

Seedlings



VOLUME 10, ISSUE 3



Junior ACORNS Build Eastern Bluebird Boxes

Junior ACORNS Protect Wildlife at the Genesee County Parks and at Home

What a busy Spring we had at the Genesee County Parks! We wanted to share a highlight from this season with our Junior ACORNS program. This program is brand new in 2025! Junior ACORNS are young people ages 7 - 16 who care about nature and want to make a difference. We are thrilled to have 23 wonderful Junior ACORNS and their families participating in this first year.

In April, the Junior ACORNS gathered at Genesee County Park & Forest for a day focused on wildlife and animal stewardship. We started by learning from the volunteers who monitor and maintain the Eastern Bluebird and Purple Martin nest boxes at the park. Junior ACORNS learned how to identify birds' eggs and nests. We cleaned out the boxes in preparation for the spring nesting season!

Thanks to a very generous donation from a Junior ACORN family, we were then able to build our own Eastern Bluebird nest boxes. Each Junior ACORN built a box to take home. We can't wait to see how many Bluebirds build nests right in our Junior ACORNS backyards!

We ended the day with Ruby, our resident Red-eared slider turtle at the Interpretive Center. Junior ACORNS learned how to feed and care for Ruby.

Thank you to everyone who made this day possible! It's great to see volunteers, community members, and young people come together to support wildlife and natural resources in Genesee County.

Want to join us? Learn more on our website:
www.geneseeny.gov/Junior-ACORN



In This Issue

Junior ACORNS

An Unexpected Guest:
Charlie the Moth

Summer Programs

Ruby the Turtle
Update

Meet the ACORNS

Rex and the GCP Dog
Patrol

Welcome Summer
Intern Michael

Interpretive Nature Center Summer Hours: May - September
Thursday - Saturday 10:00am-4:00pm | Sunday 12:00-4:00pm



11095 Bethany Center Road
East Bethany, NY 14054

An Unexpected Guest: Charlie the Moth

By: Jen Geck, Conservation Education Program Assistant

Last July, I had the fortunate “run-in” with North America’s largest native moth. Well, sort of – it was actually the caterpillar whom I found or who found me! I was trimming back my cherry tree at home and when I went to gather up the branches I stumbled upon the most beautiful caterpillar I had ever seen. Having never seen one like it before I searched the internet to see just what it was.

To my surprise I learned I had found a cecropia moth caterpillar. Cecropia moth caterpillars are born black and grow to be green, with four reddish knobs and 16 yellow ones. Well, that was it for me – he was going to come home with me, for a little while anyway. In my home we tend to name things that we find out in the wild – so our caterpillar was given the name, Charlie the Cecropia Caterpillar.



Charlie the cecropia caterpillar was found on one of the cecropias host plants, a cherry tree.



Cecropias belong to the silk moth family. They construct their cocoons from silk.



Charlie the cecropia moth. Cecropias wings can reach up to 7 inches in width. Females have a larger abdomen filled with eggs. They will lay around 100 eggs to carry on the next generation.

I made Charlie a nice “home” and fed him leaves daily from the cherry tree – one of the cecropia’s host plants. Others include oak, cherry, beech, apple and button bush. He was a “hungry caterpillar” and ate and ate and ate some more! Soon I noticed Charlie was getting bigger and bigger until one day he started spinning silk on the side of his glass bowl. He could spin silk because Charlie is a silkworm - member of the Saturniidae family. I knew what that meant – he was ready to make himself a cocoon!

An Unexpected Guest: Charlie the Moth

By: Jen Geck, Conservation Education Program Assistant

I also knew from my research that cecropia moths pupate in late July/August – the resting stage when caterpillars transform into a moth. Charlie eventually spun his cocoon in between a couple of the cherry tree twigs that I had placed in his home. I was so fortunate to be able to see this construction take place – what amazing builders caterpillars are!

After about 10 months of overwintering in my garage, early in May, Charlie the caterpillar came to live at the GCP Interpretive Center in hopes that more people would be able to see his eclosion – his emerging from the cocoon as an adult moth. I left for the weekend late this May and came back to work the following Tuesday to find Charlie clinging to the top of the screen covering on his temporary home! Sadly, I had missed his eclosion but oh how stunning he was!

