



# THE 'SHED SHEET

Spring 2024

NEWSLETTER OF THE CHAUTAUQUA WATERSHED CONSERVANCY

## Abram Nature Preserve

(by Bethany O'Hagan)

Last year, Susan Abram and Alan Kowlowitz (pictured at right) generously donated a 33.93-acre parcel of land, now known as the Abram Nature Preserve, to our organization.

This newly acquired parcel is located just west of Fredonia, off the busy Berry Road with access (once completed) from Johnson Street, snug in the middle of a very nice and partial residential area. There is a grape growing farm that sits along the backside of the preserve which butts up to Vineyards Golf Course. A lovely mix of grassy fields, wooded areas, and a few flowing creeks that connect directly to Canadaway Creek, which in turn flows directly into Lake Erie, fills these almost 34 beautiful acres.

With talk of the property possibly being turned into a dirt bike track or multi-family subdivision prior to its donation, we at Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy are happy to be able to keep this beautiful site a wild natural sanctuary for everyone to enjoy. It is much more beneficial for the neighbors, the community, and the quality of our area's water systems.

(continued on page 5)



## Caution! Beneficial Mini Meadow Construction Zone Ahead!

(by Carol Markham)

The Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy has always been an active, local leader in watershed education – and what better way to teach than to lead by example!

Plans are in the works to replace the traditional lawn at the Conservancy office in Lakewood with a selection of Chautauqua County native plants. In contrast to a grassy lawn that requires excessive water and harmful chemicals to maintain, this planting will support our local pollinators, thrive with little maintenance after its initial establishment, provide visual interest, and demonstrate the possibilities of using native plants in our gardens. All the plants chosen have evolved to thrive in our Chautauqua County soil and require little to no supplemental watering, no fertilizers or soil amendments, and only an annual cutting of dead flower stalks in the spring.

In creating this watershed-friendly front yard, we are hopeful that our actions will speak louder than our words and be a wonderful example to both homeowners and businesses to emulate. With assistance from our amazing friends at Royal Fern Nursery, this exciting project is scheduled to begin this spring and will include an on-site, hands-on educational workshop in September. So please excuse our front yard appearance this spring and summer – and stay tuned for updates!



**CHAUTAUQUA  
WATERSHED  
CONSERVANCY**

Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is 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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- Jill Eklund, *Director of Communications*
- Caitlin Gustafson, *Business Manager*
- John Jablonski III, *Special Projects Coordinator*
- Twan Leenders, *Director of Conservation*
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## Message From The Executive Director

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As spring approaches, we are all looking forward to the return of the sun and its warmth. I love all of our seasons, but after a Western New York winter, spring is always welcomed with open arms.

As we all celebrate this season of fresh growth, we at the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy are also cheering our own growth as we celebrate a milestone achievement: national land trust accreditation. I am so proud of our team and the important work that has been put in over the past 34 years that has earned us this recognition, and I am so thankful for all of you who have supported us every step of the way.

Achieving national land trust accreditation is no small feat. It's a rigorous process that demands excellence in governance, financial management, and, most importantly, conservation practices. It signifies our commitment to upholding the highest standards of land conservation and stewardship, ensuring that the precious natural heritage entrusted to us is safeguarded for generations to come.

It is a testament to the dedication of our board members, staff, volunteers, and supporters who have poured their time, expertise, and passion into protecting the health of our region's landscapes and waterways. It's a reflection of the trust and confidence of our donors, partners, and the communities we serve. Together, we have demonstrated that, when we unite behind a common purpose, we can achieve remarkable results.

In the coming months, we look forward to continuing our work protecting the lands that we've been entrusted with, forging meaningful partnerships, and deepening our engagement with the communities we serve. As we celebrate this milestone, we are reaffirming our commitment to be stewards of the land, champions of biodiversity, and advocates for our region's natural resources.

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

Warmest regards,

*Whitney*



**Executive Director  
Whitney Gleason**



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Simply email us at  
info@chautauquawatershed.org!

