve on their farm & forest in 2010. It started with great enthusiasm but activity has dropped since. I will show them your newsletters as an example of how a non-profit should run. Hopefully, the BKAA will inspire and urge them on.

I plan to visit the Bash Kill come spring to botanize and look at O&W and D&H Canal history. It might be good to meet some of your members.

Sincerely,
Mike Kudish

March 25, 2013

Hi. Just a note to say that, in spite of the cold, Saturday's duck spotting was terrific. John is an amazing guide/birder and his generosity was much appreciated. We'd have never seen or appreciated the diversity that is there without his tireless curiosity and willingness to share his great knowledge.

Frances and Martin Nankin
MAIL BAG

STATE OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
Joseph J. Martens
Commissioner

STATE OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION AND
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
Rose Harvey
Commissioner

March 6, 2013

Mrs. Paula Medley
P.O. Box 1121
Wurtsboro, NY 12790

Dear Mrs. Medley:

It is our pleasure to appoint you to the Region 3 Open Space Advisory Committee, pursuant to Article 49 of the Environmental Conservation Law, Section 0209, to provide advice on the preparation and implementation of the State Open Space Conservation Plan (Plan).

Your efforts on the Regional Advisory Committee (Committee) are critical to the work of our agencies in developing and implementing the State's Open Space Conservation Program.

In 2013, we will begin an update of the Plan as required by law. The process will rely heavily on the work of the nine committees, which will work with staff from both agencies and the public to produce a draft for public hearings and comment in 2013. Following the public comment period, we hope to finalize the Plan and submit it to Governor Cuomo in 2014 for his approval.

In light of Tropical Storms Irene and Lee, and Superstorm Sandy, we are interested in hearing recommendations from the committees on how open space conservation programs can make the state better prepared and resilient to the effects of future storms and climate change.

Additionally, we are interested in hearing your recommendations on how open space conservation can help accomplish our priorities which will include:

- ensuring clean water, air and land for a healthy public and vibrant economy;
- greening New York’s economy;
- protecting natural resources and promoting outdoor recreation;
- increasing, deepening and improving the visit experience (connect land and people);
- creating a 21st century parks system that is aesthetically compelling, energy and operationally efficient, and built to last;
- working for environmental justice and community revitalization; and
- working to address climate change.

Since 1992, the Plan has served as the blueprint for the State’s Open Space Program, guiding the investment of land protection funds from the Environmental Protection Fund. The important work of the committees serves as the base for the state’s strong Open Space Conservation Program and its continued success will stem from the efforts of committee members such as you.

We look forward to your active participation in updating the Plan.

Sincerely,
Joseph J. Martens

Rose Harvey
SEVEN PEAKS AND COMMERCE PARK AT WURTSBORO AIRPORT
THEY’RE BACK!! by Paula Medley

On January 8, following a three year hiatus, Seven Peaks subdivision and Commerce Park were on the Mamakating Planning Board’s agenda as updates presented by developer Shalom Lamm.

Seven Peaks, now without a hotel-resort, is further along in the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process, currently readying a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), which entails written comments, but no hearing. The FEIS was authorized by the planning board three years ago despite vigorous lobbying by the BKAA and others for a supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) since the initial DEIS was woefully inadequate. Notably, the Town planning board, lead agency for this development’s environmental review, is responsible for the FEIS, which is actually written by project sponsors.

Commerce Park is formulating a DEIS, which involves a public hearing and written remarks.

Read my accompanying opinion piece from the Shawangunk Journal to familiarize yourself with both proposals. To understand BKAA opposition, examine the appended maps and our experts’ statements. The latter constitute the BKAA’s response to a two-part Journal interview with Shalom Lamm, not printed due to size constraints. Retain this material as it will facilitate your future advocacy.

Having our consultants reacquaint themselves with pertinent information, draft letters, and design maps incurred significant charges that are nonetheless essential to a proactive strategy. Recent engineering bills total $1614, while ecological fees amount to $760. These costs, along with several more still to be paid, will rapidly deplete our Legal Fund’s $5,000 balance. Likewise, upcoming experts’ analyses of Seven Peaks FEIS and Commerce Park’s DEIS will necessitate thousands of dollars and demand immediate legal account transfusions to continue successful petitioning of our cause. To contribute, please send checks to the BKAA, P.O. Box 1121, Wurtsboro, NY, 12790 and write “legal fund” in the memo line. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

After experiencing an extensive interlude from “heavy duty” lobbying, it is time to “hunker down” and recall the charge from our Mission Statement: “Since our founding in 1972, our mission has been to protect the Basha Kill wetlands and surrounding area from ecological degradation, to promote education and respect for the environment in general and to preserve the beauty of the area.” Questions? Call Paula Medley at (845)754-0743 or email info@thebashakill.org

PAULA’S LETTER TO THE SHAWANGUNK JOURNAL

Dear Editor,

In part two of his interview (January 31, 2013), Shalom Lamm states, “you do what you think is good and right and all you get is grief and lawsuits.” Maybe “good and right” for Mr. Lamm, but not for the environmentally sensitive Basha Kill wetlands and Shawangunk Ridge, which will be negatively impacted by his massive, “consumptive” Seven Peaks (even without the recently excised resort hotel) and Commerce Park at the Wurtsboro Airport projects.

Seven Peaks, consisting of forty-nine 8500 sq. ft. mansions (6 bedrooms, 7 + bathrooms) with future residential development proposed for another 27 acres, is sited on a 650 acre Shawangunk Mountain parcel that encompasses the ridgetop and lands extending down the eastern and western flanks, the latter directly upslope from the Basha Kill Wildlife Management Area (WMA). New York State’s 2006 Open Space Conservation Plan identifies safeguarding the southern “Gunks” in Sullivan and Orange counties as a priority for recreation, watershed protection, and biodiversity conservation, with the WMA designated for biodiversity preservation. Notably, two unnamed high gradient tributaries originate on the

(continued on page 7)
PAULA’S LETTER TO THE SHAWANGUNK JOURNAL (continued from page 5)

site and flow west down steep slopes to the WMA while two similarly categorized tributaries are the headwaters and

Commerce Park is situated on 140 acres adjacent to the Wurtsboro Airport and comprises 1.5 million sq. ft. of office,

A student of history, Mr. Lamm is undoubtedly familiar with earlier threats to the Shawangunks and Bashar Kill Wetlands

Sincerely, Paula Medley, President, Bashar Kill Area Association

ANDREW WILLINGHAM’S LETTER TO THE SHAWANGUNK JOURNAL

Our firm, David Clouser & Associates, has provided engineering consultation and representation for the Bashar Kill Area

February 11, 2013

With regard to Seven Peaks, we have received and reviewed the proposed changes to the project’s design. In the 1/24/

Nearly all of the substantial issues raised in our correspondence to the Planning Board during the DEIS review remain

(continued on page 8)
ANDREW WILLINGHAM’S LETTER TO THE SHAWANGUNK JOURNAL (continued)

Although the Commerce Park project remains in the early stages of the environmental review, it is clear that the proposed creation of 72 +/- acres of impervious buildings and parking directly adjacent to the Gumaeer Brook/Basher Kill and the Delaware & Hudson Canal has substantial potential impacts associated with stormwater runoff, wetlands, floodplains, sanitary sewer, and other potential impacts. Should Commerce Park proceed with the preparation of a DEIS, the assessment and mitigation of these impacts will be a difficult task, given the massive scale and location of the development.

Seven Peaks and Commerce Park remain projects with a high potential for adverse impacts, despite the recent declarations made by the Developer. We look forward to our continued review of these important projects on behalf of the BKA.

Andrew Willingham, David Clouser & Associates

KATHERINE BEINKAFNER’S LETTER TO THE SHAWANGUNK JOURNAL

March 3, 2013

As a hydrogeologic consultant for the Basha Kill Area Association, Mid-Hudson Geosciences continues to review the Seven Peaks and Commerce Park projects proposed by Mr. Shalom Lamm in the Town of Mamakating. Many residents of Sullivan, Orange, and Ulster Counties appreciate the rural natural environment of the Basha Kill and Shawangunk Ridge. As proposed, neither project shows a level of sensitivity or compatibility with the natural surroundings or the “gorgeously scenic setting” described by Mr. Lamm.

As stated in our 2009 review of the environmental impact and hydrologic reports for Seven Peaks, water supply for the 49 building lots is a serious problem. Consider that the sub-division on a ridge is an island in the sky, the only source of water comes from precipitation (rain fall and snow melt on the ridge). There is no source of groundwater flow upward under the ridge or downward from higher ground. If there is a drought, there will be no recharge of groundwater. In 2009 drilling and testing of 7 wells was reported. Another well has been drilled for which no information is provided except the location. A revised pumping test protocol proposes to test only two wells (W-3 and W-8) which are less than 500 feet apart. Given that three of the first seven wells had less than 2 gallons per minute yield (state and county minimum), testing two wells next to each other will not show sufficient water for 49 homes on 650 acres.

Commerce Park at Wurtsboro Airport is designed with about 80 percent of the land covered with impermeable surfaces (buildings and parking lots) with the remaining area predominantly floodplain, floodway and wetlands. Although Mr. Lamm referred to the project as the “confluence of Adam Smith and public policy,” he has to deal with the reality that it is located at the confluence of Gumaeer Brook, the former Delaware and Hudson Canal, and a large NYSDEC-regulated wetland; all draining south into the Bashakill Wildlife Management Area. Such extensive commercial development on low land is ripe for flooding as an impact of climate change.

Currently, Commerce Park is proposed as four warehouse buildings with square footage ranging from 20,000 to 1.26 million square feet. Regarding storage and transport of commercial goods in the warehousing areas, the nature of such materials is critical to the safety of the community. Due to the proximity to the airport and extensive surface water resources identified above, hazardous materials, which could spill or vaporize, will pose potential environmental impacts. Materials with the following hazardous characteristics should not be stored or transported in the warehousing operations: chemical reactivity, explosivity, corrosivity, volatility, flammability, radioactivity, oxidation potential, acidity, spillage of liquids (solvents, cleaning products, and fuels). If any such materials are involved, mitigation measures should be identified and described in a site-specific contingency plan. The public and emergency service providers have the right to know locations, quantities, and characteristics of hazardous substances in compliance with the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA) of 1986.

(continued on page 9)
KATHERINE BEINKAFNER’S LETTER TO THE SHAWANGUNK JOURNAL (continued)

Prior to subdivision and development, each of the four water supply wells should be drilled. Pumping tests should be conducted (for 24 hours of pumping or time required by Sullivan County). During testing, in all wells drawdown and recovery water levels should be recorded during each test to observe well interference and aquifer connectivity. Although the project’s water requirements are modest and a bountiful unconsolidated aquifer seems to be located beneath the site, drilling all four wells and documenting their yield in gallons per minute is prudent. If one of the wells is completed in clay or sulfur water, selecting a new well location and drilling another well will be easier before the lots are subdivided and alternative areas for wells, septic fields, and reserve fields are limited. Also proven yield (gallons per minute) for each well may be important for future use and site activities. All pumping test information shall be included in the groundwater availability report. Seasonal high and low water tables should be recorded in all wells for use in storm water design and septic design due to proximity to the former canal, brook, and wetlands.

