



Save the Pine Bush

September/October Newsletter

Sept/Oct 09 No. 94 • 33 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12210 • email pinebush@mac.com • phone 434-1954 • fax 434-6659 • web <http://www.savethepinebush.org> • Circ. 1000

Vegetarian/Vegan Lasagna Dinner
Wednesday, September 17 2008, 6:00 p.m.

Melissa Stone

will speak about

**Current Research on the
Spread of Lyme Disease**

Join us for an evening to learn about the scourge in the Pine Bush — Lyme disease. Melissa Stone is a PhD student in the Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Program at the State University in Albany and will give a power point presentation on her research into this important subject. Until the early 1990's, there were no ticks or Lyme disease in the Pine Bush. The spread of this disease has negatively impacted people's enjoyment of our beautiful Pine Bush.

At the First Presbyterian Church, (State and Willett Sts, Albany, please enter from State St.). All-the-vegetarian-and-vegan-lasagna-you-can-eat, garden salad, garlic bread and homemade pies. Only \$10 for adults, \$5 for students, and \$2 for children. People who make reservations are served first. For reservations, please leave a message for Rezsins Adams at 462-0891 or Lynne Jackson at 434-1954. Interested people are welcomed to attend the program beginning at 7:00 for which there is no charge

Save the Pine Bush September Bike Ride
Bike to the Pine Bush Discovery Center
from Downtown Albany

Saturday, September 27, 9:30 a.m.

Meet at the Civil War Monument, intersection of Henry Johnson Blvd and State Street in Albany's Washington Park. Rain or shine, we will bike from downtown to the Pine Bush Discovery Center. Biking is a great form of transportation, and Save the Pine Bush promotes the use of the human-powered, non-polluting bicycle as a way to visit our favorite Preserve. Bicyclists of all skill levels are welcome to join the trip. We will leave the park at 9:30, and ride on City streets, observing all traffic rules to the Discovery Center. We will take a tour of the Discovery Center and then, head back to Albany. The bike ride is free and all are welcome! Please wear a helmet. No reservations needed, and you are welcome to bring your friends! This is a fun ride, not a speedy ride! For more information: call 434-1954.

www.savethepinebush.org

**Rare Worm Snake found on
Proposed Hotel Site**

Its time for the City to do the right thing
ALBANY: In a letter sent to the City of Albany, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Environmental Analyst Angelo Marcuccio detailed the discovery of an Eastern Worm Snake on the site of the proposed hotel in the Pine Bush. Not just near the proposed site, *on the site!*

Reptiles and amphibians are often considered slimy and scary animals by many people. However, these herps (short for "herpetofauna", which is the general term for amphibians and reptiles as a group) are extremely important to the viability of ecosystems. Most herp species in New York State are in a state of decline, primarily from loss of habitat. Loss of our herp species is devastating for the environment and devastating

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**The Solution to the
Garbage Problem**

by Lynne Jackson

ALBANY: Resa Dimino, Special Assistant in the DEC Commissioner's Policy Office spoke about Solid Waste Management Planning at the July SPB dinner at the First Presbyterian Church. Resa Dimino is leading the effort to develop a new State Solid Waste Management Plan in New York State. Her talk focused on the planning the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation is doing on the state level and what DEC will be asking of local planning units as they revise and update their plans.

Resa began by saying that garbage was her favorite topic and how great it was to speak to a group who is also so interested in garbage.

Her first slide was titled "Beyond Waste: A New Approach for NYS". The vision of solid waste management in NYS is to prevent waste, maximize recovery & reuse and involve all stakeholders – including producers. Note the first item on the list is "prevent waste". What better way to deal with the solid waste problem

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Worm Snake, continued from page 1

for our Pine Bush.

