

# Genesee Valley Conservancy NEWS



Volume XIV : Spring 2013

## Geocaching on GVC's Preserves

Between the three properties owned by the Genesee Valley Conservancy, 130 acres of land are now open to the public for various types of recreation. It is not uncommon to see snow-shoe tracks on trails in the winter or run into a fellow hiker exploring in the warmer weather, but recently, the trails have been visited by a growing number of adventurers on real-life treasure hunts. Rather than searching for riches, however, the search itself is the ultimate prize for these geochachers.

Geocaching is a real-world, outdoor treasure hunting game using GPS-enabled devices. Participants navigate to a specific set of GPS coordinates downloaded from the internet and then attempt to find the geocache (container) hidden at that location. The container hidden at the spot will often contain a log for those who find it to sign, and a trinket left by the previous finder, to be replaced with another for the next adventurer to find.

Thanks to some of GVC's dedicated volunteers, all three of GVC's public

**Continued on page 7**



*Justine Cheape looking for a check-in at the John W. Chanler Island Preserve.*

## Beyond the Classroom



*Benjamin Gajewski giving a presentation to Dr. Kristina Hannam's Conservation Biology class at SUNY Geneseo.*

The Genesee Valley Conservancy helps foster an appreciation for our local landscapes by offering hands-on learning opportunities outside of the classroom from single day projects of planting trees, cleaning trails, or removing trash from a preserve, to longer term projects of internships and research projects. This helps GVC accomplish much needed work while providing students at SUNY Geneseo and local schools opportunities to learn about land conservation and our local natural resources.

One of the latest projects can be seen on display at the Indian Fort Nature Preserve. Three informational signs have recently been added to the kiosk on the property and two more will be added in the spring. These signs started as a project by SUNY Geneseo's Conservation Biology class, taught by Dr. Kristina Hannam. After a class lecture on GVC and land conservation by Benjamin Gajewski, students took a trip to the preserve to see the landscape and features that make the property unique. The class then worked in groups over several weeks to develop signage

**Continued on page 3**



## From the Executive Director

This past October I spent time in Grand Teton National Park and Yosemite National Park. Besides the herds of Buffalo and Elk, I had my run of the place. During the first night (16 degrees Fahrenheit) I realized why. I went on many day hikes exploring the numerous trails, observed Bald Eagles soaring overhead, and backpacked up Cascade Canyon on a 19 mile trip scaling 4,000ft over the 10,720ft Paintbrush Divide. Despite the main tourism season being over, there were many people enjoying these parks: individuals fly-fishing in the creeks, families exploring the geysers and geologic wonders, and others like me, enjoying the scenic hiking opportunities. Some were locals, some from afar.

I spent my final night of the trip camping in the Teton National Forest on a bluff overlooking Grand Teton National Park and watching the sunset behind the Teton Range. I reflected on my trip: the Gray Wolves, the Moose, and the Bald Eagles I had seen. I came to realize how fortunate I was that someone, years ago, decided these parks were worthy of permanent protection. Yellowstone, our Nation's first national park, and Grand Teton had been set aside for nature, for recreation, and for enjoyment by people I would never meet, for people they would never meet.

We have the same peaceful sunsets over the Genesee Valley (albeit without the mountain range). We also have the same foresight in our community in recognizing the natural features, resources, and open spaces that are worthy of permanent protection. I am grateful that 23 years ago the community organized GVC and began this important work. This is not just for our benefit, but is for future generations that we will never meet.

