

The Meadowlark

The Newsletter of Genesee Valley Audubon Society, Vol. 34, No. 5
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Corn Ethanol: The great yellow hope?

By Loretta Morrell

Until a few weeks ago I would have thought that there was no negative impact to the use of Ethanol made out of corn. The television news makes it sound like the answer to all our foreign oil woes and a boon to our economy as well. Imagine my surprise as I took part in an Audubon workshop a few weeks ago and discovered that ethanol may not be the Holy Grail it is being touted as being.

Three facts seem to be driving this sudden urgent push towards finding a fuel alternative. Americans may not agree on much, but we do agree that foreign dependence for our energy needs must come to an end. Also, on the surface it seems like we are even doing something noble by using an energy source that would appear to help farmers. It also goes without saying that many of us thought that burning corn must be a heck of a lot better for our environment than burning coal, oil and gasoline. How can there be anything wrong with switching over to ethanol?

What we are not being told too loudly is that ethanol costs a significant amount of energy to create. First the farmer has to use diesel machinery to prepare the ground for planting and to harvest the corn. Often electricity is used to distill the ethanol. Once the ethanol is made and available at our local service stations, we are going to need to fill up more often. Ethanol does not burn as efficiently as gasoline. Some experts say that fuel economy could decrease as much as 30%.

Environmentally, experts are not even sure as to how much of a positive effect a switch to ethanol will have on slowing down global warming. What is known is that corn is a harsh crop on

soil. It will grow in poor soil, but it is a very thirsty plant and would need to be irrigated a great deal. Corn depletes the nutrients from the soil and causes erosion. Farmers may be tempted to forego crop rotation in order to plant more of the profitable corn and supplement the fields with artificial fertilizer rather than let the fields "rest" or plant a replenishing crop like beans or alfalfa. Excessive fertilizers get washed off into the ground water and end up back in our rivers and lakes, further damaging those already fragile ecosystems. Farmers have been hard hit economically for generations. Land that may have been put in trust for grassland birds is still in the private hands of farmers. The profitability of growing fields and fields of corn could realistically cause the extinction of many species of already threatened grassland birds.

Economically we are already feeling the effects of Ethanol blends. In the past few weeks gas prices have gone up several cents. Dairy farmers are paying twice as much for their cattle feed that they paid a year ago at this time, and consequently the price of milk is at an all time high. So we are paying more at the pump and more at the store, and this is for a fuel that has not proven its effectiveness against global warming. Also President Bush has already been down to Brazil talking about buying up more corn, so in addition to dependency on foreign oil are we looking at having a dependency on foreign crops as well?

Ethanol made out of only corn is not the answer. Potentially using a blend of grasses may be more environmentally friendly, provide us with a viable energy source, and still leave the birds in the grasslands for us to share

with future generations. The government has to take a step back and allow researchers the time and funding to find the best alternative. In the meantime, we as consumers can help by observing the speed limit, getting regular tune-ups, and buying new vehicles that are as fuel efficient as our pocketbooks will allow us to afford.

Montezuma Audubon Center Grand Opening May 5

The Montezuma Audubon Center will officially open its doors to the public on Saturday May 5th, providing visitors with an exciting opportunity to learn about and experience the most magnificent freshwater wetlands complex in the northeast. The new nature center will feature amazing exhibits highlighting the remarkable biodiversity found throughout the area.

The Montezuma wetlands have been recognized as an Important Bird Area by Audubon New York, and a State Bird Conservation Area for its critical importance to migrating water birds. It has become one of the most recognized destinations for bird watchers throughout the nation.

The Center is located approximately 1.5 miles north of the Hamlet of Savannah and is west of NYS Route 89 immediately north of the Crusoe Creek.

For more information on the programs visit the Wildlife Festival website: www.friendsofmontezuma.org/wildlifefestival.html or email montezuma@audubon.org

11TH ANNUAL MONTEZUMA MUCKRACE September 7-8, 2007

If you seek adventure and friendly competition, join us in supporting bird conservation at the Montezuma Wetlands Complex this fall. Organized by Audubon New York and Friends of the Montezuma Wetland Complex, the Muckrace is a 24-hour birding competition that raises money for bird conservation projects within Montezuma. The event will take place September 7 and 8 at the Montezuma Wetlands Complex, one of New York's most exciting birding destinations.

This year we are aiming to raise \$10,000 to put towards a conservation project at the new Montezuma Audubon Center. Prizes will be awarded to the team that raises the most money and to those teams that record the highest number of species.

