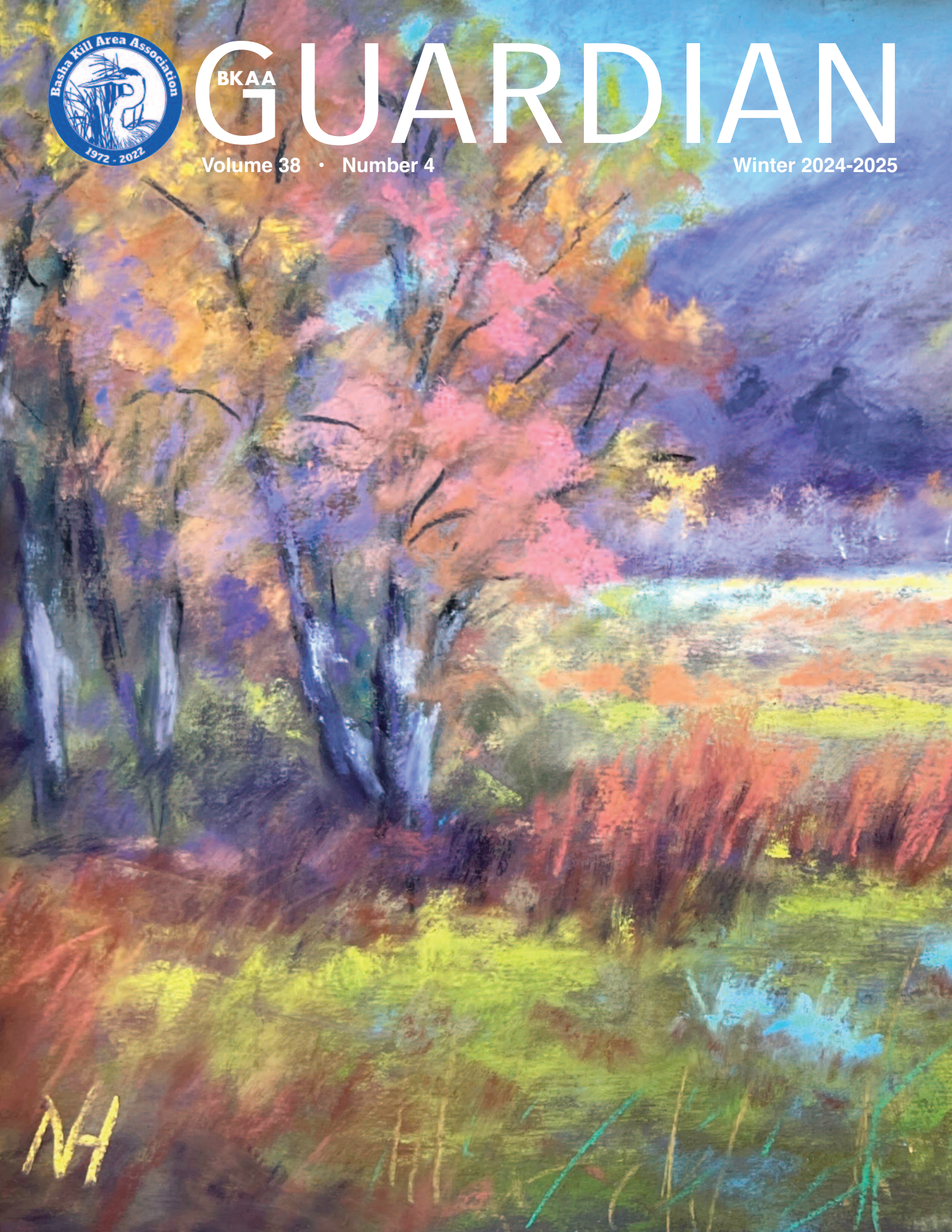




BKAA GUARDIAN

Volume 38 • Number 4

Winter 2024-2025



NH



Jackie, Leslie and Mark,

From all of us, here at the Ridgetop Lakes Conservancy, to all of you at the BKAA, I would like to personally thank you for your generous and most meaningful pledge to our "Whale's Tail" project.

This is such a huge project for us...something that is only achievable through the spirit of teamwork and common belief in the importance of conserving and protecting our wild lands. And, how beautifully appropriate that your pledge honors our dear friend, Paula. Especially so, when we consider her legacy not only with the Basha Kill, but also with that magnificent Bear Hill property in Cragmoor. We will not only remember her, with your pledge, but let her be a special role model and mentor for us as we keep moving forward.

So, again, in Paula's memory, we say to all three of you, and to your entire membership - **thank you so very much!**

We will keep you apprised of the status of the program and let you know when it is time to convert the pledge to a donation.

Rob Rogers, President
Ridgetop Lakes Conservancy

Winter 2024-2025 New Members



Victoria Bailey
Judy Biggins
Lois & Adam D'Amico
Sabrina Grable
Beverly Shulman &
Richard Grabowski
Chris & Ken Jamison
Karen Layland
Judith Myerson
Leslie & Mark Otto
Sallie Scanzoni
Mark Spina
Sarah Sturgeon
Alan Tucker
Virginia Wolfe

On The Front Cover:

**Plein Air Festival Winner: *Bashakill Beauty*
by Nancy Hansen — See More Photos Page 9**

BKAA GUARDIAN — Volume 38, Number 4 • Winter 2024-2025

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 per person 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., PO Box 1121, Wurtsboro, NY 12790 • 845-796-5339
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Secretary: Christine Saward • Assistant Secretary: Jenn Davis • Membership Coordinator: Graham Vest
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Graham Vest • Ellen Pilipski • John Pratt • Jackie Broder
E-mail Coordinator: Bill Lucas • Alerts Coordinator: Liberty Press - Jon Heaphy
Advocacy Chair: Frank Coviello • Nature Watch Co-Leaders: Nora Brusinski & Walter Jahn
Water Testing Coordinator: Cheyenne Otto
Guardian Editor: Frank Coviello • Guardian Layout: Liberty Press - Jon Heaphy

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

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

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Edward van Buren & John H. Haas	Cynthia & Angelo Pagano	
	Howard and Helene Pollack Perlman	

2025 BKAA *Calendar of Events*

Saturday, February 22 • 7 PM **Free Public Star Watch with** **John Kocijanski of the** **Catskills Astronomy Club**

Bring scopes and/or binoculars. Meet at the South Road Boat Launch, across from the Bashakill Vineyards. To register call John at (845) 798-8087. For event updates, visit Catskill Astronomy Club's Facebook Page. Rain date is the following day.

Saturday, March 1 • 1 PM

Join OCCC Professor and BKAA Board Member Walter Jahn at the Mamakating Environmental and Education Center for a presentation about Spring Amphibians. This presentation will also be available on Zoom, <https://sunyorange.zoom.us/j/98282281351/>

Sunday, March 9 • 10 AM **Nature Walk**

Join BKAA Board Member Dr. Walter Jahn for a season appropriate Nature Walk. Meet at the Boat Launch opposite the Wurtsboro Winery at 10:00 AM. . Bring camera, binoculars, insect repellent and wear good walking shoes. To register or for more details email info@thebashakill.org.

Saturday, March 22 • 10 AM **BKAA Nature Watch Training**

Sign-in: 9:30 am, Training 10 am - 12 noon

Mamakating Environmental Education Center, 762 South Road (Corner of South; Haven Roads), Wurtsboro. The BKAA seeks volunteers for their popular spring/summer Nature Watch. If you love nature, are willing to share your passion and have a few weekend hours to offer, then you'd make a great addition to our Team! In return, you will learn about our local bald eagle population, watch eaglets and other birds through high-powered scopes and meet people who share your interest. The program is likewise a great way for high school and college students to satisfy service-learning requirements. Volunteers commit to at least 3 shifts (Saturday and/or Sunday mornings or afternoon) during our season starting 4/12 and ending 6/15. If you would like to help others share in the appreciation of eagles and Basha Kill wildlife, please contact Nora Brusinski at norabrusinski@gmail.com to register for the training or receive more information.

Saturday, March 22 • 1 PM **Bald Eagles**

Join OCCC Professor and BKAA Board Member Walter Jahn at the Mamakating Environmental and Education Center for a presentation about Bald Eagles. This presentation will also be available on Zoom, <https://sunyorange.zoom.us/j/98282281351/>

Weekends from Saturday, April 12 **through Sunday, June 15 • 10 AM to 4 PM**

Nature Watch at the South Road **Boat Launch, Across from the** **Bashakill Vineyards**

Join trained BKAA Nature Watch volunteers at South Road boat launch to learn more about the many residents of this amazing wetland. View nesting Bald Eagles and other birds. Equipped with two powerful spotting scopes and lots of information, volunteers will help you know the Bashakill better. Bring your children, other family members and friends of all ages for fun in the outdoors. Contact Nora Brusinski at norabrusinski@gmail.com to receive more information.

Sunday, April 13 • 10 AM **Nature Walk**

Join BKAA Board Member Dr. Walter Jahn for a season appropriate Nature Walk. Meet at the Boat Launch opposite the Wurtsboro Winery at 10:00 AM. . Bring camera, binoculars, insect repellent and wear good walking shoes. To register or for more details email info@thebashakill.org.

Sunday, April 13 • 10 AM to 4 PM **Nature Watch at the South Road** **Boat Launch, Across from the** **Bashakill Vineyards**

Join trained BKAA Nature Watch volunteers at South Road boat launch to learn more about the many residents of this amazing wetland. View nesting Bald Eagles and other birds. Equipped with two powerful spotting scopes and lots of information, volunteers will help you know the Bashakill better. Bring your children, other family members and friends of all ages for fun in the outdoors. Contact Nora Brusinski at norabrusinski@gmail.com to receive more information.

