



# Save the Pine Bush

**November/December Newsletter**

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**Vegetarian/Vegan Lasagna Dinner**  
**Wednesday, November 19 2008, 6:00 p.m.**

**Brian Hoven**

from the SUNY School of Environmental Science and Forestry  
*will speak about*

**The Pine Barrens Buck Moth: Its Life  
History and Its Decline in the Northeast**

Brian Hoven has been a member of a team that has been studying the Pine Barrens Buck Moth — "a very interesting insect" — particularly in the Pine Bush. The moth has been declining in the Northeast but not in other parts of the country. The Pine Bush is home to a lot of unusual critters, come learn about the Buck Moth, on the US Fish & Wildlife's list of species of special concern.

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 Rezsina Adams at 462-0891 or Lynne Jackson at 434-1954. Interested people are welcomed to attend the program beginning at 7:00 for which there is no charge

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**Join the Save the Pine Bush Landfill Committee**

**We need everyone's help to stop the landfill!**

Go to [www.savethepinebush.org](http://www.savethepinebush.org) and click on "Landfill" in the side bar

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**December Dinner—Holiday Party**  
**Wednesday, December 10 2008, 6:00 p.m.**

**No Hike in November  
because it is hunting season**

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**[www.savethepinebush.org](http://www.savethepinebush.org)**

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**DEC sets Public Hearing on  
Landfill in the Pine Bush**

*by Lynne Jackson*

ALBANY: Mark your calendars, Wednesday, December 3 at 7:00 PM at the Polish Community Center, DEC will conduct a public hearing on the City of Albany's proposal to expand the landfill into the Pine Bush (see other announcement on page 4).

For two decades, DEC and the City have been promising not to expand the landfill any more in the Pine Bush. Clearly, the government has failed the people and gone back on their promises.

A bone is being tossed to people concerned about Pine Bush preservation. A plan to restore the landfill to Pine Bush ecosystem is included in the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed expansion.

*continued on page 3*

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**The Hotel Is Back**

*Now, it is all up to the Common Council*

ALBANY: Despite Save the Pine Bush's win in the Appellate Division, Theraldson from North Dakota, may get its approval to build a hotel on occupied Karner Blue habitat in the Pine Bush.

Much ink has been spent on this proposed hotel. As this newsletter goes to press, yet another Common Council Planning Committee meeting will have been held on Thursday, November 6, to discuss the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) for the hotel.

In August, the rare worm snake, a species of special concern, was found by DEC staff on the site of the proposed hotel. This snake has not been found north of Rockland County for twenty years, not since it was last found, near this site. Clearly, the worm snake likes living in this particular part of the Pine Bush.

The FSEIS written by the developer's representative, goes on a great length about how the site is unsuitable for the worm snake, and really, the snake would not want to live there. Included

*continued on page 2*

## Hotel, continued from page 1

is how the developer will build a fence that will be put 18 inches below the ground to make sure no stray reptiles or amphibians come onto the site from somewhere else. During construction, the developer promises, all amphibians and reptiles will be carefully evicted from the site.

The FSEIS talks about how generous the developer is to promise to give \$2500 a year for Karner Blue habitat restoration. The donations are to continue for 100 years. Save the Pine Bush asks: who is going to be around 100 years from now to make sure the developer made all of its payments?

Sooooo, what to do? **The most important thing that you can do today is contact your Common Council member and ask them to please vote no on the hotel in the Pine Bush.** No more development in the Pine Bush. A hotel can be built anywhere, there is only one Pine Bush.

Find your Common Council member by going to: <http://www.albanyny.gov/Government/CityOfficials/CommonCouncil/CommonCouncilBios.aspx> or call City Hall at 434-5284.

## Hotel Eligible for Tax Incentive

ALBANY: Worried about the tax base? Concerned that the City will lose money if we don't get a hotel in the Pine Bush?

