



Riverlovers Currents

Volume 19, Number 12, December 2006

Riverlovers Doings

At our Holiday Potluck on Friday, December 8th at 6:30pm, we will address the seasonally appropriate topic of the environment and religion, as a follow-up to some of the Garrison Institute conversations that some of our members have attended. Let's give a rousing welcome to our incoming President, Gunnar Andersen. We've got some good plans laid out, and I know all of us will want to give Gunnar all the support we can muster. Let's renew our sense of purpose and our dedication to environmental education and environmental action in support of our river.

While we're at it, let's give a big welcome to our new Congressman and staunch environmental supporter, John Hall, who we hope will make music in Washington on behalf of all of us and our river too. Clearwater people worked hard to put our environment first, and we celebrate our achievement.

And in January, Susan is putting together an edited video of the presentation on the nuclear problem that Dr. Helen Caldicott made in White Plains in October. Her theme, "Nuclear Power is Not the Answer to Global Warming," couldn't be more relevant, and the message needs to be heard many times over.

We're looking forward to repeating our very successful bread and soup serving activity that we did at last year's Eagle Weekend at Croton Point, and this is set for Sunday, February 11th at 1pm. Cynthia will be coordinating the arrangements for preparing and serving the food to the visitors coming to the Nature Center programs that day. Listings for this and some of our other Spring events will appear in the County calendar, thanks to Nature Center Naturalist Scott Williamson.

The next Walkabout Clearwater Coffeehouse features Guy Davis and Ann Rabson (co-founder of Saffire, the Uppity Blues Women), who will share the stage on December 9th. The first half of the season then concludes with the hugely popular Jay Ungar and Molly Mason on the 13th of January. And it's no longer rumor that Pete will be there in February to kick off the second half of the Coffeehouse season. That's sure to attract a big crowd, so get your tickets early. (I already got ours, plus some for friends too).

These evenings, which include an opening singalong starting at 6:45, are lots of fun and good entertainment. Bring your crowd of friends and join in the festivities. You won't be disappointed!

Pay your dues now—support our river!

\$15 Individual & \$20 Family

Local Attractions—II

If you're interested in boating, hiking, birding or just plain natural scenery, here are some places you will want to visit along our stretch of the Hudson at this time of the year.

Brinton Brook is a Saw Mill River Audubon Sanctuary located along Route 9A at the north end of Croton-on-Hudson. Drive into the access road and hike the marked trails, visiting the secluded lake and watching for a variety of birds.

Georges' Island, off Route 9A in Montrose, has a boat launch as well as hiking and picnicking. Eagles are often seen in the colder months, and lots of other shore and woodland birds year-round. Clay pits attest to the brick-making history of the Hudson River shores. Info: 737-7530.

The Croton Sailing School at Senasqua Park, Croton, offers boat rentals for sailors, and sailing instruction and regattas. Info: 271-6868.

Walk the scenic Old Croton Aqueduct. You can do a little or a lot, since it runs from the New Croton Dam through rural and suburban areas in most of the Historic River Towns of Westchester on the way down to New York City. Info: 693-5259.

The Briarcliff-Peekskill Trailway provides a 12-mile hike from Maryknoll Seminary in northern Ossining to Blue Mountain Reservation in Peekskill. The Reservation itself has a number of hiking trails and a pond as well. Info: 242-7275.

Rockwood Hall State Park is off of Route 9 in Sleepy Hollow and has hiking trails and meadows with great views of the Hudson River and some specimen trees. The foundations of William Rockefeller's waterfront mansion are still visible. Info: 631-1470.

Pocantico Lake Park, Old Sleepy Hollow Road, Briarcliff Manor, is the former reservoir for New Rochelle, with 164 acres for hiking, fishing, horseback riding from nearby stables, and nature study. Info: 864-7000.

Lenoir Preserve is a 40-acre nature preserve on Dudley Street in Yonkers, with woodlands and field habitats having some spectacular views. The Nature Center is open from 9 to 4, Tuesday through Saturday. Bird watchers can view hawk migrations in the Fall. There is an organic community gardening area and a composting exhibit. Info: 968-5851.

Untermeyer Park, 945 North Broadway, Yonkers, features an astonishing view of the Hudson River and the Palisades. It has a classical temple overlooking a mosaic pool, a Greek amphitheater, sculptures and Grecian gardens. Info: 377-6450.