2024 Calendar — continued from page 4

Saturday, April 19 • 10 AM to 4 PM
Nature Watch at the South Road
Boat Launch, Across from the
Bashakill Vineyards

Join trained BKAA Nature Watch volunteers at South Road boat launch to learn more about the many residents of this amazing wetland. View nesting Bald Eagles and other birds. Equipped with two powerful spotting scopes and lots of information, volunteers will help you know the Bashakill better. Bring your children, other family members and friends of all ages for fun in the outdoors. Contact Nora Brusinski at norabrusinski@gmail.com to receive more information.

Sunday, April 20 • 10 AM to 4 PM
Nature Watch at the South Road
Boat Launch, Across from the
Bashakill Vineyards

Join trained BKAA Nature Watch volunteers at South Road boat launch to learn more about the many residents of this amazing wetland. View nesting Bald Eagles and other birds. Equipped with two powerful spotting scopes and lots of information, volunteers will help you know the Bashakill better. Bring your children, other family members and friends of all ages for fun in the outdoors. Contact Nora Brusinski at norabrusinski@gmail.com to receive more information.

Friday, April 25 • 7 PM
Free Public Star Watch with
John Kocijanski of the
Catskills Astronomy Club

Bring scopes and/or binoculars. Meet at the South Road Boat Launch, across from the Bashakill Vineyards. To register call John at (845) 798-8087. For event updates, visit Catskill Astronomy Club's Facebook Page. Rain date is the following day.

Saturday, April 26 • 9:30 AM
Annual Bashakill Clean-up

9:30-10 AM Registration and site assignments in the DEC Haven Road Parking Lot. Celebrate Earth Day! Enjoy a walk and fresh Spring air while ridding the wetlands of debris. Garbage bags are provided. Wear boots, work gloves and insect repellent. Bring chairs as refreshments are provided by the BKAA to be eaten al fresco. BKAA merchandise will be on sale. Email info@thebashakill.org for further information.

Saturday, April 26 • 10 AM to 4 PM
Nature Watch at the South Road
Boat Launch, Across from the
Bashakill Vineyards

Join trained BKAA Nature Watch volunteers at South Road boat launch to learn more about the many residents of this amazing wetland. View nesting Bald Eagles and other birds. Equipped with two powerful spotting scopes and lots of information, volunteers will help you know the Bashakill better. Bring your children, other family members and friends of all ages for fun in the outdoors. Contact Nora Brusinski at norabrusinski@gmail.com to receive more information.

Sunday, April 27 • 9 AM
Hike the Shawangunk Ridge Trail
North from High Point State Park

Join Ethan Glenning from the NY-NJ Trail Conference, meet at the High Point State Lookout Parking Lot (end on Monument Road in Wantage NJ) and hike north about one hour and then turn back. Please email info@bashakill.org to register for this new event. Please specify you are registering for the April 20, 2024 Shawangunk Ridge Trail Hike and indicate the number of attendees.

Sunday, April 27 • 10 AM to 4 PM
Nature Watch at the South Road
Boat Launch, Across from the
Bashakill Vineyards

Join trained BKAA Nature Watch volunteers at South Road boat launch to learn more about the many residents of this amazing wetland. View nesting Bald Eagles and other birds. Equipped with two powerful spotting scopes and lots of information, volunteers will help you know the Bashakill better. Bring your children, other family members and friends of all ages for fun in the outdoors. Contact Nora Brusinski at norabrusinski@gmail.com to receive more information.

Saturday, May 3 • 10 AM to 4 PM
Nature Watch at the South Road
Boat Launch, Across from the
Bashakill Vineyards

Join trained BKAA Nature Watch volunteers at South Road boat launch to learn more about the many residents of this amazing wetland. View nesting Bald Eagles and other birds. Equipped with two powerful spotting scopes and lots of information, volunteers will help you know the Bashakill better. Bring your children, other family members and

2024 Calendar — continued on page 6

2024 Calendar — continued from page 5

friends of all ages for fun in the outdoors. Contact Nora Brusinski at norabrusinski@gmail.com to receive more information.

Sunday, May 4 • 10 AM to 4 PM

Nature Watch at the South Road Boat Launch, Across from the Bashakill Vineyards

Join trained BKAA Nature Watch volunteers at South Road boat launch to learn more about the many residents of this amazing wetland. View nesting Bald Eagles and other birds. Equipped with two powerful spotting scopes and lots of information, volunteers will help you know the Bashakill better. Bring your children, other family members and friends of all ages for fun in the outdoors. Contact Nora Brusinski at norabrusinski@gmail.com to receive more information.

Saturday, May 10 • 10 AM to 4 PM

Nature Watch at the South Road Boat Launch, Across from the Bashakill Vineyards

Join trained BKAA Nature Watch volunteers at South Road boat launch to learn more about the many residents of this amazing wetland. View nesting Bald Eagles and other birds. Equipped with two powerful spotting scopes and lots of information, volunteers will help you know the Bashakill better. Bring your children, other family members and friends of all ages for fun in the outdoors. Contact Nora Brusinski at norabrusinski@gmail.com to receive more information.

Saturday, May 10 • 10 am

Canoe/Kayak the Basha Kill with Elly Knieriemen

Join photographer extraordinaire Elly for a mid season venture. Bring your own vessel and binoculars. Meet at the South Road Boat Launch. To register or for more details email info@thebashakill.org

Sunday, May 11 • 10 AM

Nature Walk

Join BKAA Board Member Dr. Walter Jahn for a season appropriate Nature Walk. Meet at the Boat Launch opposite the Wurtsboro Winery at 10:00 AM. . Bring camera, binoculars, insect repellent and wear good walking shoes. To register or for more details email info@thebashakill.org.

Sunday, May 11 • 10 AM to 4 PM

Nature Watch at the South Road Boat Launch, Across from the Bashakill Vineyards

Join trained BKAA Nature Watch volunteers at South Road boat launch to learn more about the many residents of this amazing wetland. View nesting Bald Eagles and other birds. Equipped with two powerful spotting scopes and lots of information, volunteers will help you know the Bashakill better. Bring your children, other family members and friends of all ages for fun in the outdoors. Contact Nora Brusinski at norabrusinski@gmail.com to receive more information.

Saturday, May 17 • 10 AM

Spring Migration Warbler Walk

Meet walk leader John Haas at Stop Sign Parking Area off Haven Road (from Route 209, cross Haven Road Bridge and take first left just before Haven Road ends at South Road). Bring Binoculars and insect repellent. We should see an array of spring migrants including warblers, orioles and grosbeaks. We will then move to the Nature Trail, finishing at the Main Boat Launch. A visit to Mamakating's Environmental Center is included. To register and/or for more information contact John at (854)-807-2437

Saturday, May 17 • 10 AM to 4 PM

Nature Watch at the South Road Boat Launch, Across from the Bashakill Vineyards

Join trained BKAA Nature Watch volunteers at South Road boat launch to learn more about the many residents of this amazing wetland. View nesting Bald Eagles and other birds. Equipped with two powerful spotting scopes and lots of information, volunteers will help you know the Bashakill better. Bring your children, other family members and friends of all ages for fun in the outdoors. Contact Nora Brusinski at norabrusinski@gmail.com to receive more information

Sunday, May 18 • 10 AM to 4 PM

Nature Watch at the South Road Boat Launch, Across from the Bashakill Vineyards

Join trained BKAA Nature Watch volunteers at South Road boat launch to learn more about the many residents of this amazing wetland. View nesting Bald Eagles and other birds. Equipped with two powerful spotting scopes and lots of information, volunteers will help you know the Bashakill

2024 Calendar — continued from page 6

better. Bring your children, other family members and friends of all ages for fun in the outdoors. Contact Nora Brusinski at norabrusinski@gmail.com to receive more information

Saturday, May 24 • 10 AM to 4 PM
Nature Watch at the South Road
Boat Launch, Across from the
Bashakill Vineyards

Join trained BKAA Nature Watch volunteers at South Road boat launch to learn more about the many residents of this amazing wetland. View nesting Bald Eagles and other birds. Equipped with two powerful spotting scopes and lots of information, volunteers will help you know the Bashakill better. Bring your children, other family members and friends of all ages for fun in the outdoors. Contact Nora Brusinski at norabrusinski@gmail.com to receive more information

Sunday, May 25 • 10 AM to 4 PM
Nature Watch at the South Road
Boat Launch, Across from the
Bashakill Vineyards

Join trained BKAA Nature Watch volunteers at South Road boat launch to learn more about the many residents of this amazing wetland. View nesting Bald Eagles and other birds. Equipped with two powerful spotting scopes and lots of information, volunteers will help you know the Bashakill better. Bring your children, other family members and friends of all ages for fun in the outdoors. Contact Nora Brusinski at norabrusinski@gmail.com to receive more information

Saturday, May 31 • 10 AM to 4 PM
Nature Watch at the South Road
Boat Launch, Across from the
Bashakill Vineyards

Join trained BKAA Nature Watch volunteers at South Road boat launch to learn more about the many residents of this amazing wetland. View nesting Bald Eagles and other birds. Equipped with two powerful spotting scopes and lots of information, volunteers will help you know the Bashakill better. Bring your children, other family members and friends of all ages for fun in the outdoors. Contact Nora Brusinski at norabrusinski@gmail.com to receive more information



