

# The Meadowlark

The Newsletter of Genesee Valley Audubon Society, Vol. 35, No. 2  
November/December 2007



## What Makes the Great Lakes Great – Part II

By Loretta Morrell

I hope the reader feels as I do, privileged to be a resident living within the Great Lakes Watershed. But with the privilege also comes the responsibility. Our lake is in trouble and it is the responsibility of each one of us to do what he or she can to preserve our environment and our way of life for future generations. The Great Lakes are facing many threats: loss of habitat, poor water quality, contaminated harbors and sediment areas, invasive species, and quantitative use of the waters.

Quoting from Sean Mahar, Director of Government Relations and Communications at Audubon New York, "One of the main threats to the Great Lakes ecosystem identified is the loss of biodiversity resulting from the degradation and loss of key habitats around the lakes. Migratory birds like the Kirkland Warbler and Piping Plover have seen dramatic declines throughout the Lakes region, and are signaling that something must be done before it is too late. It has been found that increased degradation of these habitats leads directly to population declines in the fish and wildlife resources of the lakes, which in turn results in human impacts including reduced drinking water quality, and direct economic implication in the loss of fisheries and recreational opportunities like bird watching, swimming, and boating."

The Great Lakes Collaboration Implementation Act will restore fish and wildlife habitat by reauthorizing the Great Lakes Fish & Wildlife Restoration Act at \$20 million, in addition to promoting sustainable development throughout the Basin. The State legisla-

ture also took action to address the ecosystem management needs of the Lakes by passing the New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Act. This act will establish a council of State Agencies to coordinate the management of the state's coastal resources. In addition, as part of the newly expanded \$224 million Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), a new \$3 million category for ocean and great lakes conservation was created to directly impact the restoration of the lakes in New York.

Another leading cause of habitat degradation and reduction in water quality was sewage discharges. Excess nutrients, bacteria, and viruses from under or untreated sewage are contributing to hundreds of summer beach closures, increased algal growth, low dissolved oxygen, the return of Lake's Erie "dead zone", and fish kills. According to "Testing the Waters," a report released last year by the Natural Resources Defense Council, contaminated water closed beaches in New York more than twice as often in 2004 as in the previous year.

In a 2003 report the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published a report entitled the New York State Sewer Scorecard. In the report the Frank E. Van Lare Sewage Treatment Plant in Monroe County, which drains into Lake Ontario, rated a "D-". To fix the problem in 2003 the EPA estimated that it would take \$146,686,000. The comment justifying the grade is that the sewage bypasses full treatment during minor rain events, in the process of implementing best management prac-

tices. To Van Lare's and Monroe County's credit major upgrades to the sewage system were undergone in the late seventies, but that was now thirty years ago, and how many more communities have sprung up in that time? How many wetlands, natural drainage and pollution filters, have been bulldozed under?

The Great Lakes Collaboration Implementation Act will seek to prevent sewage contamination by reauthorizing the State Revolving Loan Fund and providing \$20 billion over five years to assist communities nationally with improving their wastewater infrastructure. Already, New York State has recognized the large need for sewage treatment plant upgrades and in this year's expanded EPF, a new \$7.250 million category for water quality improvements (sewage treatment plant upgrades) was added to address this need. Just last month Senator Charles Schumer stood on the shores of Durand Beach to announce his intention to obtain a low interest loan through the Water Quality Act to assist Irondequoit in repairing its poorly operational sewage system.