The last time a worm snake was observed in Albany County was in the Pine Bush was near the Karner Blue butterfly hill (and near the proposed hotel site) in the late 1980's. The snake found this summer is the only worm snake found north of Orange and Putnam counties since the NYS Reptile and Amphibian Atlas was initiated in 1990. The worm snake is native to the Pine Bush. The fact that it has not been observed in the Pine Bush for over 20 years, and now has been found on the proposed site of the hotel is extremely significant.

According to wikipedia, worm snakes are described as being small (about 14" long), and these elusive snakes spend most of their time buried in loose soil or leaf litter. They eat mostly earthworms and sometimes soft-bodied insects. Little is known about their mating habits.

The global picture here is that New York State is losing herps at a serious rate. The local picture is that the Albany Common Council has the opportunity to save the known habitat of a special concern reptile.

What will the Common Council do? Will they say they do not care about the status of reptiles in New York State and allow the North Dakota developer to pave occupied worm snake habitat? Or, will the Common Council do the right thing, and facilitate a land trade between Theraldson and the Harriman Office Campus (that needs a hotel)?

Call or write to your Common Council member today. Tell them you are simply fed up with the City allowing far-away developers to destroy our Pine Bush and its inhabitants!

Garbage, continued from page 1

that stop its creation?

Resa answered the question, "Why do we need a new approach to solid waste?" The last solid waste management plan for the state of New York was issued in 1987. The environmental impact of waste is significant, for every ton of solid waste that winds up on the curb, 71 tons of solid waste is generated upstream. Solid waste is also connected with greenhouse gas production, energy use and use land resources. Recycling has reached a plateau. The good news, is that there are jobs and economic opportunity in recovery. Also, there are new challenges that have appeared since 1987, including electronics and pharmaceuticals,

The goals of "Beyond Waste" are to minimize waste, maximize reuse, maximize recycling, maximize recovery of organics,

minimize the climate and energy impacts of solid waste management, foster good local solid waste management planning, strive for fairness and environmental justice, prioritize investment in recovery over disposal, maximize efficiency in infrastructure development, ensure solid waste management facilities are designed and operated well.

The major recommendations for the plan are to create a new solid waste management act, pass stewardship legislation regarding packaging and products, maximize recycling, divert organics (food & yard debris) from disposal, develop new funding source and strengthen local solid waste management plans.

A new solid waste management act would set new recovery goals, allocate resources for local solid waste management plans and other priorities, clarify commercial/industrial and public space recycling requirements, replace economic markets clause with list or a more workable "test", increase DEC's enforcement authority, develop mechanisms to ensure solid waste management facility permitting decisions do not undermine investments in reduction and recovery, update procurement and solid waste management requirements for state facilities, enact disposal bans and revisit definitions of solid waste and recyclable material.

Resa spoke about stewardship for packaging. The Canadian model requires producers pay the cost of disposing of the object or take the product back. Stewardship over products includes expanding the bottle bill, passing legislation to provide DEC authority to develop a framework for stewardship and add products as necessary. Research the best methods to properly reuse or recycle electronics, pharmaceuticals, automobiles and carpets.

To maximize recycling, the plan proposes to improve the efficiency of collection and processing systems, ban source separated recyclables from disposal, ensure disposal capacity decisions do not undermine the goal of maximizing recycling and develop a state-wide education campaign. Also, to work to develop local/regional markets and perform a Waste Characterization Study and develop standard bid specifications for government projects with OGS.

The plan proposes to continue to maximize recycling by evaluating construction and demolition debris, recycling incentives, including: developing standard bid specifications for government projects and encourage public space recycling. Data collection on recycling diversion and program performance will be improved with an on-line system.

The proposed solid waste plan would strengthen local solid waste management plans

by encouraging local solid waste management units to focus on waste prevention (outreach and education); reuse (materials exchanges, building materials reuse, reuse depots, etc); to improve recycling by improving program efficiency, offer more recycling education & enforcement; provide incentives/disincentives to maximize participation; target additional materials for recycling. Incentives for construction and demolition recycling can be created through the building permit process.

