



BKAA GUARDIAN

Volume 40 • Number 2

Summer 2026



BKAA CLEAN UP



Exciting New Project: Acoustic Wildlife

Leslie Otto

A few months ago the BKAA began using four recording monitors from Acoustic Wildlife to record the many sounds of the Bashakill headed by our board member Dr. Walter Jahn. These monitors are designed to be used with special programs to differentiate the many birds and frogs, help document where they are, how often they are recorded, and what time of year each are present. These recordings will help us to understand how common each species are and document any rare or endangered residents that call the Bashakill home. Long term this will give us crucial information about the health of this delicate ecosystem and we are hopeful our effort will help provide further protections for the area and its inhabitants in the future. A more fun aspect of this endeavor is that in the near future we will be expanding our website to include these recordings with pictures of each of the birds that created them. Our hope is this data will make it considerably easier for people visiting the Bashakill to connect which of our beautiful residents they have been able to hear and spot. Another addition to our developing Acoustics Wildlife system are bat monitors to record

ultrasonic calls unable to be heard by humans, as well as the more recognizable chirps. This will take a specialized and expensive program to identify these bats so will take a bit before it's up and running. A fact unknown to most people is that presently many different bat species populations are dropping in number, and we would like to do our part to help protect them if possible. By having the ability to document which different species reside on the Bashakill will absolutely help us do this. All of this is brand new to us and we are working hard to develop and expand our program. We will absolutely share our progress as we go and so excited to see where all of this it leads!



On The Front Cover:
Earth Day Cleanup 2026
Photo credits
Kevin Kriescher

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MISSION STATEMENT:

Since our founding in 1972, our mission has been to protect the Basha Kill Wetlands and surrounding area from ecological degradation, to promote education and respect for the environment in general, and to preserve the beauty of the area.

We welcome new members who are interested in protecting the environment.

Dues are \$10 for individuals, \$20 for families per year.

BKAA is a not-for-profit corporation and donations are deductible to the extent allowed by law.

The *BKAA Guardian* is published quarterly by the Basha Kill Area Association Inc.

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CONTACT THE BKAA — info@thebashakill.org website: www.thebashakill.org

PO Box 1121, Wurtsboro, NY 12790

CONTACT THE DEC — Call 24-hour DEC Law Enforcement Dispatch at 1-877-457-5680

2026 BKAA *Calendar of Events*

Sat Sept 11 8pm Raindate: Sun Sept 12th Star Watch - John Kocijanski

Join John Kocijanski of Catskills Astronomy Club for an evening of sky watching. Bring scopes and/or binoculars. Meet at South Rd. boat launch, across from Bashakill Vineyards. For information and to register, call John at (845)798-8087. Check for event updates at Catskill Astronomy Clubs Facebook page.

Sat Sept 12th 10am Kayak the Bashakill

Join Elly Knieriemen for an end of summer paddle through the Bashakill. If you are new to kayaking, Elly is a great person to go out with. Bring your own vessel or rent one at MEEC (762 South Rd, Wurtsboro). Make sure you arrive early enough to get your kayak in the water before 10am. Binoculars/cameras, hats and sunscreen recommended. Meet at South Rd. boat launch across from winery. To register or for information on kayak rental, call MEEC at 845-644-5014.

Sat Oct 9th 8pm Raindate: Sun Oct 10th Star Watch - John Kocijanski

Join John Kocijanski of Catskills Astronomy Club for an evening of sky watching. Bring scopes and/or binoculars. Meet at South Rd. boat launch, across from Bashakill Vineyards. For information and to register, call John at (845)798-8087. Check for event updates at Catskill Astronomy Clubs Facebook page.

Cheyenne the Water Woman

Cheyenne Otto

In recent months, the BKAA had the opportunity to apply for a grant through The Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation (the Foundation) to purchase new water testing equipment. Thank you to the hard work of Maryallison Farley, who conducted in-depth research of the history of the organization and interviewed members of the water testing group to provide the Foundation with ample background into what the BKAA does for the community. The grant application was submitted approximately two weeks ago, so we hope to have an update within the next few issues.

As discussed in previous issues, the current water testing equipment tests for pH, dissolved oxygen, specific conductivity and temperature. The data collected from these parameters provides us with an understanding of water quality across the eight testing sites included with the program. With funding from the grant, the BKAA would be able to purchase a water testing meter that could handle testing for an additional parameter, the oxidation reduction potential (ORP).

Oxidation reduction potential, or redox potential, is a measurement that determines water's oxidizing or reducing potential, quantifying a solution's electron transfer capacity. The ORP value can assess the presence of oxidizing or reducing agents, such as oxygen, chlorine, hydrogen sulfide, etc. The data associated with ORP testing can be indicators for harmful algal blooms, biological contamination, heavy metals, and other forms of surface water contamination. So again, a huge thank you to Maryallison Farley for taking lead on this grant application which would benefit the organization greatly.

Thank you to all of our volunteers and members who continue to support the organization and our water testing program at the Bashakill. If you have any questions or you would like to inquire about volunteering for our water testing program, please reach out to info@thebashakill.com with the subject ATTN: Cheyenne - Water Testing Program for more information.



Summer 2026 Donors

Sabrina Allocca
Susan Armistead
John Austin
Galen, Pam & Eric Booth
Arlene Borko
Madeline Boyd
Janet Campbell & Bill Leuszler
Barbara Carroll
Kate & Bob Collins
Frank Coviello
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Kathy & Michael Schnitzer
Adam Stuart
Burton Thelander
Sharon Thompson
Michael Toledo
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Dava Weinstein
John Conrad Weiser
Benjamin Zara

Summer 2026 New Members

Sabrina Allocca
Carol Singh Alvarado
MaryAnn Calise
Stefanie Groom
Brooke Liles

Georgia McKenna
Kalin Moon
Penny Sharp
Sharon Thompson
Julie Vieira

Dear Valued Member,

We hope this finds you well and enjoying the beginning of 2026 . I would like to start by thanking everyone for their continued support of the Bashakill Area association, the BKAA. Without all of you we could not continue to protect our beautiful Bashakill, its wild residents and the surrounding area.

Last year brought significant challenges the BKAA felt obligated to meet. The first was the proposed zoning changes of the overlay zones in Mamakating in April. These proposed changes were found to be detrimental to the Mountain Greenbelt which would then have direct negative impacts on the Bashakill. This proposal was stopped and voted down in July. Very quickly after the proposed Mulch and Composting plant directly over the aquifer that supplies the Bashakill began, and continues on today. This brings not only a great threat to the Bashakill and its residents, but also the health of our community members themselves.

