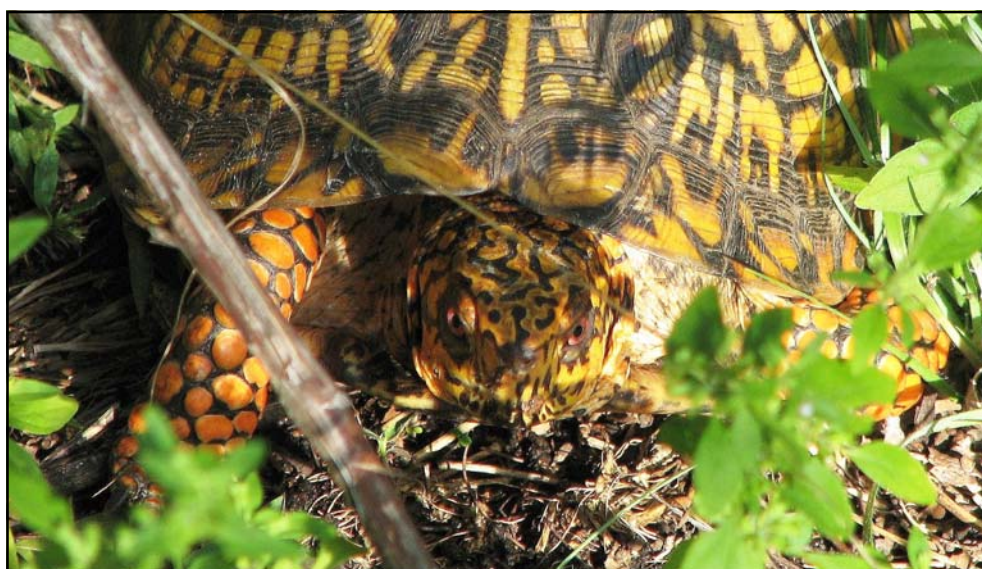


*Collaboration -
Conservation -
Sustainability*



THE HIGHLANDER

News from the Highlands Environmental Research Institute



Box turtle in the Ramapo River Watershed.

Photo by Geoff Welch

HEnRI & Partners Receive DEC Award

Spring is upon us, and that means field season has officially begun. This year HEnRI scientists and partners will be looking for turtles. Thanks to the NY DEC, HEnRI, the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, and the Palisades Conservancy have been awarded a State Wildlife Grant to pursue a three-year research project entitled: Managing Multiple Turtle Species of Greatest Conservation Need within Wetland Complexes on Conservation Lands. The \$54,603 grant aims to manage wetlands in Harriman and Bear Mountain State Parks, NY for a diverse turtle community. HEnRI scientists, volunteers, and partners will utilize pedestrian surveys and radio-monitoring to locate and tag Box, Spotted, and Wood turtles throughout wetland complexes and stream corridors to determine population dynamics, locate preferred breeding, nesting, and hibernation sites, protect nests from predation, and collect eggs for a captive rearing and educational program. The data collected over the course of the project will be used to create a GIS database, design species and population distribution maps, and ultimately design a management plan with the goals of enhancing turtle habitat, protecting current habitat from invasive species, and increasing breeding turtle populations throughout the Parks.

This mostly volunteer-driven project will begin in late April and continue through the summer into September. Volunteers from the Palisades Interstate Park League of Naturalists will be surveying stream corridors and wetlands for turtles; identifying, weighing, and tagging found individuals; using telemetry to track females to their nesting sites; and setting non-harmful traps to mark and measure as many turtles as possible.

We still need volunteers to cover the 55,000 acres of Harriman and Bear Mountain Parks. If you're interested in helping, please contact Matthew Shook, Assistant Director, HEnRI at (845) 351-2106. Happy Turtling!

DEC ERADICATION GRANT

In another three-year project, HEnRI, the PIPC, and the DEC Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve will be working together to eradicate ten acres of invasive *Phragmites australis* from Iona Island Marsh. This \$37,500 grant - also sponsored by the DEC - falls under the Aquatic Invasive Species Eradication grants program.

