

THE NIAGARA EXPLORER

Newsletter of Adirondack Mountain Club Niagara Frontier Chapter

February Monthly Program

Imagine you're out hiking in a remote area and get lost. You have no food or water, having finished it many hours ago. You're getting hungry and don't know how long it'll be before you find your way back. There's a lot of greenery around, but what is safe to eat? Most of us do find our way back, and others get rescued. But what was it like for the Freedom Seekers, who were out in the wilderness for months on end, battling weather, hunger and thirst while trying to find their way up North?

Join us on **February 13 at 7:30pm** for an interesting and informative program on survival brought to us by **Mary Ronan**, Environmental Educator with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation at Reinstein Woods. In her program, "**Freedom Seekers-Naturalists of the**



Northeast", Mary will highlight the natural history knowledge of the Freedom Seekers, who relied on local plants for survival on their journey from slavery to freedom.

As an educator, Mary works to inform and inspire citizens to take responsibility for the environment. Participants at our meeting will learn to identify regional wild edible and medicinal plants.

Her awareness of Freedom Seekers as naturalists began with the "Freedom Seekers: The Underground Railroad, Great Lakes and Science Literary Activities" curric-

ulum, a collaborative project between several organizations and schools throughout the Great Lakes.

Our evening program will tie in nicely with our **6:15 pm** educational workshop by Jonathan Coupal and Paul Gannon, on "what to do when you're lost in the woods. Our doors open at **6:00 pm**. We hope you join us for both the educational workshop and our evening program to hone your survival skills. **Sue Kolasz and Pamela Sander**

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Message from the Chair



ADKers,

My attention has been focused on preparing for my Grand Canyon trip. I leave Buffalo on Jan 20. We put-in at Lee's Ferry on Jan 22 and will be paddling 226 miles to Diamond Creek with a take-out on Feb 15. I am excited, not only to be paddling some of the biggest whitewater on the planet, but also for the side hikes to see places like Havasu Canyon and the Native American granaries. If time permits, and it should, I will be climbing Humphreys Peak (12,633 ft) after take-out in Flagstaff.

I will not see you at our February meeting but will be excited to share my adventure with you in March. I will be back just in time to head to the Adirondacks for our March trip. SYOTR, Mike
(See You On The River)

January Program Recap

Our January program featured WNY native, Jason Lape, who entertained us with a slideshow presentation entitled, "The Journey of a Mountaineer," where we witnessed his transformation from accident victim to mountain climber. We saw photos of him in a wheelchair, with his head bandaged up and his legs in casts as he recounted the severe damage his body sustained when he was run over by a drunk driver. Jason was left with serious



injuries to his extremities, requiring multiple surgeries on his legs and knees, and he still suffers seizures from a traumatic brain injury resulting from the accident.

During his lengthy recuperation, he had time to contemplate his future.

He shared the overwhelming feelings of gratitude he felt when he unexpectedly regained full use of his legs after being wheelchair bound and unsure of his ability to ever walk again. The gratitude he felt drove a determination to reexamine his life and consider its many possibilities.

During Covid, when his Hamburg business, Jay's Barbershop, was mandated to close down for an extended period of time, he thought this would be a perfect time to pursue his dreams. In addition to sky diving, climbing was at the top of his list. The Adirondack 46 high peaks were the first he conquered, and although he has now summited

over 100 of the highest peaks in the eastern United States, Jason revealed that, "... some of my

fondest memories in the mountains were in the Adirondacks while climbing the 46 high peaks." He took us on a photo journey of his high peak summits and recounted his many adventures. But the desire to climb didn't end with his completion of that goal, it just fueled his appetite for more. He was still obsessed with climbing and continued on, eventually summiting every high peak on the East Coast. He has recently set his sights on summiting the highest peaks on the West Coast.

Jason shared accounts of some of the dangerous and extraordinary

January Program Recap (cont'd)

experiences he encountered pursuing his passion. He also disclosed a remarkable and mysterious story that included a guardian angel, Esther, who must certainly be watching over him, given the many close calls he has had on his treks to conquer the highest peaks.

A lively and engaging question and answer period followed and would have gone on for much longer, had we had more time.

Jason's inspirational story left us in awe, as we all felt great admiration for his resilience and determination to enjoy life to the fullest after surviving a horrific car accident. I know we all hope he stays safe (perhaps with some assistance from Esther), and that he fulfills each and every one of his dreams.

Sue Kolasz and Pamela Sander



Looking ahead...

Save the dates!

Let's celebrate the beginning of summer with an ADK-NFC outing in the Adirondacks!

We've reserved the 12 persons loft the weekend of **June 20-23**. Or, if you prefer to camp, check out the wilderness campground and make your reservations now. We plan to hike a peak, paddle in the St. Regis area, enjoy evenings by a bonfire, and take in the beautiful scenery on the dock overlooking Heart Lake. Check future newsletters for more information.



Education Program

Our **January** presenter, Liam **Burgeson**, spoke from his lifelong experience as a cyclist to teach our members and guests about some of the more important points of cycling. This included fundamentals in safety (for example, ride as if you're invisible), a "10 Essentials" kit for cycling, and some tips on ensuring that you get the most out of your bike for the upcoming season.



