



## The Power of Trees & Leaves

The dazzling colors of deciduous trees are upon us, freckling our landscapes with vivid shades of autumn. Meander down any country road or through your local neighborhood, and the hillsides and yards are ablaze with magnificent hues of red, yellow and orange. As colder days approach, these leaves will dance, twirl and fall gracefully, garnishing our lawns with brilliant colors. To many, this spells w-o-r-k, but the benefits and beauty of trees and leaves in your yard outweigh the time and effort it takes for fall cleanup and winter readiness.



The environmental, economic and personal benefits of a yard dotted with trees are enormous to a homeowner and their surrounding community. In addition, with many of us experiencing the death of our native ash trees, we need to think about replacing what we have lost. Native trees increase property values and save homeowners money on energy costs. They help buffer noise pollution and can moderate local climates by providing shade and cooling our homes. Trees slow water runoff, thus preventing soil erosion into our streets and waterways. They store carbon and clean the air. Trees regulate temperature extremes, increase wildlife habitat and improve the land's capacity to adapt to climate change. Phew! Who would have imagined the rewards we receive just by having trees in our yards! And we didn't even mention the beauty and structure trees give to our landscapes! Even the most brilliant of painters could not capture the true beauty that our trees give to us this time of year. *(continued on page 3)*

## Collaborating To Help The Lake

In recent months, the CWC, with funding from its donors and the Chautauqua Lake and Watershed Management Alliance, has continued to collaborate with municipal leaders and landowners to arrest soil erosion and trap sediments and nutrients that help fuel excessive Chautauqua Lake plant and algae growth. CWC provided environmental engineering services through EcoStrategies Engineering & Surveying to redesign the non-functional triangular stormwater detention basin located on Fairmount Avenue at the railroad viaduct in the Village of Lakewood. With the help of CWC, the Village is seeking grant funding for the reconstruction and planting of this basin to store stormwater in order to substantially reduce downstream bank erosion, better trap sediments and nutrients and protect investments in public infrastructure from flood damage downstream. CWC also collaborated with the Town of North Harmony and EcoStrategies to evaluate Ball Creek erosion sites and plans to address three major erosion sites just upstream from Route 394 at Stow. CWC assisted the Town in applying for grant funding to stabilize and replant the banks at these three sites.



*CWC Executive Director John Jablonski stands at severely eroded section of Ball Creek in Stow.*

CWC works with landowners and government officials alike to identify and address the most problematic erosion and pollution sites in the region. Your donations and grants to CWC will fund future collaborations to help prevent soil erosion and intercept nutrients in these and additional communities around Chautauqua and other lakes of the region.

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**CWC is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization with a mission to preserve and enhance the water quality, scenic beauty and ecological health of the lakes, streams, wetlands and watersheds of the Chautauqua region.**



## Message From The President

### *New Seasons, New Strength*

As October days grow cool and crisp, the soft green lushness of summer has given way to autumn's glorious fields of amber, trees ablaze with crimson and brilliant floral tapestries of asters and goldenrod splashed among sunny roadsides, fields and stream banks...but soon to surrender to colder, darker days ahead. Just as the natural world brings bittersweet reminders of seasons swiftly passing, the altered and unsettling season of COVID-19 has gently nudged us to pause and reflect on all that is good and beautiful and to embrace the gifts of now, even in the midst of transformation, challenge and uncertainty. We are delighted that so many friends and families have rediscovered the joy and serenity of visiting our lovely preserves – walking the trails, exploring their secrets and finding refreshment, renewal and healing for body, mind and spirit. The woodlands, wetlands, meadows and shorelands of CWC's Bentley Sanctuary, Dobbins Woods, Chautauqua Creek Oxbow Preserve, Brown's Creek Tributary Forest and other special places have so much to teach us and invite our presence.



**Becky Nystrom,  
Board President**

CWC has remained resilient, strong, steadfast and adaptive throughout our thirty years and through many seasons of change and challenge, and today we faithfully continue to execute innovative and effective programs and activities protecting the vital ecosystems, water quality and the scenic beauty of Chautauqua County's watersheds while conserving and protecting nearly 1,100 acres of critical habitats for the communities of people and countless creatures for which they serve as refuge. But there is urgency in our work, for much is at stake. Each forest felled, wetland filled or drained, streambank eroded or poorly-planned construction site brings loss of habitat, loss of life and loss of critical ecosystem services such as erosion and flood control and a reduction of nutrient and sediment-loading which otherwise can fuel excessive plant and algae growth downstream. Other natural services at stake include carbon sequestration, food and oxygen production, pollination, nutrient recycling and the formation of precious, life-giving soil, which may require a thousand years to form to a depth of one inch! What we do very much matters!

