

Susquehanna Sierran

SEPTEMBER 2024



Founded 1892

EXPLORE, ENJOY, PROTECT THE PLANET

Three! August 24 Events – Moira Ashleigh

Susquehanna Group Executive Committee members were busy August 24th handling three concurrent events:

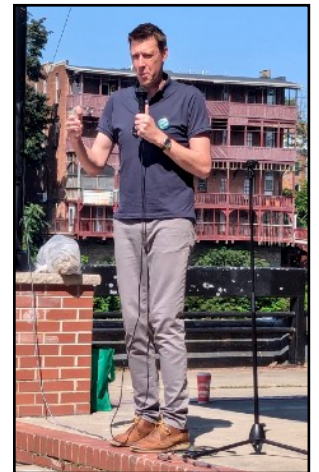
- Christina Fuller ran our table for the Move Out Project (MOP) at UFest on Binghamton University's main campus from 11am to 3pm. MOP is a successful reuse and recycle effort managed by the Susquehanna Group. www.moveoutproject.org
- Valdi Weiderpass and Scott Lauffer were at our table at Indivisible Binghamton's Climate and Science Fair from 10:30 to 12:30 at the MLK Promenade in downtown Binghamton. Among speakers were NYS Senator Lea Webb, NYS Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo and Josh Riley who is running for US Congress.



Table at Binghamton 2°

• Joann Lettis, Jim Taft, and Moira Ashleigh handled our table at Binghamton 2 Degrees event at Confluence Park, from 11am to 3pm. The table was within sight of the Park's Pollinator Garden, planted and maintained by the Susquehanna Group.

It was a perfect late summer day to be out meeting friends old and new.



Josh Riley at Climate & Science Fair
photos S Lauffer

Recent Outings – Scott Lauffer

On July 17 Susquehanna Group conducted a morning outing to the Pollinator Garden in Confluence Park, Binghamton. We learned about planning and maintaining the garden, and generated interest in volunteering. Gardening knowledge was not required. Master Gardener Sarah Hodder with husband Mark Couchman oversee the project, interface with the City of Binghamton Parks & Recreation, and lead volunteers to keep it beautiful—a place that many enjoy. To learn more and to volunteer contact Sarah at shaddow03@gmail.com.

On June 25 an afternoon outing took us to the Canawanna Nature Preserve in Owego. Kevin Millar (Owego Rotary Environmental Sustainability Co-Chair, and Manager of Canawanna Nature Preserve) gave a tour of the preserve. Jason Shaw related efforts of the Southern Tier Land Conservancy to acquire and protect natural areas—important both for wildlife and people. Shaw noted that conservation easements preserve land in perpetuity. Professor Julian Shepherd addressed his inventory of natural areas in Broome and Tioga counties, and the importance of their protection. More information on Canawanna Nature Preserve can be found at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/T5LuM9oiJhxqHrG1>. Information on the Southern Tier Land Conservancy can be found at <https://sites.google.com/southerntlc.org/southerntlc/home>



