

# Save the Pine Bush

## July/August Newsletter

Jul/Aug 10 No. 104 • 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, July 21, 6:00 p.m.

## Neil Gifford

*Conservation Director, Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission  
will speak about*

### Creating and Managing a Viable Albany Pine Bush Preserve

Neil Gifford, Conservation Director with the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission will provide an outline of the changes proposed in the 2010 Draft Management Plan and DEIS for the Albany Pine Bush Preserve. The presentation will also highlight the current research and management of several rare species including the endangered Karner blue butterfly and prairie warbler.

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 or email pinebush@mac.com. Interested people are welcomed to attend the program beginning at 7:00 for which there is no charge.

## July Flower Walk

### Saturday, July 24 at 9:30 AM

**Meet At:** SUNYA Campus Center Bus Stop, Collins Circle, 1400 Washington Ave. Albany

**Leader:** Amy Riley; **For info call:** 465-8930

Join us with the very knowledgeable wildflower specialist Amy Riley in a leisurely late July walk in the Pine Bush. Note: Amy's son Neal who is an avid informed birder will likely be along on the hike to make the event doubly interesting and informative.

We may see some black vultures or even Carolina wrens both of whom are moving up north due, most likely, to global heating

**The walk is free and open to the public! Bring your friends!**

[www.savethepinebush.org](http://www.savethepinebush.org)

### Ward Stone, Environmental Hero, Speaks

*by Lynne Jackson*

ALBANY: Ward Stone, NYS Wildlife Pathologist and environmental hero, spoke at the May Save the Pine Bush vegetarian/vegan lasagna dinner at the First Presbyterian Church. Ward began by describing how he met Rezsins Adams on the very first Earth Day in April, 1970, at the University at Albany. That day, Ward gave about four of five talks; he was saying that things were really bad, with pollution and habitat destruction, and that it would take a lot of money to fix these things. Ward said, "Here we are, forty years later, and we still have not done that much about it."

Ward asked, "How many of us here remember this kind of weather in May?" (the day was very warm, more like June or July). He reminded

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### The Great Pesticide Hunt How Grace Nichols Discovered the City Violated Their Own Pesticide Ordinance

*by Lynne Jackson*

ALBANY: Grace Nichols spoke about pesticides at the June Save the Pine Bush vegetarian lasagna dinner at the First Presbyterian Church. Pesticides include herbicides, insecticides and rodenticides.

Grace explained that unlike other types of pollution which are a by-product of making something, pesticides are designed to kill organisms. Pesticides are a whole new category of pollution. Grace began by explain how anticoagulant rodenticides (Brodifacoum) work. The pellets are these very pretty blue-green crystals (children often think these are candy, and Grace explained there are 10,000 poisonings a year by rodenticides) which are eaten by mice. The mice begin to lose blood and become very thirsty and look for puddles and run out in the open, becoming a perfect target for hawks or owls. The rodenticides bio-accummulate in the top preda-

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*Ward Stone, from page 1*

us that May is a time for planting, for fishing, for enjoying the flowers. Global warming, Ward declared, is here. It is the biggest environmental battle of our time.

Cement plants produce 5% of the world's CO<sub>2</sub>. Cement is made from limestone, which has a lot of calcium carbonate in it, that when heated to make cement, a great deal of CO<sub>2</sub> is emitted.

Global warming is a huge problem, and will become more of a problem as time goes on. Global warming is affecting the polar bears, the Inuit, and Alaska. Ward observed that so many explorers, like Henry Hudson, were looking for the Northwest passage. Now, with global warming for the first time, the Arctic ocean may allow it.

In July, 1969 Ward became the NYS Wildlife Pathologist. Then, he had a lot of hope about making the changes necessary.

Not all is bleak, Ward noted the good things that have happened — bans on DDT, and some of the worst pesticides out there. However, these bans took a long time to enact. He noted that we are still playing around with lead. We have a long way to go to control mercury.

Unfortunately, Ward said, we are still fighting for the Pine Bush - for 32 years now. The Pine Bush is being destroyed piece by piece by piece. The Karner Blue has almost disappeared from the greater Albany Pine Bush. He would have thought that after 32 years of knowing about this problem, that this unique flora and fauna would have been saved.

Ward observed that the landfill has never been properly studied in the Pine Bush, for the pollutants and the gases coming out of it. Ward pointed out the conflict of interest the Pine Bush Commission has in accepting money for every load of garbage that goes into the landfill, and yet saying that they oppose the landfill expansion.

Ward was concerned about the pesticides in the Pine Bush. At his suggestion, Grace Nichols, began to investigate the City of Albany's use of pesticides. (See related story on Grace's work.)

The Pine Bush has a long way to go to be protected. More land is needed, as well as an independent look at the management of the Preserve.