Mother Nature is a force to be reckoned with and the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process is one method to assure that flooding or drought disasters are unlikely to occur once a project is developed. I know Mr. Lamm would like “government to keep their hands off,” but in these cases, the scientific and engineering reviews are for everyone’s protection.

Katherine Beinkafner, Ph.D., Mid-Hudson Geosciences

SPIDER BARBOUR’S LETTER TO THE SHAWANGUNK JOURNAL

March 28, 2013

For over a decade I have provided environmental science consultation for the Bash Kill Area Association (BKAA) regarding projects in Mamakating, including the Yukiguni Mushroom Plant and the Seven Peaks project, as part of the Town’s environmental review. Seven Peaks is back in the news because its developer, Shalom Lamm, has been touting its virtues in person and in print. Yet hardly any hard information has been made public about the project’s reanimation. The Shawangunk Journal’s recent coverage has consisted of articles about and interviews with Mr. Lamm, and letters to the editor in response.

BKAA provided me with a letter from Seven Peaks engineer Thomas Reilly to the Mamakating Town Planning Board, and a revised map of project changes that “eliminate future potential impacts.” In his 1/24/13 Journal interview, Mr. Lamm claims these changes have “dramatically shrunk the size” of the project. What are these changes? First the hotel is dropped from the plan. But the hotel is no longer relevant to review. Its impacts were not assessed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Also, reserving the hotel and additional single-family housing amounts to segmentation, illegal for a project of this scale.

As Andy Willingham (David Clouser & Associates) pointed out in his Journal letter of 2/14/2013, the hotel was not buildable to begin with because of impacts to sewer and water, emergency services access, and attendant traffic problems. Willingham also reminds that contrary to DEC instruction, the new plan does not reduce the number of lots. 49 lots puts the project just under 50, at which stricter standards kick in. This is no accident.

What do the maps reveal? The Reilly memo claims that “relocation of Lot 29” adds green space and “eliminates impacts on Barrens Buckmoth habitat,” and “relocation of Lots 25 and 30” increases green space around wetlands. True or false? Both, it seems. The maps of the old plan and new plan are so mismatched that even Mr. Reilly’s memo gets them wrong. All the lots have been renumbered, so that no lot numbers match from one map to the other.

(continued on page 10)
SPIDER BARBOUR’S LETTER TO THE SHAWANGUNK JOURNAL (continued)

But it really doesn't matter. The relocated lots are as much a threat as before, but just to different sensitive natural areas, including wetlands and critical habitat for rare, threatened and endangered species. The genuinely new lots would have greater impacts, and also some old lots, newly enlarged with longer driveways. Additionally, the realigned two-way access drive will probably not accommodate emergency services. It is still too steep, with a nearly 30-degree sharp turn just below its junction with the relocated main road. Its larger footprint will increase impacts on critical natural resources.

The new plan will not mitigate impacts identified by NYSDEC or by me in my previous comments to BKAA and DEC. Unique wetlands and high-quality rare upland habitats will suffer no less than under the first plan. Rare, Threatened and Endangered species found on the site are just as likely to decline or die out, common species too. The new plan is worse, not better.

In his 2/7/13 letter to the journal Mr. Lamm lauds the social benefits of capitalism. The benefits he selectively mentions are undeniable. But the benefits of Seven Peaks accrue only to its potential residents, a moneyed elite representing over 1% of the U.S. citizenry, but not much more. The rest of us, not 99% but pretty close, are given a tiny strip of trail hanging on a cliff edge, set off from the houses of the holy, the social benefit as vacuous as the environmental benefit. As for the "trail" there is no plan, no connection, no walkable path – beam us across, Scotty. The full, rich experience of the ridge, now available for 100% of us, should not become an increasingly degraded environment for the few that can only get worse over time.

Seven Peaks will, for once and forever, sever the spine of the Shawangunk Ridge, a globally precious ecosystem. The corridor, upon which all life relies in that lovely, lofty world, will be bashed and broken. We can't let that happen. Let's keep the Ridge a wonderful place to visit for everyone, not just a gated, degraded place to live for a very few.

Spider Barbour, Ecological Consultant

UPDATE ON YUKIGUNI MAITAKE by Paula Medley

Yukiguni Maitake (YM) still has not received a building permit from the Town of Mamakating Building Department for its 44,000 sq. ft. pilot plant, though an independent consultant hired by the Town at YM’s expense has reviewed the detailed construction drawings (50+ pages) accompanying the application. If you recall, the BKAA urged the Town to commission an independent evaluation. Before obtaining this permit, the company must pay any outstanding costs remaining after ten years before municipal boards for an environmental review, site plan and special use permit approvals, supplemental site plan approvals, as well as variances.

Unfortunately, the exterior facade, originally brick, has “morphed” into metal sheets sprayed with a concrete-like coating. Though this exterior conflicts with Town Design Guidelines, the Town Planning Board was able to approve the metal exteriors in 2012, since the Design Guidelines constitute recommendations, not mandates, a critical flaw in Town policy.

Members must be prepared for possible groundbreaking of YM’s pilot plant this year but likewise must remember that their dogged efforts substantially mitigated the factory’s impacts.
PHOTO OPS!

Charles and Karen Harris, our newly trained water testers.

Eileen Lake, water-testing at Haven Road site.

Bob Justus addresses crowd at Treekeeper meeting.

Tree pruning Sullivan Street Wurtsboro March 2, 2013 with NYS DEC Urban Forester George Profous

Photographer Credits:
LB  Linda Lou Bartle
JG  Janet Gula
UPDATE ON CASINOS by Dave Colavito

At this writing, the state legislature’s vote on second passage of Governor Cuomo’s proposed amendment to the state constitution to permit non-Indian casinos in the state is anticipated to be imminent. Not surprising, wannabe casino developers, current racino owners, state legislators supporting casinos for their districts, among others, are all vying for a piece of the casino pie.

Mr. Cuomo contends he doesn’t want the process to be driven by politics, insisting that casino decisions be made by the 7 members of his newly constituted state gaming commission, 5 of whom have been appointed by him. And more recently we’re told he also wants a casino in Niagara Falls. So apparently he believes the only way to de-politicize the process is to keep all politicians, except him, out of it.

Yet to date there’s been no impact assessment – environmental, social, or otherwise – of the Governor’s proposal and no indication Albany law makers will conduct one. The first time around law makers voted to approve the proposal without any information on where these casinos will be located, and the same is assured to occur the second time – so it’s easy to avoid an environmental assessment when no one knows where these projects will be.

Socially, Mr. Cuomo and much of the legislature continue to ignore the well established relationship of more gambling opportunities leading to more people with gambling disorders – and the responsibility state policy has in promoting those disorders. It’s as though the Assembly’s recent 12/20/12 hearing within the Committee on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, PROGRAMS FOR THE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF PROBLEM GAMBLING, was dealing with problems from a parallel universe.

Testimony from expert witnesses was sobering: an estimated 1 million New Yorkers already exhibiting gambling disorders, yet only 5,000 receiving some form of treatment; no state prevention program; 41 of 62 counties without any state treatment program; $2.1 million in state funds to address gambling disorders last year, while Lottery spends $60 million annually in advertising; the list goes on.

Yet if second passage does occur, Mr. Cuomo will then appeal to voters for our support in the subsequent referendum required on the question of whether we support amending the state constitution to permit seven non-Indian casinos. But how are we to make an informed decision if he isn’t leveling with us on costs and who he expects to pay for them, or if the legislature remains unreceptive to holding hearings to explore the impact of the Governor’s proposal? If you think you should be given the full story before being asked to vote on changing your state constitution, well, you know what to do.

UPDATE ON GAS DRILLING by Dave Colavito

New York State Department of Health Commissioner, Dr. Nirav Shahv, requested additional time to complete the health impact assessment of High Volume Slickwater Hydraulic Fracturing (fracking) requested of him by DEC Commission Joe Martens. The initial deadline for the study, November of last year, came and went and was followed in February with another announcement by Dr. Shahv that still more time was needed for his team to complete their work. Dr. Shahv correctly indicated the time to assess the potential for human health impacts from fracking is before, not after, the process is permitted in the state.

Because of administrative deadlines established under state law, the effect of that additional time now requires DEC to conduct a second round of public comment and review in order to establish fracking regulations. The belatedly reasoned approach of Commissioner Martens to require the health impact assessment before either ratifying the state’s regulations or its environmental impact statement, fondly referred to as the sGEIS, was turned on its head when he later indicated delay of the regulations didn’t preclude the state from issuing permits to frack. Fracking without regulations? Imagine that.

However, more recently it’s been reported Governor Cuomo is holding off further on a fracking decision for perhaps as long as a year or more – not a surprise for cynics, given the time-line or his 2014 reelection campaign. It’s believed the Geisinger Health System of Pennsylvania will conduct what some think would be the most comprehensive assessment of health impacts from gas drilling, though it’s expected Geisinger will focus on its patient data base in Pennsylvania. To what extent information gleaned from such a study would be applicable to New York is something not yet known.
UPDATE ON BRIM RECYCLING  by Burt Thelander

In October our advocacy group Concerned Cuddebackville Citizens (CCC) described our recent efforts to reduce the negative impact of BRIM Recycling, a junkyard at Routes 209 and 211 in Cuddebackville in the Town of Deerpark. The junkyard property is close to the Basher Kill and across Route 211 from an Orange County Land Trust preserve.

We have advocated for the rigorous enforcement of Deerpark zoning laws, the NYS DEC inspection and enforcement of environmental regulations, and applicable Federal environmental regulations. Orange County property is also being encroached upon by the business.

At a September 5 meeting, the Deerpark Town Board (TB) reviewed evidence presented by the town engineer about continuing violations of zoning laws. The CCC and our attorney also presented written testimony about these violations, with pictures taken in the late summer. The TB decided to grant a 30-day extension to BRIM before deciding to approve the license renewal. The TB discussed options to not approve the license renewal, and the potential impact that decision would have upon the business. CCC members were pleasantly surprised that the town engineer and TB were transparently discussing the overt violations and the potential not to approve the renewal.

At the October 1 TB meeting, the town engineer again described continuing violations of the junkyard zoning law (acceptable fencing and encroachment outside the site plan). Significantly, during the meeting the TB passed Resolution #35-2012 that documented BRIM’s failure to comply with town directives to remove the violations, and directed the town attorney to seek injunctive relief to gain compliance. The CCC was again pleasantly surprised that the TB was taking assertive actions.

During the November 5 TB meeting review, the town engineer stated, “they are in compliance except for the screening,” and he recommended they be given a license until March 31. Despite clear evidence that BRIM was not in compliance, the TB voted to approve the renewal until March 31, 2013. (The junkyard license renewal period in Deerpark extends from April 1 to the following March 31.) There was no discussion regarding the injunctive relief the Town Attorney was directed to pursue. The CCC was very disappointed with the absence of rigorous follow up to the October resolution, and the decision to approve the renewal.