The goal of this project is the reestablishment of native flora at Iona Island Marsh. To that end, we will work with contractors and the NY Department of Corrections to kill and cut ten acres of *Phragmites* and promote native regeneration in an area that has recently been infested by invasives. We will also conduct bird and plant surveys throughout the eradication zone to assess the necessity of further cutting, to ensure a native-dominated biotic community flourishes, and to determine whether or not marsh resident bird species are utilizing the *Phragmites* free area.

If you would like to volunteer to help with the surveying, please contact the HEnRI Assistant Director for more information.

CLOSE-UP: IONA ISLAND MARSH

Iona Island Marsh is a 152-acre brackish tidal marsh, on the west shore of the Hudson River within Bear Mountain State Park in Rockland County. The Marsh is part of the Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve (Hudson River NERR), a long-term research site designated by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Iona Island and its associated tidal marsh have many special designations owing to their scenic qualities, high biological diversity, and importance as breeding areas for birds and fish. Iona is an Important Bird Area, a Bird Conservation Area, a National Natural Landmark, and the Hudson is a National Heritage River.

Unfortunately, the health of Iona Marsh is jeopardized by invasive *Phragmites australis*. In the past 20 years alone, the marsh has changed from a cattail-dominated community to one in which *Phragmites* is predominant. Partially as a result of changes in habitat type, bird populations have declined, and the PIPC and DEC have decided that the site must be managed to reduce *Phragmites* populations and promote the regeneration of native species. The eradication project mentioned above is the first effort toward that end.



Iona entrance sign with *Phragmites*. Photo by Marnie Miller-Keas

NEWS FROM STERLING FOREST

GEOLOGY TRAIL NEARLY COMPLETE

The Sterling Forest Mining Trail —subject of HEnRI's last newsletter – is nearly complete. In the time since HEnRI's last newsletter, we have worked with the NY State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, and the PIPC to plan the trail's route, clear the buildings of growth, preserve the structures, and design five educational signs to accompany the trail.

Turning back the clock on fifty years of neglect, overgrowth, and decay was a monumental undertaking. But with a collaborative spirit and with the long-term preservation of the structures in mind, HEnRI and our partners have done just that. The next phase of the project—providing educational programming at the trail to youth across the NY-NJ Highlands— will hopefully begin by next summer.



Map of the Sterling Forest Iron Mining Trail and associated mine structures.

HEnRI would like to express a heartfelt thanks to all those who helped with this project including: Jim Gell, Doc Bayne, Jeff Hutchinson, Gregory Smith, Rodney Johnson, Bill Rose, Ernest Hencke, Robert “Wonk” Wilson, Danny Robson, Dennis Bove, and everyone else who lent a hand toward the completion of the project.

CULTURAL RESOURCE SURVEY UNDERWAY



HEnRI, working in collaboration with Trailside Museums, the Native American Site Steward Program (NASSP), and consultant archaeologist Ed Lenik, has begun the first ever pedestrian survey for cultural resources throughout the 20,000 acre Park. HEnRI scientists have designed a GIS database to catalog known sites and keep track of newly discovered cultural resources. With the help of Ed Lenik, R.P.A., a survey criteria was established and approximately 20 volunteers were trained. Since the beginning of the survey last summer, we have discovered approximately 25 sites, and are working to monitor them to ensure their preservation.

Surveying continues throughout the year, so if you want to help protect NY's cultural heritage please contact Charlee Eaton, Manager of the Native American Site Steward Program at (845) 786-2701, ext. 293.

ACROSS THE HIGHLANDS

THE LOWER HUDSON PRISM

HEnRI has been a member and collaborator in the Lower Hudson Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) since its inception last year. As part of the team, HEnRI helped in the formation of a cooperating agreement and draft work plan. HEnRI looks forward to working with PRISM members and partner to combat invasives across the NY Highlands

HEnRI has continued its own invasive species monitoring and management efforts with an ongoing survey for *Phragmites* in Harriman State Park, the creation of a region-wide database for invasives throughout the NY Highlands, and an eradication grant application.