Ward told the story of how he investigated the ANSWERS incinerator plant in the hollow in Sheridan Avenue, and how he walked into the incinerator plant to gather samples. The downfall of the incinerator was when one day, black snow fell on the governor's mansion.

Ward asked, what have I learned in 41 years as the NYS Wildlife Pathologist? "Money talks

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## Nighthawks

*by Tim Truscott*

I don't consider myself to be a "birder", as I lack the knowledge to be one. However, over 50 years ago my Second Grade teacher, Mrs. Mary Lawler, instilled in me an appreciation for birds by means of her frequent lessons on birds, using prints of the famous and fantastically-colored Audubon bird illustrations.

One bird that has caught my interest in recent years has been the Nighthawk. Like many things in life, I didn't fully appreciate them until they weren't around anymore. During the summer months, I would often sit on my stoop in the evening in downtown Albany and hear (as well as see) the Nighthawks flying at an altitude somewhat above the streetlights, grabbing insects out of the air for their evening meal. The shrill sound of the Nighthawks was distinctive and provided a counterpoint to the crickets as a reminder that nature is still active after dark.

Nighthawks are not really hawks (not raptors, anyway) and are only the approximate size of a Robin (six inches long or perhaps a little more). They have long, pointed wings and a forked tail. Their feathers are fairly non-distinctive in coloration (which helps them blend into the appearance of tree bark), though they have some white stripes on their wings and tail. They are most active in their insect-catching activity at dusk and at dawn.

One thing about Nighthawks that I have found to be fascinating is their migratory activity: They're migratory, all right... All the way to South America each winter. Now that's quite a hike!

As I said, I didn't fully appreciate them. However, a year or two ago I realized that the Nighthawks were no longer around downtown Albany (I also noticed that we had a lot more mosquitoes in the neighborhood than we had ten or 20 years ago). This was very disturbing to me. It was also very perplexing. So I went on-line to learn more about Nighthawks and to see if I could figure out why they were no longer residing in Albany.

In New Hampshire, the Audubon Society has undertaken a statewide research initiative aimed at conserving and bringing back the Nighthawk, a threatened bird species in that state ([http://www.newhampshireaudubon.org/detail.php?entry\\_id=36](http://www.newhampshireaudubon.org/detail.php?entry_id=36)).

Until the 20th Century, Nighthawks nested on the ground, naturally nesting in open areas such as gravel beaches, burned-over areas, and cultivated fields. As building construction technology advanced to the point where many commercial and industrial buildings were built with

bituminous asphalt roofs covered with peastone, nighthawks began nesting on the peastone, safe from ground predators and in locations where there were plenty of insects (everything from mosquitoes to large moths) attracted by streetlights. The nighthawks thrived in this environment for decades, naturally helping to control the insect populations of our urban areas. At the same time, the birds' natural ground nesting habitat time habitat was lost to development and forest regeneration. So rooftops became their primary nesting habitat.

Building construction technology has once again advanced, this time replacing the peastone-covered asphalt roofs with neoprene rubber and PVC materials, i.e. no peastone employed. The result is that there is no natural rooftop nesting place for nighthawks.

In 2007, New Hampshire Audubon initiated Project Nighthawk to look at the potential for restoring nesting nighthawks. Nighthawks could still be found in a few towns, including Keene and Concord, but their numbers had diminished. The organization placed simple gravel "nest patches" on flat rooftops in these two towns. Researchers thought that, if the absence of nesting sites is a factor in Nighthawk decline, perhaps the artificial gravel nesting sites would encourage the birds to return. If there were other factors, such as pesticides, new predation or migration hazards, the rooftop experimental gravel nesting patches would not help the birds' return.

It may be several years before we know the answer.

Meanwhile, I was quite excited on the evening of the Fourth of July when I saw what I am fairly certain was a Nighthawk in the vicinity of the Empire State Plaza, zipping around the sky as Nighthawks do. I hope they weren't scared away from downtown Albany by the fireworks, which began a few minutes after I saw the bird.

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*Mark Your Calendar!*

**August Save the Pine Bush Dinner  
Wednesday, August 25, at 6:00 PM**

**Bill Danielson**  
naturalist, environmental researcher,

science teacher and writer of the  
column, *Speaking of Nature*  
*will speak about*

**Birds of the Pine Bush**

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# United National Antiwar Conference to be Held in Albany — Why Save the Pine Bush Supporters Need to Attend

an editorial by Lynne Jackson

A National Conference to Bring the Troops Home NOW! is being held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, State and Lodge Streets, in Albany, NY from July 23 to July 25.

I believe all members and supporters of Save the Pine Bush need to attend this important conference.

Why, you ask, should environmentalists get involved with an antiwar conference? What does war have to do with protecting the globally-rare Pine Bush?

