



SIERRA CLUB
FOUNDED 1892

Hudson/Mohawk Group



June 2004 Vol. 28 No.5

“Aspens” by Ansel Adams in This is the American Earth

Upcoming Events

Start Summer With A Blast !!

June 12th, Saturday 1 - 7 PM

Enjoy a Picnic, Social, Program and Conservation Fundraiser at the new Saratoga Lake Bistro at Brown’s Beach.

Enjoy the lake any way you wish - play volleyball on the beach; canoe or kayak, watch a windsurf demonstration, go for a free motorboat ride, or just relax while we listen to live music and eat in the grove at the lake side. Salads, clams, ribs, chicken, beer or soda included. A brief presentation by Dr. Gary Kleppel about our GIS project (see related article on this page) and other conservation issues will be discussed. Bring your whole family to celebrate the start of summer and help fund our local group’s conservation efforts. \$50 adult, \$20 children. Please call John at 370-4932 for information and reservations (we’ll need to know at least 4 days ahead.) Or send checks to: Hudson-Mohawk Group, PO Box 8447, Albany, NY 12208.

Phone Banks For Kerry -
see page 3 for details

Our Summer Break is Here!

We traditionally take the summer months of July and August as a break from routine publication of the newsletter. To keep up with news and activities, we invite you to our website at www.newyork.sierraclub.org/hudsonmohawk.

We wish you a happy and healthy summer. Come back energized and prepared to work to defeat George W. Bush in November.

PLAN TO PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES IN CAPITAL DISTRICT *by Susan Lawrence*

The Hudson Mohawk Group is working with a local biology professor and graduate student to develop a major project that will map the critical natural resources in the Capital District. The result will be a computerized interactive Geographic Information System (GIS) based map of the Capital District which will identify key resources (e.g., wetlands, forests, streams), geomorphic features (e.g., watersheds, steep slopes, soils), infrastructure (e.g., roads, municipal water and waste systems) and landscapes. The map will identify current or projected development projects that could impact on environmental quality and contribute to sprawl.

This new mapping system will be a very important tool to use when developers propose projects that result in haphazard, cookie-cutter sprawl. It will enable the Sierra Club (and some other environmental groups that join with us in this effort) to demonstrate the actual field conditions that development will impact. Specifically, the mapping system will use digital elevation models, accurate wetland topographic maps and other detailed information to show how clearing forests, filling in wetlands and paving surfaces will impact on the local environment.

We need this GIS mapping system to level the playing field for us environmentalists with the other stakeholders involved in the many development projects in the Capital District. For example, in Saratoga County (one of the top three sprawling areas in the State) the State Department of Environmental Conservation has stopped mapping wetlands. Mapping is critical to wetlands protection.

For more detail on this mapping system, especially to help with its development and use, you can contact Pete Sheehan or Susan Lawrence (see masthead on page 2 for contact information). If you wish to help us fund this project, we would appreciate donations, with checks made payable to Sierra Club, Hudson Mohawk Group (with “GIS map project” on the memo line).

Congratulations Mark!!

Mark Bettinger, Regional Director of the Sierra Club Northeast Office, was recently presented the Sierra Club **Special Achievement Award** by Sierra Club Executive Director Carl Pope at a ceremony at Club headquarters in San Francisco. Mark received the award for his extensive work organizing the Environmental Voter Education Campaign during the New Hampshire primary election in February, putting the issue of the environment front and center on the candidate’s agenda.

Way to go Mark!!

Hudson-Mohawk Group

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The Hudson-Mohawk Group Executive Committee meets the first Wednesday of every month (except July). Members are encouraged to attend! Please call Susan Lawrence to confirm.

This newsletter is published 5-6 times per year (or more) by the Hudson-Mohawk Group of the Sierra Club's Atlantic Chapter. Submit all letters, including name and phone number, to the editor to: Hudson-Mohawk Group, PO Box 8447, Albany, NY 12208-8447. We reserve the right to edit and keep all articles. Views expressed by the contributors may or may not be those of the Sierra Club or the Hudson-Mohawk Group. The subscription rate is \$5/5 issues; subscriptions for members are free. Contact John Nemjo for advertising rates.

Outings

**June 5, 2004
(Saturday) 9am - Pine Bush Walk with botanist Todd Elliman** - Look at Pine Bush flora, including pitch pine-scrub oak habitats, aspen groves, shrub communities, and plants such as New Jersey tea, wild lupine and butterfly weed. We will discuss the Albany Pine

Bush Preserve Commission efforts to conserve Pine Bush land. Hike is in the 'Karner Barrens East' section of the Pine Bush (between Western and Central Avenues). Meet at SEFCU parking lot on Rt. 155, in back of the building. Call Ted to confirm your reservation 765-7209.

June 19th, 2004 (Saturday) 9 AM
Help in the first clean-up of the Woodlawn Preserve. This important ecological area is the western part of the Pinebush. An expert will be on hand to help identify some of the over 400 different plant specimens. Be there for the initial planning of a passive park we can all enjoy for hiking, snowshoeing and CC-skiing. Call John at 370-4932.

July 10, 2004 (Saturday) 10 AM
Explore three different areas in Duanesburg: the Christman Sanctuary (part of the Christman Homestead, designated a National Historic Landmark); the Featherstonhaugh State Forest and the Schenectady County Forest Preserve. Learn about the natural and human history of some exceptional close to home nature areas. Call John at 370-4932.