After a little more research I found out that the sole purpose of adult cecropia moths is to mate and carry on the next generation – they do not eat so they will only live for about two weeks. I also discovered that in fact, Charlie is a female! Female cecropias have smaller antennae and larger abdomens that carry all the eggs of their future generation. Females produce natural chemicals called pheromones, which can be detected by the male cecropia moth from over a mile away. She will lay over a hundred eggs on the leaves of one of her host plants. Many of the caterpillars won't live to see adulthood as birds will eat and feed their chicks with the caterpillars – they are full of protein, fats and nutrients.

As I released Charlie back into the wild I felt a sense of loss knowing she will live for only a short while but also a sense of gratification knowing that she is doing her part in the natural world and continuing the life cycle of the cecropia. Connecting with nature is something we can all do every day. Take time to slow down & observe your own little neck of the woods. You'll be amazed at what you find or what finds you!

Butterflies and moths are both in the insect order **Lepidoptera**. There are over 12,000 different species of Lepidopterans just in North America! How many different butterflies and moths have you seen at the Genesee County Parks?

Butterflies



Monarch Butterfly

- Long, straight or clubbed antennae
- Active during the day
- Typically hold wings folded against back when at rest

Moths



Polyphemus Moth

- Short, feathery antennae
- Active at night
- Typically hold wings spread out when at rest

Summer Programs

Guided Dog Walks at DeWitt Recreation Area

Saturday, July 12th, August 2nd, and September 6th

10:00 am — 11:00 am

Bring your best friend and join us for a guided dog walk at the park! This guided walk is great for socialization and healthy exercise! Dogs must be on a leash at all times. Current license or proof of rabies vaccination required. Aggressive dogs will not be allowed to participate. \$5/dog. Proceeds benefit Volunteers for Animals. Learn more and register on our website at: www.geneseeny.gov/Events/Events/Guided-Dog-Walk

Environmental Science Summer Camp

Monday, July 14th - Friday, July 18th | 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

This week-long adventure includes wildlife surveys, forest and stream studies, outdoor recreation, and more! Environmental Science Summer Camp is for students entering 7th - 10th grades. Learn more on our website at www.geneseeny.gov/summer-camp

Outdoor Learning Center Volunteer Workday

Saturday, July 26th | 9:00 am - 11:00 am

Come volunteer at the Genesee County Park Interpretive Nature Center for the day & help us get the outdoor learning center in tip top shape! We'll be weeding, mulching and various other tasks. All supplies will be provided. Learn more and register on our website: www.geneseeny.gov/Events/Outdoor-Learning-Center-Volunteer-Workday



Music in the Park

Saturday, August 2nd | 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm

Enjoy a summer night with a free concert featuring the Batavia Swing Band! Meet us at Pavilion 2. Bring a lawn chair and your favorite people. First come, first served seating at picnic tables. This concert is FREE! Made possible by generous funding by the Association for Conservation of Recreational and Natural Spaces (ACORNS). Learn more on our website at www.geneseeny.gov/Events/Music-in-the-Park



JR ACORNS Meeting:

Native Species at the Outdoor Learning Ctr

Saturday, August 16th | 10:00 am — 1:00 pm

Calling all park lovers and future naturalists! The ACORNS are the volunteer friends group at the Genesee County Parks! Together, we connect people with nature through outdoor learning, exploration and fun. You can join our mission by becoming a Junior ACORN! Visit our website to learn more and register today!

Our August program will focus on native plants and ecosystems at Genesee County Park & Forest.

For more information and registration visit www.geneseeny.gov/parks or call (585) 344-1122.

Programs take place at the Genesee County Park & Forest Interpretive Nature Center at 11095 Bethany Center Road, East Bethany, NY 14054 unless otherwise noted.