Sunday, June 1 • 10 AM to 4 PM
Nature Watch at the South Road
Boat Launch, Across from the
Bashakill Vineyards

Join trained BKAA Nature Watch volunteers at South Road boat launch to learn more about the many residents of this amazing wetland. View nesting Bald Eagles and other birds. Equipped with two powerful spotting scopes and lots of information, volunteers will help you know the Bashakill better. Bring your children, other family members and friends of all ages for fun in the outdoors. Contact Nora Brusinski at norabrusinski@gmail.com to receive more information

Saturday, June 7 • 10 AM to 4 PM
Nature Watch at the South Road
Boat Launch, Across from the
Bashakill Vineyards

Join trained BKAA Nature Watch volunteers at South Road boat launch to learn more about the many residents of this amazing wetland. View nesting Bald Eagles and other birds. Equipped with two powerful spotting scopes and lots of information, volunteers will help you know the Bashakill better. Bring your children, other family members and friends of all ages for fun in the outdoors. Contact Nora Brusinski at norabrusinski@gmail.com to receive more information

Sunday, June 8 • 10 AM
Nature Walk

Join BKAA Board Member Dr. Walter Jahn for a season appropriate Nature Walk. Meet at the Boat Launch opposite the Wurtsboro Winery at 10:00 AM. . Bring camera, binoculars, insect repellent and wear good walking shoes. To register or for more details email info@thebashakill.org

Sunday, June 8 • 10 AM to 4 PM
Nature Watch at the South Road
Boat Launch, Across from the
Bashakill Vineyards

Join trained BKAA Nature Watch volunteers at South Road boat launch to learn more about the many residents of this amazing wetland. View nesting Bald Eagles and other birds. Equipped with two powerful spotting scopes and lots of information, volunteers will help you know the Bashakill better. Bring your children, other family members and friends of all ages for fun in the outdoors. Contact Nora Brusinski at norabrusinski@gmail.com to receive more information

2024 Calendar — continued from page 7

Saturday, June 14 • 10 AM to 4 PM
Nature Watch at the South Road
Boat Launch, Across from the
Bashakill Vineyards

Join trained BKAA Nature Watch volunteers at South Road boat launch to learn more about the many residents of this amazing wetland. View nesting Bald Eagles and other birds. Equipped with two powerful spotting scopes and lots of information, volunteers will help you know the Bashakill better. Bring your children, other family members and friends of all ages for fun in the outdoors. Contact Nora Brusinski at norabrusinski@gmail.com to receive more information.

Saturday, June 14 • 9 AM
Nature Walk

Take a stroll with BKAA Board Member and MEEC Director, Jackie Broder, to check out what's happening on the Bashakill as Fall approaches. We'll focus on wildflowers, migrating birds, and anything else that comes along! Meet at Haven Road parking lot. Call 845-644-5014 to register.

Sunday, June 15 • 10 AM to 4 PM
Nature Watch at the South Road
Boat Launch, Across from the
Bashakill Vineyards

Join trained BKAA Nature Watch volunteers at South Road boat launch to learn more about the many residents of this amazing wetland. View nesting Bald Eagles and other birds. Equipped with two powerful spotting scopes and lots of information, volunteers will help you know the Bashakill better. Bring your children, other family members and friends of all ages for fun in the outdoors. Contact Nora Brusinski at norabrusinski@gmail.com to receive more information

Tuesday, September 9 • 10 AM to Noon

Take a stroll with BKAA Board Member and MEEC Director, Jackie Broder, to learn about exotic species invading the Bashakill. We'll do some light invasive species removal as we go. Bring gloves if you are interested in helping, some will be provided if needed. If you just want to walk, that's ok too! Meet at Haven Rd parking lot. Call 845-644-5014 to register.

Saturday, September 13 • 10 am
Canoe/Kayak the Basha Kill
with Elly Knieriemen

Join photographer extraordinaire Elly for a late season

venture. Bring your own vessel and binoculars. Meet at the South Road Boat Launch. To register or for more details email info@thebashakill.org.

Sunday, September 14 • 10 AM
Nature Walk

Join BKAA Board Member Dr. Walter Jahn for a season appropriate Nature Walk. Meet at the Boat Launch opposite the Wurtsboro Winery at 10:00 AM. . Bring camera, binoculars, insect repellent and wear good walking shoes. To register or for more details email info@thebashakill.org.

Sunday, October 12 • 10 AM
Nature Walk

Join BKAA Board Member Dr. Walter Jahn for a season appropriate Nature Walk. Meet at the Boat Launch opposite the Wurtsboro Winery at 10:00 AM. . Bring camera, binoculars, insect repellent and wear good walking shoes. To register or for more details email info@thebashakill.org.

Friday October 17 • 7 PM
Free Public Star Watch with
John Kocijanski of the
Catskills Astronomy Club

Bring scopes and/or binoculars. Meet at the South Road Boat Launch, across from the Bashakill Vineyards. To register call John at (845) 798-8087. For event updates, visit Catskill Astronomy Club's Facebook Page. Rain date is the following day.

Sunday, November 9 • 10 AM
Nature Walk

Join BKAA Board Member Dr. Walter Jahn for a season appropriate Nature Walk. Meet at the Boat Launch opposite the Wurtsboro Winery at 10:00 AM. . Bring camera, binoculars, insect repellent and wear good walking shoes. To register or for more details email info@thebashakill.org.

Poetry Corner

Dust of Snow

The way a crow
 Shook down on me
 The dust of snow
 From a hemlock tree.
 Has given my heart
 A change of mood
 And saved some part
 Of a day I had rued.

— Robert Frost





Introducing the New President and Vice President

Cheyenne Otto

As of October 19th, the BKAAGuardian board welcomes Leslie Otto and Mark Otto as President and Vice President of the Bashakill Area Association! I promise I am not biased as their daughter, but Leslie and Mark are hardworking, passionate, and dedicated to their beliefs, including the protection and conservation of our local ecosystems and biodiversity.

Leslie, Mark and their family have been longtime residents of the Bashakill area, partaking in all recreational activities the area has to offer. At any given time of year, you can find one of both of them in the area hiking, kayaking, or driving a miniature pony or two down South Road! Both are avid hunters that enjoy observing the local wildlife populations while out in the woods.

Our new president, Leslie, has been an ER Nurse for over 20 years and manages one of the busiest emergency rooms in Westchester County. Mark, the new vice president, has been a substation supervisor for a major electric and gas company for close to 15 years. Prior to these positions, while Leslie was attending nursing school full-time and managing large horse farms and Mark was managing his own building contractor business, they managed to raise three children as well.

Both are eager to take on all tasks to ensure that the BKAAGuardian can continue to protect this beautiful area and educate the public on all this area has to offer. With the guidance of our previous beloved president, Jackie, I am certain Leslie and Mark will jump into their newfound duties and responsibilities with ease!



Hudson Valley Plein Air Festival winner Nancy Hansen (above).

The Wallkill River Center for the Arts (WRCA) offered a newly reorganized festival this year. One of the events was held on Thursday, October 17, 2024 at the Bashakill Wildlife Area, Haven Rd. Wurtsboro, NY. Best Painting of the Bashakill prize was \$100 presented by the Basha Kill Area Association.

Judges this year were Jackie Broder, Ellen Pilipski and Elly Knieriemen (below).



52nd Annual Meeting of the Basha Kill Area Association

Christine Saward

On a beautiful fall day about 40 people gathered in the Phillipsport Community Center for the Annual BKAA meeting. President Jackie Broder called the meeting to order and read the mission statement. A moment of silence was held for those members no longer with us: Francis Gildea, Lee Scribner, Robert Fiore, Theresa Kocijanski. Jackie then introduced the current board members. The treasurer's report was also reviewed. Finances are in good shape.



Jackie Broder presents Frank Coviello with award. Photos by John Pratt

ADVOCACY:

- Frank Coviello spoke about the Bloomingburg Waste Water Treatment Plant and how it hasn't been functioning properly. The main issue is the "flushable" wipes that clog things up.
- Maura Muller, our liaison for the Route 17 expansion, has been attending the meetings on Route 17 development and possible closures. She even read the 64-page document that was issued! So far, no decisions have been made by the feds.
- The WIR Property, "The Whale's Tail" of Yankee Lake, has been offered to the Ridgetop Lakes Conservancy for purchase. The RLC is seeking donations to help with the cost of the purchase.



BKAA Board Member, Graham Vest, presents the framed Kevin Kreischer photograph to the door prize winners.

- Deerpark Rural Alliance and NYenvironcom have been attending the Town of Deerpark meetings. Grace Woodard presented on Dragon Springs and projects proposed in the Deerpark and Mt. Hope regions.

COMMITTEES:

- The Jack Orth Memorial Scholarship was awarded Dominique Etienne from SUNY Sullivan.
- Four campers were sponsored by the BKAA to attend one week each at a NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Camp during the summer of 2024.
- The Guardian has been diligently



coordinated by Frank Coviello. He has worked on streamlining and saving money with the mailings. There is also an option to receive the Guardian by email to help lower the costs of printing and mailing.

- Cheyenne Otto is now the "Water Woman", stepping into Frank "The Waterman's" shoes. The program has a good number of volunteers and the water is testing well.
- Nora Brusinski presented on Nature Watch. There were three nests this year, one in the south (the long time one on the island), one in the north near Haven Rd., and one in-between. The south nest was attacked by other adult eagles. The north nest was empty. The middle nest did produce one eaglet.