In December the CCC decided to file a CPLR Article 78 petition with the NYS Supreme Court for injunctive relief. Four Cuddebackville residents who have legal standing, who live near BRIM, signed the petition. The defendants are the Deerpark TB, BRIM Recyclers, Inc., Callanan Industries, William Burnett a/k/a W. Bradley Burnett, Burnett Trucking Inc. and Burnett Enterprises, Inc. The petition includes the following:

- The Zoning Code contains various provisions regulating the operation of vehicle junkyards, and these provisions have been in full force and effect at all times relevant to this proceeding/action.
- Deerpark residents have complained to the Town of Deerpark for years regarding zoning violations at the BRIM junkyard
- In the spring of 2011, during its consideration of the BRIM renewal application, the Town Board was provided with written and specific notice of the ongoing violations at the BRIM site.

Notwithstanding the aforesaid notice, the Board voted to renew the BRIM junkyard license for another year.

The petition also describes the following and mentions the evidence presented to the TB during 2012 regarding the substantial Zoning Law violations:

- Operation in areas outside the approved site plan. Such operation not only violates the site plan, but constitutes an unauthorized expansion in violation of Section 5.15 (14) of the Zoning Code.
  - Inadequate fencing in violation of Section 5.15 (13) (d) & (e).
  - Illegal use as a dumping area for refuse in violation of Section 5.15 (12) (d) in areas of expansion beyond the approved site plan.
  - Improper storage of waste products in violation of Section 5.15 (12) (g) in areas of expansion beyond the approved site plan.
  - Runoff endangering downslope federal and state protected wetlands.
  - Lack of plans addressing effectiveness of screening, visibility from the highway, as well as health, safety and aesthetic concerns, in violation of Section 5.15 (13) (f) (2).

The petition asks for a judgment reversing, annulling and setting aside the Town Board’s resolution dated November 5, 2012 renewing the automobile junkyard license of BRIM.

(continued on page 14)
UPDATE ON BRIM RECYCLING (continued)

Recyclers, Inc. We learned in the second week of March that BRIM had responded to the lawsuit. The CCC will plan our response with our attorney.

We also asked Senator Gillibrand to request investigation of pollution of state and federally designated wetlands by BRIM. Since October we have asked the Senator’s office to forward the complaint to the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). We are disappointed that we do not have evidence the request has been forwarded. We will continue to advocate with her office to have the request forwarded, and investigated rigorously by the EPA.

We also have not been successful determining the results of the NYS DEC investigation in spring/summer 2012. CCC members contacted the Deeppark Town Justice staff in the fall 2012 to find out when the complaints were reviewed, and what outcome/penalty was established. In late 2012 the administrative staff stated there was no record of the hearing. A DEC staff person stated tickets with recommendations were issued to BRIM Recycling, but they did not result in a court hearing. During the November meeting, TB members asked what was occurring between BRIM and the DEC. The town engineer stated they “had an issue with the stacking and that was taken care of and he thinks they are now in compliance with the DEC.” (from TB minutes). The absence of evidence regarding the results of EPA requested and DEC actual investigations has been frustrating and disappointing.

Our group will continue to be persistent, and advocate for the rigorous enforcement of town, state, and federal laws and regulations to protect our community. If anyone has questions or suggestions as to how we could be more effective, please contact me at bthelander@hvc.rr.com or 845-754-8876. Thanks for your interest and support!

SULLIVAN RENAISSANCE 2013 ANNUAL CONFERENCE by Jon Reed

Representing Wurtsboro Renaissance at this conference, I noted that Sullivan Renaissance kicked off its 2013 season with great style and substance. The Cablevision building main floor was arranged with food tables and a coffee/ juice bar, along with exhibits highlighting local gardening and landscaping ventures. Flowers were everywhere! In an adjoining space, nonprofits like the BKAA, Trailkeepers, and Catskill Mountainkeeper provided information. Upstairs was a market featuring Sullivan County products like Catskill Distillery Company/Dancing Cat Saloon, Heirloom Botanicals, and Brandenburg Pastry Bakery.

The event’s formal program commenced with the Sullivan First Achievement Awards presented to businesses: The Sullivan Hotel, Monticello Farm Home & Garden, Thunder 102, and Kohl’s Cares Associates in Action. To community organizations: Callicoon Business Association, and Jim Steinberg & the Monticello DPW. To youth: Johns Evans Superintendent, Roscoe Central School District. And individuals: Etta Barbanti of Liberty and Nancy Levine of Swan Lake.

The Keynote address was presented by Dr. Peter Tarlow, who gave a typically enthusiastic talk about the power of individuals who volunteer to make positive changes in their communities. There were two, hour-long workshop sessions. In the first one I selected “Trees in your Landscape,” Janet Gula and George Profous were in charge and gave good reasons that trees play an important role in the community. Shade, screening, beautification, and separation were discussed as potential uses. Of course, the upkeep of the trees was stressed as well.

Topics for the other workshops were: “Youth and Their role in Communities,” “Renaissance Collection of Plants and Their Use;” “Recruitment, Training, Placement and Retention of Youth in Your Community.” Lastly, a “Sullivan Renaissance Salon” was offered for one-to-one conversations with Renaissance staff regarding required paperwork. This was also offered in the second round of workshops.

In the second workshop sessions, I selected “Social Media,” which was interesting but made me realize how much I do not know about the various means of electronic communication. Another session offered the opportunity to meet and talk with Dr. Tarlow. “Showing of Flowers” discussed the importance of color in effectively providing variety in a community. Butterflies, bees, and bugs were the topic of another workshop — how to attract and use them was discussed.

Closing remarks were made after door prizes were awarded and we all went home after a busy and productive day.
RETURN OF THE ACCIDENTAL ACTIVIST PART V by Catherine Abate

(Neighbors learned of a Jeep Obstacle Course proposed for the middle of their residential neighborhood — 68 acres at the corner of Tempaloni, Anderson & Otens Roads in the Town of Wawarsing — and stood together to fight it.)

At the close of the last chapter, our little group of fighters was hanging in and hanging on, trying to rally the town management to support us against the inappropriate obstacle course. We reached out to the town Supervisor and board to amend the zoning code to exclude the use under Rural Residential Zoning, but they declined.

We requested that the planning board re-open the public hearing since the site plan had changed substantially in its 10-month review and we had been denied public comment. We pointed out the bogus measurement of the trails on the applicant’s site map which kept the project under one acre of disturbance. By measuring only the width of the tire ruts, 20% of the overall trail width, the applicant avoided a DEC stormwater review. Nonetheless, the planning board’s engineering firm approved the site plan, paving the way for an affirmative vote on the negative declaration on the environmental impact statement.

Now we knew we were up the Bashakill without a paddle. Basically, we just had to wait for the planning board to vote the project through at the next meeting. As the team leader, I started making individual calls to my fellow fighters explaining that we could bring an Article 78 lawsuit against the town for planning board procedural malfeasance. At the top of the list was the fact that the site plan had changed substantially without public input. I polled our group to find out if we had the will, and the deep pockets, to bring suit. I also wanted to fortify them against the demoralizing effect of sitting once again on metal folding chairs in the overheated, fluorescent-lit town hall courtroom while the planning board rendered a decision against us.

With quixotic courage, we sat stone-faced while the planning board voted to approve the project. Our group quickly retired to an empty office space. Although we felt like we’d been punched in the stomach, we rallied and discussed our plan to have our crack attorney, Alex Smith, begin casework immediately. He would need all our documentation in order to file the suit by the 30-day deadline. After much hunting and gathering of materials and inspired work on Smith’s behalf, the petition was completed and served on the last possible day! Now the lawyers for the applicant and planning board would file memoranda arguing the case before finally submitting it to a New York State judge for a ruling.

NEXT: Drumroll, please! What will the judge decide?

RURAL COMMUNITY COALITION by Christine Saward

It was decided at the last meeting that the RCC should institute a membership fee, the amount of which has not yet been finalized. This fee would go a long way toward day-to-day expenses, as well as chipping away at their legal fees. They would still have to hold many fundraising events to cover the lion’s share of the attorney’s fees. They do not, however, want to leave out of the Coalition anyone who cannot afford such a fee, and they will work with you.

The Polish/Tallix Foundry in Newburgh has been allowing the RCC to come in for tours as a fundraiser. The cost is $25 and every penny goes to the RCC!! Those who went the last time were blown away — and you can be too! Check the website for the next tour date.

The Town of Mamakating board has initiated two meetings to discuss the Planned Office Zone, April 3 and 20. The board said it would post the information on its website. No update on the legal battle was available.

CATSKILL REGION LEGISLATIVE ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION
by Marcia Briggs Wallace

I represented the BKAA at a meeting discussing Catskill Region tourism, which was held on March 14 at the Sullivan Hotel in Rock Hill. Around 70 people attended. The event was organized and hosted by the Sullivan County Visitors Association (SCVA), partnering with the New York State Hospitality and Tourism Association (NYSH&TA), as well as the Catskill Association for Tourism (CATS). The latter organization is responsible for promoting tourism in the four counties encompassing the Catskills—Delaware, Greene, Sullivan, and Ulster. Also listed as sponsors in the printed program prepared for the meeting were: Delaware County Catskills Chamber of Commerce; Great Northern Catskills of Greene County; Sullivan County/the Catskills; and ulstercountyalive.com.

The event was billed by the SCVA as an “opportunity for our tourism industry to educate our state and local legislators.” Carefully and thoughtfully organized in a handsome and commodious venue, it was unfortunate that state legislators were unable to attend. As Nancy Sykes, Executive Assistant, NYSH&TA, explained to me after the meeting, they were detained in Albany by Governor Cuomo for budget negotiations. Ms. Sykes also explained that locations for gatherings such as this one rotated among the four Catskill Region counties, perhaps accounting for the absence of local legislators from Delaware, Greene, and Ulster. Three Sullivan County legislators did attend—Scott Samuelson, Chairman of the Sullivan County Legislature, along with Ira Steingart and Kitty Vetter. (All three spoke to the assembly.)

While the goal of educating legislators on tourism in the Catskill Region could not have been realized with only three of them present, the event certainly served up an impressive amount of information, while considering a wide range of relevant issues. They included: tourism funding; keeping NY open for business; concerns over an increase of the minimum wage and an extension of the school year calendar in the summer; the state-mandated Regional Economic Development Councils; property tax relief (aiding small tourism businesses); agricultural tourism; ecotourism; and finally, gaming and casinos.

At the helm, so to speak, were the scheduled speakers, who addressed the assembly after welcoming remarks by Mr. Samuelson. They were: Mark Dorr, Vice President of Operations and Member Relations, NYSH&TA; Rick Remsnyder, Regional President of CATS and Director, Ulster County Tourism; Mary Beth Silano, Executive Director, Delaware County Chamber of Commerce; Warren Hart, Director, Greene County Economic Development & Tourism; and Roberta Lockwood, President & CEO, SCVA.

Of particular interest to BKAA members was the strong support for casinos in New York State that was voiced at the meeting, focusing especially on the development of the Nevele in Ulster County. This support notwithstanding, a few members of the audience spoke up during a brief “open forum” after the scheduled speakers concluded their remarks, advocating, as one of them put it, “the value of the blue and the green in our region” and the crucial importance of development from an ecologically sustainable viewpoint. Another informed and eloquent participant spoke to the harm that casinos do to the communities where they are located.