Diverting organics from landfills is a very important part of the proposed solid waste plan. Removing organics from the waste stream would significantly reduce the amount of solid waste. Organics include yard debris, food processing waste, institutional food waste and residential food waste.

Effective organics recovery also requires developing a financing strategy for organics recovery infrastructure. One method would be to convene working group of funding agencies to identify funding opportunities and gaps and develop resources to fill those gaps.

Minimizing waste is an extremely important part of the proposed plans. Ways to minimize waste include reduce the volume and toxicity of packaging; encourage green building design & construction; education; government procurement; encourage backyard composting

Maximizing reuse (reuse is different from recycling!) includes: Encourage building deconstruction (so bricks and other building materials can be used again), develop regional network of materials exchanges, encourage the development of reuse Depots at convenience centers & transfer stations, and encourage design for reuse. Materials redistribution can be encouraged by bringing food to food banks and/or use as animal feed, distribute clothing to charitable organizations and give away office equipment and supplies.

To minimize the climate and energy impacts of waste management, it is important to divert organics from landfills, maximize waste reduction, reuse and recycling, require mandatory landfill gas collection, encourage landfill gas-to-energy, evaluate the climate impacts of transportation, and evaluate the climate and energy impacts of waste to energy vs. other alternatives (including recovery).

Prioritize investment in recovery over disposal by aligning state grant programs with state plan priorities, increasing state resources allocated to recovery investments, develop a financing strategy for organics recovery and upgrade recycling infrastructure.

Resa emphasized that the solid waste plan she was describing at the dinner is in draft form and that DEC is looking for feedback. Save the

Pine Bush strongly approves of this proposed plan that emphasizes reduction of solid waste first, reuse second and recycling last. Minimizing solid waste and reuse are clearly best for the environment and our Pine Bush.

Surveys seek to define status of night birds

By The Associated Press

Friday, August 15, 2008 11:42 PM EDT

ALBANY - On a warm, moonlit night in the Albany Pine Bush Preserve, a group of biologists listened at the foot of a grassy dune for the lilting, three-note song of a once-common nightbird that has now become rare.

"We were pretty excited to hear the whippoorwill here again," said Neil Gifford, conservation director of the preserve. "It had been 13 years since it was last heard around here."

Gifford believes intensive work in recent years to restore the rare inland pine barrens to its historic state is responsible for the return of the whippoorwill and other native grass- and shrubland species, including the endangered Karner Blue Butterfly and birds such as Pine Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Indigo Bunting and American Woodcock.

But little is known for certain about the rise and fall of the whippoorwill, common nighthawk and other nocturnal, ground-nesting birds known collectively as nightjars or goatsuckers. The birds haven't been widely studied, and because they're nocturnal, they're easy to overlook in annual bird counts and nesting surveys.

Now, several efforts are under way to evaluate the status of these birds, determine what factors are contributing to their decline and develop programs to help them recover.

"Much of the information we have at this point is anecdotal," said Pam Hunt, an avian conservation biologist with New Hampshire Audubon who leads the Northeast Nightjar Survey, begun in 2003 to monitor whippoorwills and Chuck-Wills-Widows on a large geographic scale.

"People had been saying that they didn't hear these birds anymore, and the limited data that we have corroborates that," Hunt said. "Surveys indicate a pretty dramatic decline throughout their range in the eastern United States in the last 40 years."

While there are some areas where whippoorwills continue to thrive — such as sandy grasslands of Long Island, Fort Drum and Clinton County in northern New York, and pine-oak barrens of Cape Cod and the South Shore in Massachusetts — they're no longer found in many areas where they nested in the past, such as western New York.

