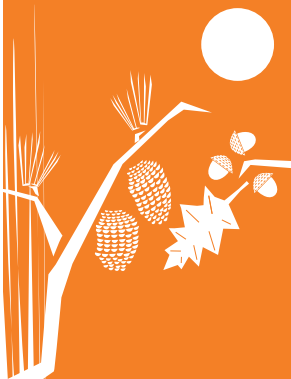


PROTECTOR'S OF PINE OAK WOODS



STATEN ISLAND'S
LAND CONSERVATION
ORGANIZATION

FALL EVENTS

10-MILE FALL GREENBELT HIKE 10/20

CLAY PIT LICHEN WALK 10/26

FOREST RESTORATION
WORKSHOPS 10/19, 11/16, 12/21

[SEE MORE AT SIPROTECTOR'S.ORG](https://www.siprotectors.org)

REMEMBERING SYLVIA ZAAGE

Please see our online tribute to Sylvia Zaage at our web site [siprotectors.org](https://www.siprotectors.org). Sylvia was a key officer in the early, important years of Protectors. Her contribution and dedication live on.

PROTECTOR'S MISSION

Protectors of Pine Oak Woods is committed to increasing the stewardship of Staten Island's existing parkland, bluebelt corridors and nature preserves and to continuing the effort to preserve Staten Island's natural areas. Protectors advocates for protection and preservation by educating our members, the general public and elected officials at all levels of government through meetings, workshops, walks, articles, newsletters and sponsorship of environmental education.

49 YEARS KEEPING S.I. GREEN!
1975-2024

FALL 2024

[SEE MORE AT SIPROTECTOR'S.ORG](https://www.siprotectors.org)

A dash of the unfamiliar on a planned walk can lead to closer connections to nature.

A MID-SUMMER'S GREENBELT JAUNT

THERE IS A FAVORITE HIKE of mine in the Greenbelt. It is a circular hike beginning at the Greenbelt Nature Center to the Blue trail towards Rockland Ave., where it connects with the Red trail. The route crosses Rockland Ave. over the mill bridge on the Blue trail to ascend the serpentine hills of Northern Seaview to High Rock. It returns eventually through Egbertville Ravine to the Nature Center, about 5 miles in all.

This time, though, I stopped briefly at the massive restoration field at the juncture of the Red and Blue trails. The fencing that had protected the site has long been removed, and I was curious to see what was coming in. Theoretically, the project's aim was to create a stable habitat that was inhospitable to the alien vines that had overrun the site in its period of neglect. This involved bulldozing and scraping the topsoil and applying herbicide to eradicate the existing vegetation. Native trees were planted and fencing was erected to deter deer foraging. Here is my assessment: My general impression is that where trees had grown to a sufficient height to provide shade, the understory was nearly devoid of invasive vines. The areas where tree cover was insufficient, a large colony of mile-a-minute was taking over. This pernicious weed was even colonizing the margins of the shady area near the trail as if waiting for any amount of purchase of a patch of sunlit ground.

There is no perfect remedy in a natural setting to keep alien vines from intruding. The best we can hope for, without intensive continuous management, is a mixture where the alien, rambunctious plants do not overrun the areas where a diversity of plants can thrive. Shading is critical it seems.

Since I had gone past my turnoff to cross Rockland Ave., I debated whether I should backtrack or continue in reverse direction. I had never done that on this particular hike, so I decided it might be fun. At least the views would be different. I proceeded down to the Bluebelt pond at Meisner Ave. and Manor Rd. My companions were a few buckeye butterflies flitting ahead of me.

The pond at Meisner and Manor is part of the Richmond Creek

FIELD NOTES

Bluebelt. The capital project for this natural stormwater system was started in 1997. It was an impressive land engineering feat, again with the requisite bulldozing, vegetation eradication, land contouring and replanting of native plants. The pond at Meisner and Manor is actually called, inelegantly, an "Extended Detention Basin." The quality of the natural area seems to be holding up as compared to the restoration done in the woodlands, calling in to question whether there are different management philosophies at play. A beautiful healthy American Sycamore graces the edge of the stream entering the pond, a testament to the care taken in considering a palette of native plants and trees.

One of the most pleasant parts of the walk is through Egbertville Ravine, where Richmond Creek flows towards Richmondtown. This is the deep ravine that runs along Rockland Ave. down to Richmond Rd. In his book, *Secret Places of*

2025 CALENDAR REMINDER

Protectors is working on completing and printing our 2025 Staten Island Nature and Wildlife Calendar. As a reminder, a complimentary calendar will be sent only to members who have paid this year's dues. If you haven't done so already, we encourage you to renew your membership or to join Protectors. Our deadline for renewing or joining to receive your complimentary calendar is **October 31, 2024**. Checks or payment by credit card through PayPal via our web site is accepted. Your payment *must be* received by October 31, 2024.