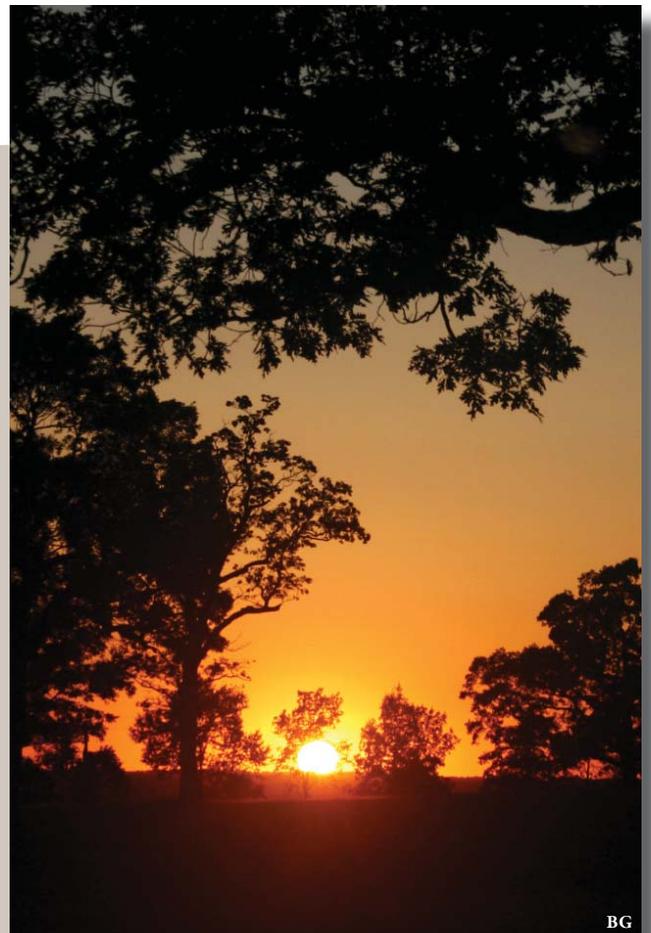
The work GVC does, conserving private properties like Paul and Gay Frame's (page 4) will be enjoyed by future landowners, farmers, birds, and passersby for generations to come. GVC's ownership of lands like the John W. Chanler Island Preserve and the Indian Fort Nature Preserve allow for access and educational opportunities for families and individuals. These preserves provide preservation of natural habitats, field sites for research projects, trails for hiking, and a terrain on which to seek hidden geocaches (page 1).

Someone, this year, next year, or 100 years from now, will set their first step in the Genesee Valley. They will appreciate the foresight that was put into preserving these landscapes: the farmland, the natural areas, the recreational and educational opportunities. They may not realize the effort, time, and cost of this work, or know anyone directly involved, but they will sure be glad it was done.

I look forward to continuing GVC's role in the community of protecting those special places now, so that someday, someone will look over the Genesee Valley at the farmland and forests and will realize how fortunate they are that someone, years ago, decided the Genesee Valley was worthy of permanent protection.

*Ben*

Benjamin Gajewski, Executive Director



*Breathtaking Genesee Valley sunset.*

# In Your Backyard: Advice from a Master Gardener



Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org  
*Garlic Mustard flower.*

*By Julie Brocklehurst Woods*

**G**arlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*), is perhaps the most aggressive invasive plant impacting our local natural environment. Its rosettes may stay green over the winter, or emerge very early in the spring, and are easily identified now. It is pretty easy to remove stem and root from moist soil, but if it breaks off, the root will re-grow. You may want to consider using Round-up on your property, which is fairly safe and non-persistent in our environment. Desired plants that have not yet emerged will not be damaged, and the soil is not disturbed, reducing future germination.

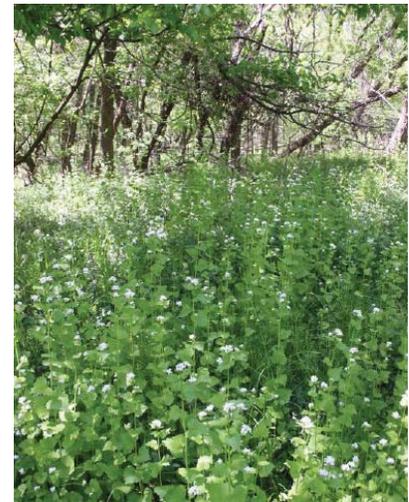
A heavy mulch is another means of smothering weeds, but I would not trust a

layer of wood chips to eradicate this aggressive weed. After getting rid of current plants, you can prevent germination of future seeds by covering the soil with six layers of newspaper, then placing 3-4" of woodchip mulch on top of the newspaper. Make sure to overlap the edges of the newspaper sheets, which will prevent the seedlings from receiving the light they need for germination and growth.

