



Save the Pine Bush

November/December Newsletter

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Vegetarian/Vegan Lasagna Dinner
Wednesday, November 17, 6:00 p.m.

Roland Kays

Curator of Mammals at the New York State Museum
will speak about

New York State
Coyotes:
Where Did They Come From and How Are They Related to Wolves and Other Animals?

Save the Pine Bush is honored and very pleased that Dr. Roland Kays will again come to our dinner and talk about the endlessly fascinating mammals living in the Pine Bush — this time, the subject will be coyotes. Is the coyote part dog or part wolf? Dr. Kays has the answers! Dr. Kays will discuss new information comparing western and eastern coyotes, how this invasive species has come to New York, and many other facts about these amazing animals (see article on Page 4).

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.

No Hike in November
because it is hunting season

www.savethepinebush.org

Draft Solid Waste Management Plan Needs Closer Look & Changes

by Tom Ellis

ALBANY: Early this year, the City of Albany's solid waste consultant, Clough Harbour & Associates (CHA), completed a draft long range solid waste management plan for the Capital Region Solid Waste Management Partnership (the planning unit of Albany and the dozen or so municipalities who now dump trash in the Rapp Road landfill). CHA worked for 16 months with a 24-person "Steering Committee" appointed by Albany Mayor Gerald Jennings. CHA and the steering committee met fourteen times between November 2008 and March 2010. Several steering committee members objected or strongly

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Environmentalists Honor Ward Stone

ALBANY: The October Save the Pine Bush dinner at the First Presbyterian Church was the setting for the birthday party in honor of Ward Stone. The party was a great success. The hall was packed full.

We all agreed that the environmental community couldn't get along without Ward.

Speakers included Elise Griffin, Elise Kunz, Tom Porter, Tom Ellis of Citizens' Environment Coalition, Rennie Sanges, Laura Haight, Brian Bush, Kelly Travers-Main, Lynne Jackson, Peter Nye, Rezsins Adams, Anne Rabe, a message from Joe Brucha and, of course, Ward Stone himself. It was a great evening and a great tribute to Ward Stone who has done so much.

As Laura Haight remarked, Ward may be "re-tiring", but that just means he is putting new tires on his car so that he can continue his drive to fight for preservation of our environment!

The party concluded with activists taking the stage with Anne Rabe as she presented Ward Stone with a plaque that said; "NY's Environmental Superman" - from NY's grassroots environmental movement"

Draft Solid Waste Management Plan Needs

objected to parts of the report. About one-third of appointed steering committee members (the mayors or supervisors of mostly Albany County municipalities that use the dump) either did not participate in the process or attended only one or two of the meetings.

The Albany Common Council (ACC), as lead agency, voted October 4 to accept the report as complete and opened up a 45-day public comment period that ends November 19. The ACC held a public hearing October 25 at which five spoke after CHA made a presentation.

The CHA report has good ideas and others SPB opposes. For example, the plan has a list of ten steps the planning unit can take to minimize residential waste generation. These include:

- * Promote PAYT [Pay As You Throw] system implementation;
- * Educate consumers about how to consider waste reduction and product packaging when they are making purchasing decisions;
- * Promote the use of existing programs that re-use or redistribute materials in the second-hand marketplace;
- * Promote the concept of repair instead of replacement;
- * Aggressive education and enforcement programs; and
- * Aggressive waste reduction and recycling programs.

These ideas are all excellent. However, the report provides very few details about how, when, and if, they could or would be implemented. Nothing was offered about how enforcement would occur even though the issue of vigorously enforcing existing recycling laws in Albany was raised at several meetings by one steering committee member. At the January 13, 2009 meeting, he said, "The Melrose Neighborhood Association would like to see strict enforcement of existing laws with penalties for people who never put out blue bins with their six trash bags."

In some ways, the report is not really a "plan" as the word is usually understood, with specific strategies, targets and dates to achieve identified goals, but an outline or a series of ideas planners can pick and choose from or ignore as they see fit. If aggressive education, enforcement, waste reduction and recycling programs are going to be set up and utilized, why are precise details of what, how and when so skimpy or nonexistent?

A major defect in the report is that while CHA asserts it is a 20-year plan (2011-2030), waste diversion (from disposal facilities) data are provided for the years 2010-2020 only. No data for 2021-2030 is provided. Are there no goals for the third decade of this century? If not,

why not? How can it be a 20-year plan without this information?