# Procrastinate for Pollinators!

(by Carol Markham)

It's March, and there's mud – imagine that! Many of us are tired of winter and can't wait to get out into our yards and gardens and get our hands dirty instead of our boots! Spring fever is definitely an “affliction” this time of year, but we need to quietly listen to the experts and biologists who tell us to be patient and wait. Last year's leaf litter and brown stems are still home to so many different bees and pollinating insects that need this winter shelter and don't necessarily leave it on the first warm day of spring.

So how do you determine when is the best time to complete your spring yard work and not bug our pollinators? Unfortunately, with our spring weather here in Western New York being what it is (unpredictable and finicky) there's isn't a hard and fast answer to this question. Instead, let's think about some other spring cues that can help us know when it's the right time to unleash our winter doldrums and reach for the rake!

## Have you put away the snow shovel?

If you haven't tempted the snow gods yet and stored the snow shovel in the back of your garage for another year, and if you're still wearing long underwear and winter boots, then it's too early.

## Would you plant your tomatoes and peppers now?

It's not a good idea to plant your tender vegetables outdoors until evening temperatures are consistently in the 50s. These plants are too tender, and most likely, conditions are also still too cold for pollinators to be out and about.



(Image and sign courtesy of Saving Monarchs at [facebook.com/savingmonarchs](https://facebook.com/savingmonarchs))



**Don't spring into your garden clean up too soon! While often hard to see, many of our butterflies, bees, and other pollinators overwinter in brush and dead plants and need extra time to “wake up” in the spring.**

## Is your grass growing tall?

Cool-season lawns begin growing when soil temperatures reach 50 degrees. If your grass is growing enough to mow regularly, it's probably a safe bet that most pollinators have emerged. To help pollinators even more, wait a little longer to mow. “No Mow May” is a movement to allow your grass and wildflowers to grow unmown until after May, creating habitat and food for early season pollinators when many flowers are not yet blooming. If you do mow before then, consider leaving small patches of your lawn unmown and/or mow it less frequently.

## Has tax day come and gone?

Mid- to late April should be the earliest you consider cutting back your perennials and clearing garden debris. Some bees don't emerge until late May, so the longer you can tolerate your “messy” garden, the better.

## Are apples and pears finished blooming?

Peach, plum, and cherry trees are the earliest to bloom, coinciding with the emergence of many ground-nesting bees. Apple and pear trees bloom

between mid-April and mid-May. If you can wait until apple trees are no longer in bloom, then you should be safe from disturbing those pollinators that emerge a little later than the rest.

With all the spring gardening shows, articles, and social media messages we get bombarded with, it's hard not to be tempted to clean our “messy” winter gardens at the first signs of spring. We gently ask each and every one of you this spring to press pause and find other ways to occupy your weekends. Instead of disturbing pollinator habitat, try some of these activities that support pollinators: design a new native garden, build a bat house or bee hotel, or install motion-sensor outdoor lighting instead of bright spotlights. While you may be eager to get outside and play in the garden – for the sake of our pollinators – wait for warmer days to dig in the dirt!

# Seeing Green and Blue in Everything We Do

(by Twan Leenders)

While our land conservation and ecological improvement efforts continue throughout the region, Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy staff is also involved in strategic planning efforts that help improve the sustainability, resilience, and scenic beauty of our landscape.

Remember the Comprehensive Regional Conservation Implementation Strategy (CRCIS) tool that we developed last year? This landscape-level analysis maps how every 30m x 30m plot of land in Chautauqua County contributes to water quality, habitat for at-risk species, climate resiliency, and more. More than a dozen relevant variables were included in the analysis, and we are continuously fine-tuning and updating the model as more information becomes available. The resulting conservation priority maps that we generate from this data are extremely valuable when we weigh whether or not to accept property donations or invest in acquiring a critical property. Most importantly, we are looking to make connections of natural areas across the landscape, cobbling together corridors where wildlife can move through the landscape uninterrupted and where entire waterways are protected, starting at their source. Those habitat corridors, forested or otherwise in a natural state, are often referred to as “greenways.” Similarly, connected aquatic corridors in the landscape should be considered “blueways.”