Mile-A-Minute Plant. Photo by Alan Wells



CONSERVATION ACTION PLANNING

HEnRI is a member of the NY Highlands Conservation Action Planning team—A group of land owners, park managers, non-profit directors, conservation biologists, and planners who have come together to help promote a coordinated, scientifically-based, planning regime for the NY Highlands. By working together across jurisdictional boundaries, we hope to conserve biodiversity and manage public and private open space with the goal of preserving natural resources. If you are interested in being a part of the Highlands CAP Team, please contact Dr. Ed McGowan - edwin.mcgowan@oprhp.state.ny.us.



THE RAMAPO RIVER CONFERENCE

The 13th Annual the Annual Ramapo Watershed Conference is to be held on Friday April 25 of this year from 10:00 AM until 4:00 PM. The Conference will be held in the Student Center Building - Room 136 at Ramapo College of New Jersey, 505, and is presented by The Ramapo River Committee and The Institute for Environmental Studies at Ramapo College with sponsorship by RRCA and other groups and individuals. The theme for this years event will be: The Ramapo River Watershed, A Highlands Watershed. For more information or to make reservations email Geoff Welch at: geoffwelch@gmail.com or call (845) 712-5220.



HEnRI AWARDS

Across the Highlands, individuals are working day and night to protect and preserve these beautiful hills and mountains that we call the Highlands. HEnRI recognizes outstanding contributions to the preservation of the Region, and would like to recognize the work of educators, scientists, and advocates through the awarding of the first annual HEnRI Highlands Awards. If you know of a volunteer, employee, or colleague that you would like to nominate, please contact Matthew Shook by e-mail at mshook@andromeda.rutgers.edu. Thanks!

BECOME A MEMBER

HEnRI works throughout the Highlands providing scientific information and advice to planners, decision makers, organizations, and member of the Highlands community. However, like many organizations throughout the Region, we rely upon the support of individuals to keep our scientific, educational, and outreach programs going.

Becoming a member today through your donation of time, talent, or treasure would help to ensure that HEnRI continues to play a vital role in shaping a sustainable future for the Highlands.

Some current projects that need you:

- *The Group Camps Summer Science Program* – Teaching science to underserved inner city youth in an outdoor setting through hands-on experiments.
- *The Highlands Biodiversity Project* – Conducting field research to conserve natural resources and promote healthy ecosystems throughout the Highlands.
- *The HEnRI Green Network* – Providing advice and information to planners, decision makers, and the public to inform their planning and life choices.
- *The Sustainable Living Initiative* – Promoting sustainable energy use throughout the Region.
- *The Native American Site Steward Program* – Preserving important cultural resources for future generations.



All across these beautiful mountains, people are breathing the fresh air that Highlands' forests provide and drinking the pure water coming from Highlands' streams. Thanks to the generosity of people like you, much of the area is protected in Parks and the headwaters of many springs, lakes, and reservoirs preserved.

However, there is much to do in order to secure these precious resources. We cannot take the future for granted. Clean air, clean water, and open space are the keystones of our community and we all must work together to conserve them for our children and grandchildren.

I hope you will take action with me – let's work for a greener future throughout the Highlands.

Matthew Shook, Assistant Director
(845) 351-2106

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS



Songbird Level – Up to \$25

The Highlands are one of the great places for birding in the nation. In the forests, meadows, and skies we can see tiny warblers, lively wood thrushes, majestic eagles, and acrobatic kestrels. Each spring and fall, migrations of birds through the Highlands provide us with the sounds of the seasons.



Striped Bass Level - \$25 to \$100

The Hudson River - the heart of the NY Highlands - was once called the river that flows both ways. The tidal Hudson estuary is home to one of New York's greatest success stories. The Striped Bass, once threatened by water pollution, is now abundant; providing many anglers with stories of fish weighing as much as 75 pounds! Grab a pole or watch them run during their Spring migration in May.



