



THE 'SHED SHEET

Summer 2024

NEWSLETTER OF THE CHAUTAUQUA WATERSHED CONSERVANCY

We've Earned National Land Trust Accreditation!

We are excited to share the news that earlier this year we were awarded national land trust accreditation!



Accreditation shows that an organization meets the highest national standards for excellence, upholds the public trust, and ensures that their conservation efforts are permanent. Through a rigorous verification process by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission (an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance), we have proven that we meet those standards by demonstrating sound finances, ethical conduct, responsible governance, and lasting stewardship practices. In other words, we are a strong and effective conservation organization that you can count on and trust!

Excellence: Accredited land trusts meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever. These land trusts demonstrate their commitment to excellence by adopting Land Trust Standards and Practices (the ethical and technical guidelines for the responsible operation of a land trust) and meeting the accreditation requirements drawn from them.

Trust: Nonprofit organizations, including land trusts, are increasingly called on to demonstrate their accountability to the public. Accredited land trusts have voluntarily submitted their organizations to an external, independent review of their practices. As a result, accreditation provides the public with the assurance that the land trust displaying the accreditation seal meets established standards for organizational quality and permanent land conservation. *(continued on page 7)*

Cassadaga Lakes Nature Park Added to NYS Birding Trail

(by Jill Eklund)

Birdwatching, or birding, is one of the fastest growing outdoor recreational activities in the U.S. and can be enjoyed by everyone, regardless of age, ability, experience, or background.

There are many great spots to go birding in Chautauqua County, but one of the most bird-diverse locations is our very own Cassadaga Lakes Nature Park. More than 175 different bird species have been identified in the 77-acre park (so far), making it one of the top birding spots around! Because of this, the park was recently added by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation as a destination on its NYS Birding Trail. The Birding Trail is not a physical trail but a network of the best-known birding locations in regions across the State that can be accessed by car or public transportation and provide an inclusive experience for all.



In addition to almost 2 miles of trails for you to explore at the park in search of our feathered friends, the park also has a wildlife viewing platform and bird blind (both with ramps) that can enhance your birding experience there. The park also has convenient off-street parking.

As you plan your upcoming summer activities, be sure to dig out your binoculars and field guide and add a birdwatching adventure at CLNP to your list! You won't be disappointed!



Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and nationally accredited land trust working to preserve and enhance the quality, scenic beauty, and ecological health of the lands and waters of the Chautauqua region for our community.

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Message From The Executive Director

As the days continue to stretch and we see more and more of that precious sunshine, I find myself drawn to the tranquil beauty of summer. It's a season of abundance and vitality, where nature is thriving, and we're invited by the sun to enjoy the refreshing waters that make us all feel rejuvenated and young (at least at heart) again. There's just nothing like running to jump off the end of a dock or rolling up your jeans to stick your feet in the breath-taking cold of the creek.



Executive Director
Whitney Gleason

At the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy, we are steadfast in our commitment to preserving the pristine beauty and health of our waterways, ensuring that generations to come will get to experience and cherish these same iconic summer splendors. I am continually inspired by the dedication of our supporters and the profound impact that we collectively make on our environment.

This summer, our focus on watershed protection is more critical than ever, as the delicate balance of ecosystems is put to the test by increased human activity and changing climate patterns. We continue to make strides toward cleaner, healthier waterways through land conservation, stream and wetland restoration, pollution control, and community engagement and education. By integrating these approaches into everything we do as an organization, we hope to ensure the long-term health and sustainability of our region's water resources. We know that the health of our watersheds is fundamental to the well-being of our communities, providing habitat for countless species, clean drinking water, and recreational opportunities.

In the spirit of this season of growth and vitality, I invite you to join us in our mission to safeguard the incredible natural resources we've been blessed with in Chautauqua County. Your support is instrumental in enabling us to continue our work. We can all have a meaningful impact on the health and resilience of our waterways. Together, we can ensure that the many joys of summer are preserved for all to enjoy, now and for generations to come.

Thank you for being a part of that commitment and for all of your support.

Warmest regards,

Whitney



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info@chautauquawatershed.org

Certify Your Garden to Help Wildlife and Water Quality!

(by Carol Markham)

Creating a wildlife habitat garden attracts birds, butterflies, and other neighborhood wildlife, and it helps water quality. It is also fun, rewarding, and will have a big impact in your yard, neighborhood, and community!