Ideology At The Interior Department

A recent article in the Washington Post describes how a senior political appointee at the Interior Department has rejected the recommendations of staff scientists to protect imperiled animals and plants under the Endangered Species Act at least six times in the past several years, according to documents obtained by the newspaper. In addition, staff complaints that their scientific findings were frequently overruled have led the agency's inspector-general to look into the role of the appointee in decisions on protecting endangered species.

Documents show that the official, Julie MacDonald, has repeatedly refused to accept staff reports concluding that species are at risk of extinction. Scientists and career civil service officials had urged the Interior Department to identify a number of species as either threatened or endangered. MacDonald has also disparaged staff recommendations at the behest of industry or land-owners, according to records obtained under FOIA requests. According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, she has significantly contributed to "a systemic problem of tampering with science that is putting our environment at risk."

MacDonald has also rewritten staff reports, changing and eliminating portions and adding her own conclusions. In one case she added a statement that "The identified threats are speculative, and none of the documents provide substantial scientific information supporting the speculation," completely ignoring the documents and conclusions submitted by staff scientists.

The current administration's record for species protection is at a dismal rate of about ten listings a year, compared to the Clinton record of 64 a year, or even George H. W. Bush's record of 59 a year. This is just the latest in a series of controversies in which government officials and outside scientists have accused the administration of overriding or setting aside scientific findings that clashed with its political agenda on issues like global warming, stem cell research, drug safety, species protection and others.

Oversight hearings on the disputed matters are planned in January, when the new Congress convenes. That should improve things, and not a moment too soon for the environment!

Autism And Mercury—Rising Together

Experts say autism diagnoses have reached epidemic proportions, and rates in Hawaii are at the high end of the national average. It's also true that Hawaii residents eat fish at rates at least twice the national average. While no cause-and-effect evidence linking the two has emerged yet, the correlation is disturbing.

In a story in the *Honolulu Weekly*, it's reported that the numbers of children born with autism are rising across the country at an average of 10 to 17 percent per year. Over the last five years, Hawaii's average yearly increase was 15 percent, and as many as four percent of children with disabilities may have autism, compared to the national average of about one percent.

Genetic factors have been suggested, but genetics don't cause epidemics. What does cause them is large-scale contamination, and there is evidence that mercury in combination with a genetic predisposition is behind the rise in autism rates. Studies have shown damage to brain structure and cell function in autism that is identical to that in mercury poisoning.

About two thirds of the increase in mercury levels is attributable to fossil fuels and incinerators. Bacteria then convert this into methylmercury in water, which fish absorb and pass up the food chain, where it accumulates in tissues.

Another possible source is vaccines and the preservative Thimerosal. While some studies have suggested links to neurodevelopment and autism, and the FDA and Centers for Disease Control have ended the further use of the preservative, recent large-scale studies by several panels appointed by the National Academy of Science have found no causal relation.

Dental amalgams have also been suggested as a causative factor, but the use of both vaccines and amalgams in Hawaiian children and those on the mainland is comparable, and not related to the different rates of autism found. Attention has now been focused on the state's higher rate of fish consumption, and some species, especially coastal ones like moonfish and shrimp, have been found to have significantly higher methylmercury levels in recent years.

The EPA reported that power plants and refineries in Hawaii released 435 pounds of mercury in 2003—quite a high level. Until we phase out use of mercury in consumer, industrial and electrical devices, and reduce our dependence on coal-burning power and on incineration of municipal wastes, it's not likely that we will see a decrease in the levels of toxic mercury pollution and the incidence of autism.

(Thanks to Jan Ravase for a copy of the news article.)

The Benefits Of Native Plants—V

Here are some reasons why we should landscape with native plants. They are easier to grow, because they are well suited to our weather and soil conditions. The resilience of native plants is due in large part to their massive root systems. Because these roots reach deep into the soil—in some cases as far down as ten feet—the plants can find water even during dry periods.

The extensive root systems of native plants can also improve your soil. New root growth reduces soil compaction, and the die-off of old roots adds humus and nutrients to the soil. Sod-grass roots in lawns extend down only a few inches, and don't provide much benefit.

So what's wrong with landscaping using non-native plants? These species, sometimes called exotic species, are those that have been transplanted to places where they did not evolve as a part of a community. Introduction has been both deliberate and accidental, and if the plant grows aggressively, it is considered "invasive" and can have serious effects on other plant populations.