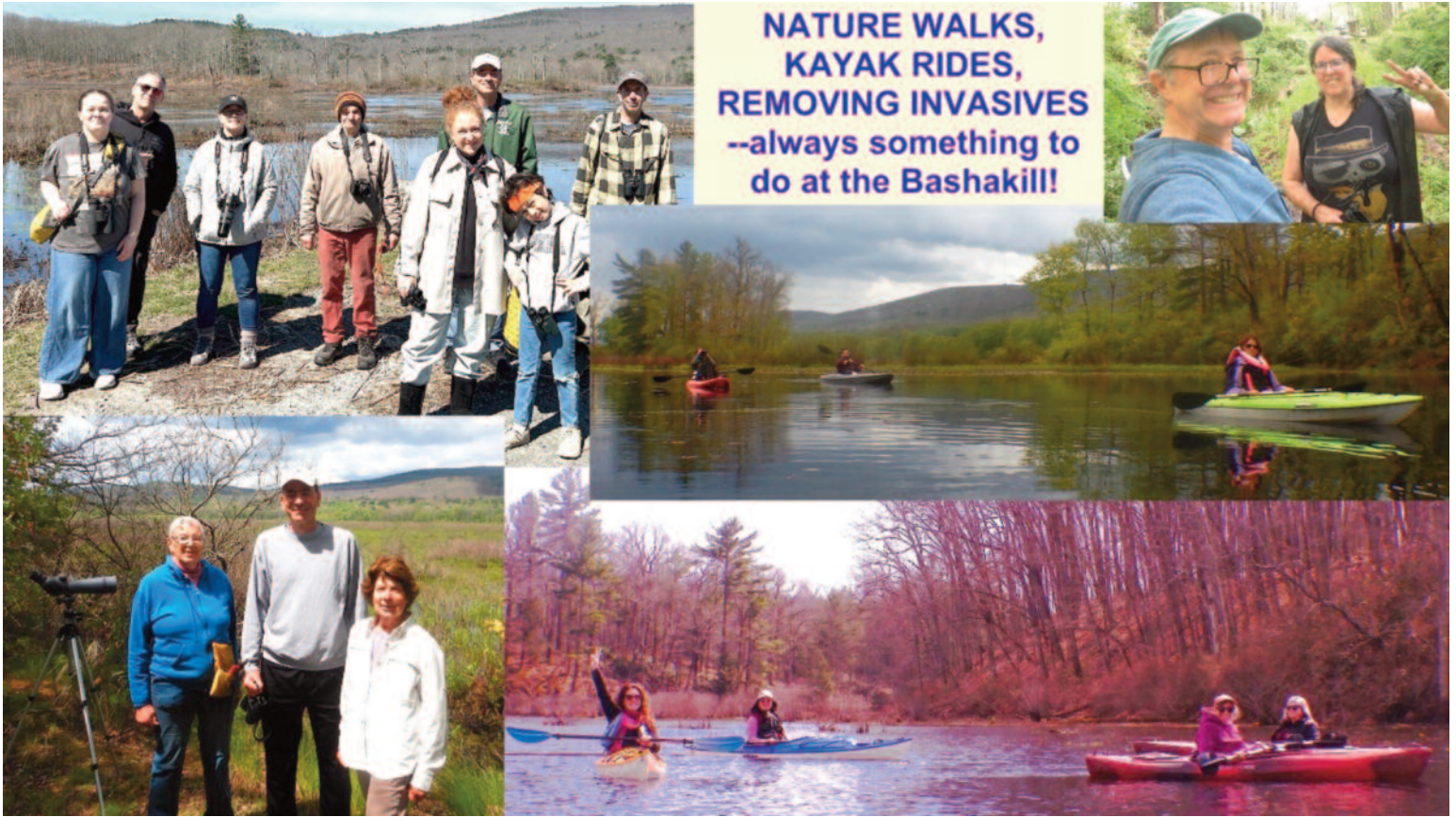
On top of these two acute problems we have the continued situation with the Bloomingburg Sewage treatment plant. We have been monitoring this for over 2 years, but now with very promising results such as DEC fines being executed, repairs to the swing arm and updated system being designed. Presently, due to all the efforts, Bloomingburg is being forced to address the situation and the last few months of water testing has been normal! These have all been important wins, but financially costly.

Our members have always been incredibly generous and supportive of our work, and with the challenges continually coming, and the possibility of future legal litigation, we are asking if you would consider donating so we may continue to meet them head on. If you are so inclined you may mail any donations to Bashakill Area Association P.O. Box 1121 Wurtsboro, N.Y. 12790 or simply scan the QR code with your phone .

Thank you for your continued support!

The BKAA Board





Web Page for Bashakill Flowers in Spring

<https://sites.google.com/sunyorange.edu/dr-walter-jahn-biology-website/the-bashakill/bashakill-flowers>

VIDEO PLAYLIST of Bashakill Wildlife (including "An Eagle goes swimming!")

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-SdsIcwpGcjcy01NzCmVtpY4kdtXoEvN&si=OaLpE7HvNd8cuUAq>

Tell A Friend About the Basha Kill Area Association

Fill out this coupon for membership or more information:

Mail to: P.O. Box 1121, Wurtsboro, NY 12790

_____ \$10 per membership _____ Other Donation _____ Prefer mailed newsletter (Not available to seasonal residents due to forwarding costs)
_____ \$20 Family Membership (every family member aged 14 years and older holds voting rights)

Name _____

Phone _____

Address _____

Email (required) _____

Local Participation Matters

Lisa Schnitzer

The Basha Kill is more than just a beautiful place to fish, hike, kayak, or bird watch. It is an important part of the community we call home - connected to our roads, neighborhoods, forests, water quality, wildlife habitat, and future development decisions. While many residents care deeply about protecting the character of our region, fewer realize how much influence local government has on the future of the places we value most. Town Board, Planning Board, and Zoning Board meetings are where many of those decisions begin. These meetings are open to everyone and give residents an opportunity to stay informed, ask questions, share concerns, and participate in shaping the future of their communities.