As we begin our 31st year and celebrate our many achievements, including the establishment of 30+ nature preserves, we look forward to partnering with you and continuing to accomplishing great things. Our Board of Directors has been recently expanded and enriched with the addition of seven new members (Nan Doolittle, Chris Flanders, Cheryl Mawhinney, Rich Morrisroe, Lisa Schmidfrerick-Miller, Greg Swan and Ruth Wahl), who join in leadership alongside our wonderful veteran directors and experienced and talented staff. My deepest appreciation goes out to all who serve, inspire and lead our organization with energy, expertise, passion and professionalism.

On behalf of the CWC Board of Directors and staff, I sincerely wish you all health and safety in the seasons ahead as well as peace, resilience, beauty, joy and blessings in the midst of it all. Please know how very grateful we are for each of you and for this community of members, donors, supporters, volunteers, advisors and friends. Your engagement brings strength to CWC, and your continued financial support and commitment to our mission and ethic are critical to furthering our work. Thank you!

## CWC Director News

### *Welcome New Directors!*

We're happy to announce the addition of several new members to our board of directors in 2020. Please join us in welcoming Nan Doolittle, Chris Flanders, Cheryl Mawhinney, Rich Morrisroe, Lisa Schmidfrerick-Miller, Greg Swan and Ruth Wahl!

We are grateful and excited to have this group of individuals join the board and bring their unique talents, expertise and perspectives to the work of the CWC and help us further our mission to conserve, restore and instill appreciation for the lands and waters of the Chautauqua region!



### *2020-21 Board Officers*

The CWC board also recently elected its 2020-21 board officers: Becky Nystrom as President, Craig Seger and Jeanne Wiebenga as Co-Vice Presidents, Bob Wooler as Treasurer and Cheryl Mawhinney as Secretary.

### *With Gratitude to Director Judy Maskrey*

We extend our sincerest thanks to former director Judy Maskrey, whose term ended in late August. Judy dedicated a great deal of time and energy to CWC and always kept things moving forward with positivity and encouragement. During her tenure as a CWC board director, Judy served as board secretary and was a member of both our finance and development committees. She was instrumental in reviving our development/fundraising committee and served as its chair for the past two years. She played a lead role in both the creation and implementation of our 2018 strategic plan and was an active participant in many CWC events. Thank you, Judy! You will be missed!

thank you

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### *Power of Trees & Leaves continued . . .*



With this splendor comes an explosion of color that eventually ends up on the ground. This color carpet is not only stunningly beautiful but, if managed properly, also adds free natural fertilizer to our lawns every fall. What a perfect scenario for feeding and nurturing our grass heading into the cold winter months! These leaves are wonderfully small pieces of free fertilizer that every homeowner should want to take advantage of. And the easiest way to do this is to mow and mulch them right into your lawn. Mulching mowers can shred unwanted leaves into tiny, organically-rich particles that will eventually decompose. These leaf particles add valuable nutrients back into the soil and improve water absorbency, resulting in a stronger, healthier lawn. This thin layer of mulched leaves can also help protect your lawn from harsh winter conditions, ensuring a healthy lawn next spring. Instead of removing this bountiful beauty with rakes and plastic bags, we should be reaping the benefits and nutrients they offer and give them back to our tired end-of-summer lawns.

So...plant a native oak, maple or birch...and enjoy the glory of its year-round benefits as well as its spectacular autumn leaves. The Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy would be happy to offer free assistance on selecting a tree and its best location in your yard. Just email Carol the Conservationist at [carol@chautauquawatershed.org](mailto:carol@chautauquawatershed.org) and schedule your yard consultation today! You, your yard and your community will be thankful you did!

## A Warm, Heartfelt Thank You From Chautauqua Lake

Chautauqua Lake is stunningly beautiful this time of year. Her blue water with trees ablaze are reflected on her mirrored surface. As the days shorten and the once warm breeze now wraps us in a sweater, gorgeous hues of yellow, red and orange rain from the sky warning us that the ice and snow of winter will be covering her soon. What a wonderful summer she has given us! Three glorious months of fishing, swimming, boating, sailing and gazing upon her waters. What a bountiful treasure we all can take advantage of!

In May of this year, CWC launched its new lake friendly landscaping and lawncare program, LakeScapes. Amid tenuous COVID-19 circumstances, our Conservationist, Carol Markham, was able to visit and/or speak with 99 homeowners from Lakewood to Dewittville, Jamestown to Stockton, Mayville to Bemus Point and many locations in-between. We are thankful to all who contacted us, shared their beautiful properties with us, expressed their concerns to us and became an important part of a community that is dedicated to protecting and enhancing the waterways of Chautauqua County by participating in our Lakescapes program.