According to the National Priorities website, costofwar.com, as of July, 2010, the United States has spent about \$ 1,013,517,950,000 on the Iraq and Afghan wars. For residents of the City of Albany alone, we have paid \$317,294,800 on the wars. For all that money, we could have bought all of the remainder of the privately-owned Pine Bush and added it to the preserve — fourteen times over (estimating that the cost to purchase all of the remaining Pine Bush at \$23 million).

The financial cost of these wars is devastating the budgets of New York State and our local municipalities. The federal government has poured so much of our national treasure into war, that there is little left for the needs of the people in the United States, such as, clean air, clean water, and, of course, preserving our precious and irreplaceable ecosystems, like the Pine Bush.

The human cost of war is outrageous. Thousands of American soldiers have died in Iraq and Afghanistan not to mention the deaths of tens of thousands of Iraqi and Afghani civilians.

Of course, to keep the wars going overseas, our government needs to keep us afraid here. We have been told that we should be afraid of “domestic terrorists.” To create these terrorists, the FBI has targeted a minority here (Muslims) and has created a program of “preemptive prosecution” or of prosecuting Muslims because the FBI thinks the Muslims may have thoughts about committing crimes (note, no one can read another person’s thoughts and there are no actual crimes committed).

In Albany, many citizens remember very well how the FBI entrapped two Muslims, Yassin Aref and Mohammed Hossain. In the Aref/Hossain case, William Pericek, the prosecuting attorney, explained preemptive prosecution at a March 8, 2007 press conference: “Well again you [ask] was [Aref] a terrorist? Well, I think he had that ideology. . . Did he actually himself engage in terrorist acts? **We didn’t have the evidence of that** but he had the **ideology** . . .”.

Why should we in Save the Pine Bush care

about the fate of Yassin Aref and other preemptively prosecuted Muslims? We are Americans. We know what injustice looks like. We forced people of Japanese ancestry into concentration camps because of their ethnicity. We persecuted people under McCarthy because of their political beliefs. We Americans have a special responsibility to see that these abuses never happen again. We have no right to persecute people based solely on their religion. As long as the targeting of Muslims continues here, the wars will continue overseas.

This is the first time a national peace conference convention has ever come to Albany. Let us all welcome the attendees, and show what a friendly place Albany is!

The conference organizers invite us to “Come to a conference where peace, social justice and environmental activists will come together to discuss the major concerns we face and to hammer out an ambitious program of action.”

A workshop will be held regarding the preemptive prosecution of Muslims, and the Saturday lunch will feature speakers on the targeting of Muslims.

Also, at the conference, there will be at least two workshops on global climate change. Save the Pine Bush is a local sponsor of the Conference. It would be great to have a table for Save the Pine Bush; please email me at lynnejackson@mac.com if you are able to volunteer to table.

Register for the conference online at [www.nationalpeaceconference.org](http://www.nationalpeaceconference.org)

I plan to attend the entire conference, including the rally and march for preemptively prosecuted Muslims at the Capitol on Sunday, July 25 at 1:00 pm. I hope to see everyone there!

We need to remember the quote from Pastor Martin Niemöller: In Germany they first came for the Communists, but I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn’t speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up. (from *Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations*.)

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[www.savethepinepush.org](http://www.savethepinepush.org)

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Ward Stone, from page 2

— the environment walks.”

Ward discussed the cement plant in Ravena. Two women came to him a year ago, telling him that something must be done. Even though Ward had no money, he went down to Ravena to look at the cement plant. Ward found mercury, cadmium and other substances. The citizens raised money to pay for the testing. The amount of mercury produced by the cement plant is substantial. Now, the health department and Harvard University wish to study the health effects of the cement plant.

One more thing, said Ward, that he wants to tell us as a scientist. We need to be moving away from poured cement. We need to be looking at other, more environmentally safer, materials to build our infrastructure. After 9/11, people asked Ward what was going on with all of these people coughing and sneezing. Ward was not thinking of the major factor, he was thinking of airplane petroleum, of burning paint in the towers, etc. But, the major problem was clouds of cement dust coming down.

Trout fishing was a big deal to Ward when he was a little boy. His mother was always happy for him to go and catch some trout to eat. He made some of his first observations about cement when he was out fishing. When he was seven or eight, Ward had thought that cement lasted pretty much forever. He thought, a bridge built from cement would last for generations. There was a waterfall, and a pool beneath the falls with some rocky material in it. Ward went to sit on this flat rock, only to discover it was cement. He noticed that the edges of the cement slab were flaking or eroding off, with little pieces of sand and gravel coming off. At that point, he remembering thinking “Cement is not forever.”

He spoke of talking to Jack Lauber (a proponent of incineration to solve the garbage problem) who told him the ash from the incinerators could be made into cement and tossed into the oceans. And Ward thought about how the cement would disintegrate, and the pollutants put into the cement would make their way out and enter the food chain. Ward also mentioned how caustic cement is — that he was once helping his step-father build a house, and put his hand into the cement and how much his hand burned. Ward again emphasized that we need a safe alternative to cement.