As usual, you can purchase additional calendars for \$5.00 each, but remember that quantities are limited.

—Calendar Committee

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Editing & Design: Hillel Lofaso,

Printed By: Modern Press, Inc.,
Jersey City, NJ

PROTECTORS BULLETIN is printed on
100% post-consumer recycled paper

Mailing address: P.O. Box 140747,
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Recent 990s are available at Guidestar.org

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Staten Island (1998, Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company), Bruce Kershner described this site: “What adds to Egbertville Ravine’s beauty are the ancient tulip trees, beech and red oak that line it. This makes it one of the three oldest forests in Staten Island. The age of one four-foot diameter tulip tree was measured at exactly 200 years old(!).” (p.78)

I paused at the bridge crossing Richmond Creek, captivated by a school of small fish swimming in a gentle sunlit pool, while water striders delicately waltzed on the surface of the water.

I crossed Rockland Ave. at Eleanor St. and walked up Tonking Rd. up to High Rock. The Blue trail and Paw trail lead up the slope with a pause at Walker Pond. The pond is looking good these days and seems to be well devoid of trash. A few years ago, our dedicated Forest Restoration Team donned waders and braved the swampy, muddy bog to clean up trash. Also, the platform is in a state of woeful neglect and has been effectively blocked from public gatherings by the Parks Department, lowering the chance of littering. I watched frogs swimming in the lily pad filled water, their little heads peeking up from the surface.

I reached the top of the hill leading to the Environmental Education Building and had my lunch at the picnic tables at the parking lot at the top of Nevada Avenue. So far, so good, I thought. The reverse route was just unfamiliar enough to sharpen my senses for the introduction of surprise and delight, and stave off the feeling of the familiar and routine.

After lunch, I headed down the Greta Moulton Green trail and Yellow trail towards Paulo’s Peak (Moses’ Mountain). I decided I deserved a little nap, so I wandered to a hollow in the hills and settled down for a snooze. A calling flicker and a chorus of cicadas kept me company. As I dozed, I let the quietness settle around me. A new sound alerted me of something different. I heard a deep, loud *huff!*, pausing and repeating. Looking up with drowsy eyes, I saw a white tail deer moving rapidly down the hill at a loud gallop. I stayed still in my place and returned to my nap.

Again I heard a deep, loud *huff!* It was the same deer, alerting the remaining members of its herd that there was danger nearby. Because I was motionless, I can only surmise that the deer picked up my scent on an errant breeze and was alerting others to seek safety.

Researching on a deer hunter web site, I learned that this behavior is actually two

parts of a warning system. Daniel Schmidt from the web site Deer and Deer Hunting, reports that the huffing or blowing through the nostrils is an alert that some unknown danger may be present and to signal others to get ready to flee. Some deer use it to signal curiosity about an unusual prompt in their surroundings. The deer process their environment to ascertain the danger and some think the forced inhalation and exhalation is the way to increase the adrenaline in their blood and prep their bodies and muscles for the energy they need to escape the threat. The deer may stomp the ground as well, before their instinct for flight takes hold and they bolt to safety.

I got to my feet and continued downhill to cross Manor Rd. to the back side of Paulo’s Peak on the Yellow trail. Here I had to be careful because, remember, I had only done this in the reverse direction and, therefore, I could easily miss the unmarked trail turnoff to go to Northern Seaview.

Sure enough, I missed it and found myself staring at the Bluebelt dam again at Rockland. Did I want to just backtrack through Egbertville Ravine? No! I was determined to retrace my steps and find that unmarked trail. It was after a couple of false starts that I found it. This trail is truly unmarked, unlike the other unmarked connector trails with a plain white circular marker with green type. These trail markers should not be confused with the White trail circular trail markers, but I will write another article about that sometime. This trail follows Rockland Ave. on the other side from the Bluebelt dam, which is what I wanted, and connects back to the Blue trail. Soon I came to the other restoration project, the deer enclosure at the top of one of the serpentinite hills.

The idea of the project is to preserve the native milkweeds and sedges, so I do hope it is a success. The enclosure seems to be doing its job of preventing deer foraging, as the goldenrods were in full bloom among many other plants I was not able to identify at such a distance.

I followed the Blue trail back to cross Rockland Ave. over the mill bridge, turned right and headed back towards the Nature

CONTINUE THE EXPERIENCE

Would you like to see an enhanced version of this article? Visit our blog at siprotectors.org for color photos and other links.



ARE YOU A MEMBER? HAVE YOU RENEWED?

YES, I WANT TO HELP STATEN ISLAND'S FINEST REMAINING NATURAL AREAS AND SEE THE GREENBELT PROTECTED.

Please enroll me as a member in the following category:

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- \$275.00...Patron
- \$500.00...Life Member

Check here and we will e-mail our newsletter to you as a PDF. (You'll still receive the print copy.)