Educational walks this year were led by John Haas, John Kocijanski, Richard Mandelbaum, Kerron Barnes, Jack Austin, Elly Knieriermen, Pam Golben, and all of the Nature Watch volunteers.

A change to the By-laws concerning board terms of service was voted on and passed. This was to prevent the whole board from being up for renewal at the same time. Also, the election of Board members was held. Leslie Otto was

elected President, Mark Otto Vice President, Lisa Schnitzer Treasurer, Christine Saward as Secretary. The following were also elected to the board: Frank Coviello, John Pratt,

Walter Jahn, Bill Lucas, Cliff Johnson, Ellen Pilipski, Graham Vest, and Jackie Broder. Each board member was elected not only to the board, but also to a one, two, or three year term of service.

Honored with a framed award for their service to the BKAA was Martin Borko, Nathan Ermer, and Frank Coviello.

Look for the full Annual Report published in this Guardian (page 11). Don't forget to follow us on our webpage, thebashakill.org, as well as our Facebook page.

Fifty-Second BKAA Annual Report

Christine Saward and Jackie Broder — October 19, 2024

MISSION

Since our founding in 1972, our mission has been to protect the Bashakill 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.

BKAA BOARD

The BKAA Board continues to carry on the BKAA's mission. Lisa Schnitzer, Cheyenne Otto, Jenn Davis, John Pratt, Leslie and Mark Otto are welcome additions and we are grateful for their help. We have continued our reorganizational work as well as updating our technology and online presence. We have formed stronger committees so that all of the work does not fall on a few people. This will make our organization stronger and more resilient. Our committees are always looking for volunteers. If you are interested in The Guardian, Membership, Scholarships, Merchandise, Nature Watch, or Water Testing email us at info@thebashakill.org.

A special thank you to Ellen Pilipski and Lisa Schnitzer for tackling the monumental task of transferring our treasurer accounts to an online system. It has been a continual learning experience and we appreciate you sticking it out!

ADVOCACY

Water Monitoring by Frank Coviello. The 2023-2024 year has seen some significant changes regarding my duties as a BKAA Board Member. In January 2021 I gladly accepted an invitation to restart the Bashakill Water Testing Program which is performed under a Stewardship Program with the Department of Environment Conservation (DEC) and had been dormant since 2017 when the previous Coordinator resigned. For me this was an interesting and important function which I thoroughly enjoyed. In the last quarter of 2023 I met Cheyenne Otto at the Mamakating Environmental Education Center (MEEC) while I was calibrating our electrode system. Cheyenne inquired as to what I was doing and why. I explained what I was doing and asked if she would like to learn this process. She immediately responded yes and so began the eventual transition of Cheyenne becoming the new Coordinator. Over the next few months Cheyenne joined me at the MEEC on the first and third Saturdays of each month for ongoing training and also agreed to be my backup as coordinator. I have turned over the position of Coordinator to Cheyenne, which she readily accepted and is now known as Cheyenne The Water Woman! My gratitude and congratulations to Cheyenne!

Bloomington Waste Water Treatment Plant by Frank Coviello. In January 2024 the BKAA became aware of an

Environmental insult which required our attention. Because of my particular skill set it was determined I would be the best choice to investigate this insult. In early January 2024 the BKAA became aware the Bloomingburg WasteWater Treatment Plant (WWTP) was having severe problems with various components of the system and was releasing approximately 120,000 gallons of unfiltered and non-disinfected waste water into the Shawangunk Kill daily! Further investigation revealed that this had begun in 2022. In February 2024 the BKAA began a monthly program of monitoring the water leaving the plant (effluent channel), upstream and downstream locations within the Shawangunk Kill for Coliform and E. Coli bacteria which are associated with human fecal contamination. This testing will likely continue for at least another year and is being paid for by the BKAA. President's Note: Due to our diligence and the amazing pressure put on Bloomingburg and the DEC by our members and sister organizations, Bloomingburg is working to remedy this situation. Frank has formed a working relationship with the Mayor, sharing water testing results so that he is aware of our findings. Our goal is to ensure clean water for everyone. We are very grateful for the continued support of Pete Marchetto of Field Kit, Stephen Hsu of Deerpark Rural Alliance and Brianna Miranda of Haverstraw Estuary Field Station for their passion and scientific support to this cause.

EDUCATION

Nature Watch 2024 by Nora Brusinski and Walter Jahn. In 2024, the BKAA Nature Watch volunteers successfully offered visitors to the Basha Kill the opportunity to enhance their experience understanding of bald eagles and other wildlife. Our program got off the ground this year with a training session in early April. We were treated to an excellent presentation on the Basha Kill's aquatic plants by Richard Mandelbaum, R.H. Soon, our volunteers were well prepared to field questions on the flora of the boat launch as well as the fauna. Later, attendees enjoyed refreshments provided by Walter Jahn and MaryAnn Geary-Halchak, who also covered the sign-in table. The day finished with a lesson on scope set-up from expert John Kocijanski.

In years past, Nature Watch has trained our scopes on the bald eagle nest on the island to the south of the boat launch. This changed in 2024. In early spring, Scott Baldinger witnessed a third adult attack the southern nest, similar to the interspecies aggression incident that occurred in 2021 at the northern nest. After several days of frigid temperatures and no sign of adults sitting on the nest, it became clear that the southern nest was bare. The northern nest was similarly empty, although the conflict there was not witnessed. John Haas generously stopped

ANNUAL REPORT continued from page 11

by training to update our volunteers on the situation. For a while, it appeared there would be no eaglets at the Basha Kill this spring. Nature Watch has continued in these circumstances before, most recently in 2018. But activity was soon spotted at the newest nest, situated in between the two established sites! Because of these territorial conflicts between the 3 pairs of bald eagles, only those on the central nest hatched a chick this season. Our volunteers adapted, hauling the spotting scopes to a new position at the rightmost tip of the boat launch. Visitors were then able to watch this eaglet mature and exercise its flight muscles before it successfully fledged by early summer.

Throughout the nine-week season, our team of 41 dedicated volunteers welcomed members of the public, answered their questions, and encouraged them to view nesting bald eagles through spotting scopes. During the hours that Nature Watch volunteers staffed the information tables and spotting scopes, 869 visitors enjoyed the Bashakill and 216 boats were launched. We also collected \$106.50 in donations and gained 3 new memberships. Thanks to all those volunteers who worked hard to offer this special opportunity to Basha Kill visitors in diverse weather conditions. In addition, special thanks to John Haas for serving as our birding resource, the Mamakating Environmental Education Center and Jackie Broder for hosting our annual training, Janet Barnett for keeping our equipment accessible in her shed, Maureen O'Meara for sending weekly shift emails, Maryallison Farley for her role as program advisor, and co-directors Nora Brusinski and Walter Jahn.

Local Educational Activities: The BKAA sponsored four programs at the MEEC in their Jr. Field Biologist Series presented by Pam Golben. This series focused on the Symbols of NYS: Beaver & Garnet, Sugar Maple & Wood Frog, Brook Trout & Blue Bird, and Snapping Turtles.

Co-sponsored with the Mamakating Library were four various O&W/D&H trail walks led by Kerron Barnes.

2024 BKAA Sponsored DEC Camp Scholarship Campers: The Basha Kill Area Association awarded scholarships to four campers, age 11-17, for one week each at a NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Camp during the summer of 2024. Recipients submitted essays addressing our application question "Why are you interested in the environment?".

Jack Orth Memorial Scholarship: The Jack Orth Memorial BKAA Scholarship is awarded to a full-time student pursuing a degree in Environmental Science or Green Building Technology at SUNY Sullivan, SUNY Ulster or SUNY Orange. Applicants must be a returning, full-time student and have completed 30 credits with a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.0. In addition, applicants must submit one letter of recommendation and an essay describing their ultimate career goal in science and why

they are pursuing this goal. For the 2023 cycle, BKAA Board of Directors selected Dominique Etienne from SUNY Sullivan. Dominique's ultimate career goal is to be in the sustainability field in construction management, urban planning, or research. Dominique wrote, "I liked the idea of being able to help people make more sustainable decisions so that we can do our part in reducing our ecological/global footprint." She plans on continuing her education at SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry. We wish her the best of luck!

Basha Kill Walks and Educational Calendar for 2024:

- March 23 - Spring Waterfowl Walk
- April 6 - Free Public Star Watch with John Kocijanski of Catskills Astronomy Club
- April 7 - BKAA Nature Watch Training
- April 20 - Annual Bashakill Clean-Up
- April 20 - Hike the Shawangunk Ridge Trail North from High Point State Park
- April 21 - How to Grow Mushrooms in Your Own Backyard
- April 21 - Hike the D&H Canal Towpath to Graham's Dry dock and Back
- Weekends from April 20 through June 23 - Nature Watch at the South Road Boat Launch, Across from the Bashakill Vineyards
- April 23 - Full Moon Walk
- May 4 - Canoe/Kayak the Basha Kill with Elly Knieriemen
- May 11 - Spring Migration Warbler Walk
- May 18 - Hike the Wurtsboro Rail Trail and Linear Trail
- June 21 - Full Moon Walk
- June 22 - Natural History Walk with Jack Austin
- September 21 - Hike the Canal & Rail Trails North of Summitville
- September 28 - Canoe/Kayak the Basha Kill with Elly Knieriemen
- October 4 - Free Public Star Watch with John Kocijanski of the Catskills Astronomy Club
- October 13 - Walk the D&H Canal Trail To Grahams Basin and Back

SISTER ORGANIZATIONS

Deerpark Rural Alliance (DRA): DRA and NYenvironcom (NYec) has kept it up attending town meetings in Deerpark, now expanding to Mt. Hope where Dragon Springs (DS) has introduced its application but no details for a "temporary concrete factory." Questions: to build what, where and how big? Mt. Hope is a small fraction of the 427 acre of Dragons Springs which is mainly located in Deerpark.