In May 2022, the Conservancy set out to certify Chautauqua County as a Community Wildlife Habitat with the National Wildlife Federation (NWF). Community certification through NWF is based on a points system, which includes a number of educational and outreach activities provided by the Conservancy and its partners as well as a certain number of individually certified gardens within the community.

And this is where **we need your help!** To receive NWF certification, a single property, yard, or garden needs to provide food, water, cover, and places for wildlife to raise young, as well as be tended to with sustainable landscaping practices. Through participation in the project, residents learn about those sustainable gardening practices and how these habitats promote healthy, purposeful living for all who visit it!

We currently need 200 homeowners, businesses, schools, churches, and/or libraries to certify their yards, properties, and/or gardens in order to make this happen. We know this is an ambitious goal, but most of us have beautiful gardens and landscapes in our yards already – let us help you enhance them to be more wildlife-friendly! For only \$20, you can certify your garden and help us reach the goal of certifying Chautauqua County as a Community Wildlife Habitat . . . one yard at a time!



Jack Gleason proudly stands next to his newly certified wildlife habitat and native garden.

Healthy habitats and healthy communities go hand-in hand. Can we depend on you to become the next Chautauqua County property to help wildlife, water, and our way of life? Visit www.chautauquawatershed.org/NWF for more info and a link to certify.



Do you need help enhancing your yard for NWF certification? We can help! Sign up for a free LakeScapes consultation!

Our LakeScapes program is a one-on-one educational program that provides a FREE personal yard consultation to any homeowner, organization, business owner, school, library, or municipality within Chautauqua County. We give guidance on how to dry up wet areas in your yard, build filtering buffers, and/or create native habitats that provide food and places for our local bees, birds, and other wildlife to live. We also discuss landscaping and the importance of native plants, shrinking your lawn, and naturalizing your yard.

Watershed-friendly living is easy! By just making a few small changes in the way you maintain your property, you can help filter and clean the water running through your yard and help keep our watersheds, waterways, and drinking water safe and healthy. Our recommendations not only beautify your yard but also protect water quality, enhance your way of life, and help the wildlife that live and thrive within it! These backyard consultations and technical assistance are free and can include plant and landscape designs as well.

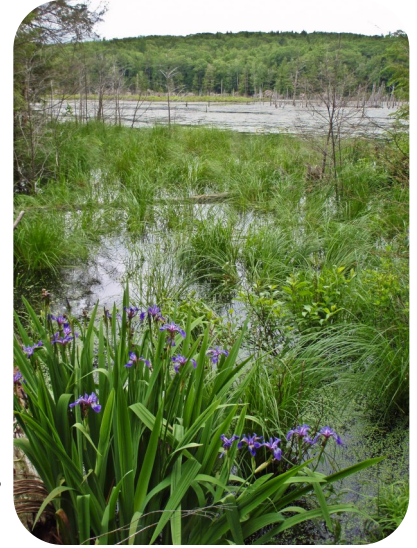
For more information or to schedule your free LakeScapes visit, contact our conservationist, Carol Markham, at 716-664-2166 ext. 1005 or carol@chautauquawatershed.org today!

Functional Wetlands – the most cost-efficient partner in sustainably improving Chautauqua Lake

(by Twan Leenders)

There are many different types of wetlands and just as many ways to define each. In essence, wetlands are the areas where land and water meet. They are the areas where upland plant and animal communities transition into the submersed areas where aquatic species thrive. Simply put, they are the vegetated shoreline areas right above and below the waterline.

Chautauqua Lake once looked very different from how it appears now. Like any other lake in the region, it would have been part of a hilly, forested landscape, occupying a low spot and receiving water from spring-fed tributary streams and from snowmelt and rainwater that runs downhill. The vegetated areas along the water's edge of lakes and tributaries function as the kidneys and the immune system of the lake. They filter out pollutants and absorb nutrients as they flow downhill, converting those nutrients into healthy native plant growth before they reach the lake. They capture sediment between the roots of the wetland vegetation before it enters the open water and creates problems. These extensive root systems also anchor the shorelines and floodplains, protecting them from collapsing or eroding when exposed to wave action, flooding, or storm events. Furthermore, the structural complexity of a wetland's vegetation and its small channels and pools forms numerous microhabitats where fish, ducks, mammals, beneficial micro-organisms, and mussels and other invertebrates can shelter, feed, reproduce, and sustain the complex ecosystem of their adjacent lake.



