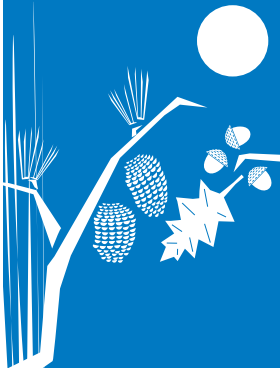


PROTECTORS OF PINE OAK WOODS



STATEN ISLAND'S
LAND CONSERVATION
ORGANIZATION

NEW SLATE OF OFFICERS ELECTED AT OUR FALL SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING

Our successes depend on our volunteer, dedicated board and membership.

PROTECTORS IS ONLY AS COMMITTED AS ITS MEMBERS

THE CONTINUED SUCCESS of Protectors of Pine Oak Woods is undoubtedly dependent upon the strong voice of our active membership. With a passion for preservation, our members remain engaged, concerned with the current state of affairs on their block, in their neighborhood, here on Staten Island.

Delving into those many concerns, parsing fact from fantasy, working to develop strategy and moving forward with education and advocacy; that's the responsibility of Protectors' board of directors. And through the years, names and titles change and our levels of availability and commitment may wax and wane, but one aspect of our board of directors remains remarkably consistent through the decades, our steadfast focus on Protectors' mission to advocate for an increased stewardship of park properties and the ongoing effort to preserve open space across Staten Island.

Currently the board of directors of Protectors of Pine Oak Woods is comprised of sixteen volunteers. Competent administrators in their own right, our board members come from a variety of disciplines and share a diverse collection of skills which combine to create the organizational success of Protectors.

Six board members chose a career in education. We have current board members who worked within government agencies, who work for nonprofits, manage their own small businesses, as well as a professional artist. Most board members remain employed, though a few have retired. We have families and we embrace the many responsibilities of our ever-expanding families. Nevertheless, our board members value the open space on our Borough of Parks and they are determined to protect the gains of the past as we work toward a cleaner, greener future.

In an effort to organize for effective advocacy, Protectors governance establishes committees to plan, and implement a strategy arrived at through discourse, concession and final majority vote. Respectful discussion allows each voice to be heard and considered. Our monthly board meetings are designed to move our organization forward.

Most important, each member acknowledges their fiduciary responsibility, placing the needs of Protectors above all else. Our board members are volunteers and no one receives payment or stipend for their participation on the board.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

The great news for anyone interested in getting further involved in the work of Protectors is that there is room at the table during our monthly board meetings. We are always open to members interested in joining the board of directors of Protectors. If any member would like to partake in Protectors ongoing effort to preserve open space on Staten Island then he or she should share that interest with any board member. Easier still, interested members can send an e-mail inquiry to ppow@siprotectors.com and someone will contact you. However, if you are not yet a member of Protectors of Pine Oak Woods, then please consider joining Staten Island's oldest, all-volunteer environmental preservation organization before the sunset this evening.

—Cliff Hagen

EVENTS SAMPLER

WINTER GREENBELT WALK	1/28
ARTHUR KILL SHORELINE	2/3
FOREST RESTORATION WORKSHOPS	1/20, 2/17, 3/16
OWL PROWLs	1/26, 2/9, 2/23
BIRD WALK	3/22
BLUE HERON PARK	3/31

SEE MORE AT SIPROTECTORS.ORG

PROTECTORS' 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

WINTER 2024

FALL SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING

DOZENS OF PROTECTORS members attended our semi-annual Fall meeting, despite a rainy, cool Sunday afternoon. The accommodations of the Blue Heron Park Visitors Center and the refreshments provided helped spark an atmosphere of warm camaraderie and festivity in keeping with the season.

Cliff Hagen's welcoming and opening remarks focused on the brief history of Protectors' leadership, starting with Dick Buegler who manned the helm for some 35 years, followed by Hillel Lofaso for 6 years and then Cliff for 9 years. Cliff emphasized that Ellen Pratt has been an indispensable guiding advocate for active open space conservation on the board for the many decades since Protectors' founding.