August 7, 2004 (Saturday) 10 AM
Located in the city of Schenectady and town of Niskayuna are several preserves, sanctuaries, and wooded areas. We will visit a bird sanctuary, sand dunes and a mature forest with pine trees that have been estimated to be over 130 years old, and learn how the Mohawk River helped to form these areas 12,000 years ago. Call John at 370-4932.



**July 31, 2004
(Saturday) 9am - Lake Myosotis Walk with botanist Todd Elliman** - The mix of habitats includes sugar maple forest, hemlock forest, flora on the edges of Lake Myosotis, and wetland communities on the north side of the lake. We will look for and identify summer blooming flora throughout

our walk. The mission of the Preserve is to 'understand and preserve the World's biodiversity' - many long-term ecological studies are done on the Preserve. From Albany take Rt. 85 southwest 27 miles. At the Village of Rensselaerville turn right and go a few hundred feet to the preserve office. Parking lot will be on the right before crossing bridge. Call Ted to confirm your reservation 765-7209.

August 8, 2004 (Sunday) - George Landis Arboretum Outing - Visit the Arboretum in Esperence, 20 miles west of Albany, situated on 200 acres overlooking the beautiful Schoharie Valley. Walk along a half mile trail to see the New York State native woody plants groupings (over 130 species planted and labeled.) A feature of the native plant collection is the established bog garden where a dozen woody bog plants and a dozen grasses have been planted. The success of this garden, in an area lacking natural bogs, is attributed to the unique design. A log raft covered with peat moss floats in a 300 gallon tank watered naturally by rain and snow. Most of the native woody plants do not have showy flowers so there is no rush to see them in the early spring. Late summer and early fall are good times to visit. Join botanist Ed Miller, creator of the bog garden, for an enjoyable and fascinating morning outing. Plan to bring a lunch to enjoy this scenic setting. Call Lorraine Plauth for details at 765-4937.

Important Note: All outing members will sign an "Assumption of Risk and Release of Liability" sheet prior to participation in the outings.

Take Action To Defeat President Bush!

On May 11th, the Sierra Club formally endorsed John Kerry for President of the United States, citing his outstanding leadership in safe-guarding America's air, water and public lands. Let's get together as a group of Sierra Club members, have some pizza, and people the phone banks.

Phone banks are ready for our use. They are computerized and very easy to use (you wait while the computer dials). The result is a very effective phoning of a lot of voters in swing states, using a short simple question format, to identify Kerry voters, undecided voters, and potential Kerry volunteers.

The results are very encouraging and suggest that this is an excellent way to have a real impact on the election. In Wisconsin, so far, nine hundred Kerry voters and three hundred Kerry volunteers have been found. Of those who responded, 42% are for Kerry, 28% are for Bush, and 25% are undecided. Follow-up is immediate: activists in Wisconsin are contacting the Kerry supporters and undecideds. We are finding the voters who will help us defeat George Bush!

Date: Wednesday, June 23rd, 6 - 9 PM Location: Albany

Contact: Steve Redler (stevedredler@yahoo.com) 434-1540 (Please contact several days in advance so Steve knows how many phones to set up.)

If you can't make it that evening, don't despair! Many other nights are available; contact Steve for details.

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Club Members Elect New Directors

Club members voted in record numbers this year to elect five members to the Board of Directors. 171,616 members (22.7% of Club membership) voted - far more than in any previous election.

Incumbent directors Jan O'Connell and Nick Aumen were elected to a second term. Returning board member Lisa Renstrom, and first time directors Sanjay Ranchod and David Karpf were also voted in as members of the Board. For further information, visit the website at www.Sierraclub.org/bod.

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Help Us Gather One Million Comments: Take Action To Keep Mercury Out Of Our Air And Water

A record 511,000 Americans have already urged the Bush administration to start cleaning up toxic mercury pollution from power plants as soon as possible. Now, the EPA has extended the deadline on the comment period until June 29th, 2004, giving the public more time to urge the administration to protect public health, not polluter's wealth. Please comment today and tell a friend about this issue to help us reach our goal of one million comments by the end of June.

The EPA estimates that one in six U.S women of childbearing age has mercury levels in her blood high enough to put her baby at risk. In 2001, the EPA estimated that, by 2008, a 90% reduction in mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants was possible with available technology and strong enforcement of the current Clean Air Act. Instead of requiring power plants to use modern technology that could start reducing mercury pollution within four years, the Bush administration's ill-conceived plan would delay cleaning up this dangerous pollutant for decades. Visit www.sierraclub.org/mercury to take action, or, send a letter directly to:

EPA Docket Center (Air Docket)
 U.S. EPA West (6 102T) Room B-108
 1200 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
 Washington, DC 20460
 Attention Docket ID No. OAR-2002-0056



It took a public outcry and an act of Congress to save the gray wolf from literally vanishing off the face of the earth. But we did it. Today, a lot of other creatures face similar extinction. And unless we step up our efforts to protect their habitats, they may not be so lucky. At the Sierra Club, we've mounted a major campaign to defend the Endangered Species Act and preserve threatened habitats before their inhabitants are gone forever. Please contact us to find out how you can help protect threatened and endangered animals. Because no amount of popular demand can bring an extinct species back to life.

Join today and receive a FREE Sierra Club Weekender Bag!



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Enclose check and mail to: **F94Q W 0802 1**
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SUMMER BREAKOUT

BROWN'S BEACH

JUNE 12TH - SEE PAGE 1

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paper containing 30% post-consumer
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