The report asserts that by the end of 2020 (ten years from now), 65 percent of what residents, businesses, institutions, and governments discard can be minimized, recycled, composted or reused in some way, compared to 45 percent predicted for 2010. The report states 65 percent is the "maximum expected diversion that is achievable with the implementation of the expanded waste reduction and recycling program elements that are put forth in this solid waste management plan." After considerable pressure from SPB and three steering committee members, CHA inserted an additional sentence into the final (March 2010) version of the draft now being considered. It reads: "However, implementation of a continuous improvement process in connection with both current and future waste reduction and recycling program efforts could help push beyond these above-noted waste reduction and recycling goals."

On the one hand CHA insists the planning unit will pursue "aggressive education and enforcement programs" and "aggressive waste reduction and recycling programs," but then says it will be very difficult to get above a 65 percent rate even twenty years from now. In life we know that if you aim low you achieve low; aim high and you might achieve great things. I believe CHA, Steering Committee chairman Bill Bruce, and Mayor Jennings do not want highly successful waste diversion rates because achieving rates of 85, or 90, or 95 percent shatters the justification for the large disposal facility they so clearly desire to have built and operating by the end of 2018. The first (December 2009) version of the CHA report called for a disposal facility "with a nominal capacity of 1500 TPD" [tons per day]...assuming a 65 percent recyclable material diversion rate is achieved."

CHA continues to misrepresent the views of the steering committee. At both the September 22 ACC general services committee meeting and the October 25 public hearing, CHA asserted there was a "consensus" on the steering committee in favor of the report's major recommendation to establish a regional solid waste management authority. What CHA says is not true. At the February 9, 2010 CHA-Steering Committee meeting at which a vote was taken on the regional authority, 11 voted in favor, 2 voted no, and three abstained. Eight SC members were absent. Less than half of the 24-member Steering Committee hand-picked by Mayor Jennings voted in favor of a regional authority; less than half of the existing planning unit's municipal partners have endorsed the authority.

We have a lot of work in front of us. My

sense is there is little support in the capital district for a regional waste authority and even less for a large disposal facility. A better alternative is a decentralized solid waste system(s) with a variety of smaller, lower-cost facilities to reuse, exchange, repair, recycle, and compost discarded materials. Such facilities would stimulate economic development, build communities, be more flexible to changing needs, easier to establish, generate many more jobs, less risky financially, and save and/or recover far more energy than a centralized, large or giant-sized disposal (resources destruction) facility. A small disposal facility could be built if really needed.

We need to do a better job of developing and articulating healthy solid waste options, and assembling the coalitions necessary to bring about their implementation. We have vast untapped support in the capital district.

*Editor's note: Send your comments regarding the Solid Waste Management Plan to John Marsolais, City Clerk, City Hall Room 202, 24 Eagle Street Albany, New York 12207 or email to Mr. Marsolais at marsoj@ci.albany.ny.us **Comments are due by November 19.***

Reprinted from the Times Union, October 12, 2010

Plant linked to Lyme risk

By BRIAN NEARING Staff Writer

2010 ALBANY -- Honeysuckle smells sweet and its red berries make a colorful splash in the fall, but this flowering shrub may be a magnet for deer with ticks that spread Lyme disease.

A recent academic study found that areas around dense thickets of honeysuckle are 10 times more likely to contain disease-carrying ticks than similar areas without honeysuckle. The decorative shrub, an Asian native, has spread throughout New York since it was deliberately introduced in the mid-1850s.

The reason? Stands of honeysuckle, which can grow up to 15 feet tall, form a dense tangle of branches that are perfect paths and cover for white-tailed deer, which can carry the ticks. More deer equals more ticks.

And honeysuckle, because its dense cover provides a place unseen by predators, draws more deer. The density of white-tailed deer in honeysuckle-invaded areas was roughly five times that in areas without honeysuckle, according to the study, which appeared in last week's Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. It was performed by researchers from Washington University in St. Louis and the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

Lyme is a bacterial infection caused by a bite from an infected tick, and the disease is on the rise in New York, which has both a growing

population of deer and large areas of invasive honeysuckle.

The disease starts with aching joints and flu-like symptoms and, if left untreated, can spread to the heart, joints and nervous system. It can be treated with antibiotics.

"The plants that people choose can aid in the spread of Lyme disease," said Troy Weldy, director of ecological management for the New York chapter of the Nature Conservancy.

Native honeysuckles are vines, and do not provide cover to deer. "We are encouraging people to plant the native honeysuckle, and take out the invasive whenever they can," Weldy said.

He said conservancy research has linked another common shrub, barberry, to an increased risk of Lyme.

Barberry is an ornamental commonly sold at nurseries, and forms small thorny thickets that are ideal cover for the white-footed mouse, another carrier of Lyme ticks. "Some people plant this around their basement windows, and it is ideal for mouse populations," Weldy said.

