



Well Grounded

A Newsletter for Winnakee Land Trust's Partners in Land Protection

Winter 2017

Sugar Beets on My Driveway?

Winter is upon us, and with winter comes precipitation in the form of snow and sleet. Warmer daytime temperatures, particularly on sunny days, may cause snow and sleet to thaw followed by refreezing into treacherous sheets of ice on our roads and walkways. Many of us have experienced the result of walking or driving on such conditions and it is not an experience that most people like to repeat. To combat these icy conditions, people often use one of several salt products known as deicers to melt snow and ice on roadways, sidewalks, driveways, steps, and other areas to reduce pedestrian and vehicular accidents. However, these salt based products can wreak havoc on our environment.



Most deicing products are chloride based, such as sodium chloride (table salt) or calcium chloride. Chloride does not break down easily and is responsible for corrosion on metal structures and vehicles. In addition to structural damage, chloride causes dehydration, nutrient imbalance, and toxicity in plants. Chloride is found in streams at levels that are toxic to aquatic life, which affects abundance and reproduction in many aquatic species. Deicers also contain numerous other additives that can have a harmful impact on the environment.

To avoid these harmful effects while preventing treacherous walking and driving conditions, seek out deicing agents that do not contain chloride. There are numerous alternatives including acetate-based chemicals and agricultural by-products. Potassium acetate and calcium magnesium acetate have been shown to be less damaging to metals and have a lower environmental impact. However, acetate-based deicers tend to cost more and may release heavy metals into the soil. Several agricultural by-products have shown promising results in combating icy conditions including tomato juice, sugar beet juice, pickle juice, and barley residue. The New York State Thruway Authority has recently begun using an anti-icing mixture of sugar beet juice and brine as a road pretreatment. These alternatives are great for small scale areas and use around the home and can help prevent damage to vegetation and water quality.

Stir it Up! Benefits of Composting

Regardless of whether you cultivate a home garden or not, composting is an excellent and easy way to contribute to environmental conservation. Composting contributes to environmental sustainability in a myriad of ways including:

1. Reduces the amount of waste in landfills
2. Adds to the creation of new, nutrient rich soil
3. Reduces overall greenhouse gas emissions
4. Improves air quality
5. Fertilizes and deters garden pests
6. Neutralizes soil
7. Creates aggregates (aids in aeration and drainage)
8. Decreases soil erosion
9. Promotes biodiversity



Composting is easy! Combine dry brown organic material, which provides carbon, with wet green organic material, providing nitrogen, and add a shovelful of good soil. You're now ready to build your compost pile which can be built anywhere but—keep it at least two feet from any structures. Stir it up—twice a week is ideal. This key step decreases composting time because it allows all the material to be exposed to the hot center and increases aeration. Under ideal conditions, your compost will be ready within two months and often as soon as two to four weeks. You'll know it's finished and ready for use when you can't tell what the particles used to be and when it smells wonderfully earthy.

Tax Benefits for Conservation Easement Donors

Providing tax benefits for conservation is a wonderful incentive for landowners already interested in protecting their property's natural, scenic or agricultural assets. Winnakee currently holds over 2,500 Acres in easements.

Qualified Contributions

The protected land must meet the requirements of Internal Revenue Code 170(h). The conservation purpose must be for:

- The protection of relatively natural habitat of fish, wildlife, or plants, or similar ecosystem,
- The preservation of open space (including farmland and forest) where such preservation is for the scenic enjoyment of the general public, or pursuant to a clearly delineated federal, state, or local governmental conservation policy
- The preservation of a historically important land area or a certified historic structure, or
- The preservation of land areas for outdoor recreation by, or the education of, the general public.



Available Benefits

The donation of an easement is a charitable contribution that may be deducted from federal income taxes. The value of the donation is determined by an independent appraisal.