Local boards regularly discuss issues that directly affect the character and future of our communities, including land use and development, wetland and water resource impacts, traffic and infrastructure, housing and commercial projects, environmental regulations, and long-term community planning and conservation efforts. Decisions made at the local level can affect residents and the environmental health of our region for decades. Once major changes are made to landscapes, waterways, or rural character, they can be difficult - if not impossible - to reverse. The future of our communities is often decided by a handful of voices - and unfortunately, many residents do not learn about important decisions until after they have already been made.

Attending meetings does not require expertise in government or environmental policy. Simply listening and learning can make a difference. Public participation encourages transparency, accountability, and thoughtful decision-making, while helping local officials better understand community concerns and priorities. Even when residents do not speak publicly, their presence matters. A room filled with engaged community members sends a

strong message that people care about the future of their town and natural resources.

If you are interested in becoming more involved:

- Check your town's website for meeting schedules and agendas. The Town of Mamakating schedules and agendas are available at: Mamakating.gov/AgendaCenter
- Attend meetings occasionally, even if no specific issue directly affects you
- Watch for emails from the BKAA advising of important meetings and issues of interest
- Stream meetings online if you are not able to attend in person
- Encourage neighbors and younger generations to participate

Several BKAA board members regularly attend meetings in the Town of Mamakating and Village of Bloomingburg to stay informed about proposed projects and developments that may impact the Basha Kill region and surrounding communities. When we believe a proposal may negatively impact the environmental health, rural character, or quality of life in the area, we work to raise awareness and advocate for responsible decision-making. If you attend a local meeting and become aware of an issue or proposal that you feel deserves attention, please contact us via email so we can help review and better understand the potential impacts.

Protecting places like the Basha Kill requires more than appreciation - it requires participation. Healthy communities depend on informed and engaged residents willing to stay involved in local decision-making. Civic engagement starts locally, and every voice matters. Email us with questions or concerns at info@thebashakill.org.



Maestro

Lisa M. Lyons

The alarm sounded and I leapt out of bed. It wasn't just another day, it was the day of John Haas's Spring Waterfowl Walk! The adventure began as soon as I left the driveway and I enjoyed the magical journey from a land of freestone streams and mountain springs to the broad and beautiful Bashakill wetland.

I've never been inclined to make a bucket list but I love looking at the BKAA lists* of all the flora and fauna that make the Bashakill home. They go on for pages! After 30 years living, working, and adventuring in the Catskills, I have so much to learn about the complex ecosystem of these wetlands. Spending time with John has been a great way to begin, especially during the time of year when so many bird species are migrating. I can't believe how many pass through or return home to the Bashakill during the spring. To better understand why, I am learning what grows there, how pristine the water is, how much food there is for refueling, and how important it is to protect it. What a great segue to promote becoming a member of BKAA!

On the day of this year's Spring Waterfowl Walk, I was delighted to see friends Denise and Jim Sullivan arrive to join us. They live near ponds and wetlands in Hurleyville, just a stone's throw from where I moved my small business Morgan Outdoors 4 years ago. Perhaps after this introduction with John, we would share sightings closer to where we spend much of our time. Sure enough, it's become a new avocation!

I asked Jim about his experience on the walk. "When I was younger, I hiked and canoed the Bashakill. To return to this beautiful place April 4th and experience it with John Haas as our guide was an absolutely wonderful way to spend a morning in nature. John is an obviously skilled birder with great knowledge of the Bashakill. I'm looking forward to returning to the Bashakill for more events like this."

As John's walk began, I was so impressed with how he scanned the area to describe the big picture, then shifted to what can only be described as an hour of multi-tasking with his eyes and ears! He would point out specific waterfowl on the water while simultaneously noticing what was flying overhead and calling/singing in the distance out of sight, naming each one and pointing in its direction. Then my favorite part kicked in – John's uncanny ability to see specific birds, clearly tell those with binoculars where to look, while softly walking to the best spot to set up his spotting scope and adjusting it to the right height for a shorty like me. It reminded me of an orchestra conductor with effortless strokes of the baton!

**The Basha Kill Wetlands, A Field Guide, 2007 Species Lists pages 64 through 93. Published by the Basha Kill Area Association, Inc.*

Bloomington Wastewater Treatment Plant Update

Frank Coviello

The BKAA has been monitoring the Bloomington Wastewater Treatment Plant since January of 2024. It was at that time we became aware of the problems with the plant and the discharge of millions of gallons of bacteria infested water into the Shawangunk Kill. We immediately implemented a water testing procedure to monitor the water being discharged by the plant. We tested for the existing concentrations of bacteria in the Shawangunk Kill both upstream and downstream from the effluent channel (where water was released from the plant into the Shawangunk Kill). Sampling is performed once each month. The concentrations of the bacteria initially were greater than 1000. These high concentrations of bacteria were the result of flushable wipes coming into the wastewater treatment plant in quantities far beyond the capability of the bar arm, whose job it is to remove those disposable wipes. The bar arm had broken down on several occasions due to poor maintenance and the overwhelming number of disposable wipes coming into the wastewater treatment plant. Repair and maintenance were performed on the bar arm each time and extended its lifetime for short periods of time until it was determined that it needed to be replaced. When the bar arm was functional, the bacterial counts would drop dramatically but never to a satisfactory level. In March of 2026, a brand-new replacement bar arm was installed and has been functioning since that time. As expected initially after the installation, the bacterial count increased significantly because the bar arm was not functional while it was being replaced. As of this report, the bacterial count has once again dropped dramatically but the BKAA is still committed to monitoring the water discharge each month.

There is still much work to be done on the Plant and the sewage system in general, we will continue to monitor these activities and keep you informed.



Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act

Leslie Otto

The Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act or HVCPA is NY State legislation which allows towns to identify critical environmental, agricultural, water as well as historical lands within their borders that qualify to be protected. Already successfully being used in other NY counties such as Orange, where the town of Warwick alone has protected over 5000 acres of farmland since 2004, Sullivan County is now up for consideration by Albany lawmakers. If this passes it can become a significant tool for responsible land use and development.