Canawanna Preserve Outing

Review: "Dinner with Darwin—Food, Drink, and Evolution" by Jon Silvertown

– Julian Shepherd, Bartle Professor, Binghamton University

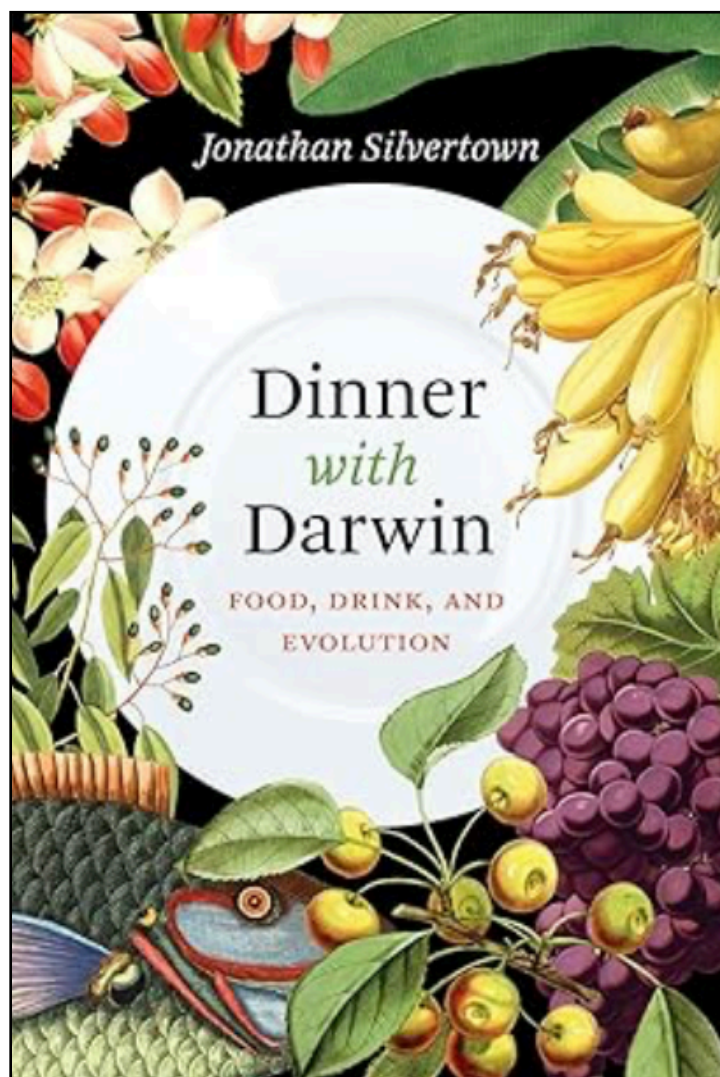
"What?! Another book on food?" That's what Jonathan Silvertown, author of "Dinner with Darwin" thought, but after checking a well-stocked library, he decided that his book would not be just another on food but an "invitation to...a dinner of the mind." One may consider Darwin passé, but he was so insightful that current biological literature, and that of several other disciplines, is still full of references to him, his observations and ideas. If you wondered how food is relevant to environmental concerns, you soon realize that population growth and climate change may be making food production a most fundamental long-term concern especially, to my mind, while still preserving nature.

Silvertown sets out with a fictitious dinner (and who doesn't want another dinner? he asks) attended by ancient forebears, starting with Lucy, the 3.3-million-year-old African fossil australopithecine, accompanied by her descendants. He outlines how she represented an initial transition from our herbivorous primate ancestors toward a more omnivorous animal, followed by early hominins who, based on tooth and jaw structures and tools, became large predators as well as plant-eaters about 2 million years ago. At some point in the next million years, cooking with fire evolved, much increasing available calories and nutrients. Notably, we also lost an important gene for strong jaws and other anatomical features, which is why we cannot now survive on raw food alone, either meat- or plant-based.

Silvertown then covers the origin, evolution and nature of our major food groups, and our current adaptation, for better or worse, to various foods. He traces how early radiation of *Homo sapiens* from Africa along ocean coastlines was largely dependent on availability and food value of shellfish. He goes into physiological detail about why fructose in large amounts—as in many drinks and desserts but also in the metabolism of sucrose (sugar)—is not only not benign like glucose, but actually designated a toxin by some physicians. He tells much about the chemistry of spices and herbs, many of which evolved plant defenses against herbivores, but paradoxically became culinary delights. Another conundrum explored is how Polynesians colonized (with their unique foods) the Pacific Ocean, navigating by what he calls "ball bearings"—I'll leave you to find out what he means.

Silvertown is profoundly erudite, encompassing biology, anthropology, chemistry, nature, history and sociology. He ends with prognoses for future foods, including discussions of genetic modification of foods, which he considers a means to feed humanity and save nature at the same time.

I am a scientist and educator familiar with elementary and lay audiences. I believe I am not presumptuous in saying Silvertown makes science intelligible. He also has a strong, oft-used sense of humor—check out the "ball bearings" reference. I am grateful for his careful notes and many references for further reading, and, helpfully, a great index.



Susquehanna Group

(All of Broome and Sullivan, & most of
Chenango, Delaware, Otsego, and Tioga
Counties)

Chair	*Valdi Weiderpass
Vice Chair	*Moira Ashleigh
Secretary	OPEN
Treasurer	*Joann Lettis
Political Chair, Outings	*Scott Lauffer
Chapter Delegate	*Jim Taft
Newsletter Editor	*Jim Taft
Webmaster	Chris Harasta
Conservation Co-Chairs	*Doug Gausman, *Mary Cronk
Alt. Chapter Delegate	*Joann Lettis

* Member Executive Committee

To become a candidate for the
Susquehanna Group's Executive
Committee, mail by November 1, 2024
a candidate statement of 150 words or
less to:

Susquehanna Group
PO Box 572
Endicott NY 13760

The Nominating Committee will create
a slate of candidates, and ballots will be
mailed with the December *Sierran*.