The most important task for members at the meeting was the vote for officers for a new three-year term starting in 2024. The members voted for the following offi-

OFFICERS 2021–2023

President Clifford Hagen
First Vice President
. Jack Bolembach
Second Vice President
. José Ramírez-Garofalo
Treasurer Hillel Lofaso*
Recording Secretary
. Lisa Abbot Pillarella
Corresponding Secretary
. Mark Latour

DIRECTORS

Alan I. Benimoff, Ph.D. •
Linda Cohen • Elaine Croteau •
Dominick Durso • Eileen Monreale •
Madeline Paladino • Jacqueline Perine
Chuck Perry • Ellen O’Flaherty Pratt •
Don Recklies • Herb Smith
*Past President

HONORARY DIRECTORS

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J. Davis • Joseph Fernicola • Marian S.
Heiskell • Hon. Ralph J. Lamberti •
Richard Lynch • Lenore Miller • Robert
Miraldi, Ph.D. • Arthur M. Shapiro,
Ph.D. • Norma Siebenheller

Protectors Co-founder and President
. Richard Buegler (1928–2016)

BULLETIN COMMITTEE

Chairman: Hillel Lofaso
Elaine Croteau • Dominick A. Durso •
Jacqueline Perine • Ellen O’Flaherty
Pratt

Editing & Design: Hillel Lofaso,
Printed By: Modern Press, Inc., Jersey
City, NJ

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web site: www.siprotectors.org

www.facebook.com/

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Recent 990s are available at Guidestar.org

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cers: President, Jose Ramirez-Garofalo; First Vice-President, Jack Bolembach; Recording Secretary, Lisa Pillarella; and Corresponding Secretary, Mark Latour. Protectors is still recruiting for the positions of Second Vice President, Treasurer and Membership Secretary, which remain open at this time. If you are at all interested in board membership or in filling these open positions, please contact Elaine Croteau at ebcroteau@siprotectors.org

Serpentine barrens restoration

Don Recklies provided an update on the efforts of the Parks Department to restore portions of the serpentine barrens habitat between Moses Mt. (Paulo’s Peak) and the edge of Seaview Hospital.

Don described how ancient shallow oceans formed the serpentine soils we find today. Continental drift left patches of serpentinite on their margins. Later, the edge of the Wisconsin glacier covered Staten Island, scraping the layers of ancient soils. The soil that developed later on was dependent on the rocks underneath, and this included serpentinite. Serpentine habitat is considered S1, meaning there are 5 or less sites in New York State. Serpentine rocks only come to the surface on Staten Island, therefore all of our barrens are here. Rich in magnesium and poor in calcium, our barrens allow only a few plants to thrive. Green comet milkweed, globe flatsedge, sweet everlasting and northern bayberry are some of the plant species found and surveyed in Staten Island’s serpentine barrens. Green comet milkweed is an S2 (impaired) plant occurring in only 20 or fewer locations in New York State, while globe flatsedge is an even rarer S1 plant.

Like all habitat, serpentine barrens also go through a process of succession, where soils build up in sufficient layers to overcome the limitations of the serpentine rock below to allow for other plants and shrubs to take hold. Grasslands inevitably transform to woodlands and habitat diversity is lost. The Parks Department seeks to restore the serpentine barrens to a point where it can continue to host the milkweeds and sedges that provide needed food for insect populations.

Don said that the goals should be:

- To halt, retard or reverse the site’s succession to woodland,
- To reintroduce plants that have been extirpated from the site,
- To expand the shrinking barrens area, and

- If possible, prevent browsing by white tail deer and eradicate stilt grass.

iNaturalist Overview

Seth Wollney, a doctoral student in ecology at the College of Staten Island, gave an overview of iNaturalist, a smartphone app that can be used to identify, catalog and report findings in the field. iNaturalist is a citizen science platform and community-driven web site that allows individuals to contribute to the documentation and understanding of biodiversity. Launched in 2008, iNaturalist encourages users to observe and record observations of plants, animals, fungi, and other organisms in their natural habitats using a mobile app or web site.

Users can upload photos, provide details about the location and date of their observations, and engage with the community for species identification and discussion. iNaturalist employs image recognition technology and crowdsourced expertise to help users identify the species they encounter. The platform serves as a valuable tool for scientists, researchers, and conservationists, contributing to a growing database of global biodiversity information.