How does it Work? Once the legislation passes in Albany each Town Board would have the ability to decide if they would like to implement it, design how it would work for their town, identify eligible properties, and then put it before the residents on the ballot for a vote. If either the Town Board or the residents decide against the HVCPA it would not move forward, but could be re-introduced the following year. Moving forward after it passes the Town Board would set a tax rate of 0.5-3.0% which would be applied to new property sales that come in above the median price. What that means is that if the median price for a specific type of property is \$150,000, but the property sells for \$200,000 the difference of \$50,000 would then be eligible to be taxed, which works out to somewhere between \$250-\$1500 depending on the rate the town board decides on. The buyers of said property would be obligated to pay this money to the town, which would then be placed in a special account set aside specifically for the HVCPA properties. If said sells for the median price or below there would be absolutely no tax applied. In no way does this tax impact any of the residents already residing in the town, or the property seller.

Once the HVCPA is passed by a town, properties are identified, guidelines are developed and an account is set up they are ready to get started. Towns will have the option to either buy the property outright to be used by the community, which is usually more expensive, or they can purchase the easement development rights for specific properties, which is usually much less expensive. If the town decides to buy the easement the owner continues to own property and continues to pay taxes to the town, but cannot develop beyond an agreement reached between them and the board. Usually only being allowed to use as agricultural land, but small exceptions can be agreed on. This is a win for everyone because the property owners are basically being paid as if they sold the land to be developed but retains ownership, the property remains on the tax role, but is protected in future!

To make this even better there are funds available through New York State to help towns obtain these easements. In some cases there are grants to pay 100% to purchase

properties, in others they will pay up to 75% while the town only pays 25% of the cost of the easement. So if the cost is \$100,000 the town will be obligated to pay \$25,000 dollars out of the account set up and the state would pay the other \$75,000. Of course this is a simplified example, but you can understand how it can work from this.

It will be beyond important that there is community support for this to be passed in Albany, as well as in each separate Town with in Sullivan County. The BKAA sponsored and event at the Mamakating Environmental Education Center in January in which Michael Sweeton and Matt McPhillips came out and gave a presentation to other environmental groups as well as Town Supervisors/ Mayors to help spread understanding about this legislation. More recently Catskill Mountain Keeper arranged a Zoom presentation with Michael Sweeton to do the same. Presently, with pressure so high for rapid irresponsible development, legislation such as the HVCPA is absolutely imperative to protect our beautiful area. If you would like more information about this please feel to reach out to the Bashakill Area Association at info@thebashakill.org



9-year-old Linda Lu Smith, granddaughter of long-time members Tom and Amy Smith, enjoying the boat launch. Photo by Tom Smith



Earth Warriors Summer Camp

Fun & Creative
STEAM based
Activities For
Boys & Girls



Ages 6-7

July 6-10

Ages 8-9

July 27-31

Ages 10-12

August 3-7

Activities :

- Go Go Challenge

<https://dec.ny.gov/things-to-do/get-offline-get-outside>

- New nature theme every day
- Nature based art
- Guest speakers
- Stewardship

Mamakating Environmental Education Center

762 South Rd, Wurtsboro, NY

www.friendsofmeec.org

Daily 9am-3pm

\$300/week Siblings \$240

Some scholarships Available

More Information :

845-644-5014

jackie.broder@mamakating.gov





Bashakill Eagle Takes A Swim! *Article & Photos by Walter Jahn*

While it is always exciting to observe eagles at the Bashakill Wildlife Management Area in Southeastern New York, one late April day in 2026 was especially exciting. Movement of a hatchling eaglet was observed at the active nest north of Haven road (note that hatchlings begin life with a gray color).

Farther south at the main boat launch, a mature eagle dove into the water after a fish. There was no need to be concerned for the eagle—eagles are even capable of swimming by using their long wings to paddle through the water if needed, for example, if they have caught a large fish which is too heavy to carry. Eagles are also capable of taking off from the surface of the water as this eagle did. As can be observed in the accompanying video (see the link on page 5), the eagle spent a few moments still on the surface of the water, perhaps while it manipulated its prey with its feet to confirm that it was secured. As it flew away, it appeared as if it had caught a sunfish.

We look forward to watching the next generation of eaglets mature throughout the next month until they fledge in mid to late June!



YELLOWTHROAT — There are so many species of warbler—how can a beginning birder hope to identify them? One strategy is to recognize that many species are primarily found in a specific habitat which limits the number of species that you might possibly see on a single bird outing. For example, if you were walking in a brushy, wetland habitat, you could already be on the lookout for the common yellowthroat (left) which hunts for invertebrate prey in this type of environment. While both males and females possess bright yellow throats,

only males possess the black mask and produce the courtship song with its “witchity witchity witch” cadence. Common yellowthroat warblers breed at the Bashakill and can be observed throughout the summer. — *Walter Jahn*

LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSHES are warblers (right) but their brown coloration and dark chest streaking is reminiscent of that of thrushes, hence their names. These early migrants prefer habitats near water where they can feed on aquatic invertebrates. Their presence at the Bashakill is an indicator of the high quality of wetland habitat found there. — *Walter Jahn*



Rapt About Raptors

Galen Booth — Photos by Leslie Otto

On May 2nd, 2026, the BKAA and the Wurtsboro community had the pleasure of an entertaining and informative visit with Ellen J. Kalish, Director of non-profit Ravensbeard Wildlife Center of Saugerties NY. Ravensbeard was founded twenty-six years ago and specializes in rehabilitating injured birds of the wild.

Thanks also to the Community Church of Wurtsboro for volunteering their annex for the packed house of all ages. This was a cost-free presentation sponsored by the BKAA. The large audience was most definitely "rapt about raptors".

Ravensbeard has an exemplary track record of successfully returning 60% of their injured birds to the wild. Most similar refuges average a 50% return. When injuries are too severe to permit a safe return to the wild, many of those birds are conscripted for educational purposes.

Director Kalish was accompanied by four injured feathered friends. First, Ms. Kalish brought out a small raptor, the American Kestrel. This breed was once known as a "sparrowhawk", but the name was changed to avoid confusion with a European breed also known as a "Sparrowhawk".

The Kestrel relies upon other birds for its food supply. The Kestrel will take flight into a swarm of other birds and capture their prey in the air. This practice actually helps the populations of other bird species by weeding out sick, injured, and slow birds. This particular Kestrel was brought in at an extremely young age. It is now aged 12 and has already exceeded the average Kestrel life-span of 8 to 10 years in the wild.

Ms. Kalish next produced an American Falcon. A former victim of the deadly DDT pesticide, once-dwindling Falcon populations have rebounded nicely. Locally, there are cliff-side Falcon nesting sites along the Shawangunk Ridge and the Palisades, and in urban skyscrapers and tall bridges. One threat faced is the presence of rodent poisons in city pigeons, one of their prey. Falcons capture prey with dive-bombing flights that may reach 240 miles per hour! Their eyes are endowed with special membranes that protect their vision at such a high rates of speed.