The tax deduction for conservation easements allows a donor to take a deduction of up to **50% of adjusted gross income per year and the full amount of the deduction may be taken over a carry forward for a period of up to 15 years.**

New York State offers a tax credit of 25% of property taxes, including school district taxes, up to \$5,000 per year. This annual deduction is available to future owners of the protected property.

Eligible Landowners

Private landowners who meet the IRS Requirements and freely donate conservation easements are qualified to claim an income tax deduction for conservation, according to the Internal Revenue Code. Real estate developers who set aside open space for conservation are not typically eligible for this tax benefit. Mandated conservation areas, whether owned by private landowners or developers, are ineligible for conservation tax benefits.

For more information contact Gregg Swanzey, Executive Director,
at 845-876-4213 or email
director@winnakee.org



MARCH 12

Winnakee Member Sleepy Moon Full Moon Hike

Drayton Grant Park
at Burger Hill
6:00 to 7:30 PM

Join us for refreshments and
fun as we view the full moon
atop Burger Hill!

MARCH 23

Winnakee-Dutchess Trails Roundtable Meeting 4:00 to 5:30 PM

FDR Wallace Center
4079 Albany Post Road, Hyde Park

The Roundtable brings
stakeholders together to foster the
development of trails on a local and
regional scale through networking,
information sharing, and enhancing
access to financial resources and
technical assistance.

MAY 20

Save the Date! for the Winnakee Land Trust Annual Fundraising Gala

Saturday, May 20, 2017
at the historic Astor Courts
Estate on River Road
Catered by Artist's Palate
Music by Bill's Toupee

Black Tie Optional

Fond Farewell from Tierney Rosenstock

It is with mixed emotions that I announce my decision to leave my position as Land Projects Manager with Winnakee Land Trust.

Over the last year and a half I've come to truly love the organization, all the wonderful staff, volunteers, and board members. I have especially enjoyed meeting and working with our easement landowners to make the conservation of their easements as rewarding an experience as possible.

I have accomplished a great deal during my time with Winnakee: revised the five year management plans for Drayton Grant Park at Burger Hill and Winnakee Nature Preserve; completed the Scenic Resources Mapping Project; and worked with the Hyde Park Trail Committee to construct new trail segments, to name just a few.

I thank you all for a wonderful experience and I look forward to working with you as a member of the Winnakee Advisory Committee.

Sincerely yours,



Tierney R. Rosenstock

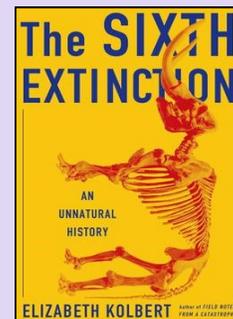


Suggested Reading:

*The Sixth Extinction:
An Unnatural History*
by Elizabeth Kolbert

A New York Times Bestseller, *The Sixth Extinction* takes readers through the previous five mass extinctions and compares them to the current trajectory of a modern, man-made sixth extinction.

Kolbert takes you on her journey of discovery as she travels the world to interview scientists, researchers, and guides. If you are interested in the trajectory of our environment, this is the read for you!



What's the Big Deal About Snow?

Snow, the iconic ground cover of winter in the northern hemisphere. For some snow represents a media for winter sports such as skiing, cross country, snowshoeing, sledding, and snowball fights. For others, it represents hours of backbreaking work to keep the driveway cleared. Whatever your relationship with snow, it is undeniable that there is nothing like the beautiful serenity of the landscape after a fresh snowfall.

Snow means even more to our natural world and plays a vital role in ecosystem balance and hydrologic cycling. In the northeastern United States, snow can make up 10-25% of annual precipitation. That may not sound like much, but precipitation in the form of snow holds water in place until spring when it is critical to our awakening landscape. In winter, nearly all plant life goes dormant, birds have migrated, and many animals go into hibernation thus diminishing the water requirements to sustain life diminish. However, the spring snow melt occurs just in time for plants to come out of dormancy, migrating birds to return, and wildlife activity to increase, thus increasing the demand for water.