The Regional Economic Development Councils also garnered considerable attention. Ms. Vetter spoke quite passionately about the fact that, at present, the four Catskill Region counties are split up, with Sullivan and Ulster in one Development Council, and Delaware and Greene in another. This means that, counterproductively, they are competing with each other for state funding of tourism. She called for a renewed sense of “Catskill identity” like that of the Adirondacks, for example. And in a parallel initiative, she called upon each of the legislatures of the four Catskill counties to examine the possibility of joining together in a Regional Development Council of their own.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS
Wilma Amthor • Lisa Cavanaugh • Janet A. Rosenthal Davis
Patricia Hancock • Margaret Heath • Mary Mancuso • Ann Marie Nitti • Barbara Palinkas
Ashley Peters • Sam Romano • William Streeter

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NONPROFIT LEADERSHIP SUMMIT 2013 by Jackie Broder

The third annual Nonprofit Leadership Summit was held on Wednesday, March 6, at Bethel Woods Center for the Arts. I was honored to represent the BKAA, as I have the two previous years. The day started off with brief comments from the Steering Committee Co-Chairs, Amanda Langseder, Linda Hartley, and Karen VanHouten Minogue, reminding us that the original purpose of the summit was to bring nonprofit organizations together. In three short years we have met, shared ideas, collaborated, and formed alliances.

Each year, the format of the summits has changed slightly, keeping things fresh and interesting. This year the day was broken up into various mini-sessions with keynote speakers in the morning and during lunch. The first keynote speaker was Mr. Doug Sauer, CEO, New York Council of Nonprofits (NYCON), who spoke on “Beyond Collaboration.” He stated that NFPSs (not-for-profits) used to be change agents and now they’ve become institutionalized at times. He suggested staying focused on the mission in order not only to survive but to grow. I have to admit, this first speaker made me leery of what was to come, as these summits have tended to cater more toward the larger NFPS like the hospitals, and we are still, very clearly, an organization for change.

The next sessions I attended put me more at ease, however, as they both touched on ideas I could pull that would be useful to the BKAA. The session entitled “Social Media Myths: If You Build It, They Won’t Come” was given by Valerie Venezia, Vice President of Membership Marketing for NYCON. She was a social media “whiz!” She defined social media, gave guidelines to determine if social media are right for the organization, and how to define and measure success.

The session entitled “Turning Prospects Into Friends” was given by Linda Hartley of Hartley Consulting, Inc. She focused on how to engage prospects in your organization, how to build the case for support, and how to get to “yes, count me in.”

A lovely lunch was enjoyed while listening to keynote speaker Greg Berman, Executive Director for Center for Court Innovation. His organization seeks to reduce crime, aid victims, strengthen neighborhoods, and enhance public confidence in the justice system. He spoke on “Lessons from the Front Lines of Innovation.” He highlighted how it made a significant change (and met every one of its goals) in a very impoverished section of Brooklyn, NY that had the highest crime rate in the country. But he not only spoke of the successes, he spoke of the failures, and how “actively embracing failure is a stepping stone to success.” He listed the four drivers of failure and spoke of how analyzing our failures helps us learn from them in order to succeed.

Something new in the summit this year was the Innovation Award Competition, open to all NFPS. This award recognizes a NFPS that has come up with an innovative way to achieve its mission. The three finalists gave presentations, judges asked questions, and the winner was announced at the end of the day.

The first winner of the award was the Community Reporting Alliance, a youth-run community newspaper, developed in conjunction with the Livingston Manor Free Library. This paper was created to fill the void when both the community newspaper and school newspaper closed due to funding loss. In the process of reporting on the community, it has united the community. Congratulations to all involved!

The last session of the day was presented by Judy Douglas, Director of Regional Volunteerism for Volunteer Center of United Way. She spoke on how to recruit skills-based volunteers. She focused on the six steps to successful recruitment, identifying who are skilled-based volunteers, and understanding the motivation of this type of volunteer.

The day ended with a play on speed dating. There was a speed networking session where participants had 30 seconds to introduce their organizations to see if there was collaborating potential and to exchange business cards. It was a very upbeat way to end the day and plant motivational seeds to continue collaboration until we meet again next year.

Contact the BKAA: Paula Medley
845-754-0743, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
BKAA email address: info@thebashakill.org
BKAA website is: www.thebashakill.org
“LOOK WHERE WE LIVE” by Kathy Scullion
(Reprinted with permission from Sullivan County Audubon Society.)

“Look Where We Live!” is the tagline of an exciting new resource for Sullivan County residents and visitors. Trailkeeper (www.trailkeeper.org) is an ambitious project that endeavors to be “your one-source outlet for hiking trails and public lands in Sullivan County,” and is well on its way to achieving this goal. The creation of the Trailkeeper has certainly been a group effort, relying on grant funding from the Upper Delaware Council and Sullivan Renaissance, and a strong partnership of organizations including the Delaware Highlands Conservancy, the Sullivan County Division of Planning and Environmental Management, the Sullivan County Visitors Association, Morgan Outdoors, the New York/New Jersey Trail Conference, and the National Park Service.

The Trailkeeper website lists and describes the trails of Sullivan County, as well as our beautiful county, state, and national parks. Each trail and park’s location is pinpointed on a Google map. When you click on the link for a specific trail or park, a close-up map of the location appears, along with detailed directions to parking areas and trailheads. For trails, the length and difficulty are noted, and symbols show if other activities, like snowshoeing, biking, horseback riding, or camping, are allowed. For parks, fees, facilities, and activities -- like boating and swimming -- are detailed. It is really easy to choose a hike or activity that suits your interests or ability.

The website also gives tips to prepare for your hike, including gear recommendations and things you should carry and do to stay safe. And what do you do when you finish your hike and you need more than GORP in your belly? Trailkeeper has you covered - just click on “Things Nearby” at the end of each hike’s description for a list of local restaurants. “Things Nearby” also lists lodging, shopping, and other attractions to further enhance your experience.

Trailkeeper is an ever-evolving and expanding work in progress. The site’s developers used GIS (Geographic Information Systems) data provided by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, the National Park Service and the NY-NJ Trail Conference to create the framework of the site. All of the other information was compiled or contributed by hikers, volunteers, and member organizations, like the BKAA, whose 2013 Calendar of Events is included. The site’s maintainers are counting on its users to comment on trail conditions, submit photos, identify discrepancies, and even to suggest new trails. Sullivan County Audubon Society is exploring ways to contribute information to the site on where and how to observe birds and other wildlife.

So, take some time to explore the Trailkeeper website, and then, more importantly, take some time to explore where we are so fortunate to live.

GARDEN TOUR COMES TO BLOOMINGBURG by Bob Justus
(Mr. Justus is a Town of Mamakating Councilman)

I am proud to report the 2013 Sullivan Arc Garden Tour will be held in and around Bloomingburg this year. Sullivan Renaissance and Sullivan Arc enthusiastically accepted my suggestions for a number of wonderful private gardens in the area, like those of BKAA members Ron and Carol Weathers. The gardens on the tour are not only beautiful but are unique and varied.

The Wurtsboro Board of Trade will be involved by promoting local eateries and shopping around town. The Wurtsboro Arts Alliance will feature botanicals for their June show. The BKAA will have information available as well.

A tour bus to the gardens is available for hassle-free convenience and comfort, or a map is offered for the self drive tour. For more information or tickets ($40 for the bus or $25 for self-drive and include a garden tour reception) visit online www.sullivanarc.org or call 845-796-1350 extension 1050. Proceeds benefit Sullivan Arc, a non-profit organization and its programs for people with developmental disabilities.
JOHN WINKLER MEMORIAL WATER TESTING UPDATE by Linda Lou Bartle

Fall and winter test results look good. We had a few incidents, at three locations, of not being able to test due to a dried-out stream or ice that was too thick. We had pleasant weather on most days, and had some pleasant surprises also. Testing twice a month for 6 months, we spotted over 75 people using the Bash Kill (BK) for deer hunting, duck hunting, fishing, birding and running. Remember, this is only 4 hrs a month, a small window on who is using the BK on a monthly basis.

We encountered a turtle on our very first outing and in mid-winter saw a fox who decided the best way to the other side of the BK was right over the ice. The photographers on Haven Road had lots of subjects. The winter waterfowl took their places with our usual back yard bird assortments, showing off on the days we came to test, after storms or big snowstorms.

Cardinals seemed to take the place of eagles for a little while and at one time what seemed like 100 chickadees landed in one site as if to warn us of the entrails of a deer that had been left behind by hunters. The end of the winter season brought the geese, seagulls, ring neck ducks and eagles, ours and a few extra. We saw three eagles one morning and then our own BK eagle in his or her favorite tree near the boat launch minutes later. I called to confirm with John Haas, and yes, we had several three-year-olds that had been hanging around.

Now for the guts of our testing results:

PH levels were all in between 6.00 and 8.34 with most hovering around 7.50. This is excellent for fresh water streams. The Haven Road site was lower with a range from 6.25 to 7.06. The water does not move in this area making this a great PH level for fall and winter readings.

Dissolved Oxygen Range was great overall, Measured in parts per million (PPM). Our numbers came in very high, over 10.0 most all the time. A measurement below 5.00 PPM would be an alert. Our fall-winter numbers are reaching 15.63 PPM and not one site below 8.00 PPM.

Conductivity - Spc usku conductivity for the chemists in the audience, was varied. Not being a chemist I consulted with several people, who included our equipment tech support team at YSI and Mr. Ed Heilig at The Orange County Water Authority in Goshen NY. Again, our numbers look great but the measurements in this parameter have a fluctuation that could seem alarming. They are not, with measurements between 71.6 - 385.7 and most in the 120.0 range. I was told, “This is very fresh water”. We would be having issues with numbers over 800.0.

I like simplicity, and will be looking to transfer our data into an easier-to-use Excel system. It will take the data manager system that we currently utilize and allow for some easy-to-read charts for everyone.

It was great to have all the additional information we logged on our water testing monitor pages. Every time I spoke to experts about water testing data, they asked for additional information, and I had it! That was awesome! Thanks to our testing volunteers, we are making great strides in developing the standards for the JWM water testing program! [See photos on page 11]

SUNSHINE, SNOW & STICKY SKIS by Michael Medley

Sunday February 10 was ushered in with beautiful blue skies and chilly temperatures. The previous Friday night, 10 inches of snow fell, creating perfect conditions for cross-country skiing.

Starting at Haven Road, five of us headed out on the D&H Canal towpath. A few fallen trees had to be negotiated, and then a left turn (at the old cemetery) and on through the pines. A light fluffy snow made it relatively easy to cut a trail and all went smoothly the first hour.

Approaching noon, however, and away from the sheltering pines, the snow softened and stuck to the bottom of our skis, making skiing more like walking than gliding. Unfortunately, we had no wax with us as the morning was quite cold and it seemed like the snow would be trouble-free. Interestingly, during our trip, we met snowshoers, along with skiers from the Catskill Nordic Ski Club, who, wiser than us, had waxed their skis and moved right along.

Although we returned early, the day was so pretty it was hard to complain! [See photo on page 20]
PHOTO OPS PART 2!

Photographer Credits:
CS  Christine Saward
LB  Linda Lou Bartle
JH  John Haas
COME CLEAN by Cathy Dawkins and Patricia Diness

BKAA’s “Come Clean” team is a small group of BKAA members who devote a bit of time in the summer months on discrete projects focused on ways to clean up and beautify our community.