The **February** session will feature **Paul Gannon and Jonathan Coupal** presenting several methods for keeping yourself "found" when hiking in the woods, and what to do if you think you might be lost. The presentation will include route planning and recovery as well as low-tech and high-tech means of orienting yourself and getting back to the front country.



***NEW* Trivia Challenge**



**What year was the Niagara Frontier ADK chapter formed?
(Answer on page 8)**

Conservation Corner

If these topics pique your interest, I encourage you to attend a Conservation Committee meeting to learn more about environmental issues and how you can make a difference.

Success! Governor Hochul signed The Birds and Bees Protection Act into law. The law discontinues the use of neonicotinoid insecticides on corn, soybean and wheat seeds and its application to outdoor ornamental plants and turf. The insecticide is used to protect crops from insects; however, it often results in the death of bees and other pollinators. It is simple- pollination is needed to produce food crops and other types of flowering plants. The bill would not prevent other types of insecticides from being used.

The ADK Conservation committee has received confirmation from Re-Tree WNY that our chapter would like to assist with planting trees this spring. We will need 1 or 2 volunteers to attend a free tree planting workshop on **April 20, 2024**. Our group will be assigned a location somewhere in Buffalo and we will need volunteers to assist with the bare root tree planting on **Saturday, April 27th**. Trees play a vital role in a city by providing shade to help decrease the amount of heat generated by a city, provide habitat for birds and insects and to help improve people's mental health. Look for details in the March newsletter.

Thank you members who took action and signed the WNY Environmental Alliance letter recommending elected officials rethink the STAMP (Western New York Science & Technology Advanced Manufacturing Park) project in Genesee County before it receives further funding, support or permit approvals. As Margaret Wooster, the 2021 ADK-NFC

Conservationist of the Year awardee summarized:

"The STAMP industrial project on 1200 acres of rural land in Genesee County will do great harm to our region. It is government-supported sprawl in the name of "economic development." It is about converting the rural land just one mile south of our largest federal wetland, Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, and adjacent to the pristine "Big Woods" of the Tonawanda Seneca Nation into "shovel-ready sites" for industries that have yet to commit.



This project will negatively impact the Niagara River, Lake Ontario and tributary fisheries, the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge wetlands, many endangered, threatened and at-risk bird species, and most of all, the traditional territory of the Tonawanda Seneca Nation who have nowhere else to go. A Smart Growth analysis failed STAMP, calling it the "poster child for location inefficiency."



Join us **Tuesday, February 20th** for the Conservation Committee meeting. All ADK members are welcome to attend to discuss conservation topics and plan upcoming events. The ADK Niagara Frontier Chapter Weekly Email will have the zoom link to attend the meeting.

Lynn Rehfeld-Kenney, Conservation Chair



The WNYEA will be hosting two upcoming presentations and discussions on 30 x 30 at www.birdniagara.org Saturday **Feb 17** at the Burchfield Penney Art Center at Buffalo State University, and at the Niagara Falls NY New York Sheraton on Sunday afternoon **Feb 18**. More details to come.

Conservation Corner (cont'd)

Threat to Cayuga Lake from the Lansing Salt Mine (and why this is important)

A recent Spectrum News story highlighted an environmental threat to Cayuga Lake, and a petition appeared on social media posts the same day asking New Yorkers to make Governor Kathy Hochul aware of the dangers to the environment and to tourism in the Finger Lakes.

Cargill, Inc., applied to the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) in June 2023 to modify its mining permit for its salt mine 2,000 feet under Cayuga Lake. The company wants to establish additional water storage areas to store groundwater leaking into the mine.

Since August of last year, local environmental activists and organizations have made concerted efforts to call on Gov. Kathy Hochul and the DEC to enhance their oversight efforts to protect Cayuga Lake from any potential environmental damages the mine could pose. The effort intensified over the summer after reports surfaced that the company was interested in selling the mine. The company has yet to confirm or deny the report.

Cayuga Lake Environmental Action Now (CLEAN), a nonprofit advocacy group based in Lansing, New York, unified other local organizations over their cause and released an [online petition](#) in September 2023 that has been signed by over 3,000 people as of January 2024.

A representative from the DEC told *The Voice* on Friday that it's reviewing the application and that it "subjects every application to a rigorous review of all applicable federal and state standards to ensure the agency's decisions are protective of public health and the environment."



It's accepted by experts that salty water can "destabilize overlying rock layers and lead to their eventual sagging and collapse," according to a [2013 Geological Survey Report by the U.S. Department of Interior](#) on the 1994 collapse of the Retsof Salt Mine, which damaged the environment and soiled drinking water for years thereafter.

Pamela Sander

Trip Reports and Outings

Hike at the Beaver Meadow Nature Center

Saturday, January 6, 2024

21 eager hikers enjoyed a delightful 4-mile hike on snow-covered trails with temperatures in the upper 20s. We crossed the Jenny Glen Boardwalk spanning a wetland full of cattails that provide habitat and shelter for wildlife. We explored the remote Backwoods Loop, a stem-and-loop trail shaped like a lollipop. Entering the Old Bones Trail elicited some chuckles from senior-citizen hikers. Later we paused at the Arboretum for snacks, friendly chats and viewing an exhibit on tree leaf identification. Near the end of the hike we viewed a Kettle Pond, formed ages ago by a receding glacier.