It is more important than ever for us to realize that we as homeowners hold the power to clean, healthy water no matter where we live or what size property we own. Whether our homes are located along a lake or stream, in the city or in the country, we can all make a difference by simply choosing what we do in our own backyards. Practicing environmentally safe lawncare, incorporating native plants into our existing landscapes, enhancing wildlife habitat and/or letting our vegetated shoreline areas grow (rather than mowing them) are all easy and effective ways to help clean our waters. These actions help to filter out pollutants from the water, protect our pollinators and decrease weed and algae growth in our lakes – not to mention beautify our personal space and create a healthier and more inviting community for all of us!

Even in October, Carol is still out and about on yard consultations and would be happy to stop by your property! Just email Carol at [carol@chautauquawatershed.org](mailto:carol@chautauquawatershed.org) and schedule your yard consultation today!

We are looking forward to visiting with 100+ more homeowners in 2021 and continuing to offer water and wildlife friendly yard consultations as well as free native plant landscape designs. We have already proved that, by working together, we can create a healthy community...one yard at a time! If only the lake and her surrounding waters and wildlife could speak, they would all be shouting a resounding **THANK YOU!**



*(photos by Carol Markham)*

## More Preserve Improvements

We've continued working right into fall to make additional improvements at many of your favorite CWC preserves! Here are just a few examples of what we've been working on!

### *Dobbins Woods*

Our Dobbins Woods Preserve on Bly Hill Road in Asheville has had a significant increase in off-road parking capacity, expanding to accommodate more than twice as many vehicles as before (now about 8 to 9 vehicles). In large part, this addition was in response to the visitor information we collected over the summer from our new, bright blue visitor sign-in boxes, as highlighted in our summer issue of *The 'Shed Sheet*. The data we received revealed that our Dobbins Woods Preserve was seeing a significant numbers of visitors – with more than 450 visitor sign-ins from June through September alone!

Additionally, many more bog bridges were constructed along the trail by our wonderful preserve stewards. With thanks to Craig Seger, Carol, Brad and Erik Samuelson, Greg Swan, Brett Swan and Tri-James for their work at this site!



*The Dobbins Woods Preserve, one of our most popular and most visited preserves, now has an expanded gravel parking lot and can accommodate 8 to 9 vehicles. (photo by Craig Seger)*

### *Cassadaga Lakes Nature Park*



Improvements at the Cassadaga Lakes Nature Park on the old Route 60 just outside of Cassadaga has also continued. Trail signs have been posted that help visitors locate and follow two trail loops and the shores of Mud Lake. In addition, several wet areas have



gotten bog bridges to make the trails easier to travel. The parking area and access have been steadily improved and maintained, and there is now a bike rack installed (in the shape of a bike!). The bike rack was generously donated by Wilson Endurance Sports and Holly Loft Ski, Bike & Snowboard shop.

*New signage and a bike rack are just two recent improvements at the Cassadaga Lakes Nature Park. (photos by Jeremy Woolson)*

### *Preserve Map & Preserve Usage*

Want to check out the Dobbins Woods Preserve or Cassadaga Lakes Nature Park for yourself? Or one of our other 30+ nature preserves? Visit our website at [chautauquawatershed.org](http://chautauquawatershed.org), where you'll find an interactive preserve map (which includes directions to our preserves) as well as a list of guidelines for visiting and using our preserves. CWC nature preserves are open to the public and free of charge year-round from dawn to dusk, and we encourage you to explore and enjoy them!

While many of our preserves have well defined and/or marked trails, some do not. When visiting, always remain cognizant of your surroundings and consider bringing along a compass, map or other orienteering device. You may also want to bring along your camera, some binoculars and/or a field guide too – there's lots to see and learn about on our 1,000+ acres! And if you do snap some photos during your visit, we'd love for you to share them with us on Facebook and Instagram!





## Pulling Together To Pull An Invasive

### Water Chestnut removed from Chautauqua Lake Outlet



This past summer, a series of field surveys conducted by the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy, Roger Tory Peterson Institute, Chautauqua Lake & Watershed Management Alliance, Audubon Community Nature Center and WNY PRISM, resulted in the discovery of a significant population of water chestnut along the banks of the Chadakoin River.

Water chestnut is an aggressive and invasive aquatic plant that, if left unchecked, can form large, impenetrable mats of fast-growing plants. These thick mats can shade out native aquatic plants that provide food and shelter to native fish, waterfowl and insects and can hinder fishing, boating and swimming. When these plants decompose, they can also reduce oxygen levels in the water and pose a threat to fish.