In 2011 and 2012 we shifted our attention to creating garden and planters in the village of Wurtsboro. This year, we are excited to continue with the garden theme, but expand into a project that more directly impacts the Basha Kill.

In late 2012, Paula Medley met David Groskin at a Mamakating Town Planning Board meeting. Mr. Groskin purchased the old Moose Lodge property at the corner of Haven Road and Rt 209 for use by his business: DPG Hudson Valley Mold Remediation. Mr. Groskin has undertaken significant efforts to spruce up his property, including both exterior “curb appeal” items, as well as less visible, infrastructure projects.

Mr. Groskin’s property is strategically sited at the logical entry into the Basha Kill for people coming from Route 17. Because of this strategic location, the Come Clean Team has met with him, the Mamakating Highway Supervisor, and a Horticulturist from Sullivan Renaissance to design a garden feature that will serve as a “Gateway to the Basha Kill”. Our proposed garden will require moving, cleaning and re-posting the existing “Welcome to the Basha Kill” sign to serve as the focal point for our garden, building a low rock wall to bound and enhance our garden, and purchasing, planting, and tending flowers, bulbs, shrubs, and trees. As a final artistic element, and in a nod to the number of birders who visit the Basha Kill, we will be working closely with Laurie Kilgore, art teacher at the Emma Chase School, to have students create birdhouses that can be displayed in our garden.

Funding for this project will come from a variety of sources. First, Mr. Groskin will be providing significant financial support to the project, as well as providing equipment and labor support. The Come Clean Team will contribute funds from its own fund-raising efforts. And finally, we have submitted a grant request to the Sullivan Renaissance organization, seeking both funds, and the assistance of a local student intern. Keep an eye out this summer as you drive by the DPG site and watch for our garden to grow!

BASHA KILL EN PLEIN AIRE by Laurie Kilgore

(Ms. Kilgore is an art teacher at the Emma C. Chase Elementary School.)

The Emma C. Chase Elementary School in Wurtsboro is doing a collaborative project with the Basha Kill Area Association, the Wurtsboro Art Alliance, and our 1st, 3rd and 5th grade students. This project is called “The Basha Kill: En Plein Aire” and will take place in mid-May of this year.

Many of our students have never been to the Basha Kill wetlands, even though it is only a few miles down the road from our school. In October, we took the 1st grade classes, a group of approximately 70 students, and had them create drawings in a sketchbook of what they saw at the Basha Kill. We sat on either side of the bridge and drew for an hour. The students also worked on memory drawings of the Basha Kill after their field trip. It was an incredible experience, but I know that it has the potential to be much more.

As part of this project, students will learn about the unique wildlife, animals, birds and plants of the Basha Kill. It is important for them to understand the incredible wetlands that we have right here in our backyard at the Chase. It will be an interdisciplinary project that will include science, the environment and art. In Art, they will be learning how to use watercolors, and the style of “en Plein Aire” painting. They will work on these paintings during a field trip to the Basha Kill. It is our intention to have the students display their work in the form of an art show for the school and community to attend at the end of this project. We have some incredible young artists here at the Chase, and it would be an excellent opportunity for the community to see the beautiful work that they create.
TREE KEEPERS MEET IN WURTSBORO by Bob Justus
(Mr. Justus is a Town of Mamakating Councilman)

On February 4, 2013 I had the privilege of opening Mamakating Town Hall to a group of approximately thirty people interested in learning about tree pruning and maintenance efforts planned for trees on Sullivan Street in Wurtsboro. The meeting was led by Janet Gula, chair of the Tree Keeper Advisory Group and owner of My Secret Gardener. [See photos on page 11]

Janet first introduced BKAA president Paula Medley, who spoke about the BKAA's initiative to partner for Main Street improvement with the Village of Wurtsboro. Following Paula, I spoke about the history of tree planting on Sullivan Street. Melinda Meddaugh then spoke about the tree care program initiated in Rock Hill. The highlight of the evening was a presentation and question-and-answer session by NYDEC urban forester, George Profous. Janet concluded the evening by outlining events planned for March, including tree pruning on Sullivan Street, on March 2.

In addition to those individuals mentioned above, others attending this meeting included Mike Medley, Jon Reed, Pat Talbot, Wurtsboro Mayor Michelina Maher and her husband Bill, William and Catherine Herrmann, members of the Rock Hill Rennaissance group, and a large contingent from local Boy Scout Troop 92.

Our DEC urban forester George Profous' lecture included the A,B,C, (and D)js of tree pruning. The A in the ABCs stands for apical dominance -- that is, leave the tallest branch alone. B stands for bad branches - remove dead, defective and diseased branches. C stands for competing branches - remove the weaker, competitive branch for a healthier tree. Finally, D stands for dose - only remove a small percentage (up to one third of the branches). Mr. Profous said that winter, followed by summer, is the best time to prune due to deciduous tree physiology. The question-and-answer session was quite informative and included a specimen of the Emerald Ash Borer that is a blight to the ash trees in the region.

On March 2, the tree keepers met at the Mamakating Library and began the work of pruning trees on Sullivan Street. Wurtsboro Renaissance group supplied equipment and refreshments to the ambitious workers. George Profous and Janet Gula supervised the group that included Janet Davis, Krista and Scott Gallagher, Greg Karpinsky, Bill and Mickey Maher, Michael Medley, Jon Reed, Mary Mancuso and Sam Romano, Greg and Susie Swann, and Pat Talbot. Many thanks to all the volunteers. A special note of thanks to Don Platt, who cleared away all the discarded tree branches.

[Further pruning was done in mid-March. Ed.]

ROCK HILL NEIGHBORHOOD COALITION by Toby Lee Boritz & Pamela Zaitchick

BKAA members might be interested to know about our local community group in the Town of Thompson. In 2009, out of concern about the impacts of sprawling residential subdivisions being proposed in our community, four of us from the Glen Wild/ Rock Hill area got together and started RHNC. Now four years later, as our readership has grown beyond Rock Hill to include readers from Monticello, Bridgeville, the lake communities as well as neighboring towns, our newsletter is becoming an important source of information for many residents.

RHNC Updates are sent out once or sometimes twice a week to report on projects under review or activities and events that might be of interest, and to encourage people to attend Town meetings.

With Monticello being the county seat and Thompson the most populous of Sullivan’s 15 towns, there’s usually a lot going on — such as the proposed expansion of the Monticello Motor Club and ambitious redevelopment plans in the works for the 1735- acre Concord property.

Focusing on sustainable growth, preservation of the natural environment, land use and zoning, our coalition has worked collaboratively and networked with other local groups as well as town officials, who have been responsive to our concerns. And at times RHNC’s outreach has been instrumental in alerting members of the community about local projects or initiatives with the potential to impact their quality of life. So it is gratifying that sometimes information we’ve provided has helped homeowners to advocate more effectively on behalf of their community.

To find out more about our coalition, discuss ongoing or proposed projects, or if you’d like to be added to our mailing list (bcc—to undisclosed recipient), please e-mail Toby at: tobyleeboritz@yahoo.com or rhneighborhoodcoalition@gmail.com
WURTSBORO WINTER FEST 2013 by Greg & Maryanne Karpinsky

The Wurtsboro Board of Trade (WBOT) held its 12th Annual Winter Fest on February 9, and it was the best one yet! Our seasonal challenge this year was a snowstorm named Nemo. Though Nemo dropped 12 inches of snow overnight and prevented a few participants from attending, it could not dampen what turned out to be a wonderful day.

Winter Fest actually started on Friday in Veterans Park with carving of the Penguin Ice Throne, which was a big hit. Everyone jumped on it and felt like Wurtsboro royalty, if only for a few seconds. Additionally, multiple carvings in the park were sponsored by several local Wurtsboro businesses, and an ice carving competition was conducted along Sullivan Street with six competitors vying for a $500 first prize.

Another very popular feature of Winter Fest is the BKAA sponsored Birds of Prey Show at the Fellowship Hall of Wurtsboro Community Church on Sullivan Street. This venue has become so popular that it is standing room only and certainly a highlight of the day's activities. Ravensbeard Wildlife Educational Center from Saugerties produces the show and does a fantastic job, displaying beautiful birds and educating the audience about them. We can't wait until 2014 to see these majestic birds again and are grateful to the BKAA for making Winter Fest even better. [See photo on page 20.]

Several other functions included the 3rd Annual Bryan Stanton Chili Cook-off, a real crowd pleaser, and Wurtsboro Art Alliance's great exhibit, appropriately entitled "Snow." Other fun things involved face painting, snacking on kettle corn, drinking free hot chocolate, and participating in the Boys and Girls Club children's entertainment.

Last, but not least, was our highly popular Treasure Hunt, where children, provided with maps, searched for this year's hidden treasure, Wurtsboro pine cones, at businesses on Sullivan Street. When children discovered a pine cone, their maps were stamped and, at day's end, $25 Wurtsboro dollars were awarded to the winner at the Wurtsboro Firehouse closing ceremonies, where all event winners were acknowledged.

WBOT thanks everyone whose contributions resulted in a successful Winter Fest. For more information on the Wurtsboro Board of Trade, visit our website, www.wurtsboro.org.

PLANNING BOARD AND ZBA TRAINING by Christine Saward

On February 11 Paula and I attended a 4-hour Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals training session at the Sullivan County Government Center in Monticello. Since I am a new BKAA board member, Paula thought it would be good information for me to have.

Session I was "Planning and Zoning: An Introduction." This provided a basic overview of the function of planning boards and zoning boards of appeals. It spoke of the land use tools they work with, the role of the comprehensive plan, procedures for holding meetings and hearings, and the enforcement of the boards' decisions.

Session II was "Locally Unwanted Land Use Regulations." This was a quick survey of land uses not everyone wants next door to their homes and the extent to which local governments may regulate them. Mining, home businesses, big box retail, adult uses, religious uses, telecommunications facilities, and billboards were among the uses discussed.

Mamakating was well represented. From the Zoning Board of Appeals were Bill Herrmann, Matt Mordas, Steve Prall and Walt Finkle, who is also from the highway department. The Planning Board was represented by Mort Starobin. Bob Justus represented the Mamakating Town Board, as well as the Village of Wurtsboro Planning Board. Jack Haley was also there from the Village of Wurtsboro.

It was a lot of information to absorb. I was grateful that they had the Power Point presentation printed in hand-outs. That made it easier to follow along and take notes, if needed. With the projects currently in the queue as well as the Planned Office Zone discussions, this should prove to be useful information for me to reference.

DEC Contacts:
Forest Ranger: Jason Seeley 845-240-6792 (cell)
Conservation Officer: Michael Bello 845-665-5489
If Mr. Bello is not available, call 24-hour Law Enforcement Dispatch 1-877-457-5680
NEW YORK STATE YOUNG BIRDERS by Truth Muller

On January 20 I attended the annual meeting of the New York State Young Birders Club (NYSYBC), held at Ward Pound Reservation in Westchester at the Trailside Museum.

The meeting started prematurely, that is, in the middle of the road to the Trailside Museum, when everyone started pouring out of their cars with scopes and binoculars to see a rare Northern Shrike perched in a tree. Most of the group, including me, had never seen one before. Very exciting.