In addition to fostering a sense of community among nature enthusiasts, iNaturalist plays a crucial role in advancing scientific research and conservation efforts by providing a wealth of observational data. The platform is widely used by scientists to monitor species distributions, track biodiversity trends, and assess the impact of environmental changes. Overall, iNaturalist empowers individuals to actively participate in the study of nature and contributes to the broader understanding of the world’s biological diversity.

Surprising surveys of moths and dragonflies

According to iNaturalist, nature enthusiasts documented 692 species of butterflies and moths on Staten Island.

A powerpoint presentation showcased a sampling of unusual moth and butterfly findings.

- Tufted bird-dropping moth
- Pondsideside crambid moth
- Cottonwood leafminer
- Little carpenterworm moth
- Curve-lined vaxi moth
- Primrose moth
- Common checkered-skipper
- Oak hairstreak

WINTER 2024

**PROTECTORS
OF PINE OAK
WOODS**



STATEN ISLAND'S
LAND CONSERVATION
ORGANIZATION

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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- \$ 15.00...Senior Citizen
- \$ 20.00...Individual
- \$ 25.00...Family
- \$ 50.00...Contributor
- \$ 75.00...Donor
- \$100.00...Organization
- \$125.00...Supporter
- \$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.)

Please provide your e-mail address below.

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

Enclosed is an additional donation of \$ _____ for

\$ _____ Protectors' SI Natural Areas Defense Fund

\$ _____ Protectors' DEC Teen Camp Scholarship

\$ _____ In honor of _____

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- YES, PLEASE CONTACT ME NO

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ENCLOSED is my tax deductible check for \$ _____ made payable to PROTECTORS OF PINE OAK WOODS, INC.

Mail to: Membership Secretary, P.O. Box 140747, Staten Island, NY 10314-0661

Questions? E-mail ppowmemberships@gmail.com • To join/renew/donate by PayPal, visit siprotectors.org

Moths and butterflies can be found in specific habitats, given the plants found there. Some hotspots are Blue Heron Park, Snug Harbor, Mount Loretto, Conference House Park and Oakwood Beach. Long Pond has the highest diversity in the city.

Dragonflies

Seth mentioned a survey done by the New York Natural Heritage Program (NYNHP), sponsored by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.



The common green darner sports bright blue and green colorings. Use iNaturalist to identify and report your findings in the field. (Credit: Josh Lincoln)

The NYNHP summarizes their findings in their New York Dragonfly and Damselfly Survey (2005-2009): "Our five-year sampling effort yielded many important finds. Most notable were five species added to the list of known odonates for the state, bringing the cumulative total to 194 species, one of the highest diversities of any U.S. state. Participants visited over 2,170 survey sites statewide and a total of 4,383 surveys were conducted, including repeat visits. We confirmed over 18,000 individual species records based on our verification protocol. [The survey] yielded 1,111 new county records beyond these preexisting data..."

Another survey, the Staten Island Dragonfly Atlas, was started in 1996 by Paul Lederer as a project of the Section of Natural History of Staten Island Museum and is ongoing.

There are a variety of habitats for dragonflies and damselflies such as ponds, streams, marshes, swamps, beaches and open fields.

Seth counts 64 species of dragonflies on Staten Island. Common species include:

- Common green darner
- Blue dasher
- Eastern pondhawk
- Common whitetail
- Twelve-spotted skimmer
- Eastern amberwing
- Wandering glider
- Spot-winged glider
- Black saddlebags
- Swamp darner

To emphasize the site-specific habitats the dragonflies require, consider the bar-winged skimmer. It requires shallow, marshy, sunny wetlands to successfully establish a population. Bar-winged skimmers will avoid any deep water shady pools.

Seaside dragonlet favors salt or brackish water and marshes like Bridge Creek, Saw Mill Creek, Freshkills, Brookfield Park and the south end of Wolfe's Pond Park.

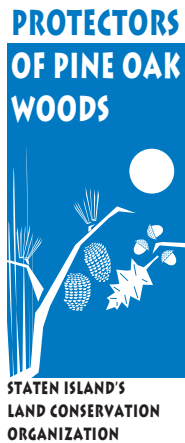
Needham's skimmer prefers highly mineralized water and can be found in New Creek.

New species recently observed here include:

- Harlequin darner

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- Spatterdock darner
- Prince baskettail
- Double-ringed pennant

The blue-faced meadowhawk is new species for the state.