*Editor’s Note:* Ward Stone has been working to protect our environment for over four decades. He is a tremendous asset to New York State. He is completely unafraid of doing the right thing for the environment. We at Save the Pine Bush offer our sincere thanks for all of the work that Ward has done.

## Action Alerts!

### Draft New York State Solid Waste Management Plan

*Deadline for Public Comments:*

*August 16, 2010*

Entitled "Beyond Waste: A Sustainable Materials Management Strategy for New York State" the draft plan is now available for review.

Everyone who cares about what to do with the garbage should send their comments.

Save the Pine Bush's position is this: 1) We need to move toward a zero-waste policy. Zero waste is achievable, its just a matter of planning and implementation 2) No more expansions of the landfill in the Pine Bush and 3) Incineration or any type of burning of municipal solid waste should be prohibited. Incineration is expensive and is the least environmentally-sound disposal method.

Please read the plan at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/41831.html>. Send your comments by August 16 to Ed Dassatti, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Solid and Hazardous Materials, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-7250.

### Speak Out on Pesticides

*Please Come to City Hall on July 14 at 6pm.*

Albany Common Council held it's first Ad Hoc Committee Meeting on Pesticides in June. We are making headway in that the City admitted to longstanding violations of its pesticides policy. The committee has dedicated itself to making positive changes.

Our voice are very much needed to

- 1) Advocate for pesticide reductions in the plans for a "Restoration" of habitat in the Pine Bush
- 2) To include in the law a ban on rodenticides, which bioaccumulate in the food chain, killing owls, hawks and other top carnivores in the city pesticide ban. Mechanical trapping has worked very well at the Landfill.
- 3) Advocate for City watershed protection such as rain gardens, which will filter some of the pesticides, fertilizers, motor oil and other contaminants from stormwater. We need to encourage positive environmental practices as we challenge negative ones.

**The meeting on pesticides is on Wednesday at July 14th at 6pm after a 5:30 Caucus.**

Grace had already discovered that pesticide records maintained by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation are secret, and that DEC will not supply information on where or who applies pesticides by specific location. But, Grace discovered that the City of Albany complies with FOIL laws, and supplied her with a treasure-trove of records including the contracts and purchase orders from Rent-O-Kill (what a name of the pesticide company!)— now named Ehrlich Pest Control.

Grace then needed to decipher the documents, which described the pesticides used, how much and where these pesticides were applied. But, she did not know what the names of the pesticides meant, such as Weatherblock XF and other exotic names. Back she went to Ward Stone who told her to "google it!" Of course, Weatherblock XF contains Brodifacoum. Grace also discovered that insecticides used at the landfill included ones that kill butterflies and moths — next to the Pine Bush Preserve which is trying to save the Karner Blue butterflies and the buck moth!

Grace continued to visit the Albany Common Council and tell them of her finds. She discovered that the City already had an ordinance outlawing the use of certain pesticides, and that the City was violating that ordinance. The Altomont Enterprise, and finally the Times Union picked up the story.

Ultimately, Leah Golby, 10th Ward Common Council member, is chairing a temporary committee to deal with the issues of pesticides (see box for meeting).

With Grace's persistence, and the support and interest of others, we hope that the City's pesticide ordinance will be strengthened, not only to protect the species in the Pine Bush, but, to protect human health. Grace ended with a provocative thought: "Why would you do all of that to kill a dandelion?"

### *Pesticide Hunt, continued from page 1*

tors, which do not die after eating just one or two mice. After eating many mice that are poisoned with rodenticide, the raptor may bruise itself on a branch or be scratched by its prey. Normally, this would not affect the bird, but, with the poisonous anticoagulant Brodifacoum in its body, this small injury bleeds until the bird dies.

Grace was visiting NYS Wildlife Pathologist Ward Stone, who suggested to her that she should look through his necropsy reports to see what killed animals in the Pine Bush. A necropsy report shows who found the dead animal, where it

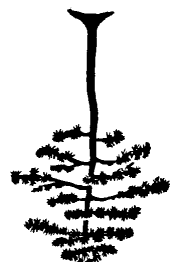
was found, and what the lab describes as the cause of death. To give us a general idea of a typical report, Grace described a Cooper's hawk found in February, 2001. It was an adult male, with abundant fat reserves (meaning it did not starve to death). However, the bird contained Brodifacoum — the hawk had hemorrhaged to death.

At a hearing about the landfill expansion, Joe Giebelhaus, the City employee who runs the landfill, said that the landfill does not use rodenticides. His comments were recorded by the Altamont Enterprise.

Grace then FOILED the City of Albany to find out about rodenticide use by the city.

Return Service Requested

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