We continued on with a 90-minute walk through the park. We saw Bluebirds, Song Sparrows, the nest of a Baltimore Oriole, a Turkey Vulture, a Red-tailed Hawk and a few of us saw a Northern Flicker, though most missed it (including me, drat!). I did however get to see a whole flock of Black Vultures (Until that moment, I never even knew there was a species of “Black” Vulture.)

I lagged behind with my Mom and another parent because the sound of thirty pairs of boots all crunching together in the snow was not exactly the stealthiest way to view birds. We were rewarded with the sound of a woodpecker, heard by Mom. (How come she never hears me when I call her, but she can hear a woodpecker far off in the forest somewhere?) I managed to find it with my binoculars; it was a large female Hairy Woodpecker.

At about 10am the meeting began with a mad dash for donuts and coffee. After introductions and a discussion of how each youth birder maintained their life list, our President began the meeting by talking about what everyone’s favorite trip of the year was. Almost everyone in the room said it was the Saw-whet Owl banding and Bashakill trip. Lots of the members added as many as seven birds to their life lists while exploring the Bashakill this past October. (Thanks to Sullivan County Audubon Society and BKAA for inviting us!)

My first experience with the NYSYBC was the Saw-whet Owl banding trip, and I can’t possibly think of a better way to start my club membership:

When we arrived at Sullivan County Audubon Society President Dr. Valerie Freer’s home, she explained how the evening would play out, laying down the ground rules and warning us about hazards hidden around the yard. She explained that we would attract the owls using an audio caller used for bird hunting. The owls would fly into the “mist nets” and be caught. (Mist nets are fine, spider-web like nets with pouches at the bottom. They are primarily used for bird study.) To fetch the birds, we would split the group into two teams, one going to fetch owls and the other eating snacks and doing photo quizzes prepared by SCAS member, Rick Bunting. The groups would switch once every thirty minutes.

We were all excited at first, but as the first, second, and third trips yielded not so much as a feather, our hopes waned. The fourth trip went out with very little hope. They were gone for a long time, and everyone stared at the door, excited, tense, and nervous. Would the entire night be an utter bust? Or would Saw-whets suddenly rain from the sky by the hundreds when we least expected it?

The door burst open. . . . . and YES! An owl! Everyone ran from the kitchen and living room into the tiny banding area. The tiny Saw-whet, no bigger than a soda can, looked at the crowd with wide, curious eyes colored a beautiful, blazing gold. Its feathers felt like silk and velvet rolled into one. This one appeared to be sleepy, its eyes drooping as we measured and banded it. Shortly before we let it go, it trilled. Lance Verderame, the organizer of the trip, said this kind of vocalization was very rare. We let it go.

The next half hour was an impatient, fidgety one. Finally, after what felt like an eternity, we went out again. It was cold, and our hearts sank as nets one and two were found empty. But then someone saw a glint of gold, and there in the center of net three was another owl. It looked rather annoyed with its predicament, and clacked its beak at us as we freed it.

Again the door opened and our triumphant group entered. This owl seemed even more interested, its eyes opened to the size of marbles. Beak, wings, tail, eye color, fat levels, weight, gender and age were measured and checked, and finally she was banded.

This one lingered longer on her tree branch when we released her, still fascinated with us, as we were with her. Trip 6 turned cold, and we all suspected that our evening was drawing to a close. The last cookies eaten, the last quiz completed, we set out for our last trip of the night. It was now icy cold out, and every one was apprehensive.

(continued on page 25)
NEW YORK STATE YOUNG BIRDERS (continued)

Would we be able to see more or would we come up empty-handed? (We were greedy; we wanted to see more.) Arriving at the nets we were thrilled to find not one, but two owls. One was tangled, its head upside down and almost touching the ground, an expression of fury on its face. The other was running back and forth, looking for an exit.

We loaded them into the owl carriers and burst into the banding area with a feeling of ecstasy. The upside-down one was impatient, clacking its beak, flapping and flexing its talons, so we finished and released it quickly. The other one, however, seemed to love the attention, savoring every petting and posing on birder’s shoulders for photos. We finished the measurements and released it.

Every one packed up, the bird caller was brought in and everyone filed reluctantly out the door. We were all tired as we drove away, not surprising since it was 11:30p.m., an hour an a half later than scheduled. No one cared. It was definitely the best birding experience ever.

WINTER FINCH INVASION by John Haas

If you happened to be driving along South Road on almost any weekend this winter you may have noticed cars lined up along the area near Melrose Farm. As you got closer you probably noticed small groups of people milling about. Closer inspection revealed they had binoculars and some spotting scopes were set up. Suddenly, someone points and all present look in that direction. What is causing all the interest? What is all the fuss about?

The answer is that the Bashakill is experiencing a Winter Finch Invasion, or an irruption of passerines from the far north. Every few years there is an irruption of birds moving south that normally would remain farther north. The reasons for this southerly movement is almost never due to weather conditions, but rather a lack of their usual food supply.

This winter, just such a movement has taken place. Early in the season, Pine Siskins arrived in tremendous numbers. A bit later, in late December, Redpolls arrived in numbers we had never experienced in the valley before.

But why all the cars on South Road? The answer: Scott Baldinger has a wonderful feeding station set up in his front yard and since late fall has been hosting unprecedented numbers of wintering finches. It didn’t take long for the word to get out before people started showing up to see these birds.

On January 1, Arlene Borko and I were viewing the birds when I noticed a bird that was different. I pointed it out to Arlene, believing it might be a Hoary Redpoll. Before we could make a definite Identification, Scott called me on my cell, informing me that he believed he had a Hoary at the feeders.

Hoary Redpolls are rarer than their cousins, the Common Redpoll, and only under extreme conditions do they ever come south. In fact, this is only the second time in history this species has been recorded in Sullivan County. The last time was the first week of January, 2008. A few birds were found at feeders in the northern part of the county and were all gone within the week.

This winter it took several days before we were able to get good identifying photos of what turned out to be two birds present. Once word got out about that, people came from far and wide to try to see these birds. Visitors from Ulster, Orange, Dutchess, Rockland and Westchester Counties
WINTER FINCH INVASION (continued)

were soon joined by birders from New York City, Long Island and New Jersey. Dozens of people made the trek to the Bashakill to see the Hoary Redpolls.

These weren’t the only finches being seen. House and Purple Finches and American Goldfinches were all seen as well. Scott’s feeders weren’t the only place to see the birds. Almost all of our local feeding stations had at least a few of these birds. Once again, the diverse habitat at the Bashakill had drawn the birds. The Deli Fields off Rt 209 were also a great place to see all but the Hoary Redpolls. The great habitat of seeding grasses, weeds and wild flowers had made the Deli Fields a bird magnet.

You might ask, what does a Redpoll look like? The Common Redpoll is a small brownish finch, heavily streaked above and below. The male is usually adorned with a bright deep pink on its breast and face. It also has a black mask. The female has no pink; both sexes have the characteristic red cap from which their name comes.

The Hoary Redpoll is similar, but is much paler, white underneath with almost no streaking, has a characteristic white rump and an overall frosty appearance. It also has a smaller bill, but has the “red cap” as well. Following a brief absence of Hoary Redpolls, they showed up again. By comparing photos taken of all the birds, we know that at least four Hoary Redpolls have been present.

Additionally, at least two individuals of the larger Greenland Race of the Common Redpoll, (Greater Redpoll) were present. To give you and idea of how many birds were actually present, high counts of over 250 Common Redpolls were seen on some days. Combine that with all the other species present and Scott was feeding 400 birds on many days. In case you’re curious, that amounts to a small fortune in Thistle and Black Oil Sunflower seeds. Scott has been a gracious host to both birds and birders over the last several months. We can’t thank him enough for his hospitality.

[See photos on page 20.]

2013 BKAA CAMPER SCHOLARSHIPS

This year, four applicants sought BKAA scholarships to DEC environmental camps in the Catskills and Adirondacks and furnished requisite paperwork within the prescribed deadline. Thanks to several anonymous donors, all four candidates will enjoy DEC camp experiences that will enhance their environmental knowledge and sensitivities. Below we include BKAA mandated essays that accompanied the 2013 scholarship recipients’ applications.

JACK BIRCHARD
Hello. My name is Jack Birchard. I am 12 years old. I’m in seventh grade and attend Crispell Middle School in Pine Bush, New York. I am in all honors classes. There are many reasons why I would like to join one of the DEC camps. I love the outdoors. Going on walks in the forest with my father is the best. I am interested in seeing all of the animal tracks in the snow. I also love birds. I like to watch and identify them. I got my first National Audubon bird book when I was 4. Snakes are also a passion of mine. I think they are beautiful and interesting. I would really like to be picked for this opportunity. Thank you.

REBECCA BUDROCK
My name is Rebecca Budrock, an eighth grader from Fallsburg Jr. Sr. High School, and I’m interested in attending the DEC environmental camp at Pack Forest this summer. I attended Camp DeBruce for two years and I really enjoyed learning about the environment and wildlife with the counselors there. My first year at Camp DeBruce, I received the Outstanding Camper award, and this past year I received the Potential Volunteer award.

I’m an active member of the Fallsburg Environmental Club, and am interested in continuing my education of the environment this summer as Pack Forest. In addition, I am currently working on my Girl Scout Silver Award, which focuses on helping raise awareness about recycling in my school and community. I hope you consider awarding me a scholarship to attend Pack Forest this summer.

JOHN CARNEVALI
My name is John Carnevali, I am in the 8th grade at Crispell Middle School in Pine Bush. I am in the honors program and I am studying Earth Science. I always try to recycle and make sure everyone around me understands how important it is to keep our earth healthy. Our environment is all we have so we need to all join in and protect it. I had the pleasure last year to be chosen for your camp scholarship and would love an opportunity to go again. I had great fun as well as meeting a lot of new friends.

Thank you for the opportunity for another chance to go to sleep away camp. I hope to hear from you.
TRUTH MULLER
My name is Truth Muller. I am in 8th grade and I am home schooled. Last year I had my first taste of a full-fledged sleepover camp, thanks to the BKAA. I got a sense of the DEC camp rules and how to live on a set schedule. I learned to go backpacking (and why a 432 page book, no matter how small & light it seems while packing it, is not a good backpacking item on a long uphill hike in 90 degree heat), and how easy it is for things (socks, toothpaste, fishing hooks) to wander away in the great outdoors. So I feel that I am ready to take a step up. Camp Colby looks like the perfect place to do that.

First of all Camp Colby is near a HUGE lake and I love fish! I want to be a marine biologist and environmentalist like my hero, Jacques Cousteau. So any opportunity to learn about and see new species of fish, salt or freshwater, is an exciting one for me.

Another interest of mine is birding. Several Bashakill events, including the “Nature Watch” program and bird walks with John Haas, have helped to spark and expand my ever widening interest in birds. I recently became a member of the New York State Young Birders Club, and had the opportunity to band Saw-whet Owls, one of the smallest owls in the world. I am currently participating in two bird counts: one for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the other for the Sullivan County Audubon Society. I also have plans for a future public presentation for 4-H, all about the songs, vocalizations and alarm calls of birds. I’m sure there are plenty of waterfowl at Camp Colby that I can observe and add to my “life list.” Did I mention my passion for amphibians and insects?