Rebecca Lohnes, a doctoral student at Cor-

Times Union Editorial

Careful In The Pine Bush

First published: Sunday, August 10, 2008

To think that the 6,000-acre Capital Region ecological treasure known as the Pine Bush was once almost 10 times that size, before developers started making their way into what still qualifies as one of the premier examples of an inland pine barrens ecosystem anywhere in the world. Today the Pine Bush and all its wonder are just a bit smaller, at least in the eyes of the builder of a proposed hotel on Washington Avenue Extension.

It's almost as if there are two separate Pine Bushes, one for ecological protection and one for economic development. The Tharaldson Development Company of North Dakota says that the 3.6 acres where it wants to build a Residence Inn Hotel contain no habitat for the Karner blue and frosted elfin butterflies — two of the 20 rare species of animals and plants that can be found in the Pine Bush.

And why would that be — if, that is, what the company says was actually true? Might all that prior development be forcing these exotic species of butterflies, one endangered and the other threatened, out of the very area where another hotel is now proposed? Might further development, of even 3.6 more acres, pose new threats to these ever-rare butterflies? They may yet relocate to that part of the Pine Bush, remember.

More study is in order, surely.

Daniel Hershberg, an Albany engineer who represents Tharaldson, told the Albany Common Council on Monday night that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has concluded that the section of the Pine Bush his company is so interested in has neither of these butterflies living there.

nell University, is studying the breeding ecology of common nighthawks in natural gravel patches on the Konza Prairie near Manhattan, Kan. She's gathering information that will be used in efforts to boost Nighthawk populations by providing gravel nesting areas on store roofs.

Nighthawks were once common in cities where they nested on flat roofs that used pea gravel as a roofing material. The birds' buzzy "peeen" call could be heard at twilight as they swooped after moths and beetles attracted to city lights.

Biologists suspect that changes in roofing materials from gravel to rubber compounds contributed to the disappearance of urban Nighthawks. In 2007, New Hampshire Audubon started "Project Nighthawk" to try to restore urban-nesting Nighthawks by placing gravel nesting patches on flat roofs.

"These are not my findings or findings from my client," says Mr. Hershberg. "These are from the scientists."

One scientist, however, disputes what he says. Robyn Nizer, a Fish and Wildlife Service biologist, says Mr. Hershberg is overstating what a study by her agency found. There is, in fact, a habitat — namely nectar plants — where the Residence Inn Hotel would be built. The issue, then, is whether the Common Council thinks Tharaldson's plans to protect that habitat would be effective.

Let's hear more from the experts, then, before another portion of the Pine Bush is bulldozed for a hotel that easily enough could be built somewhere else.

How many more hotels are there going to be along Washington Avenue Extension anyway? Oh, we understand the attraction to developers like Tharaldson. It's all about close proximity to the University at Albany and its nanotechnology center, where so much of the region's economic growth is centered. That increasingly crowded corridor can't afford out-of-control development, though. Making a casualty out of the Pine Bush is out of the question.

How far away, really, is Wolf Road in Colonie? Or the well-developed areas adjacent to Albany International Airport?

The Common Council ought to heed the warning of Lynne Jackson of the group Save the Pine Bush. To wit: "There is only one Pine Bush. You can build a hotel anywhere."

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The decline of Nightjars was first documented when states that had published breeding bird atlases about two decades ago updated them. Such was the case in New York, where the breeding bird atlas surveys completed in 2005 revealed that Whip-Poor-Wills and Common Nighthawks had disappeared from many areas where they were recorded in the atlas published in 1988, said Matthew Medler of the New York State Ornithological Association.

Mike Wilson, a researcher at the College of William and Mary's Center for Conservation Biology in Williamsburg, Va., launched Nightjar surveys in 10 Southeastern states in 2007 and expanded this year to include the 37 states not covered by the Northeast Nightjar Survey so all 48 contiguous states are included.

