The 'Shed Sheet

Fall 2019

CHAUTAUQUA WATERSHED CONSERVANCY

Laissez-Faire Fall Yard Care

Taking a "less is more" approach to fall yard care can help birds thrive in and survive winter!

Fall is a season of change and beauty. We gaze upon the vibrant colors of changing fall leaves, drink in the cool, crisp morning air and observe the migration of some of our favorite backyard birds that adorn our yards. As the brilliant reds and golds of leaves dim and plant life fades to grays and browns, many homeowners and gardeners begin an annual fall rite of raking leaves and cleaning out other dried plant matter from their lawns and garden beds. But perhaps it's time to reconsider this practice.



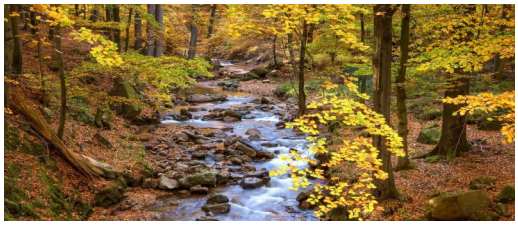
Blue jays and other birds need "messy" yards and gardens to survive and thrive during winter months. (photo by Laura Frazier / National Audubon Society)

A recent Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology study conducted by an international team of scientists from seven institutions revealed that the North American bird population is down a staggering 2.9 billion in breeding adults since 1970! The so-called common backyard birdfeeder birds represent the greatest losses of birdlife. Ken Rosenburg, a senior scientist at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and lead author of the study, stated that, "these bird losses are a strong signal that our human-altered landscapes are losing their ability to support birdlife."

So are there things we as homeowners can do to our landscapes that can not only protect our environment but also help our distressed bird populations right here in Chautauqua County? You bet! One of the easiest and simplest ways is to minimize our fall lawn care practices and learn to embrace a "messy" lawn and garden area – in other words, a welcoming fall and winter haven for birds! How do you do this? Turn to page 4 for tips!

30 Years ~ 30 Preserves ~ 1,000 Acres Protected

- Forested shorelines
- Conserved wetlands
- Shoreline buffers
- Rain gardens
- Healthy, preserved lands
- Protected & restored streambanks



That's what it takes to keep our lakes, streams and ground waters clean and our human, fish and wildlife populations healthy. And that's what the CWC has worked diligently for since 1990. We've conserved more than 1,000 acres of sensitive land throughout Chautauqua County, including two miles of Chautauqua Lake and Outlet shoreline, partnered on more than a dozen erosion control projects, distributed thousands of newsletters and pamphlets and put on hundreds of workshops to educate county residents on keeping Chautauqua County's lands and waters healthy.

Next year, CWC will be celebrating its 30th Anniversary, and we plan to celebrate throughout 2020! We'll be holding several special events and preserve tours, sharing our conservation success stories and looking ahead to new protection projects and programs! And we can't wait for you to celebrate with us! So be sure to follow us on social media, sign up to receive our e-news and keep an eye on our website so you don't miss out on any of the good news or the fun!

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CHAUTAUQUA WATERSHED CONSERVANCY

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The Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy 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.

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Message From The Executive Director



John Jablonski III

Three significant issues have been on my mind lately – declining bird populations, harmful algae blooms (HABs) and climate change. They may be on your minds as well.

You may have seen that scientists at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology recently published a paper noting that there are now nearly 3 billion fewer birds in North America than there were in 1970! That's an astounding 29% decline! This staggering number is disheartening to say the least. Habitat loss and an increased use of pesticides are identified as two major causes of this decline.

This summer, the southern two-thirds of Chautauqua Lake (from Long Point south) exhibited extended periods of excessive algae blooms which degraded lake conditions and resulted in harmful algae bloom warnings discouraging use of the lake. Pollution runoff from human land uses and climate change are among the important drivers of these blooms.

Climate change is undeniably real, with potentially far-reaching, dire and irreversible consequences. Natural climate solutions, such as forest restoration, enhanced forest management and conserving forests, grasslands and wetlands, have been identified as actions that can reach up to 37% of carbon dioxide reductions globally.