For over 100 years, pollution from PCBs, dioxin, mercury, and other heavy metals have accumulated on the bottom of the Lakes. Sources of this pollution include agricultural runoff, discharges from industrial sites and hazardous waste disposal areas, and atmospheric deposition. Heavy concentrations of chemicals in specific areas have led to the International Joint Commission (a bi-national organization to resolve

*(Continued on page 3)*

## November Program

Wednesday, November 14, 2007, 7:30 p.m.  
Brighton Town Hall Downstairs Meeting Room  
2300 Elmwood Avenue, Brighton

### Invasive Species

Christine Sevilla will present her ground-breaking work to inform the public about the fastest growing cause of habitat destruction, alien invasive plant species. If there are weeds in your garden that you haven't seen before or wild flowers you don't know, the chances are they are invasive alien plants. The problem is that most of these plants don't have a natural source of control, i.e. something that eats them. They grow faster than native plants and quickly cover native vegetation. Invasive plants offer little food and shelter for wildlife. Join us to learn how to identify these plants.

## December

No program in December. Have a happy holiday season!



## January Program

Wednesday, January 23, 2008  
Brighton Town Hall Downstairs Meeting Room  
2300 Elmwood Avenue, Brighton

### Auburn Trail Presentation

Bruce and Mary Ann Cady will share their knowledge of the diversity of habitat – plants and animals - in a short stretch of trail between Fishers Road and Railroad Mills Road, Victor. A coalition for "The Railroad Mills Special Environmental Area" is working to conserve this small section of a proposed "Rails to Trails" extension by the Town of Victor. The presentation will also detail the efforts of the coalition working with the Town of Victor to meet the goals of both groups.

## Thank You!

To Rochester Birding Association for a generous donation to provide classroom kits of Audubon Adventures for elementary school classrooms, to teach children about nature.

## First Sunday Hikes, 2007

### Black Creek Park

Since January we have been 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 Rt. 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.

November 4 3:00 p.m.  
December 2 3:00 p.m.

## Fall / Winter Field Trips

### Save the Dates

Joni Dubner will lead winter hikes (no more than 2 hours) in Mendon Ponds Park. Come out, walk a trail and feed the chickadees &



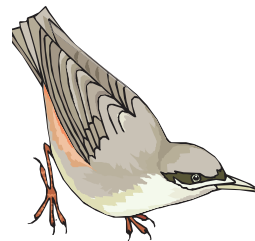
nuthatches

while enjoying nature. Fun for the whole family!! All are welcome to participate in this outdoor adventure on selected Saturdays. **We will meet at 9 am in the Nature Center Parking**

**lot on Pond Rd off of Clover St** (the southernmost of the 3 park entrances off Clover) Bring sunflower seeds and dress for the weather (wear boots, warm clothes, etc.) Seed will be provided with a donation.

Dates: Saturday, November 17, 2007  
Saturday, December 15, 2007

Watch future publications for more hikes in 2008



# GVAS Annual Campaign

By June Summers, President

Genesee Valley Audubon Society has just reached another milestone. This is the fifth year of our annual campaign. Looking back I can recall the anxiety I felt during the first annual campaign. How I had to convince the GVAS board to spend money on the remittance envelopes, not knowing if the donations would even cover that cost. The excitement when GVAS received over \$1,000.00 in donations from that first annual campaign. Whew, we more than covered our cost, thanks to all the generous donations from our wonderful members.

Genesee Valley Audubon Society has also come a long way just in this past year. We continue to offer First Sunday Hikes at local parks and walks to feed the Chickadees in Mendon Ponds Park. We have also taken a more prominent role in some other activities. We have taken the Bird Coalition of Rochester (BirdCOR) under our wing. BirdCOR is dedicated to environmental education, service learning and migratory bird conservation in the Greater Rochester area. The BirdCOR's annual fund raising event is a Rubber Duck Race in the Erie Canal in Fairport, NY. For the first time this year's Rubber Duck Race was held during the Fairport

Canal Days Weekend. Fortunately we were able to get the race in just before the rainstorm.

Genesee Valley Audubon Society also played a significant role in the Rochester International Migratory Bird Day Festival (IMBD). This year IMBD was expanded to a two-day event. Once again our GVAS volunteers did a great job covering the extra hours of this two-day event.