A good example of this is purple loosestrife, which was introduced from Europe in the 1800's in ship ballast and as a medicinal herb and ornamental plant. It spread very rapidly, and is now crowding out the native species that provide food for aquatic life in most of the United States. It is often seen along roadsides, streams and wetlands areas.

Some other examples of invasive species that produce an overabundance of seedlings include Norway maple, multiflora or wild rose, barberry, and several varieties of honeysuckle. All of these are aggressive, crowding out the native flora and reducing the biodiversity of the local ecosystem. And once they get a toehold and establish themselves, it's extremely difficult to control or eradicate them. If you've ever tried to get rid of a stand of bamboo, you'll know what I mean.

Quote Without Comment

"The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails."
William A. Ward



What's Happening When

Sundays at the Beacon Sloop Club, **Farmers' Market** 10am-4pm. Local cheeses, eggs, pasta, bread, lamb & mushroom spring rolls.

Dec 2, Sat, 2pm, **Amazing Animal Tracks**, at Croton Point Nature Center. Kids of all ages can learn shapes, habitats and adaptations of animals that frequent Croton Point. Info: 914-862-5297.

Dec 2, Sat, 8pm, **Mainstage presents Ritchie Havens at Irvington Town Hall Theater**, 85 Main St, Irvington. Tickets \$35. Info: 800-595-4849 or www.themainstage.org.

Dec 2, Sat, 8pm, **Paramount Center for the Arts presents Bluegrass Explosion with the Del McCoury Band**. Tickets \$30 & \$35. Call 877-840-0457 or order online at www.paramountcenter.org.

Dec 3, Sun, 5pm, **Uptown Coffeehouse presents Jack Hardy** singing Western ballads & pub-style Celtic songs & jigs. Sponsored by Riverdale-Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture at 4450 Fieldston Rd, Bronx. Tickets \$15. Parking in Fieldston School lots across street. Info: 718-885-2955.

Dec 9, Sat, 1-3pm, **One With the Clay program at Croton Point Nature Center**: Native Americans at Croton Point made pots from the abundant clay beds. Adults & children can learn their pottery traditions & hand-build your own pots from Croton Point clay. Info: 914-862-5297.

Dec 8, Fri, 6:30pm, **Riverlovers Holiday Potluck**, examining the seasonally appropriate topic of the environment and religion and celebrating our commitment to the welfare of the Hudson River, as well as our dedication to environmental education & environmental action. Join us at the Nature Center in Croton Point Park.

Dec 9, Sat, 7:30pm, **Walkabout Clearwater Coffeehouse presents acoustic bluesman Guy Davis and Saffire/The Uppity Blues Women co-founder Ann Rabson**, at Memorial United Methodist Church, 250 Bryant Ave, White Plains. Tickets \$17.50, open seating. Proceeds benefit Walkabout & Clearwater. Refreshments available. Free parking. Informal songfest at 6:45pm. Info: www.walkaboutclearwater.org or call 914-242-0374.

Dec 10, Sun, 1-4pm, **MALFA Archaeology Open House** at Croton Point Nature Center. Share an afternoon of archaeological adventures with your local archaeological organization. Info: 914-862-5297.

Dec 16, Sat, 2pm, **colonial crafts for kids at Croton Point Nature Center**: Come with a smile, leave with some gifts. Program includes candle-making. Info: 914-862-5297.

Dec 31, Sun, 9pm-1am, **Alcohol-Free New Year's Eve Party at Westchester County Center**, with music & entertainment. Food & beverages available for purchase. \$15 in advance; \$20 day of event. Parking \$4. Tickets at box office or Ticketmaster; 845-454-3388 or ticketmaster.com. Info: 914-995-4050.

Jan 1, Mon, all day to recover from the **Happy New Year**; and plan to do better than last time—including paying your Riverlovers dues & supporting our river.

Environmental Poetry

Im dreaming of a white Christmas, But global warming melts the snow. A cap and trade solution Will stop carbon pollution If we get all our ducks in a row.	Im dreaming of legislation With every congressman I write. We might not win this overnight, But may all of our Christmases be white
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Spreck Rosekrans

Here's how to join Riverlovers...