To receive updates and information on the Muckrace, including the newsletter, "Muckrace Musings," visit http://friendsofmontezuma.org/muck_race.html. For more information about participating, becoming a team sponsor, or to be added to the mailing list, contact Jillian Linder at jlinder@audubon.org. The registration deadline is August 10.

Thank You!

The 2006 Annual Campaign was the best ever. The total raised was over \$1,400.00. Thank you to everyone who donated, we know that you gave what you could and gave from the heart. It is greatly appreciated.

Donation Level

\$100-\$499

Anonymous (1)
Edward J. McCrea
Clare & Ronald Sloat

Pamela Rosen
Robin Salsbury
Linda Schultz
Alfred E. Smith
Carolyn Smith
Mary Ellen Stocks
Eleanor Summers
Eberhard Thieme
John Tighe

\$50-\$99

Alfred Clark Jr.
Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Newell
Suzanne R. Robinson
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Robert Twichell
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\$25-\$49

Norman Allentoff
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Patricia L. DeLuca
Leo & Doris Dugan
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Jerry Greenlee
Robert & Muriel Haggerty
Bruce Hegedorn
Dorothy LeSchander
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under \$25

Marshal E. Atwell
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Grace Culhane
Melanie Cunico
Harry D. Doty
Julia A. Guttman
Richard L. Klaver
Carl & Jo Lind
Kirby & Kathryn Milton
Elizabeth A. Ruscher
James C. Weaver

First Sunday Hikes, 2007 Black Creek Park

In 2007 we will be hiking in Black Creek Park in southwest Monroe County. GVAS has a long history of involvement with in this park. In 1975 GVAS was formed to keep this area from becoming a landfill. In the early 1990's we performed a vegetation survey. In 2007 we plan to hike and do some work in the mitigation wetland and model airplane flying field otherwise known as the Bobolink field. When the weather will allow we will stay after the hike and remove invasive alien plants. Much of Black Creek Park is a hard wood wetland, so always wear boots and dress for the weather. To get to Black Creek Park take Rt. 490 west to the Rte. 259/Union St. exit (exit 4). Turn left, heading south, cross Chili Ave., over Black Creek. The entrance will be on your right. In the park at the first stop sign turn right, stay on this road to the Sunnyside Lodge parking lot. See you there.

May 6	3:00 p.m.
June 3	8:00 a.m.
July 1	8:00 a.m.
August 5	8:00 a.m.
September 2	3:00 p.m.
October 7	3:00 p.m.
November 4	3:00 p.m.
December 2	3:00 p.m.

Coastal Cleanup

Join us at Braddock Bay Marina on East Manitou Rd., Saturday, September 15, 9:00 a.m. to clean up the bay after a long summer. We will join others around New York State and the world participating in the International Coastal Cleanup. In 2006 in New York State 10,175 volunteers helped to document and clean 338 miles of shoreline! Actually that number is higher since 15 sites remain unreported. Become part of the solution to water quality; join us Sept. 15 to clean up. Call June Summers, 585-865-6047 for more information.

Volunteers Needed

The International Migratory Bird Day Festival is coming up on May 12-13 at Braddock Bay Park. GVAS needs volunteers to sell Rubber Duck Race tickets, to oversee the sales of coffee, and snacks. Call June Summers, (585) 865-6047 to volunteer.

The Rubber Duck Race will be held on June 3 at 3:00 pm during the Fairport Canal Days. This fundraiser supports our Flying Wild teacher workshops. GVAS needs volunteers to sell tickets before and during the event, run games for kids, and kayakers to retrieve the ducks. Call David Semple, (585) 223-8369 to volunteer, or buy a ticket.

International Migratory Bird Day Festival (IMBD)

Join us for a celebration of migratory birds at Braddock Bay Park, May 12 & 13. See live bird demonstrations, listen to educational talks, participate in fun activities for the kids and family, and learn about migratory birds and organizations that support their conservation. Bob Marcotte's presentation will give an overview of how the bird populations in the Rochester area have changed over the last century. Come learn what you can do to help conserve birds and their habitat. At the festival, you can also learn about how to get involved in the Flying WILD program and service-learning projects that leave a lasting legacy to benefit birds and the environment.

Find out more about the purpose of IMBD at www.birdday.org. For directions and other information for the local festival go to www.birdcor.org. BirdCOR is our sister organization, a coalition of organizations working together to carry out environmental education pro-

Many Hands Make Light Work!