Garlic mustard has a white flower that blooms in May, on top of a two to three foot tall stalk. A full size plant may produce as many as 300 seeds, which may remain viable for at least five years. This is how this plant forms dense colonies so quickly. Because the seedlings emerge so early, and grow so densely, they are able to out-compete our native wildflowers. I usually don't pull weeds on property I don't own, but the rampant spread of this plant makes me think about doing that. I wouldn't suggest anyone do this unless you are certain about the plant's identity, AND you have the landowner's permission.

Wildlife do not benefit from this plant; it is a last choice for herbivores including deer. If cows eat it, their milk will taste tainted. The roots of garlic mustard may have a negative impact on native plants, suppressing both germination and growth.

Last year's warm winter seemed to favor germination of this plant. I found garlic mustard seedlings where I know I had persistently removed them over the past eight years. Now is the optimal time to scout them out, and remove them before they spread throughout your property and beyond your borders. **GVC**



Steven Katovich, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org  
*Garlic Mustard plants.*

*Julie Brocklehurst-Woods has been a Master Gardener Volunteer with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Livingston County for over ten years. She enjoys helping gardeners to identify tools and strategies to prioritize and simplify their gardening tasks. She works part-time as an occupational therapist with Finger Lakes DDSO. Julie and her husband David have been members of the Genesee Valley Conservancy since 1992.*



*Informational signage created by students at the Indian Fort Nature Preserve.*

## **Beyond the Classroom (continued)**

on the property's biology, geology, history, and water to be used as educational pieces for visitors.

The final projects from the class needed some revision to work as a single unit, since all five signs would be displayed on the same kiosk. Livonia Central School senior Jin-Si

Over stepped in to review and rework the signs removing redundancies. Her work satisfied volunteer requirements for school while giving her an opportunity to learn about land conservation and the various details of the property. **GVC**



# Evolution of a *Conservation Easement*

*By landowner Paul Frame*

*“Every conservation project has a story,  
and no two stories are the same...”*

Provided

Every conservation project has a story and no two stories are the same. Our story started in 2005. It includes good luck, bad luck, serendipity, good advice, patience, and even some foresight. My wife and I had lived in Sparta, near Dansville, since 1974. We had horses most of that time and hunted with the Genesee Valley Hunt so we often traveled to Geneseo, frequently at 5:00AM in the morning. We were looking at property in the area, and had put in a purchase offer on a small piece of land on Elm Road, contingent on good water. Bad luck, two wells yielded nothing. Good luck, we didn't buy the land. Soon after, our current property became available. 147 acres of poor farmland, some woods and swamp located in what is affectionately known as the “big bottoms.” No wonder the price was reasonable! It was right in the middle of hunt country so we bought it. Serendipity, or foresight?

Now what to do with the land? We knew we wanted to conserve it as open space and also improve it, but how? Someone suggested we contact Pete Knouse, engineer with the Livingston County Soil and Water Conservation Service.

Pete walked the ground with me and said: I would dig a new ditch parallel to route 39 about 1000 feet from the road to provide drainage for the land between the road and the ditch so it could be decent farmland. The rest of the land I would put in the Wetland Reserve Program. (Good advice!)

The Wetland Reserve Program is a federal program designed to return former wetlands that had been converted to agriculture back into wetlands, primarily for duck habitat. After an application process, if approved, the government pays the landowner a lump sum for a permanent conservation easement on the property and then pays for improvements. The owner still owns the land, can post it, hunt, fish, subdivide it and sell it, but cannot build on it, farm it, or commercially log it.