Questionable Industrial Park Plan

–Doug Gausman

I was one of several Sierra Club members attending the 8/6/24 Broome Technology Park open house held by the Broome County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) at Johnson City High School. I met with IDA Executive Director Stacey Duncan and other staff and briefly discussed Susquehanna Group's opposition to the project (hilly natural area, would require energy-intensive supply lines, would require extensive parking lots). The project is now planned to involve 526 acres in the area around East Maine Road and Airport Road. The IDA folks told me they need a large contiguous area to develop the park. They also know that a portion of the area in question is not suitable for manufacturing development. The goal is to entice business tenants such as advanced electronics, semiconductors, life sciences, agriculture processing, and related supply chains. The plan could include a movie theater, gym, bike paths and hiking trails. Ms. Duncan said she would be interested in meeting with Susquehanna Group and other similar groups to discuss the project.

Later, I talked with residents opposed to the park. They were wearing shirts displaying 'No Eminent Domain.' They provided a copy of a letter the IDA had sent to owners of land the IDA wants. It specified that the IDA was offering to purchase their property with a \$10,000 initial deposit. It stated that a neighbor had accepted a similar offer, and also stated the IDA would prefer to negotiate with landowners rather than use statutory powers (eminent domain) to obtain the land.

Landowners suggested I drive along East Maine Road and Airport Road to see the type of land involved. I did so and also drove Kot Road to its dead end. There were many signs posted saying 'NO TECH PARK.' Some of these folks seem to fear losing their homes.

UPDATE: The Broome County IDA has completed the draft scoping document for the environmental impact assessment for the project and scheduled a public hearing for September 10, 2024, 6:30 pm at the Maine-Endwell Middle School. The public comment period on the draft scoping document is open until September 24, 2024. One may send comments to techpark@theagency-ny.com. One may also review the document at the IDA offices at 5 South College Drive, Suite 201, Binghamton or download it from <https://theagency-ny.com/economic-development-resources>.

New York State Must Not Delay Its Climate Goals

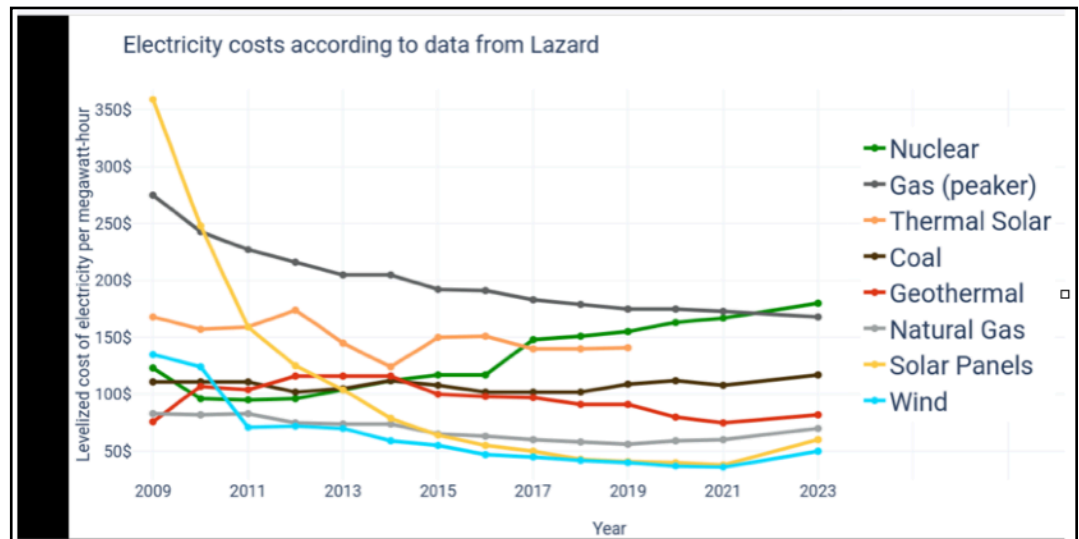
–Valdi Weiderpass

Governor Hochul announced a "Future Energy Economy Summit" for September 5 in Syracuse, in response to the NY Business Council's request for a review of NY's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) goals. Per NYSERDA's July 2024 "Draft Energy Standard Biennial Review" NY is likely to achieve just 73,292 GWh of renewable energy production in 2030, far short of the 115,437 GWh needed to meet the 2030 CLCPA-mandated target of 70% renewable grid electricity. Math shows the NY grid would achieve only 44% renewable electricity in 2030. NYSERDA estimates that at its current pace NY would be 3 years late in meeting CLCPA's 2030 goals of 70% renewable electricity and 40% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