It is without question that habitat protection and open space preservation is critical to the viable and sustainable populations of these wonderful moths and dragonflies.

—Hillel Lofaso

ONLINE SOURCES

New York Dragonfly and Damselfly survey: <https://www.nynhp.org/projects/nydds>

Staten Island Dragonfly Atlas: <https://sidragonflyatlas.blogspot.com/>

Staten Island Outdoors Nature Only: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/283127995179023/>

Don Recklie's Serpentine Barrens Presentation video: <https://youtu.be/2swjJn6x1nA>
or scan the QR code



DEC CAMP PROVIDES MEMORIES

HERE IS AN ESSAY FROM Margaux Sandoval, one of the teens we sponsored to attend the NY State Department of Environmental Conservation's Camp Pack Forest this summer. The funds to attend are provided by our members as part of our mission.

We rolled into Camp Pack Forest and did the necessary Covid testing, medical, and lice check. Once done, I was helped by a counselor to bring my belongings to my assigned cabin.

I immediately made a new friend and we both headed to the pavilion where everyone else was gathered. That same night, our first campfire was held. We all sang songs together, watched skits, and genuinely had a good time.

I was chosen to be part of the Hudson Float group for the long optional, which I was excited about. The eight of us got into pairs to have a buddy in the canoe. We carried our canoes down and helped each other push them into the water. It was such a calming and beautiful experience. We were surrounded by greenery

and nature and we even fished. On top of that we spotted a bald eagle!

We had lunch and played volleyball against the hunter trapper group along with the counselors. Later we got our canoes and set them in the lake with our buddies and put our bags in them for the overnight. We went to our camping site which wasn't too far, set up our tents and spread out to look for firewood. Once it got dark we sat around the campfire, telling stories, laughing, and eating s'mores. We saw the moon rise over the mountain, which to me is a rare occurrence.

The next day we set out to hike and reached the top of the mountain. It was such a beautiful and peaceful site. You could see the rest of the mountain tops when you sat on the edge of the rocks there.

On our last day, we packed our bags and later were together in the dining hall. The counselors handed out certificates. In the end, I received a possible volunteering award (along with a few others) which enables me to come back next year as a volunteer and help out! I was delighted since I enjoyed camp this year and am planning to volunteer the same week with the new friends I've made.

—Margaux Sandoval

SATURDAY, JANUARY 20, 10:00 A.M. TO NOON

Forest Restoration Workshop Below the LaTourette Bike Path – Participants will meet at the entrance to the bike path on the Old Mill Road (west of Richmond Hill Road) next to the old St. Andrews Church. We will go west on the unofficial trail between the bike path and the marsh cutting the invasive vines that escaped us the last time we were there (this will be our 326th monthly workshop). After the work session we will take a short walk over nearby trails. Please register at Eventbrite.com by going to Protectors' web site (siprotectors.org) and using the link in the calendar there. For more information call Brian Smith at (917) 842-6585, or Don Recklies at (718) 768-9036. (*Service credit is available.*)

FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 5:00 P.M. TO 6:30 P.M.

Owl Prowl at High Rock Park – Join with Cliff Hagen as he searches the road less traveled through the deeper, darker areas of the Greenbelt in search of owls. Enjoy an evening walk through the winter woods and listen for screech and great horned owls in the quiet night recesses of Staten Island's largest park. Participants will gather in the parking lot atop Nevada Avenue. For more information call Cliff Hagen at (718) 313-8591.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28, 9:15 A.M. TO 3:45 P.M.

Richard Buegler Winter Greenbelt Walk – Join with Protectors of Pine Oak Woods for a hike through the winter woods of the Greenbelt. Beginning at the trailhead on Staten Island Boulevard behind the Petrides School, participants will climb through Deere Park, cross the top of Todt Hill and wander down through the Saint Francis Woodlands. Bring water, wear sturdy shoes, dress appropriately for the weather. Be sure to confirm that the walk is not cancelled due to snow or forecasted storms. To confirm a day prior please call Dominick Durso at (917) 478-7607.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 10:00 A.M. TO NOON

Arthur Kill Shoreline/Kreischerville Discovery – For folks interested in Staten Island history, participants will step back to the past with tales of Charleston, to a time when horse-drawn carriages brought patrons to Killmeyer's Inn. Participants are encouraged to wear sturdy shoes and warm, winter clothing. Participants will meet at Allenton Lane and Arthur Kill Road, (next to Tides at Charleston Estates). A walk through the woods leading down to the shoreline will bring participants into some of Staten Island's more remote woodlands. For more information contact Jim Scarcella at (718) 873-4291.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 6:00 P.M. TO 7:30 P.M.