The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service estimates that by the mid-1980s, the U.S. had lost over half its original wetlands, and those losses continue to date. The same holds true in our region, and many of our wetlands have been drained, filled, or otherwise impacted over time. The good news is that the remaining wetlands in the watershed continue to do for us all those things that we cannot seem to accomplish with even our most sophisticated engineered or chemical solutions. They continue to absorb nutrients, trap sediment, mitigate flooding, and prevent erosion wherever we allow them to exist. They help keep our lake healthier, our businesses and neighborhoods safer from flooding, and our region more scenically beautiful. And the truly wonderful thing is that they do it all for free! Wetlands work quietly, 24/7/365. They also look great doing their job, all dressed in wildflowers, birds, butterflies, frogs, turtles, and other wildlife.

There are many undeniable ecological and economic benefits to protecting our existing wetlands. Rather than simply vilifying wetlands as a problem, we should embrace their incredible restorative abilities. They have always kept our lake healthy and thriving until we compromised their ability to function properly. Wetlands truly are the original tool in that metaphorical “toolbox” which is so often referenced in conversations about lake maintenance.



I understand people's concerns over the potential impacts wetland regulations may have on property values but want to point out that properties protected by wetlands or vegetated shorelines are significantly less likely to be damaged by our increasingly intense storm events than those protected by lawn and/or a bulkhead – a point that has also not gone unnoticed by insurance companies and is reflected in the cost of flood insurance premiums.

Whatever shape a potential future wetland designation on parts of the lake's shorelines will take remains to be seen. However, I am absolutely convinced that protecting our remaining wetlands is critical for the long-term health of Chautauqua Lake. And I am equally convinced that investing in the restoration of compromised wetlands, or the construction of new vegetated buffers along our shores in places where it makes sense, will give us the most bang for our buck if we want our Lake to be ecologically and economically sustainable.

Eyes on the Waters – looking for aquatic invasives in Chautauqua Lake

(by Twan Leenders)

This summer, we will again be training citizen scientists and conducting surveys to gather information on new aquatic invasive species in our lakes and waterways. We are working with marina owners around Chautauqua Lake to distribute information to boaters, fishermen, and anyone else who moves equipment between different lakes about the risks of inadvertently introducing new invasives. It doesn't take much more than some algae or plant fragments clinging to a boat or someone's waders or hitchhiking in a bait bucket or bilge water to move these potentially harmful species from lake to lake. Our staff and interns will again be offering free on-water "floating classroom" sessions that provide information on how to recognize the species of greatest concern. After a brief introduction, these sessions will move to areas on Chautauqua Lake where such invasive species have been detected or removed in recent years, and the "class" will re-survey the area to ensure that all undesirable species are absent still. If found present, a rapid action taskforce made up mainly of Conservancy staff and volunteers will be deployed to remove the unwanted species.

We'll be looking for volunteers this summer to help with our ongoing Water Chestnut removal efforts in the Chautauqua Lake outlet. After six years of consistent monitoring and hand-pulling, we have been able to keep this invasive from spreading and reproducing. It is critically important that these efforts continue until the seeds remaining in the Lake sediment are depleted. Likewise, we will also continue to take a lead role in the collaborative pilot mitigation efforts that focus on effective management of Starry Stonewort in two target areas in the Lake where these algae have reached nuisance density in recent years. A new initiative that we plan to pilot this summer focuses on establishing an experimental underwater nursery that can produce transplantable native submerged aquatic vegetation which we can apply to areas where invasive species, like Starry Stonewort, were removed. We'll experiment with different species native to Chautauqua Lake and with different transplant techniques to explore the feasibility of rapidly restoring native vegetative cover where needed.

Information on program survey dates and opportunities to volunteer will soon be posted on our website at www.chautauquawatershed.org/aquatic.

Native Plants Fun Facts

Serviceberry

(*Amelanchier arborea*)

Some say its berries taste similar to a blueberry.



Butterfly Milkweed

(*Asclepias tuberosa*)

The scientific name *Asclepias* comes from Asklepios, the Greek god of medicine.



Tulip Poplar

(*Liriodendron tulipifera*)

Average lifespan is 200-250 years.



Joe Pye Weed

(*Eutrochium purpureum*)

Joe Pye was an Indigenous person who used the plant medicinally in the 18th & 19th centuries.



Black Chokeberry

(*Aronia melanocarpa*)

These berries are known as a superfood - rich in antioxidants.