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We will follow both Mt. Hope and Deerpark Planning Board and Town Board meetings. We suspect that the concrete factory and the return of the Deerpark Commons project (in a scaled down version from 2 mil. sq ft.) are related. Deerpark Commons application of 12 years ago along with Galley Hill Rd rezoning, gave birth to DRA. Six ill-advised projects later, and some measures of success, we are still at it. And so is Deerpark.

Many issues continue to get our attention regarding permits and oversight at Dragon Springs, including, the indictment of Epoch Times CFO for money laundering and fraud to the tune of \$67 million and monies diverted into DS and Shen Yun. The most immediate concern, however, is why has Dragon Springs not been inspected in the past few years by Deerpark, though much construction is taking place? NYec has said from the start—land use, land decisions are fundamental to our lives. So, we urge all to participate in town meetings. Being alert and active about land use decisions grabs and motivates us. Why have others call the shots while we are relegated to the sidelines? So we push back on deficient plans and pull for thoughtful development with community and water concerns foremost. And, of course, continue with bottle testing and water station monitoring under the WaterInSight initiative. Join us, volunteer with good company and a can-do attitude that embraces fun and laughter.

Last, we are still waiting for a decision from the federal court on our Clean Water Act litigation and word on the Article 78 lawsuit against Deerpark for failure to make a positive declaration on the proposed large expansion of New Century Film along the Neversink River in Huguenot. The action was spearheaded by a new group, the Lower Huguenot Neighborhood Association.

Continued activity of grant applications and public outreach at the PJ Farmers' Market, attending watershed workshops, and supporting efforts to oppose the expansion of Rte 86, keep us busy.

Ridgetop Lakes Conservancy: The RLC has an opportunity to purchase what is known as the "WIR Property" and also the "Whale's Tail of Yankee Lake", a piece of property that was formerly part of the China City/Thompson Education project. It is of particular significance and importance not only to the lakes sitting on top of the ridge, but also to the Pine Kill, the Basha Kill, the Delaware River, and the Neversink River. The BKAAG will be pledging a donation to this endeavor.

Networking: The BKAAG is constantly revitalizing connections with long-standing friends and supporters. These include: Ridgetop Lakes Conservancy, NY/NJ Trail Conference, Open Space Institute, and Friends of the Upper Delaware River.

- FieldKit, Haverstraw Estuary Field Station, Friends of Shawangunk, Wallkill River Watershed Alliance,

Theodore Gordon Flyfishers, Gardiner ECC worked closely with the BKAAG on monitoring the Bloomingburg Wastewater Treatment Plant and getting the word out to the public.

- The BKAAG retained affiliations with Sullivan Catskill Visitor Association, whose website and publications highlight our programs and wetland ecosystem.
- BKAAG maintained membership in Coalition for the Delaware Watershed.
- BKAAG minimally networked with local politicians, but sent Guardian to most.
- BKAAG enjoyed consistent backing from Deerpark Rural Alliance and NYenvironcom.
- Frequently communicated with DEC Bashakill Wildlife Managers, EJ Borchert and Gregory Cerne. We are planning an invasive species pull for spring.
- Interacted with Mamakating Environmental Education Center (MEEC) via Director Jackie Broder's column in the Guardian, sending Alerts underscoring MEEC programs, and sponsoring, co-sponsoring, or participating in various MEEC programs.
- Networked with Mamakating Local Development Corporation by staffing an informational table at the Mamakating Farmers Market every Friday throughout the summer.
- Networked with Wurtsboro Board of Trade by staffing informational tables at the Founder's Day Festival.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Membership - thank you Graham Vest for your continued work in keeping our membership records up to date.

Emails - thank you Bill Lucas for your ongoing vigilance with answering emails in a knowledgeable and timely manner.

Correspondence - thank you Cliff Johnson for writing all of the beautiful thank you's as well as handling shipping of Guide Books.

Alerts - thank you to Jon Heaphy and Nancy Benedek of Liberty Press for their timely alerts and taking care of all of our printing needs.

Facebook & Instagram - thank you to Frank Coviello for keeping our pages beautiful.

Guardian - As Editor of the Guardian, Frank Coviello has implemented a new Bulk Mailing program known as the USPS Intelligent Mail for Small Business. Basically this change requires us to perform some presorting of the mail by zip code and if successful (which we have been so far) will result in the waiving of our annual bulk mail permit fee. This system also helps us keep our membership addresses up to date, significantly reducing returned mail fees.

We'd like to express our gratitude to the following:

ANNUAL REPORT continued from page 13

Frank Coviello, Editor-in-Chief, for overseeing all aspects of the Guardian, including figuring out the ridiculous mailing system and chasing down article writers

Frank, Christine Saward, and Graham Vest for editing submissions

Jon Heaphy and Nancy Benedek of Liberty Press for printing the Guardian and orchestrating the online distribution.

Cathy Dawkins and her team, Pam and Galen Booth, Patricia Diness, and Maryallison Farley for sorting and assembling the Guardian.

Cliff Johnson for helping transport the Guardians as well as hand distribution.

Website - thebashakill.org - the new website is up and running. We implemented the online membership renewal with some favorable response. We hope that as people become accustomed to its simplicity, they will renew online as it saves your volunteer board members a lot of time. The text is not complete on the website at this time, it is still a work in progress.

The BKAA Board would like to thank each of its members for their continued support, especially during this transitional time. We are still looking for volunteers to help

occasionally with outreach (sitting at events, telling people about all the great things we do), "stuffing envelopes", water testing (easier than you think and only 1-2 times/month for a couple of hours). We are also looking for guides to lead nature walks (1-2 times/year). If you are looking for something more involved, we need an outreach coordinator (do you love telling people where to go?). The organization needs help, we are 600+ strong, let's show up strong!

Supplement to Advocacy

Route 17 Expansion Project

This project is being watched closely by BKAA members Maura & Bob Muller. Their most recent article in the Summer 2024 Guardian is a comprehensive history of the project as well as recent events. There has been significant push-back on this project from residents of Mamakating, Catskill Mountainkeeper, and other environmental groups. We are concerned about this project since Route 17 crosses through the Bashakill and any expansion would affect it from construction to run-off to the possibility of increased exhaust emissions. Mamakating Town Board Member, Matt Mordas has also been working hard to keep NYS and federal representatives transparent and attentive to our concerns. We will be following this development closely.

2024 Nature Watch Summary

Nora Brusinski

In 2024, the BKAA Nature Watch volunteers successfully offered visitors to the Basha Kill the opportunity to enhance their experience & understanding of bald eagles and other wildlife. Our program got off the ground this year with a training in early April. We were treated to an excellent presentation on the Basha Kill's aquatic plants by Richard Mandelbaum, R.H. Soon, our volunteers were well prepared to field questions on the flora of the boat launch as well as the fauna. Later, attendees enjoyed refreshments provided by Walter Jahn and MaryAnn Geary-Halchak, who also covered the sign-in table. The day finished with a lesson on scope set-up from expert John Kocijanski.

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SEE PHOTOS ON PAGE 15

NATURE WATCH

JUNE 2, 2024



Eagle photos by Walter Jahn
Other photos by Gary Cormier

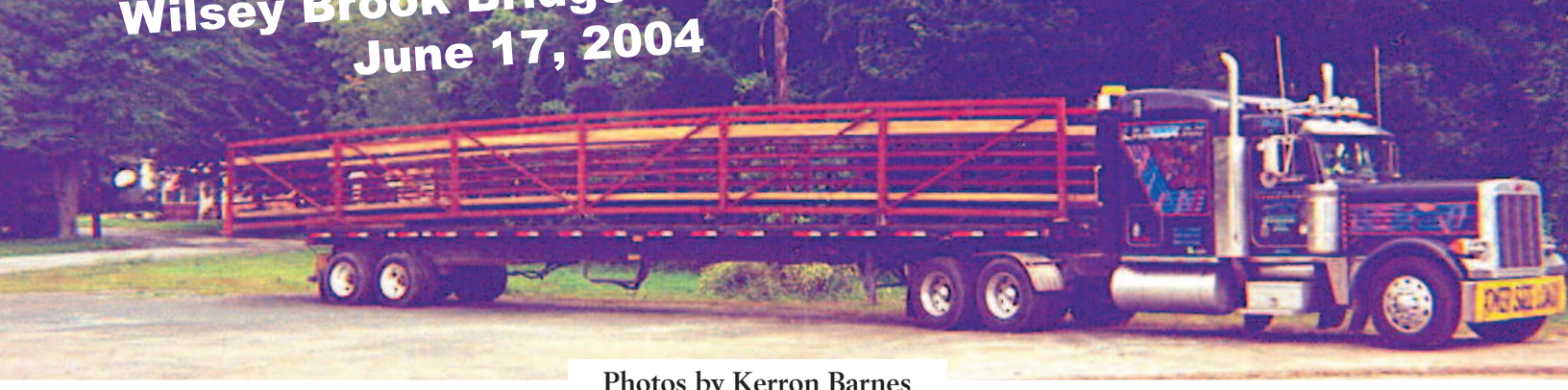


2024's single Bashakill eaglet
practicing using its flight muscles





Wilsey Brook Bridge Installation June 17, 2004



Photos by Kerron Barnes



Phillipsport Community Center Hosted International Monthly Music Night

Christine Saward

Do you know about the hidden gem in the hamlet of Phillipsport? There is a well-maintained 1850s one room schoolhouse, lovingly preserved by the Phillipsport Community Center Association. Since its founding in 1956, the PCC has held many events such as yard sales, penny socials, pot lucks, poetry readings, educational seminars, and tai chi classes, to name only a few, for its community of members, families, and friends. The PCC has awarded scholarships annually to deserving seniors of Ellenville High School. They also host a "Meet the Candidates" forum in October. Member volunteers have planted gardens throughout the hamlet in partnership with the Sullivan Renaissance beautification programs. They even won the top prize of the Golden Feather Award of \$25,000 in 2014, given to one of five large community projects that exhibited the highest level of excellence by incorporating beautification as part of a long-term strategy.