Following this find, a unified and collaborative effort was made among all of these non-profit partners, along with support from Evergreen Outfitters in Mayville and members of the local community, to remove this stand of water chestnut. In total, approximately three cubic yards (a whole truckload!) of plant material was removed from the outlet and disposed of in a free compost location. Additional surveys of the same area will be done next year starting in June.



*(Photos by Jeremy Woolson/CWC, RTPI, CLWMA, Adirondack Watershed Institute and Saratoga PLAN)*



## Remembering Al Cala (1950 – 2020)



Albert D. Cala, a founding trustee of Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy, passed away on April 25, 2020. Al served as a director and as vice president during the organization's formative years and was also the artist who designed CWC's kingfisher logo.

A graduate of the Syracuse University School of Forestry, with a degree in landscape architecture, Al was passionate about drawing, trees, nature and his family. He was a fun-loving guy, who always brought smiles to those around him. He was employed by the City of Jamestown DPW engineering department for 30 years, where he was a strong advocate for and participant in the development of the Jamestown Riverwalk and the City's street tree program. Al will be dearly missed, and we send our sincerest condolences to his family.

## A Home At Last

### *The Ospreys of the Loomis Goose Creek Wetland Preserve*



It's been five years since the dedication of the osprey nesting platform at our Loomis Goose Creek Wetland Preserve, located at the outlet of Goose Creek on the south shore of Chautauqua Lake, at the border of North Harmony and Busti.

After the pesticide DDT was banned in 1972, osprey numbers began to rebound, so in 2015, a group of CWC staff and volunteers decided to build an osprey platform in hopes of attracting more ospreys to the area. Art and Carol Webster were the title sponsors, with Dan and Jan Bowman, JCC's Earth Awareness Club and Mary Laumer as co-sponsors. Others involved with this project from design to final construction were Tricia Bergstue, Bill Locke, Leroy Parker, Brian Halberg, Bob Karbacka, Richard Rose, Bob Lannon and Bill Proctor. And now it appears that their efforts have finally been rewarded!

For four years, there was no activity on the platform. However, this past spring, someone spotted an osprey on site! By mid-April, CWC board director Jeanne Wiebenga started photographing the white-breasted male and the female with her brown speckled collar carrying building materials to the nest, from grasses and leaves to large twigs. At times, the birds settled on a perch on top of a dead tree or returned from a fishing trip holding on to a half-eaten fish.

By mid-May, Jeanne watched the female settle down on the nest and assumed she was brooding on eggs. Knowing that the incubation period is about 6 to 7 weeks, she hoped to see one chick or perhaps more sometime in June. Jeanne made regular visits to the site and sometimes imagined seeing a small head pop up above the nest or hearing a feeble cry, but many told her this was an illusion.

Then, on August 3rd, there was suddenly a full-grown chick, standing upright, with bright orange eyes and a white scaling of feathers very distinct from its parents' black coats. It was the magical moment Jeanne had been waiting for! Perhaps the tiny head and small cries were the chick's after all. It had a brown collared upper chest, appearing to be a female. Over the next week, Jeanne watched the endearing behavior of the mother seemingly giving flying lessons to her daughter. The chick was hesitant at first, trying to make small leaps, then falling back on the nest hanging on by her talons, until suddenly she flew away on an updraft of wind and made a victory lap before returning to the nest. Later, the mother returned with a fish in her talons, perhaps as a reward!

By early September, the nest, abuzz with so much activity for months, had become quiet. Still, most mornings and late afternoons, she could see a parent or the chick returning for a brief visit. The mother had likely already have left for Florida, from where she will follow the food trail to the lakes, rivers and oceans of tropical South America via Cuba. The father hung around for a few weeks longer to help the fledgling hone its flying and fishing skills, but eventually, he also departed for a warmer climate. The fledgling was then left alone to fend for and feed herself, until she was guided by instinct a few weeks later to find her way south just like her parents before her. The parents, who usually mate for life, are likely to return to this same nest next year, while the juvenile will stay south until 2022 and then return as a mature osprey – if she survives the hazardous journey of 6,000 miles each way!

For all of us who watched this osprey story unfold, and for those who invested so much heart and energy in building a home for an osprey family five years ago, this has been one of the small wonders of nature that brought moments of joy and relief during this otherwise stressful year!



*(Osprey photos and story courtesy of Dr. Jeanne Wiebenga)*



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## CATCH THE REPLAY!



If you missed any of these great events.....

- ◆ “Our Yards & Gardens” presentation by master gardener and author Sally Cunningham
- ◆ “A Guide to Restoring the Little Things that Run the World” presentation by native plants expert and author Doug Tallamy
- ◆ CWC’s 30th Anniversary Annual Meeting

.....you can find all of them on our YouTube channel!  
Head over there now and catch the replay!

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