Thanks to Pam Sander who coordinated RSVPs using the ADK-NFC Meetup app, a new hike signup procedure for our Chapter. All went smoothly, with just a few hikers using the earlier email or phone methods to respond. Thanks also to Randy Barker and Sue Kolasz for the photos.

Take a Hike in a beautiful forest! There's no better way to spend a day outside in the Winter.

Janet and David Kowalski

Snowshoe at the Erie County Forest

On January 20, we had our first, and hopefully not our last, snowshoe hike of the season. A group of nine came out to brave the freezing (14 degrees) temperatures to snowshoe at the Erie County Forest. We met at

11 am in the warming hut, and after gearing up and brief introductions, we headed across the road to the Scarbuck Trail.

What a treat we had in store for us! All the trees were decorated in a beautiful snowfall and the crisp, cool air felt invigorating. The many inclines helped to keep us toasty...a perfect place to hike on a chilly day!

We snowshoed across A Bridge Too Far and continued on the trail to the cabin in the woods. Randy and Frank got a blazing fire going and we all huddled around, sharing stories and laughs.

We chose the shorter trail back, as we spent quite a bit of time at the cabin. Our mileage apps varied quite a bit, but it's safe to say we hiked close to four miles.

We worked up quite an appetite, so we decided to meet for an early dinner at the Steelbound Brewery in Springville. Delicious food and drinks were the perfect ending to a fun filled day. Thank you to everyone who braved the cold and came out to enjoy the afternoon with fellow ADKers- you're a fun, hardy bunch!

Sue Kolasz





The Chapter is seeking Nominating Committee volunteers to find candidates to fill the positions of Chair, Vice-Chair Programs, Hospitality and Treasurer.

Please reach out to current Chapter Chair, Mike Radomski

Where to find us:

Website: adk-nfc.org

Membership: If you would like to join the Niagara Frontier Chapter you can sign up at a monthly meeting or online at <https://www.adk-nfc.org/membership/>

Facebook Group: [ADK-Niagara Frontier Chapter](#)

MeetUp: <https://www.meetup.com/adk-nfc/>

Follow us on [Instagram \(adk_nfc\)](#)

[Chapter Outings & Events Calendar](#)

This sculpture is on display at the Burchfield Penney Art Center until March 10th, in the crafts exhibit.

Take a Hike 2023

Artist: Morgan Meheran

<https://burchfieldpenney.org/art-and-artists/people/profile:morgan-meheran/>



Our Executive Committee

Chair

Mike Radomski
mike.radomski@gmail.com

Outings Chair

Frank Meyer
edendds@gmail.com

Conservation Chair

Lynn Rehfeld-Kenney
woodthrush3@hotmail.com

Programs Co-chairs

Sue Kolasz
sue728115@yahoo.com
Pamela Sander
sanderpamela88@gmail.com

Education Chair

Jonathan Coupal
jonathan@coupal.us

Membership Chair

Vacant

Advisory Council Trustee

Kate Hacker
hackerks@gmail.com

Webmaster

Jonathan Coupal
jonathan@coupal.us

Treasurer

Doug Gaffney
dgaffney@roadrunner.com

Newsletter Editor

Peggy Naughton
panaughton59@gmail.com

Secretary

Larry Beahan
larry_beahan@roadrunner.com

Hospitality

Carol Schuster
carolfschuster@gmail.com

Archivist/Historian

Lynn Rehfeld-Kenney
woodthrush3@hotmail.com

Outings Co-chair:

Waterways

Bob Van Hise
adkpaddles.bvh@gmail.com

Outings Co-chair: Biking

Vacant

Outings Co-chair: Hiking & Winter

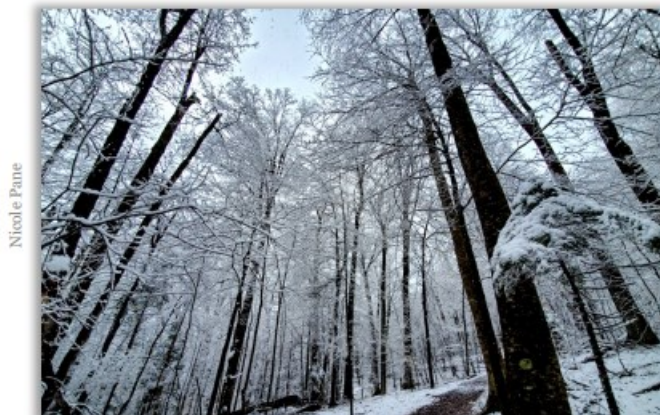
Leslie Salathe
lesliesalathe@live.com

Librarian

Karen Coupal

Digital Communications

Emma Piascik



Nicole Pane

Trivia Challenge Answer

1971

Ray Markiewicz and 12 other members signed the charter to form the ADK Niagara Frontier Chapter.