DEC camp is a great learning experience, but in a far more down-to-earth way. I remember how at Camp DeBruce last year, we were having a lesson near the fishing pond about how all the world’s animals, including us, are connected. We noticed a little frog floating on the lake with all his legs splayed out, like he was body surfing. He was looking at us warily, but he seemed fascinated with us. We named him Spy. As we were talking, he paddled over to the bank, and peered out from the weeds, almost as though he was listening to the conversation. We were having a first-hand example of the lesson right in front of us.

Overall, another week at a sleep away camp will give me a chance to improve on my stamina, responsibility and survival life skills, all necessary tools needed to achieve the goal of my chosen field, the path to living my passion. For as Jacques Cousteau once said: “The sea, once it casts its spell, holds one in its net of wonder forever.”

THANK YOU TO RECENT DONORS
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The Homestead School  •  Sullivan County Audubon Society

In honor of John Conrad Weiser: Mark W. Russell
2013 CALENDAR
(Note date changes in Gary Keeton’s 2nd D&H Canal and Sunrise Walks from August to July)

Saturday, April 13, 7:30 pm
Star Walk with Bob Fiore
Very dependent on weather! Meet at Haven Rd. DEC parking lot on Route 209 side. Call Bob to register and/or check trip status at (845)498-9001.

Saturday, April 20, 9:30-10am
(Registration and site assignments)
32nd Annual Basha Kill Clean-up
Celebrate Earth Day! Enjoy a walk and fresh spring air while ridding wetlands of debris. Garbage bags are provided. Wear boots, work gloves, aa, will be eaten al fresco in the parking lot. BKAA merchandise will be on sale and door prizes awarded. Call Paula Medley at (845)754-0743 for further information.

Saturdays & Sundays 10 am to 4 pm
Saturday, April 20th through Sunday, June 30
Nature Watch at the South Road Boat Launch
Join trained BKAA Nature Watch Volunteers at the South Road boat launch toon, the volunteers will help you get to know the Basha Kill a little better. Bring your children, other family members and friends of all ages for some fun in the outdoors! Call Maryallison Farley at 845-888-0261 or Patricia Diness at 845-386-5024 for more details.

Saturday, May 4, 8am
Spring Bird Migration with John Haas
Join John Haas at the Haven Road parking lot (Orchard and Stop Sign Trail--South Road side) to view spring migrants, ranging from Warblers to Vireos, Orioles, and more. We begin our walk here, then move to the Nature Trail off South Road, past the main boat launch. Call John to register and/or for more information at (845)888-0240.

Sunday, May 12, 10am
Spring Wildflowers with John Kenney
See first blossoms of the season. You will be delighted! Meet at Haven Rd. DEC parking lot on Route 209 side. Call John to register and/or for more details at (845)436-6046.

Saturday, May 18, 1 pm
Hike to Gobbler’s Knob with Mike Medley
Enjoy views of a beautiful 650-acre Shawangunk Ridge property, which is also site of the proposed Basherkill Subdivision. The hike gains 450 vertical feet from the parking area to the Knob, which is almost 1,000 feet high. Wear comfortable, sturdy shoes and bring water. Trip takes two hours. Meet at the South Road fishing platform (Westbrookville end). To register or for more information, contact Mike at (845)754-0743.

Sunday, June 9,10am
Happy for Herps with Bill Cutler
Join herpetologist Bill Cutler on a search for amphibians and reptiles. Kids and adults love learning about them. Meet at Haven Rd. DEC parking lot on Route 209 side Call Bill to register and/or for additional information at (845) 807-0291.

Saturday, June 15, 9am
Natural History Walk with Jack Austin
Stroll 2-3 miles on level terrain with naturalist Jack Austin as you see and listen to what is nesting, growing, and maturing in mid-summer. Wear good walking shoes as there may be wet areas and bring insect repellent. Meet at the Stop Sign parking area, off Haven Road (South Road side). For information, contact Jack at (845)856-0706 or cell at (845)649-8720.

Saturday, June 22, 8:30 pm
Moonlight Walk with Gary Keeton
Amble along Haven Road and the Railroad Trail. Enjoy moonrise over the ridge as you discuss the area’s natural history. Meet at Haven Rd. DEC parking lot on Route 209 side. Contact Gary at (845)386-4892 for additional facts.

Sunday, June 29,10am
Blooms and Butterflies with John Kenney
See the next wave of wildflowers and a beautiful array of butterflies. Meet at Haven Rd. DEC parking lot on Route 209 side. Call John to register and/or for further information at (845)436-6046.

Saturday, July 6, 10am
History of D&H Canal with Gary Keeton
Join Gary for a walk through time. Ever wonder about local stone walls and foundations? Curious about how people farmed the rocky soils or the relationship between the Basha Kill and Pinekill? Oh, and learn about the canal, too! Meet at the DEC access road on Route 209 across from the Pinekill Deli in Westbrookville. Contact Gary at (845)386-4892 for particulars.

Sunday, July 14, 10am
History of the D&H Canal with Gary Keeton
A reprise of July 6. Meet at DEC access road on Route 209 across from the Pinekill Deli in Westbrookville. Contact Gary at (845)386-4892 for details.

(continued on page 29)
2013 CALENDAR (continued)

Sunday, July 21, 8:30pm
Moonlight Canoe/Kayak Adventure with Scott Graber and Mike Medley
Experience the Basha Kill from a unique perspective! Must bring your own vessel. Meet at South Road Boat Launch. Register and check trip’s status with Mike at (845) 754-0743.

Saturday, July 27, 5:30 am
Sunrise Walk with Gray Keeton
Rise and shine! Enjoy the Basha Kill’s wonders from a different view. Meet at Haven Rd. DEC parking lot on Route 209 side. Call Gary at (845) 386-4892 for information.

Saturday, September 28, 10 am
Canoekayak the Basha Kill with Scott Graber and Mike Medley
Join naturalists Scott and Mike for a late season venture on this first day of autumn. Bring your own vessel. Meet at the South Road Boat Launch. Call Mike at (845) 754-0743 to register and for more details.

Saturday, October 5, 9:30 am
Hike the Shawangunk Ridge with Mike Medley
Moderately difficult hike, lasting 4-5 hours. Wear comfortable sturdy shoes and bring water and lunch. Meet at the D&H Canal Kiosk at the Pat Moore Memorial Picnic Grove on Sullivan Street in Wurtsboro. Must register by calling Mike at (845) 754-0743.

Sunday, October 13, 9:00 am
Hike the Minisink Trail at Huckleberry State Forest in the Town of Greeneville with Mike Medley
Join Mike on a beautiful 5-mile loop hike on the Shawangunk Ridge. Wear comfortable sturdy shoes and bring water and lunch. Carpool or travel in a caravan led by Mike. Meet at South Road fishing platform (Westbrookville end) Absolutely must register for this trip by calling Mike at (845) 754-0743.

40 YEARS: HISTORY OF THE BKAA (PART 4) by Buff McAllister

GYPSY MOTHS (1980-on)
In 1865, some genius brought some gypsy moths to the U.S. to breed with silkworms to create a heartier strain. It didn’t work, but, of course, some moths escaped. Twenty-five years later, the state of Massachusetts spent $25,000 to try to eradicate them (a lot of money in 1890!) That didn’t work, either, and the caterpillars steadily ate their way into other states.

They came into public awareness in our area about 1980, as their numbers were growing and they were denuding trees in great numbers. There was much discussion and controversy as to how to control them. The municipalities wanted to spray Dylox and Sevin, which would also kill beneficial insects, and weren’t so good for human health, either. Some entomologists warned that spraying would only interfere with the natural boom/bust cycle of the moth. We attended town meetings, opposing spraying near the wetlands; we found a federal government handbook and wrote up fact sheets for our members, which we sent out several years in a row.

In March of 1983, the Mamakating newsletter claimed that there was no problem with moths that year because of the previous year’s spraying. The DEC, however, was quoted in the Record as saying that a natural virus, and starvation because of the vast overpopulation, caused the decline. We wrote a letter to the town expressing our disappointment at the misinformation disseminated to residents, but never received a reply.

In the years since, gypsy moths have continued to be a scourge; while they don’t directly kill trees, they can weaken them to a point where other factors, such as drought or disease, do kill them. I don’t believe, however, that any insect species has ever been exterminated; so we continue to live with them and do what we can to mitigate their damage.

ORDINARY BUSINESS (1981)
Mrs. Pollock resigned from the board and Jeff Fisher and I became co-directors; Jeff Moore was secretary and Louise Briggs, treasurer (a position she was to hold until about 1997, after which she was membership chair until shortly before her death in December 1999).

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40 YEARS: HISTORY OF THE BKAA (PART 4) (continued)

MARCY-SOUTH POWER LINE (1981-1986)

Background: In 1970, Consolidated Edison (ConEd), NYC’s power company, applied for a permit for what was then called the Southern Tier Interconnection. The Public Service Commission (PSC) had 54 days of hearings and 9000 pages of testimony from more than 50 witnesses (including Anna Hagovsky). There were also petitions and letters with the signatures of more than 5000 persons. There is little about it in our files except for a notation in Anna’s handwriting that the portion of the route from Cooper’s Corners in Sullivan County to Rock Tavern in Orange County was — after still more hearings — approved for crossing the Shawangunks near Cuddebackville. Other proposed crossings near Route 17 were denied. This was important for the Basha Kill, as the line would be south of it, and less visible. For some reason, this line was never constructed.

It’s Back: In November 1981 we found out that the power line proposal was back, this time by the Power Authority of the State of New York (PASNY) and called the Utica-Poughkeepsie 345kV Transmission Line (later to be called “Marcy-South”). The point was to buy cheap hydroelectric power form Canada and route it to New York City. There were questions over whether the power would be available locally, which would supposedly reduce electric rates; whether or not it would damage property values; whether the projected savings would really pan out, etc. There was enormous resistance to it, from many quarters, including both Orange and Sullivan Counties and state legislators.

A Record editorial on April 20, 1983 said PASNY’s own estimates showed that conservation could save 2.5 billion gallons of oil per year, compared with the 7.7 million gallons per year that would be saved by the line. A letter to the editor on the same day said PASNY admitted that Canadian hydropower could be imported over the existing grid at a savings of $114 million, but PASNY’s reason to exist was to build power lines — and its investors expected to get a $711 return on their investments for this one.

PASNY published some slick newsletters, offered to reimburse affected landowners for future real estate taxes, and offered $12 million in grants for localities along the right-of-way.

On February 1, 1983, we made a statement at a PSC hearing. We made it clear that our members had their own opinions on the power line as a whole, but we were speaking on behalf of the BKAA regarding the crossing near the Kill. We opposed it on two grounds: aesthetic impairment, and disruption of wildlife, not only during construction, but from chemical defoliants to be sprayed around the finished line. I had previously written to John Dyson, chair of PASNY; his office wrote back that several alternate routes were rejected as being too close to the wetlands. I said, “HA!” to myself — they didn’t reject these routes, they were denied by the hearing officer back in 1970, thanks to Anna and many others.