It's these greenways and blueways that make conservation “sing” – elevating the value of connected natural lands well above parks, preserves, or other natural “islands” that exist in isolation. It's what drives Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy's work these days. We are in the process of reaching out to landowners who own property in areas where greenway connectivity is lacking. Likewise, we are prioritizing habitat restoration efforts in sections of our waterways that are currently compromised, making ecological improvements that will lead to hydrologically connected blueways, making streams more resilient and more able to handle the intensifying storms we are experiencing, while also creating healthier living conditions for fish, turtles, and other creatures.

Often, blueways and greenways go hand-in-hand. Continuous tree cover along stream corridors helps provide shade and keeps the water temperature down, while the roots of those trees help stabilize banks and prevent erosion. And, just as much as fish follow streams and rivers to move through the landscape, lots of other animals will do the same – especially if there is a decent tree canopy present. Migratory birds are well known to follow such landscape elements.

One other important benefit of the greenway and blueway corridor concept is that it not only provides ecological benefits but economic ones as well. Increased resilience across the landscape will prevent a lot of property damage (think flooding, erosion, damage to roads and bridges). Also, the creation of these functional, natural corridors through the region lends itself perfectly to recreational uses such as hiking, biking, horseback riding, kayaking,



fishing – you name it! Any of these outdoor activities are more enjoyable if they take place in a scenic setting, especially if the trails and waterways are also located where brightly colored birds migrate and fish can be found.

If you're interested in learning more, stop by our office to pick up a printed copy of our new CRCIS brochure. You can also view and/or download an electronic copy from our website at [www.chautauquawatershed.org/strategicland](http://www.chautauquawatershed.org/strategicland).

It should be no surprise to you that the success of our work depends entirely on connections – connecting nature across the landscape and connecting people across the landscape to nature. Don't ever hesitate to reach out to us if you want to connect!

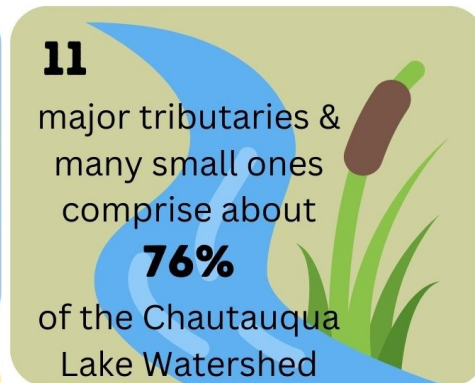
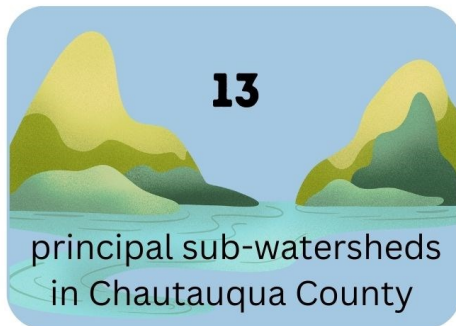
## Abram Nature Preserve (continued)

Speaking of neighbors, it was by chance that our preserve handyman, John McCarthy (“Johnny Mac”), and myself met a most wonderful neighbor of the preserve, named Beverly Strauser, while we were installing corner posts on the preserve. After chatting with Beverly for a while, she was so excited about having a nature preserve for a backyard that she graciously made a donation to us to fund the addition of hiking trails to the site! These trails will be named after her late husband, who enjoyed being outdoors. We very much look forward to keeping his memory alive with improvements to the preserve through her generous donation.

Both of these magnificent and generous gifts given to our organization help to enrich the lives and environment of the people of the Town of Pomfret, as well as all the residents of Chautauqua County. Stay tuned for an official ribbon cutting of what will surely be one of our finest preserves!



### Did You Know? There are . . .



## 2023 Jefferson Project Update – What Can We Do Now?

(by John Jablonski III)

The Jefferson Project at Chautauqua Lake is a multi-year research project that was started in 2020 and led by the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and IBM Research using state-of-the-art technology to monitor and research the water quality of the lake with the intent to “mitigate harmful algae blooms and forecast them.” The project includes research into the impacts of human activity on the lake’s water quality and how to possibly mitigate those impacts. This project has been funded primarily by Chautauqua County, Chautauqua Institution, and the Ralph C. Sheldon Foundation, with research partners to date including SUNY-Fredonia, Bowling Green State University, Chautauqua Lake and Watershed Management Alliance, Chautauqua Lake Association, and Chautauqua Lake Partnership.