Next to appear was a Barred Owl, a species that is now well-established and spared of the need for regulatory protection (as is the case with other owl breeds). Owls have proportionately large eyes, with those sizes preventing them from moving their eyes from side-to-side. Instead, nature has endowed owls with an extra SEVEN neck vertebrae which allow the owls' HEADS to swivel to a range of 270 degrees!

Finally, a Eurasian Eagle Owl took the stage. Incredibly, this large species may be legally purchased in a specialized market with a price range of \$5,000 to \$6,000 per specimen. Ms. Kalish explained the cruelty of ownership of such a large fowl in confined spaces as opposed to a natural habitat in the wild. This particular bird was given to Ravensbeard by an owner who was frustrated with the bird's birth defects and did not care if the owl was simply "put down". Now, this bird has a new lease on life as an educational ambassador. These owls, like all raptors taking the stage, mate for life. Both parents assist with the raising of young chicks.

This was a fascinating presentation as evidenced by a very hearty audience reception. Ms. Kalish dispensed fun facts and fun stories to the delight of all ages. Now I have to pay a personal visit to the Ravensbeard facility in Saugerties. I may be in need of a bigger bucket for the list!



Eurasian
Eagle Owl



American
Kestrel

Amphibian Nights at the Bashakill - Part 1

Article & Photos by Walter Jahn

Throughout the spring, the Mamakating Environmental Education Center (MEEC) organized groups of dedicated volunteers to help amphibians safely cross the road and to document the species observed in collaboration with the DEC. BKAA and OCAS volunteers were among those who gently escorted these amphibians out of harm's way. Warm

(above 48 degrees), rainy spring nights offer an opportunity for amphibians to leave the places where they hibernated and travel to the vernal pools where they will mate and lay eggs which hatch into aquatic larvae. Vernal pools lack fish predators and many birds which feed on eggs and tadpoles have not yet migrated back to the area.

Can you identify the diverse species of amphibians which can be observed in a single night? (answers below)

Both red-backed salamanders and four-toed salamanders belong to the salamander family Plethodontidae. These long, thin salamanders actually lack lungs and perform all of their breathing through their skin. The coloration of the four-toed salamander (including its black spots on a white belly) is a more obvious feature to use when identifying it rather than its four toes.

Jefferson Complex Salamanders

What Amphibian Night salamander is this in this photo (next page) taken by Charlotte Tracey (OCAS member & MEEC Board Secretary)? A Jefferson Salamander? A Blue Spotted Salamander? Is it one of the interspecific hybrids between these two species named Tremblay's Salamander or Silvery Salamander? While our field guides display animals as clearly belonging to one species or another, nature is often



ANSWERS: 1) Wood frogs 2) green frog 3) bullfrog 4) spring peepers
5) four-toed salamanders 6) red-backed salamander 7) Jefferson complex salamander
8) pickerel frog 9) American toad 10) spotted salamander

messier and separate species may be capable of interbreeding to various degrees. Proper identification of these salamanders is so difficult that it may be best if you consider salamanders that look like this as belonging to the “Jefferson species complex”. The Jefferson salamander is classified as threatened in some parts of its range.

Hybrids between Jefferson and Blue Spotted salamanders can have multiple possible assortments of chromosomes. Interestingly, the Tremblay’s Salamander and Silvery Salamander populations are composed almost entirely of females (and perhaps a few sterile males). These hybrid females produce fertile eggs which develop into viable young without sperm fertilizing them. Even though these females do not need the genetic contribution of males to produce offspring, they actually do need to mate with males from one of the bisexual species (Jefferson or Blue Spotted) because the act of mating triggers the meiosis which produces the eggs.



Amphibian Nights at the Bashakill - Part 2

Were the efforts of all the Amphibian Night volunteers successful? The egg masses of wood frogs and spotted salamanders in vernal pools by the Bashakill are evidence that they were!

The overall size of the egg clusters of spotted salamanders are smaller than those of wood frogs but the individual eggs are larger.

In vernal pools, the egg masses of wood frogs and spotted salamanders will actually become green due to symbiotic algae which provides oxygen to the developing amphibian embryo and in return receives carbon dioxide and nitrogenous compounds from the embryo. In spotted salamanders, the alga is actually an endosymbiont living inside salamander cells and passed on to the embryo from the mother. This is the only example of an algal endosymbiont known in vertebrates!

Vernal pools elsewhere are following the same yearly cycle as evidenced by the wood frog and spotted salamander eggs from a vernal pool in Pike County Pennsylvania.



How deep does a vernal pool need to be? In the following picture from the Bashakill, embryos are developing in an egg mass which is hanging above the water. The egg mass was laid a month ago when this stick was underwater.



Barberry

Article/Photos by Walter Jahn

Japanese barberry, also known as red barberry, has been a popular ornamental plant for its red autumn foliage, yellow flowers, & red berries and its use in making hedges given that deer avoid eating this thorny plant. Unfortunately, it has spread from gardens into the wild where it is an invasive species. As deer avoid this plant and focus on native plants, Japanese barberry can form dense patches where individual plants grow 3 feet tall and eight feet wide. Not only does its spread come at the expense of native plants, it has been shown to promote deer tick numbers which spread Lyme disease. The greater the expanse of Japanese barberry in an area, the greater the number of ticks it is likely to support. In early spring, its light green leaves sprout a bit earlier than most natives allowing one to recognize just how extensive its spread is in many areas. Japanese barberry is considered invasive in 32 states & is banned in New York & Pennsylvania. Volunteers for MEEC & the BKAAG will be working hard this Spring & Summer to control this aggressively invasive species—would you like to help?



Rose Breasted Grosbeaks

Article/Photos by Walter Jahn

Last month, visitors to the Bashakill may have been lucky to see the rose-breasted grosbeaks identified in eBird lists and by acoustic monitors. Adult male rose breasted grosbeaks are easy to spot with their black



head & back, white underside, and bright rose-colored patch on their chests. Because of this reddish throat patch, some birdwatchers use the nickname “cut-throats”! Females and immatures are brown in coloration with a white stripe over their eyes. Grosbeaks possess distinctive, thick triangular bills which are powerful enough to exert 25 pounds of pressure and crack open the pith of wild cherries. In addition to seeds, grosbeaks can feed on other plant materials such as fruits, buds, and flowers. Despite how well adapted these strong bills are for eating seeds, half their diet is composed of invertebrates such as insects and spiders. Nestlings depend on the invertebrates fed to them for protein.