Also on my mind is how the CWC is uniquely positioned to locally and positively address all three of these serious challenges facing us.

As a land trust, CWC has worked and will continue to work to identify the most important fish and wildlife habitats, including bird habitats, to conserve across Chautauqua County. CWC has conserved over 450 acres of wetlands to date and over 1,000 acres of land in total! CWC's preserves are hosting hundreds of acres of growing forests, shrub lands and old fields reverting back to forests, which actively absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. CWC is also seeking to rapidly expand its forest and wetland conservation efforts to more aggressively and permanently sequester carbon to fight climate change, protect water quality and save habitat for birds and other wildlife across large acreages of our watersheds.

> ***"The CWC is uniquely positioned to locally and positively address . . . declining bird populations, harmful algae blooms and climate change."***

CWC is bolstering its pollution prevention education and technical assistance efforts to encourage landowners to conserve shorelines and shorelands, install shoreline buffers and use native plants to help reduce soil erosion and intercept nutrients before they reach our streams and lakes. We're also launching an effort to encourage homeowners to reduce their use of both pesticides and herbicides, which will not only be healthier for families and their pets but also allow their yards to provide safe food and habitat for birds and other wildlife.

Your contributions and volunteerism are helping to develop and deliver these very important programs, and on behalf of the board and staff of the CWC, I send a heartfelt thank you to all who support the CWC!

Meet Our New Lands Manager . . .



CWC's new lands manager, Jeremy Woolson

Jeremy Woolson has joined the CWC team as our new conservation lands manager!

A long-time resident of Chautauqua County, Jeremy has always enjoyed exploring natural spaces. Jeremy received his master's degree in biology from SUNY Fredonia and has spent most of his professional life in education, having taught high school science for eleven years and working as an adjunct lecturer at both Jamestown Community College and SUNY Fredonia for the last six years. He is also an avid kayaker and kayaking instructor, an activity that puts him in a very close and personal relationship with the waters in Chautauqua County and around the northeast.

Jeremy hopes to bring his diverse experience and skills to the task of maintaining CWC's existing preserves and finding new spaces that can be protected for the benefit of all — two legged, four legged, many legged, flyers, swimmers and the green growing world. After all, we can't replace what grows in place by any art or guile!

. . . And Meet Our New Conservationist!

Carol Markham has also recently joined the CWC team as our new conservationist!

Carol has an undergraduate degree in marine biology from Roger Williams University and a master's degree in natural resources management from The Ohio State University. She worked for nine years for the State of Maryland as a natural resource biologist focusing on fish stock assessments in Chesapeake Bay. It was during this time that Carol discovered her love of plants. She followed that passion by taking various college courses in botany and then teaching botany at a local college. Carol also worked for the US Fish and Wildlife Service conducting their BayScapes program, which uses outreach strategies to encourage homeowners, landowners, local businesses and other partners to adopt environmentally beneficial landscaping practices using native plant species. Following a move to Western New York, Carol worked for over a decade at Turnbull Nursery and Garden Center in North Collins, NY.

Carol and her husband Jim have three children and live in Forestville, NY. In addition to enjoying her weekly Pilates classes, Carol loves being outdoors and can often be found in her butterfly gardens, hiking, bike riding, cross-country skiing or out by the bonfire with a cold one.



CWC's new conservationist, Carol Markham

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Laissez-Faire Fall Yard Care Continued



Many plants end up producing delicious seeds in their "less aesthetically pleasing stages" and should be left alone as a meal for birds and other wildlife or even just to propagate their species. Above, an American Goldfinch looks for its next meal in a dead coneflower head. (photo by Scott Kruitbosch / RTPI)

Stack Your Sticks!

Limbs, branches and twigs that fall into our yards are perfect for creating a brush pile that will provide shelter for birds from the winter weather and protection from predators.

Don't Deadhead!