Anna got her photo in the Poughkeepsie Journal on April 29, 1983, page one, under the headline, “Powerline Experts Meet Their Match.” Her skills at cross-examination were mentioned, and the PSC attorney said it was significant that she got the consultants to admit that if one line is built through an area, it increases the chances of having others built along the same corridor.

It was all to no avail. PSC approved it, the Army Corps approved the planned water crossings, and a lawsuit failed.

An ironic footnote: The last item in our file is a Record story from August 25, 1989; it turns out that while we were buying “cheap” and “abundant” electric from Canada in the summer, they were buying it from us during the winter.

ORDINARY BUSINESS (1982)

May 1982 – First Annual Basha Kill Cleanup. It was member Ben Siebecker’s idea and was not formally organized. We just encouraged all members to clean up where they wanted to.

GRAVEL PIT (1982-83)

For many years the Town of Mamakating took gravel out of the old Benson gravel pit on Route 209 slightly north of Haven Road. In May of 1982, we found out that the town wanted to take out the remaining gravel, level the hill (destroying a stand of white pines), and make a parking lot out of the space. The DEC wanted to turn it into a model reclamation site.

We wrote to legislators and the DEC, and a meeting was set up for July 15, 1982 at the site. It was quite a star-studded event, with NYS Senator Cook, Assemblyman Kisor, a representative from Rep. Gilman’s office, Region 3 DEC Director Paul Keller, a reporter and photographer from the Record (at our request) and town officials. We presented our views strongly — that the lack of a buffer between the road and the Kill would disturb visitors; it would again undermine the DEC’s plan to limit access to the wetlands; and

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40 YEARS: HISTORY OF THE BKA (PART 4) (continued)

there were other gravel pits available. The DEC presented an opinion from its legal department, and that was that. By our annual meeting in June 1983, the site had been graded and bushes and trees had been planted to create a model of reclamation.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM (1982-on)
This was Louise Briggs' excellent idea. She felt that lack of appreciation of the wetlands, and the vandalism that had been occurring in recent years, could best be solved by early education – teaching the children of the value and beauty of the wetlands.

The first year, in September of 1982, children in the third, fourth, fifth and sixth grades at the Bicentennial School in Cuddebackville were treated to a movie on the wetlands by Paul Jeheber. The week after the movie, DEC officers took three fourth-grade classes on a field trip. We had prepared a booklet on animals in the Kill, illustrated with Louise's drawings.

In the spring of 1983, we started gathering slides, some from the DEC, and others from nature photographers we found. In addition, we asked the DEC to train us so that we could start leading field trips ourselves. Joel Hermes and Judy Ford, biologists from DEC's Region 3, attended our June 12 annual meeting and took a group of us on a walk through the Kill, showing us interesting things we could point out to the children.

September of 1983 saw our first venture into doing the program ourselves. Fourth-graders at both the Bicentennial School and the Emma Chase School in Wurtsboro saw the slide show presented by Louise Briggs, received a copy of our booklet, and were led on a field trip by member volunteers. They loved it.

And it was very timely. An article in the Times-Herald Record on September 14 showed a photograph of a 40-foot long foot bridge on the nature trail that had been wrecked by vandals. The bridge had just been rebuilt in the spring to replace another bridge that had been vandalized the fall before. Lance Kolts from the DEC told us that there had been some $20,000 of vandalism in the previous two years. In addition to the bridge damage, bluebird boxes were shot at, 12-foot sections of logs in the parking lots were stolen (until they were anchored together), and an empty house on South Road, which might have been a dwelling for a DEC officer, was burned down. It could not have more clear how important it was to continue our educational efforts.

We had another reminder of the urgency of education. On a field trip in September 1986, gunshots were heard. Shortly afterwards, the children and guides found a dead raccoon that had been deliberately arranged on a rock, obviously to frighten and horrify the children. We wrote about it to the DEC, but the perpetrators were never found.

The program continued with second-graders as well as fourth-graders, until 1991, when budget cuts started forcing the schools to cut out the field trips. Florence Rothauser decided that if the kids couldn't go to the wetlands, we would bring the wetlands to them. In the spring of 1992, BKA naturalist Gary Keeton did just that. He had slides and a hands-on presentation of specimens, including a huge turtle shell, various animal bones, and fish tanks full of aquatic life. It was very popular, and he went on to take his program to hundreds of students in many schools all over the area.

Gary's presentation was the basis for the hugely successful calendar project, also Florence's brainchild. The children made drawings under the direction of Emma Chase School art teacher Brenda Heins, which Florence put together into a calendar for 1993. Donations to defray printing costs were solicited from individual, groups, and local businesses. The calendars were very popular and sold very well for $2.50 each. With the proceeds, Florence bought more than seventy carefully chosen books on the themes of art and science. With her specially designed bookplates inside, they were given to the libraries of the Monticello District Schools. Enthusiastic thank-you notes flooded in.

On October 21, 1993, the International Reading Association and Sullivan Reading Council honored the BKA, the Emma Chase School, and the community for "exemplary service in the promotion of literacy."

The 1994 calendar, called "Our Heritage," focusing on Native Americans, was just as successful. Books were purchased for the Native American, art and wetlands sections of the libraries. The 1995 calendar, called "The Web of Life," was produced with the help of art teacher Ellen McNally. More than fifty books, in the art and environmental science sections, were donated to the libraries.

It was a wonderful project, benefiting all involved. Unfortunately, by 1996, Florence was burned out by the enormous time and energy she expended, and nobody stepped into the breach to produce another calendar. Perhaps in the future, someone else will take it up again.
40 YEARS: HISTORY OF THE BKAA (PART 4) (continued)

In September of 1999, fifth-graders at the Chase School participated in a federally-funded project intended to integrate technology into the curriculum. The curriculum was the wetlands ecosystem. The students thought of ideas, designed equipment, studied wetlands in the classroom, and went out with Gary Keeton to see it first hand. The finished project was of such high quality that the class was designated a “demo” site, meaning that the technology would be on permanent loan during the life of the program. And what a great assortment of technology it was! – desktop and laptop computers, digital cameras, scanners, printers and projectors.

In August 2000, BKAA formed an education committee. Janet Barnett, an educator, was asked to be chair and be the liaison between the BKAA and the schools. The goal was to “foster an awareness of nature and a conservation ethic in our youth.” That same year, George Schuler (head of the local Nature Conservancy and BKAA ecological advisor) was teaching water testing techniques to students, and Florence was leading classes integrating haiku and collage with a focus on nature.

The 2002 BKAA Annual Report listed the staggering numbers of children that Gary Keeton had reached with his hands-on program – hundreds of children in local schools, summer camps, Thrall Library in Middletown, Soil & Water Conservation Days in Orange and Sullivan Counties, Orange County Community College, and in schools as far away as Tuxedo. In the spring of 2006, Gary was honored as “Man of the Year” by the Sullivan County Soil and Water Conservation District for his years of service and education to students.

The education program is ongoing. Other BKAA members, including Mike Medley, Jackie Broder, Linda Gette and Gary VanHouten have all been involved in recent years. It is one of our most important projects. As young people grow up appreciative of the magic of the Basha Kill and wetlands in general, they will be more inclined to cherish and protect them, and take their knowledge with them to inform others as they disperse to other parts of the country and the world.

ORDINARY BUSINESS (1983)
August 1983 – The state program “Return a Gift to Wildlife” was started in 1982; residents could check off a box on their state tax return to donate a few dollars to the DEC; $800,000 was collected in the first year. In 1983, $55,000 of that amount was earmarked to buy an additional 35.5 acres at the Basha Kill, which included the entrance to a system of extensive limestone caves (“Surprise Cave”), an important bat wintering ground.

OTISVILLE FEDERAL PRISON POLLUTION (1983-1986)
The Federal Prison at Otisville – a medium-security men’s prison – had been discharging treated sewage into the Kill under a DEC permit since it was built in 1977. In early 1983, we discovered that the system frequently broke down, as it was apparently inadequate from day one, and allowed untreated sewage to flow into the wetlands. We pushed the DEC and the prison to agree on a remediation plan. The plan was approved, but in 1984, we found out that the prison hadn’t followed it, and the permit was still being violated.

The matter was turned over to the Attorney General’s office and we urged vigorous prosecution of the prison to end the problem. (I was surprised to realize that we also made the Assistant AG in charge of this issue very nervous by suggesting that we could bring a private lawsuit, permitted under the Clean Water Act, which could result in money damages for us and our attorney. I suppose they viewed us as a loose cannon.)

By 1986, the prison was finally in compliance. After breathing a sigh of relief, we promptly found out that the nearby State prison had been polluting the Shawangunk Kill for years. It did not directly affect the wetlands, but we still wrote to the DEC about it and were told that a modification was to be completed in 1988.

KAY COTTAGES (LATER PARADISE II RESORT (1983)
These were originally summer camping cottages on 50 acres owned by union Local 805 for use by their members. The property was sold, and the new owners wanted to sell the cottages as condos. They planned to use the existing water and sewage arrangements, and did not intend to clear land or put up any more buildings. We attended a planning board meeting in February 1983 and found that, since the site had been in continuous use, even though it was nonconforming under later zoning laws, it was grandfathered. The only agency with jurisdiction was the NYS Department of Health, which had to approve it annually — and the approval was up to date. As the parcel was adjacent to the wetlands, we made a note to keep an eye on it.
BKAA TO RECEIVE AWARD AT DEC CEREMONY by Paula Medley

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Region 3 is celebrating the release of DEC's updated guide “New York State Watchable Wildlife” via a special observance at the South Road boat launch on Tuesday, April 23 at 3 p.m., where the BKAA will be honored as a long-time steward in the DEC’s Adopt-A-Natural-Resource program. Each DEC region will commemorate the new edition’s debut by conducting Earth Day festivities at a Watchable Wildlife site within its area. Happily, our Region 3, comprised of seven counties, chose the Bashakill Wildlife Management Area. Yea!!!

Years ago, DEC connected with the Watchable Wildlife group headquartered in Minnesota to develop the initial guide published in 1998. The revised version will be available in late April and may be accessed on Amazon for $10. It will provide information and directions to 112 locations in New York State where people can enjoy viewing wildlife. DEC likewise has a Watchable Wildlife website: http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor55423.html which will contain current data in the amended guide. DEC facilitated site selection with help from partners: New York State Parks, Empire State Development, Audubon New York, Nature Conservancy and New York City Parks.

The BKAA is thrilled with DEC’s accolade and urges members to share our achievement by attending this event, which also acknowledges the importance of DEC’s Watchable Wildlife initiative. Light refreshments will be served. Hope to see you there!

TELL A FRIEND ABOUT THE BASHA KILL AREA ASSOCIATION!

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)
RAFFLE OF JIM CARNEY PHOTO
by Paula Medley

A stunning 18" x 14" framed photograph [see Photo Ops page 20] entitled "Fall Colors at the Basha Kill," generously donated by nature photographer Jim Carney, will be raffled off at the BKAA's 32nd Annual Cleanup on Saturday, April 20.

Tickets are $5 apiece and may be purchased at the event or by mailing payment to Paula Medley, BKAA, P.O. Box 1121, Wurtsboro, NY 12790.

All proceeds from this fundraiser will be placed in the BKAA's regular account.

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