Summer Programs

Summer Night Hike

Friday, August 22nd | 7:30 pm — 9:30 pm

Explore the forest at night and enjoy the darkness and stars that accompany the New Moon. We'll watch for fireflies, listen for owls, and hear katydids chirping. A short, easy paced walk along the trails will be followed by the chance to view stars through a telescope! Participants are welcome to bring camp chairs for the stargazing portion of the program. \$5/person, \$10/family. Meet at Interpretive Center. Learn more on our website at www.geneseeny.gov/Events/Summer-Night-Hike

Kayaking at DeWitt Recreation Area

Saturday, August 23rd and August 30th

10:00 am — 12:00 pm

Seize the day with a guided kayak tour of DeWitt Recreation Area! Explore the lake by water and discover a new world. Meet at the boat launch. No experience needed, kayaking skills and safety lesson will be provided. Kayak, paddle, and PFD are available to borrow or bring your own. Ages 12 and up. Program fee is \$15/person without kayak rental or \$25/person with rental. Learn more and register on our website: www.geneseeny.gov/Events/Kayaking-at-DeWitt-Recreation-Area

Watching Monarchs

Saturday, September 13th | 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Capture the last few days of summer with a visit to a butterfly meadow and a journey into their world! See how butterflies are tagged and released as part of a nation-wide Monarch Butterfly conservation project. Kids can explore the meadow with nets and bug catchers! Recommended for ages 4 and up! \$5/person, \$10/family. Meet at Interpretive Center. Learn more at www.geneseeny.gov/Events/Watching-Monarchs



Fall Wildflower Walk

Saturday, September 20th | 1:00 pm — 3:00 pm

Fall colors come from more than just the changing leaves! Join us for a walk to explore the beautiful wildflowers that give us purples, yellows, oranges and more each year. From goldenrods to asters we'll identify the flowers that we find and discuss why they are important for our pollinators and ecosystems at the Genesee County Park! Meet at the Interpretive Nature Center. \$5/person, \$10/family. Learn more at: www.geneseeny.gov/Events/Fall-Wildflower-Walk



Eco- Book Club

Saturday, September 27th | 10:00 am - 12:00 pm

We are creating a monthly book club where we will be reading & discussing both fiction & nonfiction nature centered books. Meet at the Interpretive Center starting at 10:00 am and will wrap up with a gentle hike through the park. Our first read is, Braiding Sweetgrass, by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Books can be purchased at your local bookstore or borrowed from your local library. Learn more at: www.geneseeny.gov/Events/Eco-Book-Club

For more information and registration visit www.geneseeny.gov/parks or call (585) 344-1122.

Programs take place at the Genesee County Park & Forest Interpretive Nature Center at 11095 Bethany Center Road, East Bethany, NY 14054 unless otherwise noted.



Ruby the Turtle

We are thrilled to provide an update in our turtle habitat enhancement project at the Interpretive Nature Center. Our Red-eared slider turtle, Ruby, has lived at the Center since 2011, inspiring thousands of people over the years. In 2024, we decided that it was time to build Ruby a new home with more space so that she can continue to grow. We completed a concept design for her new tank, which includes enhancements like a large water tank, walking space, and improved lighting. In May, the Genesee County ACORNS held a fundraiser to raise funds for this project.

The fundraiser turned out to be a huge success! We were blown away by the amazing support from our community. Over 140 people stopped by the Interpretive Nature Center for a day filled with fun turtle-themed activities. The ACORNS have raised almost \$4,000 towards a new home for Ruby. Thank you!

The ACORNS are very close to their goal of \$5,000. You can still donate by visiting the ACORNS website. Check back in our newsletter for future updates!



Volunteers Needed

From planting trees to leading hikes, volunteers are essential to our parks! Meet new people interested in nature, while learning about the world around you and gaining new experiences. Parks thrive when we come together to make the world a better place!

The help of volunteers makes it possible for the Genesee County Parks to provide excellent recreational and educational activities for citizens of Genesee County and beyond.

Learn more on our website:
<https://www.geneseeny.gov/parks>



Scout Opportunities

Genesee County Parks, Recreation & Forestry provides volunteer opportunities for Scouts of all ages!

Earn service hours by:

- Assisting with programs
- Creating trail signs
- Monitoring nest boxes
- Maintaining the ACORNS Outdoor Learning Center
- Hosting duties and cleaning the Interpretive Center
- Providing turtle care

Please contact Claudia Nusstein at:
Claudia.Nusstein@geneseeny.gov

ACORNS Highlights from Spring 2025

The ACORNS are the volunteer friends group for the Genesee County Parks. Here are our favorite photos from this past Spring. Thank you ACORNS for all that you do!