In January of this year, Dr. Kevin Rose of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and Dr. Harry Kolar of IBM Research virtually presented information from research to date to the Chautauqua County Legislature. (A recording of the presentation can be viewed on the county’s website or legislature’s YouTube channel.) Among the findings was the affirmation of the need to reduce the amount of phosphorus and nitrogen nutrients flowing into the lake from its surrounding watershed.

They noted that abundant phosphorus stored in the lake bottom is released from lake sediments into the water during periods when the water is stratified by temperature and little or no oxygen is available at the lake bottom. These conditions promote the release of soluble phosphorus into the water, which is then mixed higher into the water column for uptake by cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) and which can move vertically to access phosphorus.

The phosphorus contained in stormwater and eroded soil coming into the lake from the watershed, known as external load, accumulates in lake sediments. A positive feedback loop exists in which external phosphorus loading results in more internal phosphorus loading feeding algae blooms in future years. The scientists said that reducing external nutrient loading can be difficult but that riparian (waterfront) vegetative buffers and stream erosion control projects are important to controlling these sources of pollution. An interesting finding of this study is that internal waves are stirring up bottom sediments, releasing phosphorus into the water column, and that aquatic plants may play a role in holding the sediments in place. New for 2024, stream water sampling stations have been placed on most major lake tributaries to monitor flow and nutrient concentrations. Evidence is growing that large storms are responsible for the runoff and erosion that carry most of the annual external phosphorus loading to lakes.

We at the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy are pleased that information presented by Drs. Rose and Kolar strongly supports the body of pollution prevention work that the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy has been implementing with its partners for more than 30 years! We look forward to seeing the future research results from this initiative. In the meantime, here are some suggestions as to what you can do as a local property owner to help:

- 1) conserve and restore naturally-vegetated streamside and lakeshore buffers, no matter how small the stream;
- 2) naturalize as much of your property as possible with native plants, shrubs and trees;
- 3) implement stormwater best management practices to “capture the storm” and allow water to soak into the ground and recharge groundwaters feeding streams and wells;
- 4) route runoff from your rooftops and driveways to vegetated surfaces that can absorb it, rather than route it directly into streets, storm drains, or road ditches;
- 5) advocate for your local municipal leaders to adopt and enforce strong, effective stormwater volume and pollution control laws (none of which exist here now); and
- 6) advocate for and support the large scale permanent conservation of wetlands, stream corridors, and headwater forests feeding waters to our lakes.



Pictured is one of the vertical profilers/research buoys used to gather data in Chautauqua Lake. (photo courtesy of the Chautauqua Lake and Watershed Management Alliance)

# Our Priceless Preserve Stewards

(by Bethany O'Hagan)

Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy has conserved more than 1,250 acres of ecologically important parcels of land that help protect our watershed's beautiful and healthy water systems. From preserves with rare birding areas, to preserves with lake, creek, pond, and stream access, to preserves with serene and peaceful trails, our 35+ nature preserves offer a plethora of natural habitat to immerse yourself in and over 10 miles of hiking trails.

As a small but growing organization, we rely on our preserve stewards to help us monitor our ever-expanding reach. We have an amazing, dedicated group of nature lovers who help take such great care of our preserves that we want to give them some much-deserved recognition. Here are all our stewards and the preserves that they monitor:

Dobbins Woods (100 acres)	Brad & Carol Samuelson	Joyce Johnson Bird Sanctuary @ Cass Creek (41.6 acres)	Dennis Collins
Elm Flats Wetland Preserve (113 acres)	Tom Slabe	Chq. Creek Oxbow Forest Preserve (23 acres)	Deb Piotrowski
Cassadaga Creek Wetland Preserve (151.14 acres)	Johnny Mac	Goose Creek Valley Greenway Preserve (23.3 acres)	Jan Bowman
Prendergast Creek Wetland Preserve (8 acres)	Judy Maskrey	Naetzker Forest Preserve (74.9 acres)	Jim Godwin
Chq. Lake Outlet Wetland Greenway (82.9 acres)	Brad Peterson	Salomon Family Nature Preserve (58.6 acres)	Karie and Maddy Hayes
Ball Creek Nature Park (5 acres)	Terry & Kathy Horner	Bentley Preserve (38 acres)	Terry Roberts
RoseMary Straight Bird Sanctuary (5.8 acres)	Peter & Kathy George	Brown's Creek Tributary Forest Preserve (31 acres)	Greg Eckwahl
Houston Hollow Preserve (1.3 acres)	Jackie Damore	Fletcher Family Preserve (12.84 acres)	Jennifer Harper
Chq. Creek East Branch Preserve (21.6 acres)	Jay Stratton	Galucki Wetlands at Chq. Lake's Big Inlet (20 acres)	Michael Koscher
Randy Allan Hendrickson Preserve (17.5 acres)	Kyle Cashmore	Cassadaga Lakes Nature Park (77.7 acres)	Nancy Wickmark
Little-Big Inlet Wetland Preserve (4.3 acres)	Michael Koscher	Jerry & Joan Myers Family Wetland (11.9 acres)	Bethany O'Hagan
Sunnyside Marsh Preserve (4.5 acres)	Cheryl Eckwahl	Pry Wetlands (24.3 acres)	Jim Fox
Fern Island Wetland Preserve (12.4 acres)	Peter & Kathy George	Southern Tier Brewing Company Preserve (30.5 acres)	Jackie Damore
Loomis Goose Creek Wetland Preserve (25.10 acres)	Jackie Damore	Kyle's Landing at Cassadaga Creek Preserve (22 acres)	Mary Donna
Wells Bay Lakeshore Forest (3.5 acres)	Julie Stronz	Abram Preserve (33.93 acres)	Nicole & Eric Hohenstien
Whitney Bay Lakeshore Forest (0.9 acres)	Judy Maskrey	McCray Peckinpaugh Nature Preserve (14.7 acres)	MaryBeth Southwick
		Mary and Tom Huhn Nature Park (50.2 acres)	Bob Pray

We also have a few trail adopters and a secondary preserve steward. Stephen Bulich is a trail adopter at our Brown's Creek Tributary Forest Preserve, and Rosalie Hewitt is a trail adopter at our Dobbins Woods Preserve. Nathan Elliott is both a trail adopter at our Chautauqua Lake Outlet Greenway Preserve and a secondary steward for our Bentley Nature Preserve. We extend a big thank you to each of these generous volunteers for everything they do to help with our preserves. If you are interested in becoming a preserve steward or trail adopter, please email our land steward at [Bethany@chautauquawatershed.org](mailto:Bethany@chautauquawatershed.org).

## Join our Legacy Society

You have chosen to support Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy because you believe in our mission. Now you have the opportunity to also leave your mark on the organization long after you're gone.

A bequest to our organization will stay local and have a significant impact on your community. It's an investment in the health and quality of the waterways and habitats in the Chautauqua region for generations to come!

We've recently begun a partnership with FreeWill, an online resource that allows you to write a legal will at no cost to you - and it only takes about 20 minutes.

Start your legacy  
at FreeWill today



[freewill.com/chautauquawatershedconservancy](https://freewill.com/chautauquawatershedconservancy)



For more information and additional ways to leave us a legacy gift, visit: [chautauquawatershed.org/legacy](https://chautauquawatershed.org/legacy).

Reach out to a member of our giving team:  
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## UPCOMING EVENTS

- May 12th**     **Mother's Day Wildflower Walk**  
at Bentley Nature Preserve *(space is limited)*
- June 22nd**    **Chautauqua Lake Sailing Rallye**
- June 22nd**    **Chautauqua Lake Science Conference**  
at Chautauqua Institution
- June 24th**    **Charity Pro-Am Golf Tournament**  
at Chautauqua Golf Club
- August 24th** **Native Plant Sale & Buffer Walk**  
at Chautauqua Marina

*Visit [www.chautauquawatershed.org](http://www.chautauquawatershed.org) for more details and other upcoming events!*



We could use some extra help furthering our mission!

- Educational event support
- Garden maintenance
- Preserve maintenance
- Trail adopters
- Preserve stewards

For more information, call 716-664-2166 Ext. 1001 or  
email [tracy@chautauquawatershed.org](mailto:tracy@chautauquawatershed.org)

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