(the local Clearwater Sloop Club in the Northern Westchester-Putnam County area)

Application for Riverlovers Membership

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____
 Zip _____ Telephone _____
 Renewal ___ New ___ Additional Contribution \$ _____

Please send check (\$15 individual, \$20 family) for 2007 to: Riverlovers, P.O. Box 285, Croton-on-Hudson, NY 10520.

Yes! I Also Want To Join Clearwater

Please sign me up in the following membership category:

<input type="radio"/> Individual	\$40	<input type="radio"/> Mariner	\$500
<input type="radio"/> Family	\$55	<input type="radio"/> Sailing-Master	\$1000
<input type="radio"/> Contributor	\$100	<input type="radio"/> Benefactor	\$5000
<input type="radio"/> Sponsor	\$200	<input type="radio"/> Student	\$10

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please include check payable to Clearwater, or charge by credit card

Visa MC Discover Amex

Account No. _____

Exp. Date _____ Signature _____

Mail To: Clearwater, Inc.
112 Little Market Street
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601

Your Clearwater membership gets you the *Navigator* and other benefits, along with being part of Riverlovers' "parent" organization representing individuals and Sloop Clubs up and down the Hudson Valley "working for the River."

Riverlovers - Who We Are

Riverlovers, Inc. is a chartered Sloop Club of the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Inc., an environmental non-profit membership organization whose most visible symbol is its member-owned and operated 106-ft. sloop "Clearwater." As a local affiliate, Riverlovers' purposes are:

- Maintaining an active Sloop Club in the Northern Westchester-Putnam County area;
- Meeting the needs and interests of individuals through a variety of interest groups, including monthly Potluck dinner meetings with varied programs, environmental education and awareness, boats and sailing, concerts and festivals;
- Organizing trips and recreational activities, seminars and workshops, learn-to-sail programs and Clearwater visits;
- Research, education and action to protect our rivers and our environment;
- Working for access and effective land use along the Hudson River and its tributaries;
- Boating projects on the Hudson River, to reach out to the surrounding community for educational and recreational purposes.

We invite you to join us. Contact our interest group coordinators, or write to Riverlovers, Inc., P.O. Box 285, Croton-on-Hudson, NY 10520. Together we can do a lot!

Riverlovers Officers

President:	Gunnar Andersen	432-3112
Vice Pres. (programs):	Robin Fox	271-6088
Secretary:	??	??
Treasurer:	Daria Gregg	944-8396



Interest Group Coordinators

Interest Group	Coordinator	Phone
Envir. Education	Bill Flank	238-8240
Membership	Gunnar Andersen	432-3112
Newsletter	Bill Flank	238-8240
Newsletter Distribution	Cynthia Andersen	432-3112
Outreach	Jan Ravase	739-0640
Photographer/Archivist	Beverly Dyckman	739-5057
Potluck	Robin Fox	271-6088
Publicity		
ShadFest	Robin Fox	271-6088

Newsletter Submissions

Please send news articles and other items of interest to Riverlovers Currents, P.O. Box 285, Croton-on-Hudson, NY 10520. Include your name, address, and phone number. Names can be omitted on request.

Newsletter Committee: Editor, Bill Flank; Associate Editor, Mel Fitting

December Newsletter Contributors: Bill Flank, Jan Ravase, Spreck Rosekrans

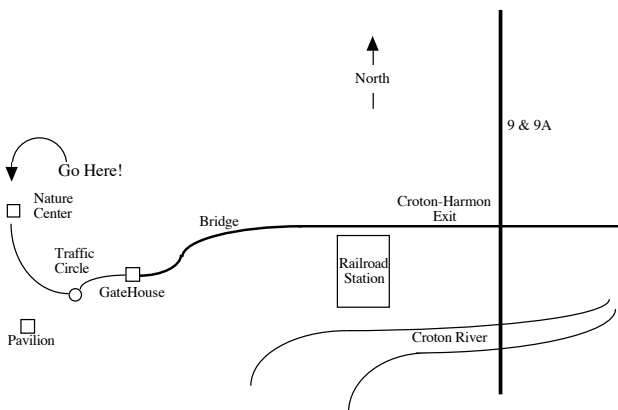
Holiday Season Potluck Croton Point Nature Center



Riverlovers, Inc.

P.O. Box 285

Croton-on-Hudson, NY 10520



Friday, December 8, 2006

6:30pm