By Carolyn Emerson

Black Creek Park is now ready for the arrival of our state bird, the Eastern Bluebird. Ten hardy individuals trudged through the crusty snow to clean out the bluebird nest boxes in the park. Thanks to Norma Benedict, Brian Curtis and his fiancée from Wayne County, Karen Folts, Joni and John Dubner, Jim Emerson, Lisa McKeown, Hans and Shirley Strassner.

In the new wetland area still under construction, four boxes and poles were pulled out. Unfortunately, these have been fairly popular nesting sites. Once the ground thaws, these boxes will be repositioned.

We usually begin monitoring the nest boxes around mid-April. If anyone would like to tour the bluebird trail and possibly help with checking on nesting and fledging progress, please call Carolyn Emerson at 889-1887. Thanks again to all who assisted on March 3rd and to all who will help in the spring.

Teachers, Flying Wild Workshop

Is an educational program offered by the same folks that brought you Project Wild. Flying Wild focuses on birds and their conservation. A workshop has been scheduled for Saturday, March 3, 2007 at Brockport High School. If you are a teacher and interested in hearing more about this program, call David Semple, (585) 223-8369.



5th Annual

International Migratory Bird Day

Braddock Bay Park

E. Manitou Rd at Lake Ontario State Parkway

Town of Greece



SATURDAY, MAY 12TH

10 A.M. — Festival opens

10:15 A.M. — Live Bird Program by Seneca Park Zoo

11:30 A.M. — Live Bird Program by Seneca Park Zoo

1:00 P.M. — *Changes before our eyes: The ebb and flow of various bird species in our region* – Bob Marcotte

2:00 P.M. — Live Raptor Program – Ron Walker, Friends with Feathers Ltd.

3:15 P.M. — Live Raptor Program – Ron Walker, Friends with Feathers Ltd.

SUNDAY, MAY 13TH

12:30 P.M. — Nature Walk – led by Ed McCrea

1:00 P.M. — Live Raptor Program – Ron Walker, Friends with Feathers Ltd.

2:00 P.M. — *Changes before our eyes: The ebb and flow of various bird species in our region* – Bob Marcotte

3:15 P.M. — *Rochester Peregrine Falcons* – Jim Pisello, Genesee Valley Audubon Society

4:00 P.M. — Close of Festival

No admission charge

Food by DiRosato's Pizza & Pasta

The Meadowlark

P.O. Box 886, Adams Basin, NY 14410-0886

GVAS: A chapter of the National Audubon Society

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The mission of GVAS is to promote conservation of the environment through education and to advocate for its protection, focusing on birds and other wildlife in western New York.

Keep up-to-date with our NEW web site, www.gvaudubon.org

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The Meadowlark is published the 1st of September, November, January, March, and April. Articles for the Meadowlark should be submitted four weeks prior to the date of publication. Send articles to Joanne Mitchell, 169 Black Walnut Dr., Rochester, NY 14615, or at GJMitch@localnet.com.

Meadowlark staff: *Editor & Layout*, Joanne Mitchell; *Business Editor*, vacant; *Printing*, Community News; *Distribution*, vacant.

Socks and Shirts for Grassland Conservation

Georgena Terry, owner of Terry Bicycles, loves bobolinks and is working to help save the habitat for them. Her SONGBIRD socks have bobolinks, meadowlarks, sandpapers, or grasslands on them and she will donate \$2 per pair of socks to Audubon New York.

Her organic t-shirts have bobolinks and facts about them; 20% of the net profit is donated to the Vermont Institute of Natural Science in habitat conservation for the boblinks.

If you are a fan of bobolinks or other grassland birds and want to wear your passion on your socks, visit www.terrybicycles.com. You will look good while sharing your passion!

Rubber Duck Race Fundraiser

Join us for our annual Rubber Duck Race Fundraiser on June 3 at 3:00 p.m. on the canal in Fairport. This year the Rubber Duck Race will be held during Fairport Canal Days. Proceeds from this event support our bird-based environmental education programs, Flying Wild workshops for teachers, and the International Migratory Bird Day Festival. Rubber Duck Race tickets are \$5 each or a Quack Pack is 6 for \$25; they may be purchased from June Summers, 208 Rhea Crescent, Rochester, NY 14615, check payable to GVAS, or during Canal Days in Fairport. For more information go to www.birdcor.org.