No, we're not referencing fans of the Grateful Dead, but we are talking about the benefits of savings seeds. Many of the birds we observe in our yards in the fall and winter not only eat seed from our feeders but also rely on the seeds, nuts and berries that are produced on many of your landscape plants and shrubs. If we weed whack or trim everything down for the winter, we remove valuable sources of calories for birds. For example, goldfinches love to perch and feed on native grasses, black-eyed Susan and purple coneflower seed heads during the winter months as do cardinals on the withered red berries of winterberry holly. Many species of native bees and butterflies also use "messy" garden spaces to overwinter. So wait to snip the stems of those perennials or other dried or dead plants until springtime.

Leave The Leaves!

Mowing and mulching your leaves right into your lawn naturally enriches the soil and eliminates the need for chemical fertilizers. In other words, leaves are free lawn food! Leaves that remain in or are raked into gardens and mulched areas not only add winter insulation for plants and bulbs but can also establish cover for birds and create space and habitat for beneficial insects and caterpillars to overwinter. In turn, these beneficial bugs provide food for birds during the cold winter months.

As a bonus, leaving or mulching your leaves into your yard or garden bed will also help keep them out of storm drains, which in turn helps to keep them out of our streams and lakes where the phosphorus and nitrogen contained within the leaves can act as fertilizer for aquatic plants and algae. Even if the leaves don't make it into storm drains, leaves left on the curb or swept into streets can block storm drains and cause or exacerbate flooding problems.

Need even more reason? You'll also save yourself some time, backaches and blisters by skipping the leaf raking this fall! And, if you are a village or city resident, it can also help keep municipal costs down since it reduces the amount of leaves your local public works department needs to haul away.



Municipalities & CLP Treat Chautauqua Lake With Herbicides

The Towns of Busti, Ellery, Ellicott and North Harmony and the Villages of Celoron and Lakewood partnered with the Chautauqua Lake Partnership earlier this year to employ the firm Solitude Lake Management to apply herbicides to approximately 388 acres of Chautauqua Lake. The applications took place on May 15th, 16th and 17th under permits issued by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Granular 2,4-D as Navigate ® and liquid endothall as Aquathol K ® were the herbicides used. The stated targeted non-native plants were curly-leafed pondweed and Eurasian watermilfoil.



A temporary sign posted on the shoreline of Chautauqua Lake warns lake users of a recent herbicide treatment and consequential lake use restrictions. (photo by Claire Quadri)

A very limited "independent" third party assessment of the treatments, commissioned by the Chautauqua Lake and Watershed Management Alliance and Chautauqua County, was completed by the firm Princeton Hydro and based on sampling in June, one month after treatment. This assessment supported anecdotal reports that the herbicides effectively controlled Eurasian watermilfoil and curly-leafed pondweed and determined that "… total plant biomass declined with a marked reduction in the two invasive species. However, none of the declines in biomass were statistically significant." (It should be noted that curly-leafed pondweed tends to peak in abundance in the spring and complete its life cycle and naturally decline by late June.)

The report also confirmed drift of herbicides away from the treated areas. Fishing groups contend that the herbicide suppression or killing of beneficial plants extended greatly beyond the 388 acres that were treated, leaving much of the southern basin without the usual plant beds that provide food and habitat for the survival of young-of-the-year fish hatched in the spring in of 2019. The Princeton Hydro report indicated that public drinking water intakes in the northern basin and native plants at the treatment sites were not negatively affected by the treatments. The growth of native plants and Eurasian watermilfoil across the entire lake seemed to be delayed this spring and summer. The mid-May herbicide treatment was intended to minimize the suppression of later germinating native plants. The abundant growth of native eel grass or tape grass (*Vallisneria americana*) was reported to be problematic in treated areas as well as untreated areas of the lake by later in the summer.



One of several mid– to late summer algae blooms in Chautauqua Lake in 2019.

The southern basin of the lake also suffered from extended periods of excessive algae blooms, most of which were verified as containing harmful toxins. There is a misconception that herbicides can help to control algae blooms. In fact, the suppression of aquatic plant growth with herbicides may actually enhance algae and cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) blooms. The very limited nature of the third party monitoring of a few of the treated, potential drift and control sites, as well as the single episode of monitoring sampling done in June, leaves much unknown regarding the effectiveness and potential unintended impacts of this 2019 herbicide treatment program.