Don't worry, the hotel is eligible for a property tax deduction!!! 485b is a state tax incentive program — a program that promotes sprawl. To be eligible, any business "involved in the production of goods or services" that spends at least \$10,000 on new construction or real estate improvements is eligible for reduced taxes on the increased property assessment from those improvements. Under Albany's program, an owner pays taxes on 50 percent of the additional assessment the first year, and gradually increases until the full amount of taxes is paid after the fifth year.

Most developments constructed in the Pine Bush in the City of Albany received this tax incentive program. If the City had created a plan for the tax incentive program, this plan could have designated certain areas (such as downtown, where construction is needed) where the tax incentive would be given. But, no plan was ever written.

The developers of the proposed hotel are not saying whether or not they will apply for the tax incentive program. If the Common Council approves this project, not only will the hotel destroy occupied Karner Blue habitat, but, we, the taxpayers of the City of Albany, may very well subsidize the hotel with tax deductions!!!!

## Returning to flight

### Efforts of New England biologists help usher in rebirth of the endangered Karner blue butterfly

By Michael Levenson of the Boston Globe published September 14, 2008

CONCORD, N.H. - Two biologists crawled through a field thick with blueberry, black chokeberry, and scrub oak, searching for butterfly eggs the size of pinheads.

Suddenly, one of them, Steve Fuller, thrust a hand into the air. "Found one!" he shouted. As his colleague, Heidi Holman, ran to his side, Fuller opened his hand to reveal a tiny white egg of the Karner blue butterfly, clinging to a twig.

Eight years ago, it was impossible to find any sign in New England of the Karner, an inch-long silvery blue butterfly with orange crescents on the undersides of its wings. The wild lupine, a member of the pea family that is the Karner caterpillars' only food, had been all but eradicated by development and suppression of forest fires, which help the plant grow.

Nationwide, the problem was also acute. By 1992, the Karner's numbers had dwindled 90 percent, to a few thousand, and the insect was declared an endangered species. Biologists wondered whether the Karner, which once dotted pine barrens and oak savannas from Minnesota to Massachusetts, could survive.

These days, their outlook is much brighter, thanks in part to the painstaking efforts of biologists working to create an Eden for Karners in the pine barrens near the Concord Municipal Airport and in 28 other locations nationwide.

Mobilized like those who work to save endangered whales or bears, biologists have planted thousands of lupine, raised thousands of Karners in a lab, numbered their wings with indelible markers, and released them into the barrens, sandwiched between the airport and an industrial park. This summer, they counted 1,500 in the butterfly's only New England refuge.

While they caution that it is too soon to declare the Karner saved from extinction, biologists who a decade ago were gloomy about the prospects for the insect's survival now speak of the program as a model of wildlife conservation.

"Eight years ago, we had conservation partners walking away, saying this is a lost cause and, personally, many of us were pessimistic, wondering if the species could be saved," said Michael Amaral of the US Fish and Wildlife Service in Concord. "Now, I'm wildly encouraged. I think we're several years ahead of where we thought we could be."

The Karner has a rich history, dating in scientific literature to 1861, when it was first identified by the renowned naturalist W. H. Edwards in Karner, N.Y., a hamlet in the Albany Pine Bush Preserve.

In 1943, the butterfly was classified more precisely by the writer Vladimir Nabokov, who

worked from 1941 to 1948 as a curator of the butterfly collection at Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology. Nabokov gave the Karner its scientific name, *Lycaeides melissa samuelis*, and, in the novel "Pnin," describes how Karners "fluttered around like blue snowflakes before settling again."

"Even though my father was not a 'joiner' of organizations, associations, or clubs, I can say with certainty that, as an individual, he would have staunchly continued to encourage the efforts to preserve the Karner Blue and its habitat," Nabokov's son, Dmitri, said in an e-mail to the Globe.