Rose breasted grosbeaks prefer open woodland habitats and are typically seen near the tops of trees. Both males and females incubate the eggs (with the female sitting on the nest overnight) and unlike most songbirds, females can sing as well. They breed throughout the northeastern & north central US and winter in Central America, South America, & the Caribbean. As evidence that wildlife preservation must be a global effort, some of the decline in grosbeak populations in the Eastern U.S. has resulted from the deforestation & pet trade that affect them in their winter range outside the U.S.

MEEC Connection

Vol 24 — May 2026

Jackie Lukowski-Broder

We have once again hit the ground running as spring is quickly turning into summer. Our events of the last few months have been very successful, rain or shine!

The BKAA Earth Day Cleanup saw 30+ dedicated volunteers show up in the rain and cold. It was also one of our biggest pulls in a while, with the Otto clan youngins finding a huge old cache of junk! But whether your find was minimal or the max, we appreciate every one of you coming out to give back to the Bashakill! Everyone enjoyed a hot lunch donated by local restaurants and some great conversation afterward.

Our First Annual Tea Party Fundraiser, held in conjunction with the Mamakating Library was a big success. We had over 40 attendees scattered throughout the center at intimate, elegant tables decked out in linens and china. With the Friends of MEEC and the Friends of Mamakating Library lending their personal wares as well as making all the food and donating items for raffles, there was very little overhead and both "Friends of" groups did well for a first-year event. A huge thank you to Bashakill Vineyards and Winterton Farms for donating items for the raffles. Another big thank you to Bashakill Bazar for lending us service ware for the event. Community really came together to support two great organizations.

Our 3rd Annual Fairy House Festival served over 120 people this year. Parking was at capacity and there was a steady stream of people and fairies throughout the day. Again, the Friends of MEEC really stepped up to pull off the wonderful family event. We had some new vendors this year, including Finessed by Jess of Wurtsboro who decked out our fairies in tinsel and Tin Can Dough Pizza provided delicious food. Our trails are now decorated with new fairy houses, so we encourage you to stop by or check them out on Instagram.

Upcoming events include National Trails Day Cleanup on Saturday June 6th from 10-12pm. Help maintain our trails

at MEEC and enjoy some refreshments afterward!

We are excited to announce that we will have an artist in residence starting Sunday June 7th for one year! June Audrey Bartow as she allows the sounds of birds influence



the colors of her knitting. Join her or just come and enjoy, Sundays from 10-12pm.

On Saturday, June 12th join Pam Golben for Children's Butterfly Garden (as per multiple requests). Learn about Butterfly anatomy and the 4 stages of their lifecycle. Discover how plants provide food for butterflies and their caterpillars and how to create your own Butterfly Habitat! You must register for this program, to ensure we have enough supplies for you.

Admission: \$5/person Butterfly Garden Kit: \$15 each (Kit includes 3 native plants and sunflower seeds). Additional native plants will be on sale afterward, from 2-4pm, all welcome.

On Saturday June 20th at 6pm, join expert botanist, Richard Madelbaum on a Solstice Paddle through the Bashakill. Please bring your own kayak or rent one at MEEC. Arrive early to ensure you are ready to launch at 6pm.

Our monthly Dungeons & Dragons game centered on our fantastical Bashakill meets Sunday June 28th at 4pm, Admission \$5

We still have room in our Earth Warriors Summer Camp, so sign up before it's too late! See flyer (page 9) for details!

Lastly, visit us anytime Wed-Sunday or at the village farmer's market on Thursdays starting June 11th, or at the Winterton Farms Lavendar Festival June 27th & 28th from 12-5pm. We hope to have native plants on sale there as well.

For more information, call us at 845-644-5014 or check us out on social media.



Rara Avis

Recent sightings of a bird species in the Basha Kill Wildlife Management Area

All photos by Walter Jahn



Great Crested Flycatcher



Golden eagle seen on South Road by BKAA President Leslie Otto and Water Woman Cheyenne Otto.



Little Blue Heron



Ruby Throated Hummingbird (female - above; male below)



Red-Eyed Vireo



American Redstart



Palm Warbler



Warbling Vireo



Cerulean Warbler

Snapping Turtles Mating

Article/Photo by Walter Jahn

Why are those rocks moving? Wait—those are mating snapping turtles and they have been going at it for an hour! One of the most dramatic things you might observe on a wetland nature walk/kayak ride is the mating of snapping turtles, most commonly observed in April & May but possibly stretching into November. There are variations in this ritual's behaviors--males can initiate courtship by waving their long claws in front of the females, both partners may roll over each other, partners may look into each others' eyes, and partners may bite each other to the point of inflicting minor wounds. In some instances, males (which are larger than females) can be more aggressive and violent as they wrestle with the female and remain on top of her. Mating can last for an hour.

Interestingly, mating in turtles does not have to immediately result in the fertilization of eggs. Like many turtles, females can store and nourish the male's sperm for months and even years inside their bodies and allow fertilization of eggs long after mating when she chooses to produce eggs. Females often travel over a mile to make their nests and 10 mile journeys have been reported. Most egg clutches range in size from 20 to 40 but clutch sizes of 6 through 104 are known.

Did you miss snapping turtle mating this spring? Next year, it is possible that you have the opportunity to observe the same two turtles mate given that the average longevity of snapping turtles is 28 years, lifespans of 40 years are possible in the wild, and some captive turtles have approached a century in age!



Hummingbirds

Walter Jahn

Ruby-throated hummingbirds return to New York from their winter breeding grounds in April through May with males returning first. Early blooming flowers are important in sustaining these hummingbirds during migration—like these highbush blueberry flowers nourishing this April hummingbird at the Bashakill. Some of the hummingbirds we observe in spring may stay in our area throughout the summer while others migrate to the northern U.S. & southern Canada.

The flight capabilities of hummingbirds are simply awe-inspiring. Ruby-throated hummingbirds can reach maximum speeds of 27 mph and are flying at almost full speed from the moment they take off. During normal flight, female ruby throated hummingbirds beat their wings 50 times per second and males beat their wings 70 times per second. During courtship, ruby-throated hummingbirds can beat their wings 200 times per second! While hummingbirds do make sounds, especially males, the majority of hummingbird species do not produce musical songs.