For some 15 years the PCC has hosted a monthly music night from spring to fall. With additional funding from the NYS Council on the Arts grant program managed by the Delaware Valley Arts Alliance, the monthly music event has grown exponentially. When it first started, local musicians played for whatever was contributed by "passing the hat." Over time as the grant money increased, established bands and emerging artists from a wider geographical area have showcased their talents at this inviting venue. In August of this year the PCC went international, featuring a touring band from Ireland with Uilleann pipes, guitar and percussion.



From an evening for music lovers served dessert and coffee, and later to suppers homecooked by members, the events morphed again after missing the 2020 season due to Covid. Admission now includes homemade pie, baked that morning by Vice President Andy Weil and a team of volunteers. It takes more than a dozen PCC members to plan, organize and operate music nights. Members manage parking (with a thank you to our neighbor for use of her yard), door admission, kitchen tasks, set up, and the sound system. Landscaping and grounds maintenance are an ongoing responsibility as performances are held outside under the pavilion with audiences seated in the gardens.

Keep an eye on the Phillipsport Community Center Facebook page for the 2025 season. New members are always welcome. Annual dues for Individuals-\$15, families-\$20, seniors-\$10. And the handsome facility is also available to rent—you can hold your own events, celebrations, and activities at the lovingly preserved and maintained building and grounds.



Rara Avis

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

All photos downloaded from public domain



Red-Headed Woodpecker

Ruby Throated Hummingbird



Deerpark Rural Alliance and NYenvironcom

Grace Woodard

A lovely first snowfall came and went bringing much needed moisture to our parched land. 2024 saw Deerpark Rural Alliance and NYenvironcom remain stalwart, realistic, and they just keep on truckin'.

NYenvironcom is investigating larger grants to apply for in 2025, marrying new initiatives to ongoing work, and patiently looking for movement by the federal court in White Plains of NYenvironcom's appeal in its Clean Water Act lawsuit. Meanwhile, mapping and maintaining water stations in the Basha Kill and the Neversink with DRA volunteers is a constant. Winter is the chloride season and NYenvironcom and DRA are starting to reach out to volunteers to participate in a region-wide measuring of chloride in streams and rivers—a serious initiative by Stroud Water Research Center.

DRA is planning two new initiatives for 2025, building a skill base of volunteers and developing a much needed

community survey. And the constant for NYenvironcom and DRA is continuing to monitor, record and post Deerpark Town and Planning Board meetings—focusing on administrative and procedural actions and observing activity at Dragon Springs. A number of issues are getting serious scrutiny but not boiling over yet. So, we meet, talk, and work to get more involved in social media to inform the public. And we relax too, just like at our recent Halloween Wickerman gathering in Godeffroy where hoisting a few was in order.

Making the community aware of issues that impact land, water and rural living is the big game. 2025 is the year for many small local environmental groups to collaborate across the Neversink Valley, identify issues and engage each other. We keep positive and appreciate our volunteers. And when we dream, we dream of donations. We'd love for you to share that dream. Feel free to contact Grace at 646 644 3726. gwoodard@gmail.com.

MEEC Connection Vol 18 — Nov. 2024

Jackie Broder, MEEC Director

Holiday Greetings! Hoping your celebrations are/were full of laughter, love, and that you found some time for soulful rejuvenation in nature. It's been a mild autumn, albeit dry. This has allowed for extended time hiking and kayaking in and around the Bashakill. It's been great to see people out and about. Speaking of dry, we'd like to thank all of the volunteers who have so courageously helped in fighting the fires of the past weeks. From fire fighters and other first responders to auxiliaries and town employees collecting donations, to the donors, it was a community effort and we are grateful for each of you.

Speaking of kayaks, our kayak rental station is finally in place and ready for a Spring launch! The unit is a locker system run off of an app, Rent.fun (QR code on the side of the unit). Once you pay through the app, the locker opens and everything you need is there, kayak, paddle, life jacket, straps and mounts for securing the kayak to your car. Prices are \$30 for 2 hours and \$10 for each additional hour. It's the perfect opportunity for people who want to try kayaking before buying or for out of towners who can't bring their kayaks with them. We'll announce the date of the grand opening in early spring on social media and our website so stay tuned.

We've had some different programs in the last few months, a few we are definitely going to continue. We had our first open mic nature poetry night, which was very well attended and resulted in another community alliance. We are happy to be working in conjunction with Otisville Sanctuary for Art, Music, & Spirituality. Look them up at otisvillesams.org for some great programming. We also had our first Paint & Sip

with Jess Piren. Jess was here over the summer helping out with our summer camp. She is talented, enthusiastic, and fun, and we can't wait to have her back soon! Look for new dates for both of these programs.

We had our annual candle making program, also popular. It's always great to see people having a relaxing creative time here at MEEC, and I love seeing the end results. Our Fall Festival was a beautiful celebration of indigenous storytelling, crafts, dancing, and drumming. We were so grateful to the Red Feather Drummers for sharing their knowledge and culture with us and Orange & Rockland Utilities for their financial support. In December we are continuing our traditions of wreath making and our annual artisan fair.

In January, we are planning a book club of sorts. We will listen to the audio version of "Braiding Sweetgrass" by Robin Wall-Kimmerer with discussion afterwards during an evening series in January and February. We'll also be scheduling another Paint & Sip and a children's book reading and signing. Local retired teacher, Jill Weed has published her first book, "Falconry with Lady, the Red-Tailed Hawk." And save the date for our Winter Festival being held on Saturday, February 22nd!

As I expressed in my last column, we are always looking for different funding avenues in order to acquire and maintain staff so that we may continue to provide the quality of programming you've all come to expect from us. To that end, the Friends of MEEC are seeking foundational and corporate sponsors willing to support our mission and vision. Significant annual funding is the goal, but we are open to smaller or one-time gifts as well. If you can help us achieve this goal in any way, please give us a call at 845-644-5014.

Wishing you a restful, peaceful winter.

Partial Migration & Bashakill Birds

Walter Jahn

Will the Bashakill's summer birds remain in our area throughout the autumn and winter? That is actually a difficult question to answer—whether a bird species will migrate is not always a simple “yes” or “no” question. Let's consider the bald eagles, cedar waxwings, and eastern bluebirds observed on a November nature walk at the Bashakill starting at the boat launch (and on this particular day the hike began with 5 bald eagles in the group's range of view at the same time)!



The immature bald eagle which was observed at the same time as four adults was not the eaglet which hatched in spring 2024. (One could tell by the coloration that it was probably 2 ½ years old; bald eagles do not develop the fully white head and tail until 5 years of age.) The single 2024 eaglet which was raised at the Bashakill this summer probably struck out on its own by late summer. Are the adult eagles observed in autumn and winter at the Bashakill the same eagles which nested here this summer? Perhaps. Bald eagles are partial migrants—while eagles in the northern part of their range will typically migrate and eagles in the south of their range will typically not migrate, migration can be variable among birds in the middle of their range. The adult bald eagles which spent their summer

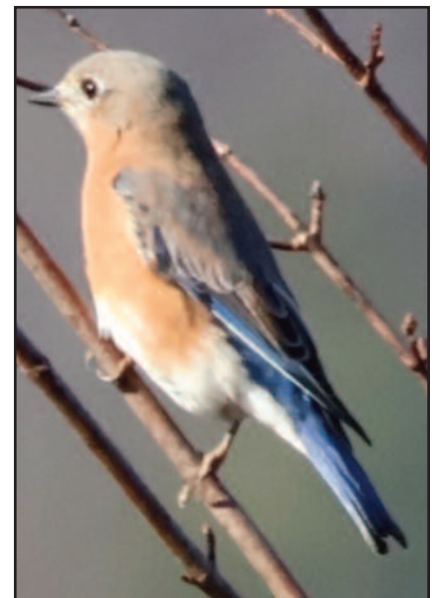
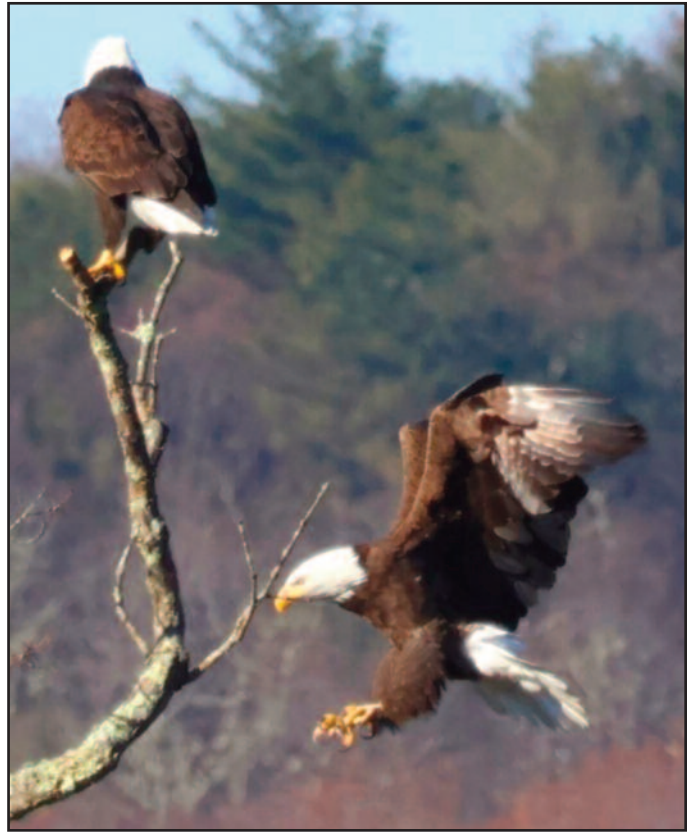
here may have migrated south with the onset of colder weather or they might remain in their nesting territory depending on the presence of open water and the availability of food.