He said the link between Lyme and barberry was shown in a recent study that included Columbia County and the Berkshires region of Massachusetts.

Both the mouse and the deer are spreading Lyme, which has become epidemic in upstate New York. More than 9,000 new cases were reported in 2009, and there have been more than 77,000 cases since the disease was first tracked starting in 1986.

The disease is most prevalent in the Hudson Valley. Columbia County has the highest rate of Lyme in the state, with 558 cases per 100,000 people, according to state Health Department figures for 2007-09.

Other high-risk counties in the Capital Region include Greene (284), Rensselaer (178), Albany, (121), and Washington (85). The state-wide average for Lyme infection was 25 cases per 100,000 people.

Weldy said The Nature Conservancy is conducting a honeysuckle control program at its Lordsland Preserve outside of Cherry Valley in Otsego County. The goal is to protect Jacob's Ladder, a rare plant, from the honeysuckle, which kills all nearby ground plants by shading light.

So-called "bush" honeysuckles reach heights of between 6 and 15 feet tall. The shrub has pink or yellow flowers in the spring, and red-berried berries in the fall. Honeysuckles are among the first shrubs to leaf out in the spring and the last to drop leaves in the fall.

The invasive shrub can quickly spread in open woodlands, old fields and other disturbed sites, with its seeds spread by birds and small mammals. It can form thickets that choke off

native plants and tree seedlings.

Reach Brian Nearing at 454-5094 or bnearing@timesunion.com.

Coyotes, continued from the back

mortality is quite high, a study done in the Albany Pine Bush found.

The coyote-wolf question has been on or near the top of the agenda since Kays came to the State Museum a decade ago to be its top mammal researcher.

"It struck me as a really interesting evolution story and it's almost contemporary," he said. "When I got here and was looking for projects, this was pretty interesting."

Kays' research is going to figure prominently in a future museum exhibit on New York's coyotes, said State Museum Director Clifford Siegfried. He said such research is central to the museum's mission of exploring the natural and cultural history of the state.

"Roland's research is an excellent example of how museum research is changing as researchers adopt modern technological approaches to investigate collections that may be hundreds of years old," Siegfried said.

A researcher's migration

Kays, 39, grew up in Kalamazoo, Mich., where he roamed in the woods and learned the outdoor ethic as a Boy Scout.

He enrolled at Cornell University in Ithaca with an interest in biology and genetics.

"I ended up really liking upstate New York, and meeting my wife as well," he said.

From Ithaca, he went to the University of Tennessee at Knoxville for his doctorate in wildlife biology. He did research on kinkajous -- a small nocturnal mammal found in the trees of Central American rain forests.

After that came post-doctoral work at the Field Museum in Chicago, studying lions in Africa. It was during that period that he interviewed for the mammal curator position at the State Museum.

"I was actually offered the job by satellite phone in the middle of Kenya. It's pretty funny," he said.

Kays, who either bicycles or unicycles the five miles from his Guilderland home to the downtown Albany museum except in cold weather, works on the museum's third floor where its research staff is congregated.

The landmark museum at the Empire State Plaza is best known for its extensive public exhibits on the human and natural history of New York state, but it also carries on extensive scientific and historic research, much of it funded by federal and private grants.

Bone collection

On the third floor, off-limits to the general public but open to students and researchers, the museum maintains a collection of bones, scat and other biological material that -- just under Kays' domain -- ranges from mice to sperm whale bones.

It has the equipment to do sophisticated chemical and DNA analysis and saves older samples for retesting as new testing techniques are developed. "People are always inventing new tests to do on animals," Kays said.

One project he's been working on recently is trying to determine the source of a purebred gray wolf that was shot by a hunter in the town of Day, Saratoga County, in 2002. There were questions about whether it was coyote or wolf, but genetic testing in 2004 determined it was a wolf.

His study -- which he can't discuss while it is under peer review -- is looking at information that can be gleaned about the animal's diet from analyzing its bone composition. Knowing its diet should help answer the question of whether it was an escaped or released pet, or a genuinely wild wolf that had traveled down from Canada.

Kays is also currently tracking the adaptation of fishers to suburban environments.

Fishers -- a weasel-like carnivore once thought to stick to deep wilderness habitats -- are now being found in suburban woods, even tiny patches of trees between housing developments in Niskayuna and Glensville.

"Fishers are making a rapid adaptation to living in urban-suburban areas," Kays said.

Reach Gazette reporter Stephen Williams at 885-6705 or swilliams@dailygazette.net. Copyright (c) 2010 The Daily Gazette Co. All Rights Reserved.