Vladimir Nabokov netted his first Karner near Albany in 1950, according to the book "Nabokov's Butterflies," but by then the population was declining. Decades of residential development, road and airport construction, and sand and gravel mining had destroyed much of the nation's barrens and savannas.

Modern firefighting had also squelched lightning-ignited fires, which had helped lupine grow by devouring large trees and allowing the sun to reach the low-lying plant. In New England, the Karner, which had thrived along the Merrimack River, made its final stand near Concord's airport, before vanishing in 2000.

Scientists did not despair. The following year, they brought Karners from Saratoga County Airport in New York to Concord and raised them in a lab. They enlisted schoolchildren to plant lupine in the barrens, and periodically burned areas of the barrens to spur the plant's growth. The New Hampshire Legislature declared the Karner the state butterfly, boosting its humble profile.

"It has a degree of celebrity now, and I think that's heightened by the fact that Nabokov described it," said Robert E. Dirig, curator of the mycology herbarium at Cornell University, who corresponded with Nabokov about the Karner before the author's death in 1977. "It's a very small butterfly, and it has such a big impact on conservation. It became an early icon of pine barrens preservation."

This year, New Hampshire biologists discovered that by feeding Karners lupine cultivated in early spring, they could make the butterfly produce three broods, instead of two, a year. The discovery gave them hope of vastly accelerating its recovery. This summer, biologists released 1,700 more Karners in the barrens, the most ever.

"Its chances of survival are good, if the efforts can be sustained," Amaral said. "But even if we get 5,000 or 10,000 Karners back, if the habitat isn't managed, they will slowly decline."

## Genetic Tests on Ticks May Reveal Secrets of Lyme Disease

by Lynne Jackson

ALBANY: Melissa Stone, PhD student in the Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Program at the University of Albany, spoke at the September Save the Pine Bush vegetarian dinner at the First Presbyterian church about Lyme disease.

Lyme disease is an old disease, first identified in the early 1900's. In 1975, it was recognized in the United States. Lyme disease, caused by the *Borrelia burgdorferi* bacteria, needs a tick vector. The black-legged tick hosts the bacteria. The tick hangs on to the end of a blade of grass, waving its legs, waiting for some warm-blooded body to wander by that it can grab onto. Only female ticks can carry Lyme disease. Ticks are not born with Lyme disease.

Symptoms include a bull's eye rash, fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, joint pain, nerve problems and a lowered heart rate.

Why is Lyme disease so important? New York State had the highest incidence of Lyme disease in the country. Columbia County has the worst reported cases in New York.

Melissa is planning to study the genetics of the bacteria. There is an Outer Surface Protein C (OspC) on the bacteria. A Gene Bank has determined the codes for these OspC. There are different groups of these OspC. These groups are important, because different groups cause different levels of disease. For example, OspC groups D, E, F and L do not infect humans. Groups G, H, J, T cause bull's eye rash, but no other symptoms. Groups A, B, I, K cause very severe disease and are the most medically important groups.

Melissa will take ticks collected in the Pine Bush in 2001-2003, grind them up, and compare them to ticks she collects in the Pine Bush now. The hope is by comparing the Outer Surface Protein Cs of the various ticks, more will be learned about how Lyme disease spreads.

Melissa plans to bring lots of DEET with her for her study. To capture the ticks, she will drag a sheet through the Pine Bush which the waving ticks should grab onto. We hope that when her research is completed (several years from now), Melissa will come back and tell us what she found out.

Dirig is among those hoping the insect thrives. He rhapsodized about the beauty of seeing Karner blues fluttering on purple-blue lupine "like this artistic, perfectly color-coordinated unit. I hope, after all of our work, that it's able to hang on," he said. "It's real a survivor, I think, and it's a wonderful little animal to have in our life."

## Making a Living as a Trash Picker

*The Landfill in Guatemala City*

ALBANY: Mindy Whisenhunt and her daughter Alex spoke at the October Save the Pine Bush vegetarian lasagna dinner at the First Presbyterian Church.

