



Fall 2007

Utica Marsh Council

Utica Marsh Council, Inc., P.O. Box 73, Utica New York 13503

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About Us

The Utica Marsh Council is a non-profit, volunteer organization that promotes environmental education using the Utica Marsh. Several of our members are active in community education. Many educational resources are available to the public through our website (http://academics.hamilton.edu/biology/ewilliam/utica_marsh.html) including a Field Trip Guide for those who wish to lead nature walks through the marsh.

The Utica Marsh Council also works for conservation of marsh resources and advises NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) on matters affecting the Utica Marsh.

Birding at the Utica Marsh

The Utica Marsh is a wonderful place to watch birds. Over 150 different species of birds can be seen here. While there are birds in the marsh year round, it is really fun to go birding during the spring and fall migrations, which is when many birds stop at the marsh on their way North or South. The Kirkland Bird Club takes birding trips to Utica Marsh regularly. The following list is from one of their trips last spring, and it provides a sense of the bird species that can be seen at Utica Marsh in April:

Pied-billed Grebe
Red-necked Grebe
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Canada Goose
Wood Duck
Green-winged Teal
Blue-winged Teal
Mallard
Northern Shoveler
Gadwall
American Wigeon
Ring-necked Duck
Bufflehead
Common Merganser
Osprey
American Coot
Ring-billed Gull
Mourning Dove
Blue Jay



American Crow
Black-capped Chickadee
American Robin
Northern Cardinal
Song Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
Red-winged Blackbird
Brown-headed Cowbird



North Pond of Utica Marsh in August 2007

Water Level Down in North Pond

Many people may have noticed that the water level in the Utica Marsh was very low this year. Most natural wetlands go through wet-dry cycles to aerate the soil and regenerate plants. The normal cycle of a wetland is: dry → re-germination → re-flood → plants gradually decrease (depending upon water level) → open water → draw down → dry. Normal disturbances of an ecosystem (e.g. flooding, fires, drying) usually result

in increased productivity and benefit wildlife. The Utica Marsh has not had a dry cycle since a water control structure was put in the late 1980's. With declines in submerged and emergent vegetation and a high carp population, the DEC decided that a drawdown of the marsh was necessary to promote growth in this ecosystem. So, this spring, the DEC was able to take about 2 feet of water from the north pond (near Rt. 12).

The drawdown, in addition to the paucity of rainfall, resulted in virtually no open water in the north pond by the end of the summer. Plant response was good with a lot of smartweed and bidens growing in the damp soils. The Utica Marsh will eventually re-flood and the cycle will begin again. Drawdown events help maintain productivity for a wide array of plants and animals.

Utica Marsh Happenings

Utica Monday Nite Walk and Talk Series

Matt Perry led the first walk on June 18th entitled 'Bird Watching'. The attendees were very interested in identifying birds by their vocalizations and the group spent time listening intently and learning methods to remember the various songs and calls.

Sharon Wise led "Life at the water's edge" on July 16th. Along their walk they observed basking turtles and remnants of turtle nests as well as defoliation of purple loosestrife thanks to the Purple Project!

On August 20th, Laura Erlandson discussed "Things that fly aren't always birds". With nets in hand, they went into the marsh searching for

insects. They also talked about one of insects' biggest predators, bats!

Annual Dinner and Speaker

Each year, the Utica Marsh Council holds their September meeting at a restaurant and invites someone to give a presentation relevant to the Utica Marsh. This year, we met at the Blue Flag Restaurant. We enjoyed a wonderful meal and companionship. We also learned about aquatic snails from Dr. Thomas McCarthy (Utica College). His talk was entitled: "Genetic similarity influences mating behavior and reproductive success in a hermaphroditic snail, *Physa gyrina*".

Conservation Efforts in the Utica Marsh

Invasive plants such as honeysuckle and Japanese knotweed can have negative effects on native plants in the marsh by competing for precious nutrients and sunlight. Apple trees are an example of one plant that is affected in this way; they need plenty of sunlight in order to thrive. This spring, the Utica Marsh Council and DEC flagged some apple trees that grow along the main trail and cleared the area around these trees of invasive plants. Wildlife, such as deer, squirrel, and fox, depend on apple trees for food. Apple trees also provide habitat for many birds. Therefore, it is important to keep these trees healthy and productive.



Bryant Buchanan clearing growth from around apple trees in Utica Marsh

Join or Renew Your Membership

Please help support the development of educational activities and general use of the Utica Marsh, and take advantage of activities, programs, and equipment that are available to our members, their families, and interested groups.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ E-mail _____

Check appropriate membership category (renewable each April)

- Individual \$10 _____
- Family \$15 _____
- Organization \$25 _____
- Lifetime \$100 _____

Check if interested in volunteering

Annual Clean up Day _____
 Educational Programs _____

Check if enclosing a donation

for the annual clean up
 _____ Donation

Check if interested in:

Attending Meetings _____ Receiving meeting minutes (e-mail only) _____

Please make your tax-deductible amount payable to the Utica Marsh Council, Inc., and mail this form and check to: **Utica Marsh Council, PO Box 73, Utica, NY 13503**

Get Involved in the Utica Marsh

The Utica Marsh Council welcomes anyone who wishes to participate. We hold regular meetings on the third Thursday evening of each month at 6:30. Meetings are currently held at Utica College, 208 (Willard) DePerno Hall (check out www.utica.edu for a map of college campus).

This year's meetings will be held on:

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| December 20 th | June 19 th |
| January 17 th | Summer TBA |
| February 21 st | September 18 th |
| March 20 th | October 16 th |
| April 17 th | November 20 th |
| May 22 nd | |

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President: Laura Weiser Erlandson
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Treasurer: Charles Williams

We're on the Web!

See us at:

[http://academics.hamilton.edu/
biology/ewilliam/utica_marsh.html](http://academics.hamilton.edu/biology/ewilliam/utica_marsh.html)



Aerial view of the Utica Marsh

About The Utica Marsh...

The Utica Marsh is an urban wetland consisting of 213 acres that lie mostly within the city of Utica. The marsh provides a home for diverse plants and animals and is characterized by a mixture of different wetland habitats. Bordering the Mohawk River and New York Barge Canal, the Utica Marsh is a wildlife management area of the state of New York and is managed by the NYS Dept of Environmental Conservation. It is located at the end of Barnes Avenue and easily accessible. Come visit and enjoy the beauty of the marsh!

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