Loretta Morrell, a GVAS board member, represented GVAS at Great Lakes Days in Washington D.C. this year. On March 6 & 7, 2007 Loretta joined other Great Lakes advocates from the Healing Our Waters Coalition and the Great Lakes Commission who came to speak with one voice about the urgency for acting now to restore the Great Lakes. I'm certain you have been reading her informative Meadowlark articles about the issues threatening the Great Lakes.

In 2007, the Kodak Birdcam "fledged" and took flight as the Rochester Falconcam! This year the Genesee Valley Audubon Society (GVAS) became responsible for producing and hosting the 2007 Rochester Falconcam in association with Kodak. This new program is in perfect align-

ment with the Audubon chapter's goals of education, community outreach, and conservation of natural resources.

GVAS is responsible for raising the necessary funds to keep this project moving forward. This past summer GVAS board member Marcia Lyman organized the Rochester Peregrine Falcons Photography and Art Show at the Center at High Falls Museum. Photos and artwork from fans of the Rochester Peregrine Falcons were on display from July 7 – September 5, 2007. This exhibit gave the Greater Rochester community and visitors from around the country an opportunity to see one of Rochester's most magnificent birds.

These are just a few of the significant events that Genesee Valley Audubon Society was involved in this past year. Not only do these activities require many volunteers, but they also require money. Last year the GVAS Annual Campaign received a record amount of donations, over \$1,400.00. **Please help exceed that amount this year by making a tax deductible donation to Genesee Valley Audubon Society.**

Respectfully,  
June Summers

*(The Great Lakes, continued from page 1)*

boundary water disputes between the US and Canada) to designate Areas of Concern (AOC) to concentrate available resources to clean up the most polluted areas in the Great Lakes. As part of this process, The United States and Canada are committed to cooperate with State and Provincial governments to ensure that Remedial Action Plans (RAPs) are developed and implemented for each AOC. One of these Areas of Concern is the Rochester Embayment. To prove that there is hope Oswego harbor, which was also an AOC, was able to obtain the funding to do the necessary work to be removed from this list.

The proposed Great Lakes Collaboration Implementation Act would au-

thorize the funding necessary to advance the remediation of these sites, and clean up these blighted areas so that future generations will benefit from cleaner and safer Great Lakes. The Act would support the clean up of contaminated sediment under the Great Lakes Legacy Act by authorizing \$150 million per year. It would also phase out mercury in products by establishing a new grant program and improving existing research programs. The New York State legislature, led by Senator George Maziarz and Assemblywoman Francine DelMonte, also took action to reduce the potential for new toxic hot spots to occur by passing legislation to prohibit the siting of new or expansion of existing Hazardous Waste landfills that have

the potential to discharge into the Great Lakes Watershed.

The threats to our lakes are real. But the solutions are just as real. Yes, they are also costly, but ignoring the stress that our lakes are under will not make the stressors go away, and with each decade the problems are ignored the dollar signs to correct the problems will increase exponentially. In our next issue I will discuss the very real threat of invasive species and the threat of water export diversions. In the meantime if you would like to find out more join the Healing Our Waters Coalition at <http://healingourwaters.org>. To learn more about the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration check out <http://www.glrc.us/>

# *The Meadowlark*

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

GVAS: A chapter of the National Audubon Society

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](http://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](mailto:GJMitch@localnet.com).

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

## ***First Sunday Hikes 2008***

### ***Ellison Park, Blossom Road***

Genesee Valley Audubon will meet in the parking lot off Blossom Rd. marked Orchard Grove and Creekside Lodges. We will meet in the corner of the parking lot near the road away from the parking lot entrance. This park is in the Irondequoit Creek bottom land; therefore, it is wet and hilly. Please wear boots.

**WARNING:** This park is very doggy.

Call June Summers at (585) 865-6047 the day before if you have questions; you might not be able to catch her the day of the hike.

Jan. 6 at 3:00 p.m.

Feb. 3 at 3:00 p.m.