Sally's Recycling Corner

Recycling 'Tiny Trash' -- Cigarette Butts

ScienceDaily (May 14, 2010) — A new study suggests expanding community recycling programs beyond newspapers, beverage containers, and other traditional trash to include an unlikely new potential treasure: Cigarette butts. Terming this tiny trash "one of the most ubiquitous forms of garbage in the world," the study describes discovery of a way to reuse the remains of cigarettes to prevent steel corrosion that costs oil producers millions of dollars annually. It appears in ACS' Industrial & Engineering Chemistry Research.

[Scientists Jun Zhao and colleagues] showed that extracts of cigarette butts in water, applied to a type of steel (N80) widely used in the oil industry, protected the steel from rusting even under the harsh conditions, preventing costly damage and interruptions in oil production. .

Researcher: Coyote is Part Wolf

by Stephen Williams

It's one of the great animal kingdom migrations of the last century -- the arrival and flourishing of the coyote in the eastern United States.

The thick-furred canine and its high-pitched, ethereal yips and howls have become commonplace across the Capital Region over the last 30 years. Even suburbanites hear them.

The eastern coyote is a bigger and more aggressive beast than its western counterpart -- capable of taking down deer, rather than living off rabbits, squirrels and mice. So almost since their first appearances in the 1950s and 1960s, people have asked: Could this animal be part wolf?

The answer turns out to be yes.

"It's kind of the wolf sneaking back in coyote's clothing," said Dr. Roland Kays, curator of mammals at the New York State Museum.

Two studies

An extensive genetic study of nearly 700 coyotes taken by hunters from Maine to Ohio, led by Kays, found the coyotes of upstate New York and New England have from 10 percent to 20 percent wolf DNA.

Wolves were once native to New York state, but were hunted to extinction by about 1893 when the last known native animal was killed in the Adirondacks. That meant there was no top predator roaming the forests, leaving an opening for coyotes to move east through wolf country in Canada.

"It looks like at some point there was some hybridization," Kays said.

State museum bird curator Jeremy Kirchman and Abigail Curtis, then a University at Albany undergrad, were co-authors of the study.

A research team on Cape Cod, which only looked at eastern Massachusetts coyotes, came to the same conclusion about the same time.

The two findings, published in scientific journals, have generated attention in the mainstream press, including a recent story about the spread of New York's coyotes in the *New York Times*. Coyotes in recent years have even turned up in Central Park in the middle of New York City.

Eastern coyotes resemble German shepherds and weigh 35-45 pounds, according to the state Department of Environmental Conservation. The best estimates are that there are now 20,000 to 30,000 coyotes in the state.

Children were attacked by a coyote in two separate incidents this past summer in Westchester County. But coyote attacks on humans are very rare, though state officials say the risk may be growing as coyotes become acclimated to people.

Coyotes can be hunted or trapped in New York state this year from Oct. 1 to March 27, and some hunting groups support extending the season.

However, the New York State Conservation Council, a sport hunting group, at its annual meeting in Utica last month voted down a resolution supporting a year-round season. Group members nevertheless feel more coyotes need to be hunted.

Genetic traits

The museum's finding about wolf genes adds a new twist to the public debate.

Kays said, "A lot of people like them, a lot of people hate them, but either way they're interested in what we find."

Using records mostly from kills by hunters, Kays has pieced together a lot of information about coyotes' eastward migration during the 20th century, determining that there have been

two different waves.

While one strain of coyote has traveled slowly east through Ohio and Pennsylvania since about the 1940s and has shown no sign of hybridization, a second group has come both farther and faster by going north of the Great Lakes through Ontario, reaching the Adirondacks in the 1950s. Those coyotes cross-bred with existing gray wolf populations in Ontario, Kays believes.

Such breeding across species is rare but can occur when animal populations are low, leaving females with fewer choices of mates, Kays said. He believes the hybridization likely occurred around 1920 in Canada and today's coyotes carry those genes.

"As a result, [the eastern coyotes] were larger, they had larger skulls and they colonized much faster," Kays said.

With the state's coyote population large enough to sustain itself, Kays said he's seen no evidence of coyotes interbreeding with domestic dogs. "Coydogs," he said, are just coyotes.

He said the coyote's arrival has created something of a dilemma. "On one hand, it's an invasive species, but on the other hand they are filling an important ecological niche that used to be filled by wolves."

A study in the 1990s looked at whether wolves could be returned to the Adirondacks, but ultimately found the idea wasn't feasible. The idea was controversial at the time and discussion of it has been dropped.

Coyotes are generally extremely shy of humans, though there's evidence their diets occasionally includes cats. Kays said their hunting ranges aren't large and are often limited by an apparent fear of crossing roads. Coyote road-kill

Coyote, continued inside on page 3

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