They have made two trips to the landfill outside of Guatemala City to volunteer with and organization called Camino Seguro or Safe Passage that helps the children of people who eke out an existence picking recyclables from the Guatemala City landfill.

Volunteers such as Mindy and Alex go to Safe Passage for a week at a time. While there, they meet the children, play with them, and help with Safe Passage Program.

Trucks bring garbage to the dump from Guatemala City and the surrounding areas. All kinds of wastes are brought, including household waste, medical wastes and toxic chemicals. The people who work in the dump pick out the recyclables and sell them. This is a common practice in developing nations. They earn about \$3 a day doing this, if they are lucky. When Mindy and Alex arrived, there were terrible rainstorms. Trucks were backed up in line, and they could not dump their loads do the rain. Without dumping, the people could not pick out the recyclables and make any money.

The people in the dump have to fight the vultures for the garbage. Now, children under 14 are banned from picking garbage. However, some of the children in Safe Passage still have scars from the vultures, when they worked the dump before the ban.

The dump is where the parents of the children work. It smells of methane and tons of garbage. The dump is a dangerous place. It was very hot and incredibly smelly. Because of the toxic nature of the landfill, the children were often sick with skin infections, respiratory diseases and dysentery. The cancer rate is very high and the residents here don't live past 50.

*Editor's note: There is something wrong with this picture: people in poverty pick trash in Guatemala, while the City of Albany is going to spend \$41 million to construct a landfill in the Pine Bush.*

### **Garbage, continued from page 1**

On the face of it, restoration of the landfill to Pine Bush seems like a good idea. Until you find out that some land that is currently Pine Bush will be landfilled and then restored. And you discover that the restoration will cost between \$12.5 and \$18 million.

In this day and age, when buildings are being abandoned in downtown Albany at an amazing rate, when there is an increase in poverty, where some people do not have enough to eat, it is a moral outrage for the City to even propose to spend so much money on Pine Bush

Children are given bags of food once a month based on their attendance. The food is supposed to make up for the income the child would make if he or she worked in the landfill.

Mindy showed a slide of the dump and pointed out a where a sink hole opened up and swallowed many trucks. No one knows how many people died.

Alex showed slides of the homes that people had made from the trash they picked in the dump. The roofs are often just tarps. The rain can be torrential at times, and people really suffer.

The program, Safe Passage, was founded by Hanley Denning. She sold her car and her computer and left Maine with \$5000 for Guatemala City. Unfortunately, Hanley died in a car crash in January, 2007. She was only 36.

Alex observed significant changes in the children from her first trip to her second trip. For example, on the last trip, the children enjoyed music class and danced to the music. In contrast, on the first trip that the children did not move.

The food served in the cafeteria may be the only meal the children eat all day. Workers at Safe Passage put an emphasis on serving nutritious meals.

Safe Passage has a clinic, a dentist and social workers. Emphasis is put on education to escape the relentless poverty.

While Alex was at Safe Passage, Alex and the children went on a field trip to a children's museum in Guatemala City. The children had never been to such a place before. Alex noted that at lunch, the children would just take a bit of the food, and then wrap it up, and put in their pockets to take it home to their families.

For more information about Safe Passage, please go to [www.safepassage.org](http://www.safepassage.org). Also, for more information on the people who live at the Guatemala City dump, see the documentary *Recycled Life*, [www.recycledlifedoc.com/](http://www.recycledlifedoc.com/)

restoration to get its the landfill expansion. The City of Albany should be investing in restoring the beautiful abandoned buildings in the South End, Arbor Hill, West Hill and Park South, not on spending tens of millions to bury garbage in the Pine Bush.

**Sally's Recycling Corner:  
"Use It Up, Wear It Out;  
Make It Do, or Do Without!"**



**Public Hearing  
Proposed Landfill  
Expansion in the  
Pine Bush**

**Wednesday, December 3, 7:00 PM**

Polish Community Center

Washington Ave. Ext. Albany

Everyone who is concerned about the  
Pine Bush Must Attend!!!