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Already a member? Please use this form to continue to generously support Protectors' SI Natural Areas Fund, DEC Teen Camp Scholarship or other projects.

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Center and my waiting bicycle. I was pretty satisfied with this walk through the Greenbelt. One might assume that hiking in the Greenbelt is a been-there-done-that kind of experience, but I assure you that much joy, wonder and adventure can be found with a little openness and willingness to explore.

—Hillel Lofaso

PROTECTORS NAMES NEW TREASURER TO THE BOARD

PROTECTORS' BOARD HAS NAMED board member Andrew Blancero our new Treasurer. Andy is currently an Empire State Fellow at New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Andy's focus is on finding nature-based solutions to urban planning.

Andy comes with project management and grant writing experience and will be able to source those skills for Protectors.

As always, we welcome our members to join committees or serve on our board. If interested, please contact Elaine Croteau at ecroteau@siprotectors.org.

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

WHAT BETTER TIME TO CELEBRATE the gifts of Nature than autumn on Staten Island? With walks and talks and meetings and friendly outdoor greetings, the Protectors of Pine Oak Woods offers much to Islanders of all ages. These seasonal newsletters provide our members with information, observations and events developed to keep up all active participants in the preservation of our natural areas. Thank you for your support!

Perhaps you received this newsletter because you are a former member, or you haven't yet sent in this year's membership dues. We encourage you to do so today to remain on our 2024 membership roster. Please look for the new/renewal form inside this newsletter, or enroll at our Protectors of Pine Oak Woods web site: <https://www.siprotectors.org/donate>. The greater our membership, the more you as a Protector have influence on the work that is being done, or could be done, to keep our Island a natural wonder.

— Madeline Paladino

(I'm happy to help with any questions about your membership status: mpaladino@siprotectors.org)

PROTECTORS OF PINE OAK WOODS, INC.

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FALL CALENDAR

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19,
10:00 A.M. TO NOON**

Forest Restoration Workshop at High Rock Park, It's My Park Day – Again we'll meet in the Nevada Avenue parking lot at High Rock Park. We will roam various trails to cut invasive vines and remove invasive Devil's Walking Stick, and afterward spend a little time maintaining our tools. If you don't have your own, Protectors will supply pruners, gloves and refreshments. For more information call Brian Smith at (917) 842-6585, or Don Recklies at (718) 768-9036. (*Service credit is available.*) Registration available online at siprotectors.org.

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20,
9:15 A.M. TO 4:00 P.M.**

The Richard Buegler 10-Mile Fall Greenbelt Hike – Meet at the Carousel at Willowbrook Park at the Eton Place entrance. Bring water, lunch, wear sturdy shoes, dress appropriately for the weather and be sure to confirm that the walk is not cancelled due to forecasted storms. To confirm a day prior, please call Dominick Durso at (917) 478-7607.

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26,
11 A.M. TO 2 P.M.**

Lichen Walk at Clay Pit Ponds State Park Preserve – Join Zihao Wang of the Torrey Botanical Society for an educational walk through Clay Pit to learn about the important and infinitely complex world of lichens. Meet at the parking lot at the interpretive center, 2351 Veterans Rd. For more details call Zihao at (347) 498-6050.

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16,
10:00 A.M. TO NOON**

Forest Restoration Workshop between Paulo's Peak and Seaview – We'll meet in the Paulo's Peak (formerly Moses Mountain) parking lot at the entrance to the Yellow Trail (or park on Meisner Road opposite the Bluebelt dam close to the intersection of Manor and Rockland). We will continue pulling Wisteria vines, lopping Oriental Bittersweet vines that smother trees along the trail, and cutting Japanese Angelica in places where it is dense below the trail. Protectors will supply tools, gloves and refreshments. For more information call Don Recklies at (718) 768-9036 or Brian Smith at (917) 842-6585. (*Service credit is available.*) Registration available online at siprotectors.org.

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21,
10:00 A.M. TO NOON**

Forest Restoration Workshop on the Buck's Hollow Red Trail – We'll meet where we met in August at the bike path entrance at the intersection of Travis Avenue and Forest Hill Road. We will follow the Red Trail downhill to where we have been cutting invasive vines strangling trees and saplings. If you don't have your own, Protectors will supply gloves and pruners (and refreshments). For more information call Brian Smith (917) 842-6585 or Don Recklies (718) 768-9036. (*Service credit is available.*) Registration available online at siprotectors.org.

FALL SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING

Look for Updates on our November Meeting – Visit with members of Protectors of Pine Oak Woods to hear updates on recent activities. Details are being finalized, and more information will be posted on our Facebook page and web site prior to the meeting. Check in at <https://www.siprotectors.org/calendar-of-events>.