Hummingbirds do not mate for life and males even attempt to mate with other species (and a number of hybrids between species have been produced). Hummingbird females usually lay 2 eggs which are incubated for about 2 weeks. The amount of food the mother is able to bring the nestlings determines how much time they spend at the nest. In ruby-throated hummingbirds, the nestling time can vary from 10 to 30 days.

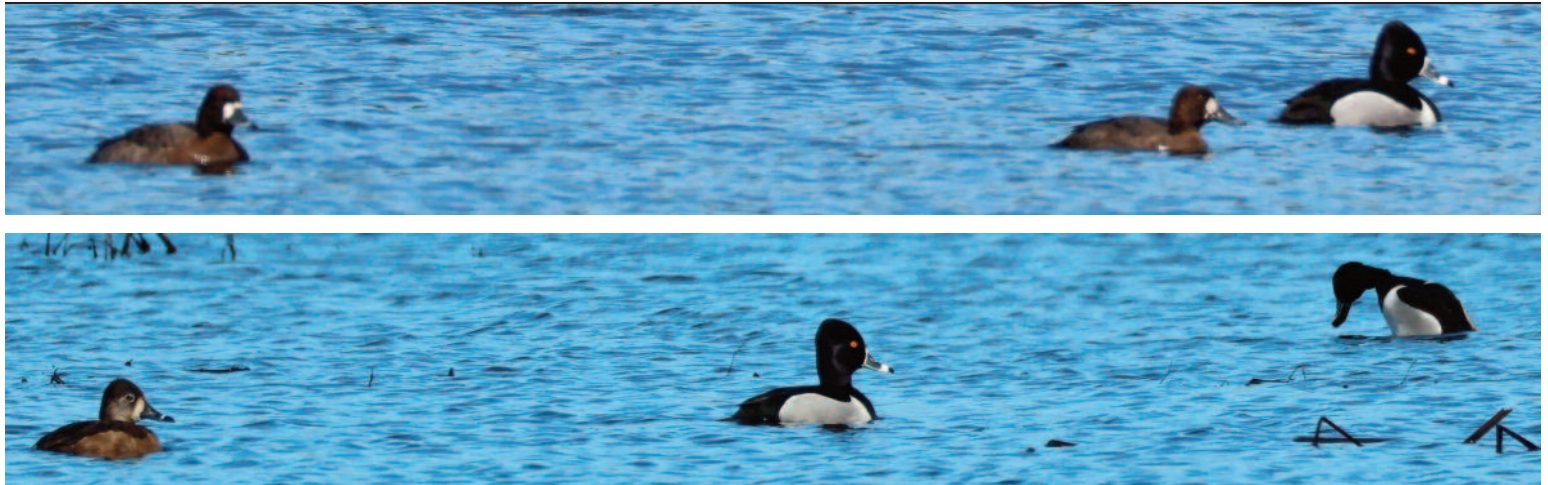


Blue-Gray Gnatcatchers

Walter Jahn

The constant movement of blue-gray gnatcatchers may frustrate bird watchers since they are difficult to capture with your binoculars or your camera. In addition to the white patches on their long tails, their relative size can help in their identification given that they are one of the few birds which are smaller than sparrows. They feed on insects and spiders--although gnats do not make up a disproportionate part of their diet, unlike what you might expect from their name. They can glean their prey off leaves and branches or, as their hunting movements cause insects to take flight, catch their prey in midair.





Greater Scaups at the Bashakill

Article and Photos by Walter Jahn

Some birders give the following recommendation: LOOK AT EVERY BIRD! During an April OCAS walk at the Bashakill, a small flock of rick-necked ducks were gathered in the distance. Upon closer inspection, it became clear that another species often confused with ring-necked ducks was included in the group. In the first of the two images, you can observe two female greater scaups alongside a male ring-necked duck—note the white spot at the base of the bill and the absence of a white ring around the tip of the bill. The second image depicts female and male ring-necked ducks on the left and a male greater scaup on the right about to dive—note the absence of white rings around the bill.

These greater scaups were an unusual sighting at the Bashakill—these birds are more common in coastal waters and on the Great Lakes. These greater scaups made a stop at the Bashakill for the nourishment which will sustain them on their journey to Northern Canada where they breed.

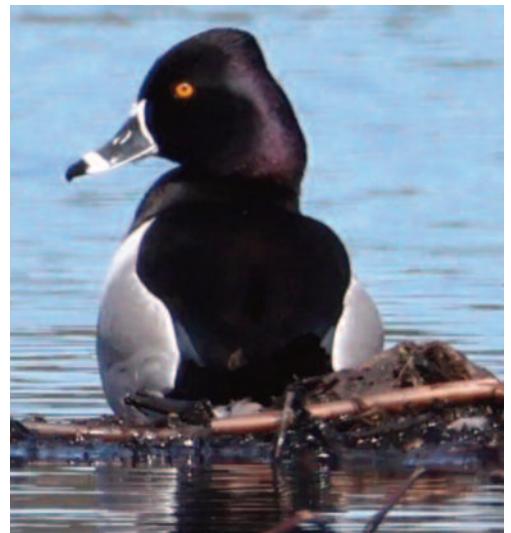
Ring Necked Duck

Article and Photos by Walter Jahn

“Spring” waterfowl migration at the Bashakill actually begins in late winter and ring-necked ducks are reliably one of the first migrant ducks that one might observe. During the months of February and March, ring-necked ducks migrate from their wintering grounds in southern North America to their breeding grounds in the Northern U.S. and Canada. Unlike the diverse dabbling ducks that you may observe which feed by upending themselves, ring-necked ducks are diving ducks which swim underwater to grasp underwater plants, small fish, and aquatic invertebrates. Thus, these ducks are often observed in small flocks near the center of a body of water rather than along the shore.

Although they are called “ring-necked ducks” the rufous ring around the neck of males is very difficult to observe. These medium-sized ducks possess a peaked head and a white stripe separating the gray center of their bills from the black bill tips. Males are more starkly colored with a black body, gray sides and orange eyes. Females are bright brown with a grayer face.

