

# Old Saybrook Conservation Circular

Vol. 8 / September 2019

## ATV's and Public Land in Connecticut



Everyone knows what is an ATV – All Terrain Vehicle - and are aware of their popularity. ATV's are useful utility vehicles - going anywhere where the job requires cross-country mobility and are often used for herding cattle, checking fence lines, checking power lines for a public utility, snow plowing, and forestry services. They are also used by the general public for fun and recreation. There are private land owners who permit ATV's, and many states have specifically designated trails approved for recreational use.

But in Connecticut, ATVs are by law not allowed on public lands. The penalty is arrest for trespass and ANY public official is an enforcer. This means any law enforcement officer of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), motor vehicle inspectors, state police officers, uniformed municipal police officers, constables, state park police officers, state forest police officers, or forest rangers may enforce this regulation.

To many this may seem unfair, but it unfortunately is not. Intentionally or unintentionally, ATVs and their riders can do a great deal of damage to the land. Lately, unauthorized usage has gone up significantly in Old Saybrook - especially in our newest acquisition - the Preserve. Trails have been created by ATV users or they have expanded trails to run through new areas which contain protected or rare plant species. In some instances, boulders have been moved to widen trails. These incursions have a negative impact on wildlife habitat. This land has been preserved for all of us, so please help us to protect this precious resource.

by Glenda Sohl



### Fall Swallow Migration

This fall, take some time to come see the fall swallow migration along the mouth of the Connecticut River. Every fall, hundreds of thousands of several species of swallows gather in huge flocks prior to their departure to the Carolinas and the Gulf Coast. The sight is truly spectacular and there are boat excursions you can book to watch these beautiful birds circle, swerve and dive in mass, as they prepare to roost for the evening in the tall salt marsh grasses. The sight is absolutely breathtaking!



### Damage caused by unauthorized ATV use

If there was a way to prevent ATV's from causing this amount of damage, the argument prohibiting their use would be less of an issue. Unfortunately, the very nature of the vehicle and where it is being ridden has been very detrimental to the local habitats that Connecticut is trying to protect.



#### Birds of Prey Quiz



(Answers on back page)



# Old Saybrook Conservation Committee and Plastic Free July Campaign

These days, it's not difficult to find media reference to reducing our use of plastics. Plastic straws, grocery bags and water bottles are frequently named as easy items to eliminate. The Old Saybrook Conservation Committee adopted plastic reduction and elimination as a focus area for fiscal year 2019-2020. As part of this initiative, the committee decided to use a global program called "Plastic Free July." On June 28, during the Old Saybrook summer side-walk sale, the committee introduced this program to the public. Members of the committee stationed a table and distributed a checklist of items that individuals and families could pledge to avoid during the month of July. And hopefully, the practice would continue throughout the year! This list showed the impact to our landfill waste,

oceans and global warming. The overall intent was to educate and hopefully engage people in seeking alternatives to plastic. Aluminum water bottles were distributed to those that stopped by and took the pledge.

Recycling isn't the best answer anymore - our landfills have fewer options to dispose of recycled plastic. So eliminating plastic wherever possible is crucial to solving this problem. You may be familiar with the 4R's Pledge which is refuse, reuse, reduce and recycle. Check-out the following websites for additional information on how you can make a difference. [www.plasticfreejuly.org](http://www.plasticfreejuly.org) [www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org](http://www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org)

## American Bittersweet vs Oriental Bittersweet



Now that fall is quickly approaching, we will soon



see the fruited bittersweet vines bearing their distinctive orange/red berries with yellow paper-like skins or husks. These vines can be the bane to a landscaper's existence because they can be very invasive and cover shrubs and trees with their vines. However, truth be told, the American bittersweet vine is not as prolific as the invasive Oriental bittersweet. The native American bittersweet grows from Central to Eastern United States and can be distinguished from the Oriental variety in several ways. The native bittersweet has a smooth stem whereas the invasive oriental variety has blunt thorns or spurs. The oriental variety will have berries throughout the entire vine whereas the American variety only has berries at the tips of the stems. The American bittersweet's berries are an orange color in contrast to the oriental bittersweet that has a red orange berry. It is the oriental variety that can topple trees or strangle them with up to 4" thick vines wrapped tightly around the trunks and limbs of a tree. The oriental bittersweet is so prolific that in some areas, the American bittersweet is now endangered and protected.

## International Coastal Cleanup Day



Saturday September 21st is International Coastal Cleanup Day. The Old Saybrook Conservation Commission will be joining the international community in organizing coastal cleanup projects for that day. We have reached out to our local beach associations to organize cleanup teams in their areas and with the help of the Senior High School Ecology Club and local resident volunteers, we will perform a cleanup from Harvey's Beach to the Town Beach along the Great Hammock Road from 9:00am - 1:00pm. Volunteers will also be providing cleanup along the 'Causeway'. Anyone interested in volunteering may sign up by contacting the Land Use Department at 860-395-3131. To learn more about the International Coastal Cleanup Day and events scheduled across the state, please follow this link: <https://oceanconservancy.org/trash-free-seas/international-coastal-cleanup/>



## YFS Environmental Camp

On June 18th, the Old Saybrook Conservation Commission joined forces with Youth and Family Services crafting birdhouses made by local artist Sally Rothenhaus. For this project - the youth provided their favorite digital photos in which Sally transferred the photos onto metal plates that were fastened to the birdhouse fronts. The youth then completed the assembly of the houses and stained the remaining 3 wooden sides. The finished products were truly works of art! During this event Richard Esty - chairman of the Conservation Commission - spoke with the youth about the different bird species that would nest in these structures as well as provided an audio book which played the songs of each of the bird species. After assembly of the houses, discussions on plastics and pollution and an interactive game was enjoyed by the youth. All in all, it was a great day of learning and fun for everyone involved.

### Conservation Commission Members

Richard Esty, Chair  
Christine Picklo, Vice Chair  
Kelly Hartshorn, Secretary  
Donna Leake  
Larry Ritzhaupt  
Glenda Sohl  
Tomas Gezo  
Joseph Bradley, Student Rep.

### Answers to Birds of Prey Quiz:

- 1 - Great Horned Owl - Photo by Irving Esty
- 2 - Short Eared Owl - Stock Photo
- 3 - Peregrine Falcon - Photo by Richard Esty
- 4 - Marsh Hawk - Photo by Richard Esty
- 5 - Sparrow Hawk - Photo by Irving Esty
- 6 - Screech Owl - Stock Photo
- 7 - Osprey - Photo by Tom Gezo
- 8 - Red Tailed Hawk - Stock Photo

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