ALBANY: The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation will hold one public hearing about the proposed landfill expansion on December 3.

This is the only hearing that will be held on the proposed expansion. **This is your only chance to tell the City and the DEC what you think of destroying 20 acres of Pine Bush for more trash.**

Supporters of the Pine Bush must ask, when will it end? The City is proposing to spend \$41 million in capital expenses over the next five years on the landfill. This expansion, if built, would be the forth expansion in twenty years. Burying our trash at such a great cost is not the best way to handle our garbage.

Please take a moment to review the documents at <http://www.capitalregionlandfill.com/documents/> or by viewing the documents at the Albany Public Library or the Town of Colonie Library. Written comments will be accepted until December 15 by writing to: Angelo A Marcuccio, NYSDEC Region 4 Headquarters, 1130 North Westcott Rd, Schenectady, NY 12306. Mr. Marcuccio's phone is (518)357-2069



**Save the Pine Bush**

A Project of the Social Justice Center  
33 Central Avenue  
Albany, NY 12210

**Return Service Requested**

You are invited to the first statewide  
**Zeroing Out Waste Conference**

**Saturday, November 15, 2008, 9:30 AM - 5:00 PM**

Westminster Presbyterian Church, Use entrance at 85 Chestnut St., Albany, NY 12210

*Speakers Include:*

**Neil Seldman, Institute of Local Self Reliance**

**Professor Paul Connett, International Waste Management Researcher**

**Majora Carter, Environmental Justice Leader, Founder Sustainable South Bronx**

**Barbara Warren, Citizens' Environmental Coalition**

Why do we have so much garbage? What can we do to prevent it? Looking at the trash question as a resource issue and a problem of industrial design is ushering in bold alternatives to leaking landfills and polluting incinerators in forward-thinking cities and countries around the world. What can New Yorkers do to bring these solutions to our state and communities?

New Yorkers have a great opportunity to transform our solid waste practices as the state is finally revising its Solid Waste Policy. National expert speakers will discuss how NY communities can start zeroing out waste with reuse, recycling, composting and remanufacturing. The conference features speaker presentations followed by strategy sessions on key zero waste issues, including fighting incinerators & landfills, composting all organics (food & yard waste, etc), economic development and green jobs, pitfalls of privatization and waste prevention.

**Sponsored by Citizens' Environmental Coalition (CEC)**

**For information, contact CEC at 518-462-5527 X16 or [cectoxic@igc.org](mailto:cectoxic@igc.org), Directions: [www.wpcalbany.org](http://www.wpcalbany.org)**

**\$15.00 Conference Fee includes lunch and refreshments. Scholarships are available.**

*Information on the Zero Waste Conference Speakers*

**Paul Connett**, International researcher and campaigner on waste management and recently retired Chemistry Professor. Paul is known for his decades of work effectively fighting incinerators around the world making over 2,000 presentations in the U.S. and 50 other countries. He is the only one we know that can make waste funny!

**Neil Seldman**, President of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance. Neil is known for his work effectively fighting incinerators, and for his economic perspective and promotion of alternatives like waste reduction. He is an economic development & jobs expert utilizing resources in our waste stream.

**Majora Carter**, Founder of Sustainable South Bronx, distinguished Mac Arthur Fellow and environmental justice leader. Majora teaches sustainability through the lens of social justice and has appeared on many TV and radio programs. She promotes environmental justice, sustainability and green collar jobs.

**Barbara Warren**, Executive Director of Citizens' Environmental Coalition, Formerly with Consumers Union and the NYC Zero Waste Campaign. Barbara helped to prevent the building of incinerators in NYC, led the effort to close Fresh Kills landfill and has addressed environmental justice burdens of waste.

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