We had the half mile ditch dug, and applied for 90 acres to be put in the Wetlands Reserve Program. JoBeth Bellanca was the local person helping us with the application through the Natural Resources Conservation Service. She was great. None-the-less this was the federal government. It took two years

before we reached a mutually acceptable agreement for the wetlands easement. (Patience.) Once the agreement was signed, things moved faster. Pete Knouse had designed a wetlands plan which called for conserving the 40 acres of woods and building seven ponds. All of the ponds are connected with a general water flow from north to south and flow control valves to control the water level. Two of the ponds are about five acres in size, one even has an island, the rest are smaller. Around the ponds we planted tall native grass mixes, switchgrass, for bird habitat and nesting.

The remaining 50 acres, between route 39 and the drainage ditch, we wanted to make into better farmland and perhaps a place for a home, but definitely conserve as open land. A conservation easement with the Genesee Valley Conservancy



*Tundra Swans and Geese on one of the ponds built through the Wetland Reserve Program.*

was the perfect vehicle for doing this. With the conservation easement you get a tax deduction rather than a direct payment, however the land can still be farmed and you can set aside a limited number of areas for future construction. In contrast to our experience with the federal government, this was a relatively smooth and quick process which took about six months. Eric Grace and Ben Gajewski were great at shepherding us through the process. We set aside

two areas of approximately 10 acres each where construction of a house would be allowed. That way, in the future if desired, we could subdivide the property into two parcels, each with a building lot, about

20 acres of farmland/pasture, and 40 acres of woods/wetlands.

We had no concrete plans to build on the property when we bought it, but as it developed and began to look more beautiful, and as retirement neared and my duties in Dansville and Cohocton lessened the idea of building took hold. Never start looking at new cars if you don't intend to buy, and never start thinking about building a new house unless you intend to build. One major problem was water. The bottoms, and much of the land north of

Geneseo are, "water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink." We drilled one well which was dry and then put building on hold for nine months while we developed a surface "spring well" 800 feet from the house and made sure it had adequate water in late summer.

So what have we learned



*The Frame's house under construction from east of the pond.*

from this process? 1) There are many ways to conserve open space. For us, combining a wetlands easement with ponds and improvements, with a conservation easement which allows us to pasture our horses, and earn rent to offset taxes was a good mix. 2) My wife and I have always loved the outdoors, however, a swamp, was never a place we sought out. It is amazing the beauty and diversity of wildlife that live in wetlands. We are constantly learning new things. 3) Patience! This project is 8 years old and is only now coming into full bloom. Think big and let the future take care of itself. **GVC**



*Paul and Gay Frame enjoying a winter day on their protected property.*

# 2013 Nature Walks and Events

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*Join us as we kick off the spring season!*

Events are free and run rain or shine! Distance and difficulty vary.  
Visit [www.geneseevalleyconservancy.org](http://www.geneseevalleyconservancy.org) for more information

## April

### April 25th - Preserving and Restoring Natural Landscapes - 7pm

Location: Wadsworth Library, 24 Center Street, Geneseo

Jim Engel, owner of White Oak Nursery with extensive experience in restoring large natural landscapes, will speak about invasive plants, methods to control them and how to efficiently repopulate with native plants. Light refreshments will follow the presentation.

## May

### May 4th - Bluebell Walks - 10am & 2pm

Location: 3468 Nations Road, Geneseo. Meet at the bridge on Nations Road: approximately 1 mile from Route 39. This 3.5 mile round trip walk takes place on trails with some muddy sections. The walk features working agricultural fields and a forest along the Genesee River that is host to a spectacular sea of Common Bluebell flowers.

### May 25th - Birding with Jim Kimball - 7:30am

Location: 3468 Nations Road, Geneseo. Meet at the bridge on Nations Road: approximately 1 mile from Route 39. Bring binoculars and viewing scopes to view grassland birds in the National Audubon Society designated Important Bird Area along Nations Road with birder Jim Kimball. We will walk along the roadside and possibly drive to a few other locations depending on the conditions and sightings.