ACORNS Kayak Training at Beaver Island State Park



BOCES Conservation students install a temperature logger in Black Creek to study Creek health



Lewis teaches about honeybees at the Kinderfarmin' program



Volunteer Kathie championed the turtle habitat fundraiser. Thanks for all you do, Kathie!



Spring Break Adventure Programs - in the snow!



Junior ACORN smiles with his turtle tattoo!

Meet the ACORNS

Association for the Conservation of Recreational and Natural Spaces

ACORNS is the volunteer group formed to support the Genesee County Parks by assisting with environmental programs and park maintenance, offering recreational opportunities and promoting the parks.

Board of Directors

Ashley McKeown - President
Brad Nickerson - Vice President
Kathie Woika - Secretary
Julia Garver - Treasurer
Chris Nickerson
Jerome Gentry
Lewis Tandy
George Squires
Pete Stanbridge



Members

Gabe & Michelle Abdella
Roula Alkhouri
Kim, Stephen, Eric, Jared Allen
Charlie Augrom and Lucy
Sargent
Nancy Balbick
Sarah Balduf
Sam & Ann Barone
Teresa Bartz
Jenna Benedict
Beth Berkemeier
Brian & Renee Burns
Christopher & Melissa Caputi
Sonya & Carl Christensen
Adam Clark
Guy & Patricia Clark
Tom & Linda Clark
Nina Czach
Bart & Sue Dambra
Alea Delong
Barb Easton
Tina Frank
Gretchen Franke
Julia Garver & Joe Ruh
Liz Genesky
Jerome, Isabel, Elsa Gentry
Paul Hess

Bernard Hoerbelt
David Jaros
Catherine Johnston
Brian Kemp
Josh, Heather, Landon, Ainsley Kent
Sarah Kohl
Jeff & Priscilla Langdon
Esther Leadley
Kathy Lee
Jack and Mary Lou Lemkuil
Jennifer, Jim, Jay Lewis
Dave Lichtenthal
Shannon, Matt & Danny Lyaski
Krysia & Jon Mager
Laurie McKenzie
Kyle & Ashley McKeown
Mary Miller
Katie Mohler
Bill & Connie Moon
Mike Morasco
Molly Morrison
Jim & Claudia Morrison
Sheri Mosher
Debbi Nanni
Christine & Brad Nickerson
Claudia & Matt Nusstein
Paul & Emma Osborn
Pat Patota

Cassandra Pettry & James Nesbitt
Kathy Purcell
Dave & Dawn Rumsey
Jim Schmitt
Sean Sheehan
George Squires
Pete Stanbridge
Sandy & Dave Steele
Lewis & Bonnie Tandy
Kristin Turturo
Chase & Bianca Vallance
Phyllis VandenBosch
Tom, Anne, & Mary VandenBosch
Evan Verbanic
Mitchell & Megan Wardell
Karyn Winters
Kathie & Jack Woika
Pam Zola



Remember to **renew your membership** for 2025!

To renew or become a member, please visit the ACORNS website or contact Ashley McKeown, ACORNS Membership Specialist at acornsoutreach@gmail.com
Send renewals to ACORNS at PO Box 787 Stafford, NY 14143.

Volunteer Spotlight

At the Genesee County Parks, volunteers make our work possible. We could not do what we do without them! This is our chance to say THANK YOU to the wonderful volunteers.

George Squires



An integral part of our Educational School Programs for students in grades K - 6, George is always willing to take on any task asked of him. He comes to us with years of knowledge and experience from his work with the Genesee County Soil and Water Conservation District.

George enjoys leading students on Ecology Hikes and is great at keeping students engaged with his plethora of nature knowledge. George enjoys volunteering for our Environmental Science Summer Camp over the summer, as well. We are so thankful for George and all of his help with these programs as we wouldn't be able to provide the number of programs we do without him! George is also a founding member of the Genesee County ACORNS!

A founding member of the Genesee County ACORNS, Julia has been a volunteer with the Genesee County Parks for over 20 years! She brings enthusiasm, a strategic mind, and a smile everywhere that she goes. She also often brings delicious homemade snacks. Julia currently serves as the ACORNS Board Treasurer, and she has served as Board President and leader of Run for the ACORNS.