New nuclear is not the answer (too slow, too expensive, waste problem, public opposition, etc.). Renewable Natural Gas (RNG) or hydrogen blended into fossil natural gas is not an answer either because it will prolong greenhouse gas emissions, and fails to achieve the 2050 CLCPA goal of 85% reduction of GHG emissions from 1990 levels, to be at net-zero GHG emissions with offsets. Offsets are ways to capture and store GHG, especially carbon dioxide (CO₂), by planting trees, implementing regenerative agriculture to store CO₂ in soil, etc. The levelized (project lifetime) cost of energy generated by various sources has been calculated and tabulated in a June 2024 Lazard report, published at this link: https://www.lazard.com/media/xemfeyok/lazards-lcoeplus-june-2024-_vf.pdf

The report reveals that Onshore Wind, with Energy Storage, is least expensive per unit of energy measured in dollars per megawatt hour (\$/MWh), with a range of 45 to 133 \$/MWh. Utility scale solar, backed up by Energy Storage is next in cost with a range of 60 to 210 \$/MWh. Nuclear energy is most expensive, ranging from 142 to 222 \$/MWh. The latest nuclear project, Vogtle in Georgia, costs 190 \$/MWh. The Vogtle nuclear expansion project has two reactors of 1.1 GW each and started delivering electricity to the grid in March 2024, 7 years behind schedule. The project took 15 years and cost \$34 Billion, more than double the initial \$14 Billion estimate. New design Small Modular Reactors (SMR) are being proposed, but there is no commercial scale working project yet so this is unproven technology. Imagine the public opposition to building these in several NY communities!

NY must step up projects: wind, solar and battery storage, improve building efficiency and use geothermal, loops, etc, in order to get back on track to meet targets mandated by its climate law. CLCPA goals are not an "arbitrary schedule" as suggested by NY Business Council, but are based on science and must be met for NY to do its part to help avoid climate catastrophe.



Average unsubsidized levelized cost of energy. Source: Wikipedia

Outing: Riverbank Cleanup -Scott Lauffer

Join us on Saturday October 19 for the Riverbank Cleanup sponsored by the Broome County Environmental Management Council. We will pick up trash and debris around Confluence and Southside Parks in Binghamton.

Meet at Conklin Ave near the Washington St bridge at 9:00 am. You can park along Conklin Ave. If questions, contact lauffer.scott@gmail.com

Pollinator Garden

– Sarah Hodder

Susquehanna Group and Binghamton City Parks & Recreation in 2017 established the Pollinator Garden at Confluence Park, where the Chenango flows into the Susquehanna. Group members select plants, mulch, weed, and keep the beds in good condition. The City funds purchases and provides copious mulch. This year, Parks & Rec built a lovely lattice structure for us along the Memorial Bridge abutment for native honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*). The *Lonicera* was purchased at Agway, planted, and is climbing the lattice.



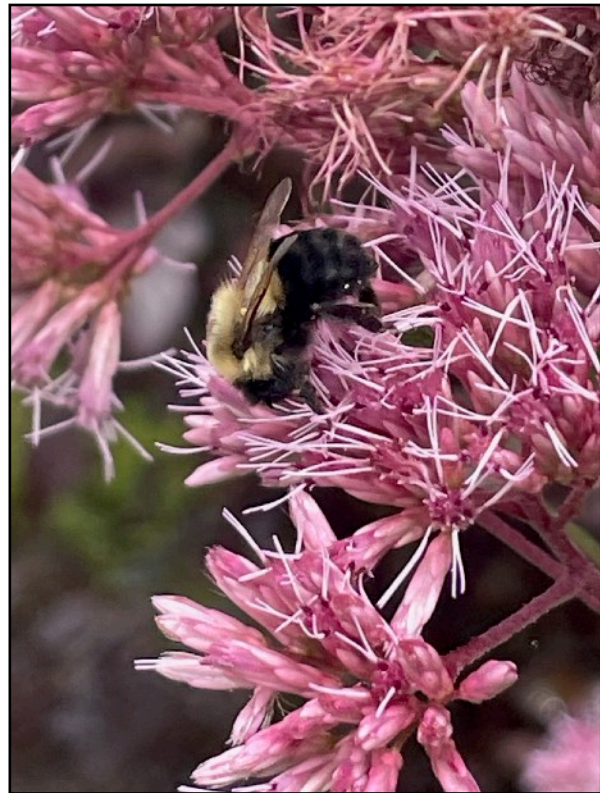
Here's hoping you can visit the garden and see the lattice along with the honeysuckle.