Owl Prowl at Blue Heron Park – Having walked each trail from Hylan Boulevard to Amboy Road, Cliff Hagen has an intimate knowledge of the night woods at Blue Heron Park. Meet Cliff in front of the Blue Heron Park Nature Center at 222 Poillon Avenue to join him for this wonderful winter Owl Prowl.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 10:00 A.M. TO NOON

Forest Restoration Workshop Between Paulo's Peak and Seaview – Participants will meet in the Moses Mountain (now Paulo's Peak) parking lot at the intersection of Rockland and Manor Road (or park on Meisner Road opposite the Bluebelt dam close to that intersection), then follow the Yellow Trail past Paulo's Peak where we will take an unmarked turn-off to the left and follow that trail toward Seaview. There we will continue cutting Wisteria and Oriental Bittersweet vines that strangle the trees along the trail. Please register through Eventbrite by going to Protectors' web site and using the link under Forest Restoration Workshop in the calendar. Call Brian Smith at (917) 842-6585 or Don Recklies at (718) 768-9036. (*Service credit is available.*)

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 6:00 P.M. TO 7:30 P.M.

Owl Prowl at Chapin Woods – Join with Cliff Hagen as he searches the road less traveled through the deeper, darker areas of the Greenbelt in search of owls. Enjoy an evening walk through the winter woods and listen for screech and great horned owls in the quiet night recesses of Staten Island's largest park. Participants will gather at the park entrance atop Chapin Avenue. Call Cliff Hagen at (718) 313-8591.

SATURDAY, MARCH 16, 10:00 A.M. TO NOON

Forest Restoration Workshop Below the LaTourette Bike Path – Participants will meet in the "Field of Dreams" parking lot at the southwest end of the bike path (across from Costco) then follow the unofficial trail east between the bike path and the marsh to continue cutting invasive vines that escaped us two months ago (this will be our 328th monthly workshop). Please register through Eventbrite by going to Protectors' web site (siprotectors.org) and using the link under Forest Restoration Workshop in the calendar. Call Brian Smith at (917) 842-6585, or Don Recklies at (718) 768-9036. (*Service credit is available.*)

FRIDAY, MARCH 22, 6:30 P.M. TO 8:00 P.M.

American Woodcock Walk – Staten Island hosts more than one hundred species of breeding birds and none are as entertaining as the American Woodcock. Known for their aerial displays and wild vocalizations, participants are sure to enjoy the evening afield in one of Staten Island's few grassland habitats looking and listening for this charismatic bird. Participants will gather at the corner of Quintard Street and Mason Avenue. Contact Cliff Hagen at (718) 313-8591.

SUNDAY, MARCH 31, NOON TO 2:00 P.M.

A Walk in the Woods at Blue Heron Park – Participants will walk some of the lesser walked trails on the east side of the park hoping that March has indeed "gone out like a lamb" and spring buds are breaking. From the Nature Center at 222 Poillon Avenue we'll follow the Red Trail to Butterfly Pond, then by local roads to the eastern part of the park where we'll check out some awful, unwanted Wisteria, then return to continue the Red Trail loop back to the Nature Center. Inclement weather (but not a sprinkle) will cancel. For more information call Don Recklies at (718) 768-9036.

Important Disclaimer: Our walks and events are suitable for adults and children accompanied by an adult. While we strive for safety, the activities of Protectors of Pine Oak Woods ("Protectors") have certain uncontrollable hazards which each participant undertakes and for which each participant is responsible. Protectors and its event leaders or substitute leaders are not responsible in any way whatsoever for any of these hazards. All participants assume the responsibility and risks of hiking and participating in Protectors events, and release Protectors, its leaders or substitute leaders, from any liability whatsoever for any loss, damage to personal property, or injury, however caused, of any kind, nature, and description. Protectors is not responsible for typographical errors or last-minute changes in the walk schedule.