Nightjars are the most enigmatic group of

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A Note from the Albany Pine Bush

Preserve Commission Newsletter

Q. How did the Karner Blue butterfly come to live in the Pine Bush?

A. The Karner Blue is a sub-species closely related to the Melissa Blue, a common butterfly of the Western US, that feeds on a number of plants of the pea family. Some 12,000 to 14,000 years ago, the last ice-age came to an end and the glaciers that covered the upper Midwest and Northeast in over a mile of ice melted. From 2000 to 4000 years ago the same area went through a period of warming resulting in a great eastern expansion of prairie and barrens habitats. Over the course of time--hundreds of years--the climate cooled and the eastern prairies and barrens converted to forest. Living in a different place, in relatively isolated remnant prairie and barrens habitats, separated from the center of the Melissa Blue range and feeding on only one plant of the pea family--the wild blue lupine--the Karner Blue developed different characteristics from its "parent", the Melissa Blue.

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birds in North America, with very little known about basic aspects of their biology, habitat use, and population status, Wilson said. Widespread, long-term monitoring using a standard protocol is necessary to determine the population status of these birds, recognize changes in the status and develop conservation programs.

Wilson and Hunt recruit volunteers through Audubon groups, bird clubs, and e-mail groups for birders in each state. Volunteers do roadside counts at night when the moon is at least half full, relying on sound rather than sight, because that's when Nightjars sing.

"We want to find out where they're increasing or declining, what are the specific regions

Sad News — Update on Yassin Aref's Appeal

ALBANY: On July 2, the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit denied Yassin Aref and Mohammed Hossain's appeal of their convictions in the FBI terrorism-sting operation. This means that both men's convictions were upheld, and the men will continue to serve their 15-year sentences.

The court's decision is a sad day for the US Constitution. Secret evidence was used against Yassin Aref, violating the sixth amendment of the constitution. In an email Yassin sent after the decision, he said "I am grateful for everyone who has supported me, wished and prayed for the best for me, and has felt sorry for my family. I appreciate your time and support and I would like to assure you all that I am fine and patient. They cannot put hate in my heart and revenge in my thoughts. I know it's not over, and I hope you believe the same and stay firm until justice takes place and the truth comes out. Please do not forget my family. Yours, Political Prisoner, Victim of war, Scapegoat for this administration's policy, Yassin"

where they're imperiled, and how do complexes of habitats influence their abundance," Wilson said. "From that, we'll get an idea of what we need to do to prevent further declines of these species."

Several factors have likely contributed to the decline of Nightjars, Wilson said. They include changes in habitat and increased predation by raccoons, foxes, and domestic cats.

You get a peak in numbers in areas that are about 50 percent forest and 50 percent grassland," Wilson said. The birds nest on the ground and hunt for insects over open fields. As old hayfields grow up into forest, or when woods and meadows give way to houses and lawns, habitat is lost.

It could be that the decline of Nightjars is

Targeting of innocent Muslims is taking place all over the United States now. In August, 2008, a group of people have come together to form the Muslim Innocence Project. Learn more by going to the website, www.musliminnocenceproject.org. We must never forget the words in this poem:

First They Came for the Jews

by Pastor Martin Niemöller

First they came for the Jews
and I did not speak out
because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for the Communists
and I did not speak out
because I was not a Communist.
Then they came for the trade unionists
and I did not speak out
because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for me
and there was no one left
to speak out for me

related to the same habitat loss that has adversely affected numerous other bird species, said Gifford in the Pine Bush."

About 67 percent of shrubland birds have declined since 1980," Gifford said. "About 50 percent of grassland birds have declined, and 25 percent of forest birds."

Albany's Pine Bush, a rare habitat of prairie grasses and wildflowers, scrub oaks and pitch pines on rolling sand dunes left by glaciers, once stretched for 125 miles. Now, a patchwork of 3,010 acres is included in the Pine Bush Preserve and about half of that has been restored to its original condition by cutting and burning invasive trees and shrubs.

It may offer clues to what led to the decline of Nightjars, and what might bring them back.



Save the Pine Bush

A Project of the Social Justice Center
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