Cedar waxwings are one of the few North American birds which can survive on fruit alone, although they can also include insects & other invertebrates in their diet, especially during breeding season. Cedar waxwings are able to remain in our area over winter because they still find fruits in the diverse habitats that the Bashakill provides. As partial migrants, it is possible that the cedar waxwings which overwinter here are migrants from regions farther north while the Bashakill's summer cedar waxwings have migrated farther south.



The same is true of bluebirds which can feed both on invertebrates and plant material. While northern bluebirds are migratory and southern bluebirds typically do not migrate, the bluebirds which spent their summers here may or may not remain throughout the winter.

Even if the Bashakill is included in a species' year-round range (such as the range of bald eagles, cedar waxwings, or eastern bluebirds), it is possible that individual birds do not remain year-round. Winter birds may have migrated from breeding areas farther north and summer birds may overwinter in regions farther south. While some of our summer birds may choose to migrate, others may not and variables such as age, gender, the availability of food, and the harshness of the winter are known to be variables which affect the migratory behavior of partial migrants.



Pollution of the Shawangunk Kill — *An Update*

Frank Coviello

In the 2024 Fall issue of the Guardian, I wrote a comprehensive history of the last three years of the Bloomingburg, NY Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) and the contaminated treated sewage which has been discharged into the Shawangunk Kill.

The Bashakill Area Association (BKAA) began monitoring the water discharged into Shawangunk Kill on February 20, 2024, a few weeks after we became aware of this issue. The monitoring continues on a monthly schedule and will likely continue for the next year or two. The testing is performed at three locations; at the effluent pipe where the water is released by the WWTP, approximately 100 yards upstream and downstream of the effluent pipe. We have consistently detected both Fecal Coliform and E. Coli bacteria at all three locations which exceed the acceptable limits for the water quality limit for the Shawangunk Kill.

The root cause of the contaminated discharge is an overwhelming number of flushable wipes entering the WWTP. Although these wipes are “flushable” (they do not individually clog the residential pipes), the overwhelming numbers in the sewer system are capable of clogging the pipes, pumps and filters needed in the WWTP. They have caused the “Bar Arm”, the initial component of the WWTP located at the influent pipe and responsible for removing them, to fail, allowing them to pass into the plant. This bar arm was installed in 2014 during the construction of the plant. It is now considered obsolete and old technology and repair parts are not available. Currently, several workers manually remove them by capturing them with rakes and transferring them to crates. This is done several times each day.

The Village of Bloomingburg has contracted an engineering company to design, build and install a new bar arm. As of this writing construction of this new bar arm is anticipated to begin in April 2025. As a temporary fix the village has ordered a new electric motor and custom made gear box to repair the current bar arm. These items are currently not in the possession of the village. The Mayor has also distributed brochures to the population requesting they not dispose of these wipes in the sewage system. In addition, The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation has implemented a monthly inspection schedule rather than the biannual schedule.

What can you do to help? We have successfully brought the issue to the public, however each month we spend \$240 for the bacterial testing of the three sites. As stated above, we anticipate this to continue for another 1-2 years; please consider a donation.



Bar arm



Rags in arm assembly



Rags in dumpster

Route 17 Winter Update

Maura Muller

At our annual meeting in October I gave the following update on Rt 17:

In September Governor Hochul announced the completion of the scoping report for the project. The scoping report is one step in the environmental review process that documents the evaluation of preliminary concepts. Several potential alternatives are being advanced for detailed study.

“Like so many of our bridges and highways, State Route 17 is a product of the mid-20th Century that no longer meets the needs and demands of 21st Century New Yorkers,” Governor Hochul said. “This scoping report reflects the ongoing partnership that exists between the state and the community as we seek to reimagine this vital roadway into a modern highway that will reduce congestion, enhance safety, promote tourism and improve quality of life in some of the fastest growing regions of the state.”

As part of the scoping process, the New York State Department of Transportation, in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration, solicited input from the public. NYSDOT expects to publish a Draft EIS for the project in 2025. You can read the scoping report at this address:

https://www.route17.dot.ny.gov/docs/project%20scoping%20report_final_09.19.24.pdf

Latest News

On Wednesday, November 20th, 2024, the NYSDOT held another in-person public information open house from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Emma Chase Elementary School gymnasium in Wurtsboro, NY. The purpose of the meeting was to provide information about conceptual plans for Exit 114 (Wurtsboro/Highview), answer questions, and gather input from members of the public. When I arrived at 5:10pm the parking lot was packed, with every space taken. After calling DOT staff the next morning, I was told that final attendance was noted at 112 persons.

There were approximately 19



informational posters set up around the room walking visitors through every step of the project with plenty of DOT staff on hand to answer questions. I was helped by Mark Kruk, P.E., Project Manager and Heather Pillsworth, Public Information Officer.

They both explained that the NYSDOT is now considering 6 possible options for Exit 114. Of these 6 alternatives, only 2 propose that the exit close. The first option closes Exit 114 and transfers use to 113 and 115. This seems the least desirable from the public's point of view. At least the public that was in attendance. I did not encounter any guest that night who was interested in seeing the exit close. There was a very noticeable group of 15 people wearing bright green T-shirts that said “Keep Exit 114 Open”. I spoke with a few of them. One couple said they wanted the exit to stay exactly the same as it is now. Others were open to the alternatives, but opposed to the 2 options in which the exit

would close. They said traffic for vendors during the annual Founders Day would be awful if the exit closed, and they were really worried about the detrimental effect on small businesses as well.

The second option as we moved around the room is to remake the exit so that it is fully functional. Option 3 would close exit 114 as it is now and move it a few hundred yards east where it would become a full interchange with County Rte 171. A fourth option is to combine 114 and 115 into one fully functional exit. A fifth option would be that the exit is removed for public use, and it would be available only for emergency access

Preliminary Project Schedule

April 2024	Publish Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
May 2024	Public Scoping Meeting
September 2024	Publish Project Scoping Report
Fall 2024 - Summer 2025	Develop Draft EIS
Summer 2025	Release Draft EIS
Fall 2025	Public Hearing
Fall 2025	45-day Draft EIS Comment Period
Winter 2026	Issue Combined Final EIS/ Record of Decision

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vehicles. The sixth option is to create a partial interchange in which there would be both a westbound off and westbound on ramp.

To see the slides illustrating these options (also in Spanish and Yiddish) you can go to:

https://www.route17.dot.ny.gov/docs/Rt%2017%20EIS_Exit%20114%20Open%20House_Boards.pdf

The staff I spoke to mentioned that YOUR feedback is important. It's not enough to sign a template group email. They want to know what you think. Please make your subject line of your email noticeable when emailing Rt17MobilityAccess@dot.ny.gov. For example, email subject: I prefer option Full Interchange at Exit 114. Then say why in the body of your email. There are other ways to express your opinion. By US mail:

NYS Route 17 Mobility & Access Improvements Project Team
NYSDOT Region 8
4 Burnett Boulevard
Poughkeepsie, NY 12603

You can also follow the project on the NYS DOT website, <https://www.route17.dot.ny.gov/#/mobility-access-outreach>

Don't forget to make your voice heard and stay tuned for more information.

Your Feedback is Important

The NYSDOT invites you to participate in and provide comments on the NYS Route 17 Mobility and Access Improvements Project.

How to Comment:

- Comment Forms**
Fill out a comment form, available at the sign-in table, and drop it in a comment box
- Email**
Rt17MobilityAccess@dot.ny.gov
- Comment Electronically**
Submit your comments via tablet
- U.S. Mail**
NYS Route 17 Mobility & Access Improvements Project Team
NYSDOT Region 8
4 Burnett Boulevard
Poughkeepsie, NY 12603
- Online at the Project Website**
[route17.dot.ny.gov/#/mobility-access-contact](https://www.route17.dot.ny.gov/#/mobility-access-contact)
Scan QR code to visit Project website

New York State Department of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration

Cheyenne the Water Woman

Cheyenne Otto

Recently the lower Hudson Valley, including the Bashakill wetlands, experienced a severe drought due to the unusually warm, dry autumn. This increased wildfire risks and potential for water supplies to dry out, as seen by the low water level in the Bashakill this November. As discussed in previous Guardians, key indicators of water quality include temperature, pH, conductivity, and dissolved oxygen. But how do droughts specifically affect these indicators in our local wetlands?