Julia enjoys center sitting at the Interpretive Center, balancing budgets for the ACORNS board, writing grant applications, and coordinating events, large and small. She can often be found walking her two friendly dogs at GCP. She has had an immeasurable impact on our Parks over the years - we would not be where we are without her. Thank you, Julia!

Julia Garver



You can join our volunteer team!

Park volunteers donate their time to help keep our parks beautiful and connect others to nature. Learn more and complete a volunteer application form on our website.

<https://www.geneseeny.gov/Department-Content/Parks-Recreation-and-Forestry/Volunteer-Opportunities>

Rex and the Genesee County Park Dog Patrol

By: Rex the German Shepherd and his friend Pete Stanbridge, ACORNS Park Volunteer

Hi Park lovers! Rex here! Unfortunately, we were unable to include an episode of “Rex and the GCP Dog Patrol” cartoon in this newsletter, but rest assured, we are already working on one for the next issue!

I'd like to fill the open space by introducing you to a few of the unsung heroes of the Genesee County Parks and my personal friends who keep the parks running and in great condition 52 weeks of the year. Eric, Steve, and Dave make up our amazing parks maintenance team! In addition to routine maintenance and upkeep, they are also plumbers, electricians, painters,

mechanics, builders, and whatever the park needs at any given time! They also happen to keep dog treats in their truck but that has nothing to do with why I like them!

Many of you have probably seen Dave, Steve, and Eric at the Genesee County Parks. You may have even interacted with them when you needed directions or assistance at your park pavilion. If you get a chance, tell them thank you for all that they do! But stay away from the treats, they're only for me.



Rex with Eric, Steve, and Dave at the Genesee County Park



How can you help the amazing Genesee County Parks staff?

Besides thanking them when you see them, you can support their goal of providing a fantastic park experience by keeping the parks clean! You can pick up litter when you see it, stay on marked trails, and report any park issues that you see to staff at the Interpretive Nature Center.

Remember - Genesee County Parks are “carry-in, carry-out!” Please take your garbage with you and dispose of it at home!

Welcome Summer Intern Michael Marchese!

By: Michael Marchese, Environmental Education Assistant

Greetings Y'all! I am Michael Marchese your 2025 intern for the Genesee County Park & Forest, helping out as their Environmental Education Assistant through the Student Conservation Association (SCA)/ AmeriCorps. From June until late August I can be found working at the Interpretive Nature Center, as well as around the Genesee County Park area and the DeWitt Recreation Area, helping or leading educational and recreational programs.

I am an upcoming senior at Paul Smith's College up in the Adirondacks where I am Majoring in Environmental Science. In addition to my studies I am also on the college rugby team and when I am home, I play on the Genesee County local rugby team - the Genesee Creamers!

When I'm not busy with work or sports, I'm out in the wilderness hiking up the mountains. I'm about half way through the New York 46ers and I have even hiked a handful of mountains in Alaska. My favorite part of hiking is the sounds from the natural world, and even getting to observe all the living and non-living parts of nature at work. You often find unique animals and plants hanging around the tops of mountains.

I am excited to interact with people who care and enjoy for the environment as much as I do this summer. I cannot wait to expand my knowledge and hone in my teaching skills, and help others do the same.



Michael at the top of Mount Jumbo, Juneau Alaska 2024



Northern Lights from Deer River Flow in the Adirondacks, 2025



Reserve a Pavilion

Reserving a Genesee County Park pavilion is easy and can be done totally online! Whether you want to host a birthday party, family cookout, or a graduation party, the parks are the place to be.

Visit our website to check out the list of pavilions and amenities available:

www.geneseeny.gov/parks



Run for the ACORNS

Join the Genesee County ACORNS at the Genesee County Park & Forest **Sunday, October 5th 2025** for their annual 5k and 10k fundraiser trail run / walk!

All proceeds benefit ACORNS, a non-profit 501(c)(3) that supports the Genesee County parks by connecting people with nature through outdoor learning, education and fun! A portion of the proceeds will also be donated to Roswell Park in honor of Breast Cancer Awareness month.



GENESEE COUNTY PARKS, RECREATION & FORESTRY

www.geneseeny.gov/parks

(585) 344 - 1122

11095 Bethany Center Road
East Bethany, NY 14054