During courtship, males bob their heads up and down, bend their necks backwards, flap their wings, and pull their wings and tail upwards. Females can also bob their heads. Once they have returned to their summer breeding grounds, females typically lay 8 to 10 eggs in nests near the surface of the water. Females incubate the eggs for almost a month and males will leave the females before the eggs hatch. Females will stay with the ducklings for 7 to 8 weeks until they are able to fly.



Warblers, Warblers, Warblers!

Photos and Article by Walter Jahn

For many bird watchers, a highlight of spring nature walks is the chance to see not only our summer warblers returning to breed in our area but also the warblers of the Northern U.S. and Canada as they pass through on their migration routes. The sights and sounds of warblers have enriched walks through the diverse habitats of the Bashakill and surrounding areas. If you are suffering from “bird neck” or “warbler neck” (the soreness in your neck resulting from all the time you have been searching for small birds at the tops of trees), you are not alone.

Breeding male **black-throated blue warblers** have a striking coloration with their dark blue backs, black face and throat, and white underside. The white spots on the wings can help identify females and nonbreeding males which have a browner plumage. As one can observe in the Bashakill Spring Video Play List link, it can be frustrating to try to focus binoculars or a camera on small birds flitting through underbrush in search of insect prey.



Yellow-rumped warblers are one of the first warblers to return to our area in spring and a few overwinter (such as the one observed at the Liberty Loop this winter). The yellow patch on their rump has earned them the nickname “butter butts”!

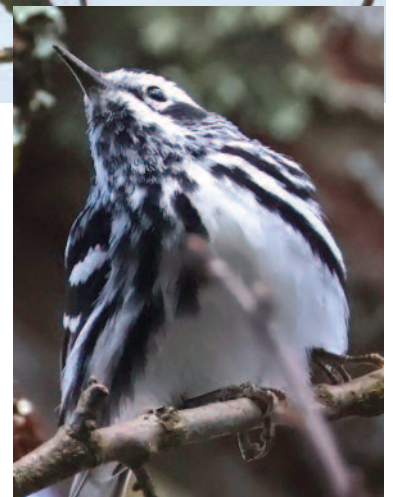
Yellow warblers are a common warbler in our area which will breed in wetlands. If you are hiking near a wetland, you are likely to hear their “sweet, sweet, sweet, I’m so sweet” call.



American redstarts are one of the warbler species which can be observed in our area throughout the summer, as opposed to the many species which are only observed during migrations. Male redstarts are mostly black with bright orange patches on their sides, wings and tail and a white belly (and are sometimes referred to as the “Halloween bird”). Females and immature males have yellowish patches on a grayish-brown background and some nickname them “yellowstarts”.



Black & white warblers are often observed in coniferous forest where they search for invertebrates in the crevices in tree bark.



Nashville warblers only pass through Tennessee during migration—but they can breed in southeastern New York!



Ovenbirds have a brown plumage pattern similar to thrushes and an orange stripe along their foreheads. Their loud “teacher teacher teach” call makes them more commonly heard than seen.



With a black eye stripe, white bars on its slate-blue wings, yellow body, or “bee-buzz” call, it is a joy to observe a **blue-winged warbler**. The expanse of this species northwards is, at least in part, at the expense of the rare golden winged warbler with which it can hybridize.



During spring migration, it is a bit easier to recognize northern **parula warblers** with their yellow throats, white eye crescents, a greenish patch on their backs and the chestnut stripe across the chest of males. While parula warblers can breed in New York state, most breeding birds are found either north or south of New York where they prefer trees rich in lichens or mosses.

Warbling Vireos

Whether at 6 ½ Station Sanctuary, the Bashakill, or other local wild spots spring bird watchers can be treated to the melodious songs of **warbling vireos**. Woodlands located near water represent their preferred habitat where they feed primarily on insects and berries. It is a good thing these shy birds make such melodious songs since they are rarely seen as they flit among the branches high in a tree. When they are seen, their light gray to olive backs, light yellow undersides, and faint white stripes over their eyes make them hard to identify.



Dear Valued Member,

We hope this finds you well and enjoying the beginning days of spring. I would like to start by thanking everyone for their continued support of the Bashakill Area Association (BKAA). It is that time of year again to renew your memberships which will run from June 2026 - June 2027.



Your support is crucial to helping us continue to protect our beautiful Bashakill, its residents, and the surrounding area. Especially now when there is ever increasing pressure for irresponsible development in our area. Your membership and donations will help support the following endeavors (among others):

- Advocacy Work - continued monitoring of the sewage treatment plant in Bloomingburg, water testing of the Bashakill, opposing Ecology Organics Mulch/Composting Facility, advocating for the Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act as well as Critical Environment Area designation
- Cost of environmental protection litigation
- Community outreach - festivals, farmers markets, fairs, college events
- Education - Nature Watch
- Scholarships - sponsoring children to attend DEC camp,

college scholarships supporting environmentally minded degrees.

We also encourage members to be involved. Volunteer opportunities include but are not limited to:

- Outreach at the Farmers Market
- Bashakill clean up
- Advocacy work
- Nature Watch
- Our new acoustics monitoring of the Bashakill

The list goes on! If you wish to be more involved we will find an opportunity that works for you!

The cost will remain 10.00 for a single membership or 20.00 for a family. This can be done both online at thebashakill.org or by cutting out the form below and mailing it to:

Bashakill Area Association

P.O. Box 1121

Wurtsboro, NY 12790

***If done online there is a small convenience fee.**

As always, we are truly grateful for your continued support. Thank you for all you do to protect our beautiful Bashakill.

Best Wishes Always,
The BKAA Board

"The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it"

- Robert Swan

To join the BashaKill Area Association, we highly encourage you to go to thebashakill.org. Otherwise, fill out this form and mail with your check.

Please write your check to the **Basha Kill Area Association**.

_____ \$10 Individual _____ \$20 Family

\$_____ Additional donation (helps with Nature Watch, educational programs, advocacy, water testing, scholarships, Guardian publication, website maintenance, legal fees when needed, etc.)

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail address to receive BKAA Action/Information Alerts:

_____ I am interested in Volunteering (please check if interested)

You will also receive the newsletter, *The Guardian*, by e-mail. If you would prefer a hard copy mailed to you, please check here. _____

PLEASE NOTE: The US Postal Service does not honor seasonal forwards because of the not-for-profit bulk mailing. We get charged a lot of money for these returns. PLEASE do not request a hard copy if you move seasonally.

Thank you for your support!

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