A drought is defined as an extended period of decreased precipitation and streamflow which can cause a deficiency in water availability and water quality. Wetlands are sensitive to droughts as the shallow water table is especially susceptible to fluctuations depending on the season's precipitation. As a result of the drought conditions, water volume will continue to decrease from evaporation, effluent discharge or biological usage.

The influence of internal and external processes increases during droughts as there is less water volume to dilute the concentration of harmful buildups. Biological activity will

cause a build up of organic matter in areas of low circulation. This can create anoxic environments as the percentage of major ions and carbon increase in catchments created by lower water levels. Organisms sensitive to changes in the dissolved oxygen and conductivity will start to die off as the environment undergoes these changes.

The water levels of the Bashakill had become extremely low by early November, and multiple influent sources, like the South Road waterfall had become dry. Throughout the drought, our water testing volunteers were able to collect important data that will be used to analyze the water quality during this period. Maintaining a consistent and long-term monitoring program allows us to analyze how these events, like this drought, are impacting the Bashakill. This testing is critical to preserving the water quality of the wetlands, especially an area as special as the Bashakill. In the upcoming Guardian, please be on the lookout for the analysis of the water quality data for 2024!

If you have any questions or you would like to inquire about volunteering for our water testing program, please reach out to bashakillareaassociation@gmail.com with the subject ATTN: Cheyenne - Water Testing Program for more information.

NYS DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION CAMP SCHOLARSHIPS

BASHA KILL AREA ASSOCIATION

The Basha Kill Area Association (BKAA) is sponsoring several campers for one week each at a NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Camp during the summer of 2025.

CAMP CHOICES INCLUDE

Camp Colby (Saranac Lake)

Camp DeBruce (Livingston Manor)

Camp Rushford (Caneadea)

Pack Forest (Warrensburg)

BKAA will pay \$300.00 of the total camper's fee (\$350.00) for each child selected. Primary requirements are that campers be between 11 and 17 years old and be interested in the outdoors. Priority will be given to first-time applicants.

TYPES OF CAMPER EXPERIENCES

Campers: 11 to 13 years old

Teen Ecology Camp: 14 to 17 years old

TO APPLY

Please have the interested child submit a letter with the following information:

1. Why you are interested in the environment
2. Your name and names of your parents or guardians
3. Your address and phone number
4. The name of your school and the grade you are in

SEND YOUR LETTER VIA EMAIL TO

Jackie Broder, BKAA Board Member

broderjackie@gmail.com

or mail to

PO Box 1121

Wurtsboro, NY 12790

APPLICATION LETTERS MUST BE SUBMITTED BY THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15th 2025

For more information on the NYS DEC Summer Camp program: www.dec.ny.gov/education/29.html

ABOUT US

The BKAA, formed in 1972, has some 800 members who are dedicated to preserving the wonderful 3000-plus acres of the Bashakill Wildlife Management Area and surrounding areas in the Town of Mamakating, New York.

2025 JACK ORTH MEMORIAL BASHA KILL AREA ASSOCIATION SCHOLARSHIP

DESCRIPTION

To assist a full-time student pursuing an education in Environmental Science or Green Building Technology at SUNY Sullivan, SUNY Ulster or SUNY Orange

AMOUNT OF SCHOLARSHIP

\$500

ELIGIBILITY

Returning, full-time students with 30 credits and above a 3.0 gpa

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Applicants must submit the following to be considered:

One letter of recommendation from a high school teacher/advisor, college faculty member, or a community member, and

One of the following:

A 500 word essay on what your ultimate career goal in science is, and why you are pursuing this goal

OR

A presentation of the details of an environmental project you have completed plans for a project you would like to complete

SEND YOUR APPLICATION PACKAGE VIA EMAIL TO

Jackie Broder, BKAA Board Member

broderjackie@gmail.com

or mail to

PO Box 1121

Wurtsboro, NY 12790

APPLICATION LETTERS MUST BE SUBMITTED BY THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28TH 2025

ABOUT US

The BKAA, formed in 1972, has some 800 members who are dedicated to preserving the wonderful 3000-plus acres of the Bashakill Wildlife Management Area and surrounding areas in the Town of Mamakating, New York.

Basha Kill Area Association, Inc. Treasurer's Report - October 1, 2023 - September 30, 2024

General Fund Operating Account

Balance from September 30, 2023

\$33,002

Income:

Membership Dues	2,160
Donations	17,208
Holiday Fundraiser 2023	76
Book Sales:	
Haas - A Birding Guide to Sullivan County	185
The Basha Kill Wetlands Field Guide	18
Merchandise Sales	785
Sales Tax collected on book & merchandise	46
Total Income	20,479

Expenses:

Guardian printing	(8,929)
Email Alerts	(189)
Printing/Copies/Office Supplies, etc.	(1,503)
Postage, Postal Fees	(1,343)
DEC Campers Scholarships	
Meeting Room Rental	(900)
Meeting Supplies	(122)
Phone - Vonage	(693)
Water Testing Program	(1,440)
Advocacy - Bloomingburg	(2,118)
Insurance	(1,407)
Port-A-Potty	(720)
Website	(4,194)
Merchandise Purchases	(2,139)
Annual Cleanup	(1,144)
Community Programs	(700)
Nature Watch	
Class Instruction	(600)
Conference Costs	(444)
Sympathy Gifts	(296)
Membership Dues for other Organizations	(50)
Mamakating Local Development Calendar	
Volunteer Mileage Reimbursement	
NYS Law Department	
Taxes	(50)
NYS Sales Tax	(63)
MoneyMinder - Accounting Program	(341)
Amazon Prime (Cancelled as of October 2024)	(57)
PayPal, CheedarUp & Bank Fees	(31)
Total Expenses	(29,473)
Net Income	(8,994)

(\$8,994)

Balance: General Fund Operating Account at September 30, 2024

\$24,008

*Due to DEC Camp session cancellations the BKAA has a credit balance of \$750 for next year's programs

Legal Fund Account

Balance from September 30, 2023

\$45,787

Income:

Various Donations	\$445
Total Income	\$445

Expenses:

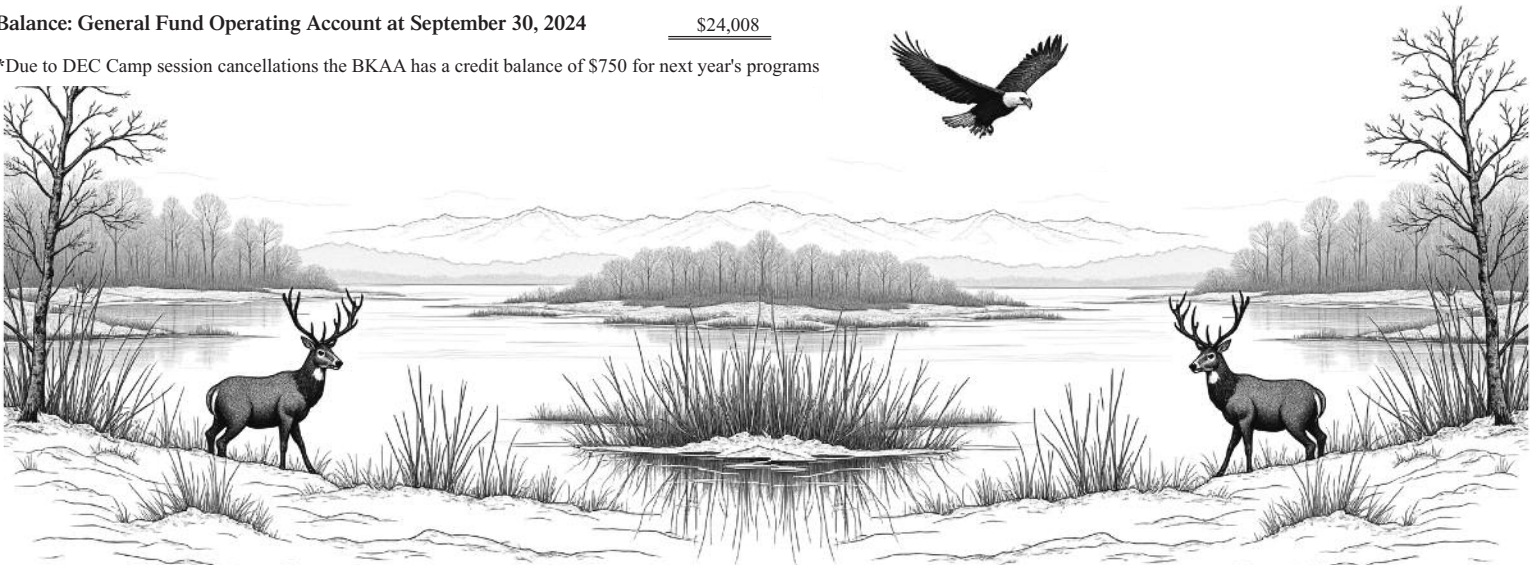
Advocacy	(\$511)
Total Expenses & Outlays	(\$511)
Net Income	(\$66)

Balance at September 30, 2024

\$45,721

General Fund Special Account

	<u>Unallocated - currently held on deposit in bank</u>	<u>Community Foundation of Orange & Sullivan Fund</u>	<u>Total</u>
Balance from October 15, 2021:	\$30,000	\$0	\$30,000
Initial Contribution & Donation	(\$20,000)	\$20,280	\$280
Net Investment Earnings & Fee		(\$1,373)	(\$1,373)
Balance as of September 30, 2024	\$10,000	\$18,907	\$28,907





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