## June

### June 1st - Birding with Hans Kunze - 7:30am

Location: 6340 LaGrange Road, Wyoming

Bring binoculars and viewing scopes for this birding adventure with birder Hans Kunze! Be prepared for wet conditions!

### June 16th - GVC Membership Picnic

Save the Date! Invitations to follow.

### June 29th - Summer Hike - 1pm

Location: 1972 Moneghan Road in Canaseraga

Come explore the hilly trails near Swain Ski Resort on this 4.5 mile hike!



## July

### July 20th - Insect Walk with Biologist Dr. Jen Apple - 10am

Location: 3468 Nations Road, Geneseo.

We will walk slowly and scour the field for insects and bugs. This is a great event for children who want to try their hand at catching some critters and hearing about their lifestyles. Dr. Jen Apple will provide fascinating insights on these tiny creatures.

### July 27th - Genesee River Canoe Trip \*registration required

This paddle will depart from Mt. Morris and conclude at the Indian Fort Nature Preserve. The river is gentle along this stretch and lunch will be provided. Contact GVC's office for more information!

To be notified of additional events, join GVC's Mailing list:  
[info@geneseevalleyconservancy.com](mailto:info@geneseevalleyconservancy.com)

**Events are held with permission on private property.  
Please respect the landowners and do not trespass.**

### Geocaching (continued)

properties now offer this additional opportunity for recreation. Genesee Valley Conservancy's newest property, the Indian Fort Nature Preserve, currently boasts two caches. One of them is traditional, and the other has a twist, with puzzles that need to be solved in order to determine the coordinates, commonly referred to as a "Mystery Cache."

Due to the digital aspect of the sport/activity, an online community has formed, in which geocachers share experiences and recommend particularly good hunts. One user by the name of Spooko13 writes of the traditional cache at the Indian Fort Nature Preserve, "Excellent cache in a fantastic spot! I really enjoyed the hike and the views here in this new to me spot."

The caches at the Railroad Bed Trail and the John W. Chanler Island Preserve are multi-caches, with multiple check points providing missing information in the coordinates to the final destination. All that's needed to play is a GPS device or GPS enabled mobile phone and a free membership to geocaching.com to download the coordinates of the cache. To find the caches on GVC's preserves, click the link on each of the preserve pages of GVC's website. **GVC**



Portable GPS and coordinates.

BG



Charlotte McLean, Tori Perez, Emma Vitello, and Emma Janson counting the money raised during Jar Wars.

*This winter, Genesee Central Presbyterian Sunday School class for grades 6-8 recently spent time focusing on planet earth and different ways to care for the local community. In doing so, they held a "Jar Wars," competition between kids and adults in the church to raise money for a local environmental organization. Genesee Valley Conservancy was honored to be chosen as the recipient of their donation!*

*Thank you Genesee Central Presbyterian Church & grades 6-8 Sunday School class!*

## In Memoriam



BG

**Kenneth "Ted" Kinsey**

Kenneth "Ted" Kinsey joined the Board of the Genesee Valley Conservancy in 1994. Throughout his service to the organization, he participated as a member of various committees and served as Vice-President for four years. Ted's commitment to protecting the local landscape led him and his wife Susan to donate a conservation easement on their property in 1993. His insight and service to GVC were immeasurable and his dedication and passion for the Genesee Valley will be missed.

In honor of Ted, the Genesee Valley Conservancy will be planting a Sugar Maple, one of Ted's favorite trees, on the John W. Chanler Island Preserve.

*GVC would like to extend our special thanks to the following individuals that made donations to GVC in Ted's memory:*

- |                        |  |                          |
|------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Dr. Rexford Adelberger | William and Meg C. Lloyd               | Jon & Bee Perkins        |
| Neil & Angela Bliss    | John Lockhart, III & Lynne Mazadoorian | Robert & Sharon Presutti |
| Benjamin Gajewski      | Robert McDonald                        | Joyce Wechsler           |
| Eric & Celeste Grace   | Myrtle A. Merritt                      | Sally Wood               |



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