You might be lucky and see a hummingbird seeking nectar. Recently, a new sign was donated by Matzo Signs to replace the original degraded ones.

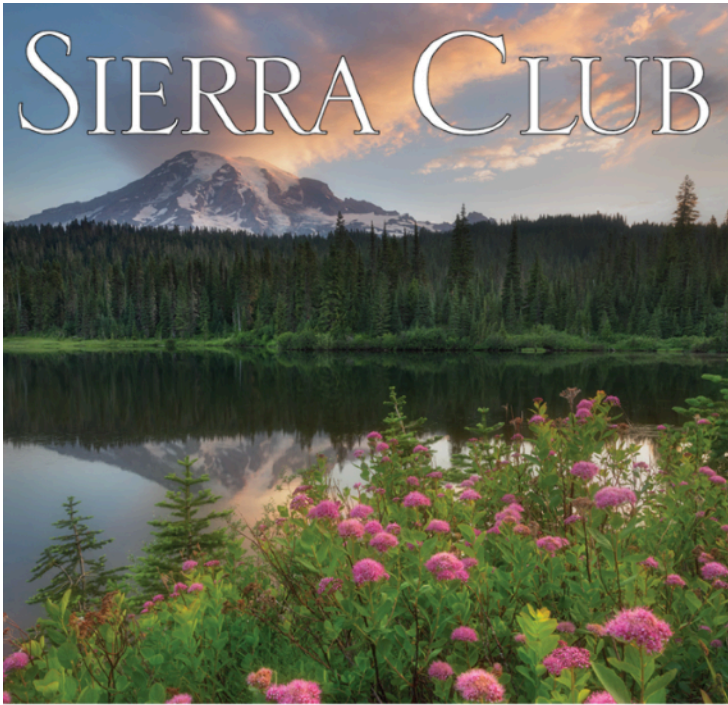
This venture could not be done without the help of Binghamton City and the volunteers that donate time once per month during the growing season. A huge “Thank You” to the volunteers and the City for working together to make our community more beautiful and to provide an oasis for pollinators.



Native Honeysuckle on the Lattice



Bee on Joe Pye plant photos J Taft



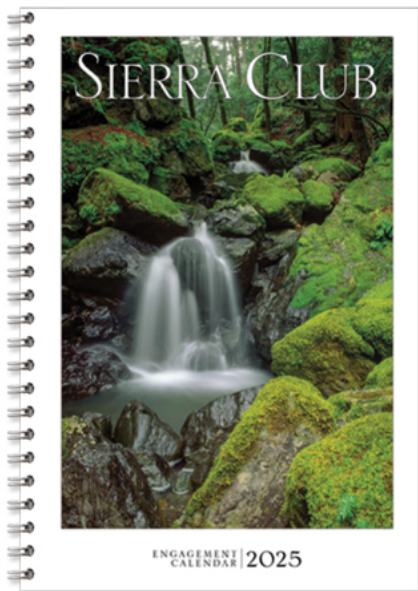
CALENDAR TIME !

Goodbye 2024

We'll mail them to you! Supplies are limited. Please get your order in promptly. \$18 each for either Wall or Engagement size. This is a small fundraiser for Susquehanna Group.

Mail order form and payment by check to the address below. Questions? Contact Treasurer Joann Lettis at jomom83589@aol.com.

WILDERNESS CALENDAR | 2025



Calendar Type	Each	X	Quantity	=	Cost
Wall	\$18				
Engagement	\$18				
Shipping	→				\$5
Total Due	→				

Ship to:

Name _____

Street/PO Box _____

City, State, Zip _____

Please make check payable to: Sierra Club Susquehanna Group
 Mail to: Sierra Club Susquehanna Group
 PO Box 572
 Endicott NY 13760

THANK YOU !



Susquehanna Group

PO Box 572

Endicott NY 13760

<https://www.sierraclub.org/atlantic/susquehanna>