Buttonbush

(*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)

If grown near water or a wetland, ducks and other waterfowl love to eat Buttonbush seeds.



If you're interested in adding any of these plants to your property or garden, contact our Conservationist, Carol: carol@chautauquawatershed.org, 716-664-2166 Ext. 1005

Celebrating Our Preserve Stewards

(by Bethany O'Hagan & Jill Eklund)

Twice a year, we hold a “preserve steward appreciation” to show our gratitude for our amazing volunteer preserve stewards, and in mid-May, we held our first for 2024 at the newly renovated Busti Tap House in Jamestown.

Our preserve stewards are an integral part of our organization, volunteering their time to help keep our preserves an ecological asset for our community now and for generations to come. Stewards periodically walk and inspect the boundary and interior of a designated preserve, taking note of any changes or damage (whether natural or man-made), and then document their visit for our land specialist. Stewards also sometimes oversee trail adopters. Best of all, they get to spend time outdoors on our beautiful properties knowing they are helping to protect the integrity of those lands for water quality purposes, wildlife habitat, and passive recreational opportunities!

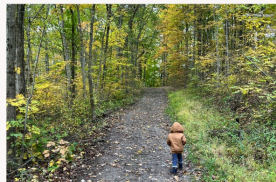
Interested in becoming a Conservancy preserve steward? Contact our land specialist, Bethany O'Hagan, at bethany@chautauquawatershed.org or 716-664-2166 x1007.



Leave a Legacy that Lasts: Join the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy Kingfisher Society

Legacy giving is a profound way to leave a lasting impact on the land and communities we cherish. By including the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy in your estate plans through a bequest, charitable trust, or other planned gift, you ensure that your passion for conservation lives on beyond your lifetime.

Your legacy gift will help us continue our mission of protecting and stewarding vital habitats, safeguarding clean water sources, and promoting environmental education for years to come. Whether it's preserving pristine forests, restoring critical wetlands, or creating green spaces for communities to enjoy, your contribution will make a significant difference in the health and resilience of our natural world.



To learn more about legacy giving and how you can make a lasting impact, please contact Tracy at 716.664.2166 ext. 1001 or Tracy@chautauquawatershed.org or to start creating your legally valid will for free visit freewill.com/chautauquawatershedconservancy

Meet Our Summer Intern

Caroline Cameron is currently interning at the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy and will be working with our staff all summer, assisting with the Aquatic Invasive Species Early Detection Program and other conservation efforts throughout the county.

She is a Master's of Environmental Management student at Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment concentrating in terrestrial and freshwater environments and in community engagement and environmental justice. She is originally from Fredonia and is excited to be involved in environmental stewardship in and near her hometown.

Welcome Caroline!



So many ways to give!

If you support the work that we are doing, consider making a financial contribution to the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy today!

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Stocks



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IRA Distributions



Cryptocurrency



Land Donations



Legacy Gifts



Land Stewardship Fund



To learn more or give today, visit: chautauquawatershed.org/support-us
For questions, contact: tracy@chautauquawatershed.org, 716-664-2166 Ext. 1001

National Accreditation (continued)

Permanence: Land trusts help conserve land that is essential to our health and well-being. When land trusts agree to protect land for the benefit of the public, in most cases they do so by promising that the protection is forever. The accreditation program verifies that the land trust has the policies and programs in place to keep this promise, either by caring for the land itself or transferring the land to an entity that can.

We are incredibly proud to have earned this remarkable distinction as part of our continued commitment to protecting the lands and waters of the Chautauqua region. It's a win for conservation and for our community!



CHAUTAUQUA
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CONSERVANCY

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UPCOMING EVENTS

- | | |
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| June 13th | Give Big CHQ |
| June 19th | Book Discussion Dan Egan's 'The Devil's Element' |
| June 22nd | Chautauqua Lake Sailing Rallye |
| June 24th | Charity Pro-Am Golf Tournament |
| July 25th | Conservancy Presentation with Land Trust Alliance (online) |
| July 27th | Walk & Talk at Naetzker Preserve (with WNY PRISM) |
| August TBD | Annual Meeting |
| August 24th | Native Plant Sale & Buffer Walks at Chautauqua Marina |
| Sept. 14th | 'Harvest Moon' Paddles Across Cassadaga Lakes |

Visit www.chautauquawatershed.org or scan the QR code
for more details on these and other upcoming events!



The 'Shed Sheet newsletter is compiled and edited by Jill Eklund, Director of Communications.