If you are 70½ years of age or older, you can make direct distributions of up to $100k per year from your IRA to the CWC.

These withdrawals can be counted towards your required minimum distribution, and you won't need to include the distribution as part of your taxable income.

Please consult your tax advisor to learn more about how both you and the CWC can benefit from gifts of assets during your lifetime!

Swinging "Fore" The Lake!

The CWC is once again celebrating a successful charity golf tournament! The 2019 "Score One For The Lake" pro-am golf tournament was held on June 24th at the Chautauqua Golf Club with more than 100 professional and amateur golfers hitting the links to raise money and awareness for the CWC's conservation efforts.

This year marked the 8th year that CWC has partnered with the Chautauqua Golf Club on the fundraiser and the 2nd year that Snug Harbor Marina was the presenting sponsor for the event. To date, the tournament has raised more than $200,000 for the CWC! PGA Professional Dwayne Randall (Bartlett Country Club) came in first for the professionals, and PGA Professional Ryan Swanson (Pinehurst Golf Course) and amateurs Gary Reeve, Rich Flanagan and Dan Filipi took first place for team participants.



(from left) PGA Professional Dwayne Randall, PGA Professional Ryan Swanson, Gary Reeve, Rich Flanagan & Dan Filipi (photo by Jill Eklund)

The Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy and Chautauqua Golf Club are grateful to all of the golfers, sponsors and volunteers who made the 2019 tournament a success!



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SAVE THE DATE *of Monday, June 22, 2020 for our next Charity Pro-Am Golf Tournament and let us know if you would like to sponsor, play in and/or volunteer to help with the event!*

Keep It Clean — It Drains To The Lake!

Storm Drain Marking Campaign

This October, CWC staff and volunteers participated in a "storm drain marking campaign" in the City of Dunkirk, along Lake Erie, using grant funding from the Lake Erie Management Commission and the Lake Erie Watershed Protection Alliance.

Volunteers placed 106 stenciled markers near storm drains with the message *Keep It Clean – Drains to Lake*. (See an example of one to the right.) The campaign is intended to remind the public of the function of a storm drain and increase public awareness about pollution entering these drains.



An example of one of the "Keep It Clean — Drains To Lake" storm drain markings in the City of Dunkirk. (photo by Tracy Carlson)

Storm drains are intended to quickly re-route rainwater off streets and parking lots during storms and direct the rainwater to a nearby waterway such as a creek, stream, river or lake as a way to help prevent flooding. Unfortunately, undesirable materials can be picked up by the rainwater and flow along with it into the drain – things such as automotive oil, antifreeze, paint, trash, yard waste, pet waste and other debris. Contrary to what many people think, storm drains rarely lead to wastewater treatment plants, meaning most stormwater typically enters these waterbodies *unfiltered and untreated*.

In addition to not intentionally dumping *anything* down a storm drain, there are other ways you can help keep these drains clean:

- Properly dispose of grass clippings, leaves and other yard waste. When leaves and grass clippings decompose, they release nitrogen and phosphorus which act as fertilizer for aquatic plants and algae if they end up in the water. Instead, compost or mulch these materials and use them as free fertilizer for your lawn and garden beds!
- Clean up pet waste in your yard and on walkways. Pet waste contains nutrients, bacteria and other pathogens that not only pollute the water but also fertilize and promote aquatic plant growth and algae blooms.
- When washing your car, direct the waterflow towards a permeable surface, such as your lawn, instead of letting it run down your driveway.
- Clean up spills such as automotive or industrial fluids with absorbents (such as cat litter) and then properly dispose of it.

This project was funded by the Lake Erie Management Commission and the Lake Erie Watershed Protection Alliance, with support from Chautauqua County and the City of Dunkirk.



A planned gift is more than just a donation — it's an expression of your desire to make a difference and leave a lasting legacy!

Make your legacy protecting the woods and waterways of the Chautauqua region for generations to come by naming the CWC in your will, living trust, bank account, 401(k) or life insurance policy.

Already included CWC in your planned giving? Let us know—we want to thank you!

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