River Otter Level - \$100 to \$500

River otters may be the world's most playful animal - but they are also one of the world's best fishers. These sleek swimmers can be seen in many Highlands lakes, diving, twisting, and floating. Keep an eye open around sunrise and sunset, you may just see them in your nearest Park.



Black Bear Level - \$500 to \$1,000

The black bear is one of the great symbols of the forest. They are seen across the region foraging in old stumps for grubs, protecting cubs, and digging through garbage bins. They evoke awe in all that cross their path, but seeing them is one of the great privileges of living in the Highlands.



Bald Eagle Level - \$1,000 and up

The bald eagle is not only the symbol of our nation, but also one of the greatest success stories in conservation history. Once nearly extinct, this magnificent raptor is making a comeback throughout the region. Every winter, they make their triumphant return to NY, roosting in large old trees, fishing the Hudson, and soaring above the mountains. Watch the Hudson near sunset, and see them come home to roost by the dozen.

Should you decide to contribute to HEnRI financially, please make checks out to our fiscal agent—The Rutgers University Foundation—and specify HEnRI as the recipient of your donation. Please mail all donations to the Highlands Environmental Research Institute, 115 Old Forge Rd., Tuxedo, NY 10987. Thank you for your generosity!

FRIENDS OF HENRI

Appalachian
Mountain Club

The Lower Hudson
PRISM

Orange County Land
Trust

Regional Plan
Association

Association of New
Jersey Environmental
Commissions

Meadowlands
Conservation Trust

Orange County
Planning Department

Rockland County
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Association, Inc

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Montgomery County
Lands Trust

Orange Environmental

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Black Rock Forest

Natural Lands Trust

PA Audubon

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Connecticut Fund for
the Environment

New Jersey Future

Palisades Interstate
Park Commission

Scenic Hudson

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NJ Audubon

The League of
Naturalists

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Heritage Conservancy

New Jersey State
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Clubs

The Palisades Parks
Conservancy

Sterling Forest
Partnership

Highlands Coalition

New York State DEC

The Passaic River
Coalition

The Trust for Public
Land

Hudson Highlands
Land Trust

New York State
OPRHP

The Ramapo
Highlands Coalition

Wanaque REACH

Housatonic Valley
Association

NY/NJ Trail
Conference

Ramapo River
Committee

Westchester Land
Trust

Boro of Kinnelon, NJ

The Open Space
Institute

Ramapo River
Watershed
Intermunicipal Council

The Wilderness
Society

HENRI SCIENTISTS & PARTNERS

Kirk Barrett Ecology	Richard J. Jones Planning	Matthew Paul Forestry
Nels Barrett Ecology	Anne Kruger Conservation	Raymond Perry Bird Conservation
Michael Burger Ornithology	Leo Kruger Conservation	John Schuring Civil Engineering
Janet Burnet Planning/Conservation	Nancy Kruger Conservation	William Schuster Forestry-Ecology
Al Caccese Bird Conservation	Richard Lathrop Remote Sensing	Dennis Schvejda Recreation/Trails
Andrew Chmar Planning/Conservation	Edward J. Lenik Archaeology	Lee Slater Geophysics
Clifford David Conservation	Marian Lupulescu Geology	Gary Solar Geology
Kelly Dobbins Planning/GIS	Dorice Madronero Conservation	Scott Stanford Glacial Geology
Joan Ehrenfeld Ecology	Terryanne Maenza-Gmelch Ecology	Donald Steinmetz GIS
Susan Elbin Conservation	Edwin McGowan Herpetology/Conservation	Edmund Stiles Ecology
Roger Friedman Conservation	Jon Meade Planning/Conservation	James Thorne Forestry
Alexander Gates Geology	Rob Messenger Forestry	George Thurston Air Pollution
René H. Germain, Forestry	John Mickelson GIS	David Valentino Geology
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Howard Horowitz Geography-Ecology	William O' Hearn Conservation/Planning	Otto S. Zapecza Hydrology