A winter snowpack also helps insulate the soil, preventing it from freezing and allowing water to penetrate deep into the soil and recharge ground water aquifers. The insulation of the snow creates an area called the subnivean zone, which is the space between the surface of the ground and the bottom of the

snowpack. The subnivean zone, at six inches or deeper, maintains a temperature near 32° F regardless of the air temperature. This zone is vital to rodents such as mice, voles, and shrews that use this zone to hide from predators and to access food such as vegetation and insects. The subnivean zone is also vital for the survival of many herbaceous plants by preventing the overwintering structures (i.e. root crown, leaves, etc.) from freezing and reducing winter damage.

Whether the oncoming snow is a blessing or a curse, remember that snow is a vital aspect to the climate cycles in the northern hemisphere and thousands of species depend on adequate snowpack for survival.



Red squirrel

Bird Feeders: Beneficial or Harmful?

Bird feeding is a common pastime around the world. Some 53 million Americans have bird feeders in their yards. If that many people are practicing bird feeding in the United States just imagine how many there are worldwide. People feed birds for many reasons. Some just enjoy being able to watch them from the comfort of their home while others believe that they are helping the birds by providing them with otherwise difficult to come by nourishment. However, the verdict is still out on whether bird feeding is beneficial or not.

Researching the effects of bird feeding on wild bird populations has proven challenging—with so many people feeding birds it is nearly impossible to have a control group of wild birds that do not have access to a bird feeder. Even in the early stages of research on the effects of bird feeders, researchers have come across some interesting results. One study conducted on twelve bird species in Florida found that birds that actively fed at bird feeders showed improved feather quality, increased immune function, reduced stress, and improved antioxidant capacity. However, there are some negative impacts emerging as well. In the same study researchers found that despite an increase in immune function, birds that regularly used bird feeders had higher incidence of disease (~10%) than those that did not (~1%). Bird feeding also appears to be influencing migration patterns and resulting in evolution of new species in very short periods of time. A population of blackcaps in Germany that once migrated to Spain and North Africa now migrates northwest to the United Kingdom where the birds would have previously starved. In less than 30 generations these birds, who are mostly breeding amongst themselves, are showing genetic and physical differences from their migrating counter parts. For example, the U.K. population have evolved rounder wings and longer, narrower bills.



Cedar waxwings

There are ways to attract birds to your yard without using a bird feeder. By planting bird friendly vegetation, you can provide critical habitat and food sources to birds year round without the potential negative impacts of bird feeders. Here are **10 plants recommended by The National Audubon Society; purple coneflower, sunflowers, milkweed (also helps monarch butterflies), cardinal flower, trumpet honeysuckle, Virginia creeper, buttonbush, elderberry, oak trees, and dogwoods.** Remember do not cut off deadheads of flowers or cut back in the fall. Audubon also recommends, if you want to continue using bird feeders, to clean bird feeders with a 10% non-chlorinated bleach solution at least a few times a year. You can also have separate bird feeders with specific bird feed (rather than generic, which are packed with fillers) to attract different types of birds to different feeders, reducing the spread of disease. The jury is still out on whether bird feeding is more beneficial or more harmful to birds, but until we understand the full effects of traditional bird feeding practices consider feeding alternatives.

Make an Impact

Please consider becoming a member of the **Winnakee Land Trust Open Field Society**. Open Field Society members have elected to take a leadership role among Winnakee Land Trust stakeholders. It is through their dedication—our most loyal members—that Winnakee has been able to accomplish so much. Open Field Society Members ensure Winnakee's success in protecting and stewarding local lands for future generations to enjoy.

The Open Field Society requests **One Annual Gift for three consecutive years**. Membership provides a unique opportunity to enjoy Winnakee benefits throughout each year, including event sponsorship and tickets.



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**WINNAKEE
LAND TRUST**

The Mission of Winnakee Land Trust is to protect and preserve the natural agricultural, recreational, architectural, cultural, scenic, historical, and open space resources of northern Dutchess County.