

C H A U T A U Q U A



BIRD
TREE
&
GARDEN
CLUB



The Martins Are Coming!

And they will want their summer homes opened, cleaned, and refurbished with a fresh carpet of white pine needles. Fortunately the landlord will be ready. **Jack Gulvin** has been caring for Chautauqua's **102 purple martin condos for 22 years** and he's a pro.

This time of year, Jack tunes into the [PMCA scout report](#) (**Purple Martin Conservation Association**) to track the migration of our birds on their return trip from **Brazil**.

According to scout reports, the first martins arrived in the US on December 27 and have been making their way north since then, sometimes **flying 300 miles a day**. They usually arrive in Chautauqua around the **first of April**. One day very soon, when the martins are at or near Erie, PA and the weather is nice, Jack will fetch the houses and gourds from the Sports Club where they spent the winter, hang them up on the poles (four poles along the lake shore and one on the golf course), and stuff each of the houses with **white pine needles** he collects every third week of October. White pine needles are the ideal nesting material for martins.

The older birds are the first to arrive, usually in **early April**. The last to arrive are the one-year old birds in May. But it's no different for martins than it is for humans in Chautauqua - if you wait until mid-May, you're unlikely to find housing here because the early birds have claimed every condo. So the one-year olds go off in search of new homes. (If you put up a purple martin house, your first tenants will be one-year olds looking for a starter home.) This is actually quite healthy for the martin population as a whole because it spreads out the gene pool.

Meanwhile back in Chautauqua, courtship and mating continues from April until about mid-May when the expectant parents get serious about the nesting. Jack knows the eggs are about to be laid when he sees **green leaves in the nesting material**. The first eggs will likely hatch in **early June**. By **late July**, the flock will depart for Brazil, stopping near Westfield on the coast of Lake Erie for a brief pre-migratory roosting period to rest and reunite with martins from all over the region before hitting the airstreams to **Brazil**.

While the martins are in residence, **Jack checks the nests every five days**, keeping careful logs on the eggs and chicks in each compartment and performing nest changes as needed to get rid of blow fly maggots, which kill the chicks. Last year the Chautauqua nests fledged **245 new martins**.

The 2022 **Purple Martin Chats will be Thursdays at 4:15pm** Weeks One through Four. We hope you can join us for one. If not, [click here to watch a video of Jack's Purple Martin Chat](#).

- Leslie Renjilian

- photos by Angela James. Purple martin eggs (above). Jack performing a nest check during his Purple Martin Chat (below)



Save the Date!

Please put **Friday, August 5, 2022** on your calendars for our **Annual Life Member Luncheon**. Our own **Jeanne Wiebenga** will present a slideshow and talk, entitled ***Return of the Ospreys to Chautauqua Lake***. Jeanne's *Art of the Osprey* photography exhibit debuted last summer at the **Roger Tory Peterson Institute**. Printed in large-format on metal, her photographs of the local osprey were featured alongside photos that Roger Tory Peterson took half a century earlier in Connecticut.

Jeanne has documented the local **Loomis Bay osprey family** since (almost) the moment of their arrival in Chautauqua. The osprey platform was built in 2015, but sat uninhabited for five years. Driving by one day in the **spring of 2020**, Jeanne noticed an osprey circling the platform. She knew immediately that she had found a new focus for her passion for photographing wildlife - this time close to home, since travel during the first year of Covid was not an option.

One striking photo shows the male carrying what was likely one of the foundational sticks of the now-enormous nest. Jeanne returned regularly to Loomis Bay to photograph the pair and their offspring **throughout the 2020 and 2021 seasons**. Her photographs will be on display at the Athenaeum Hotel this summer ahead of the luncheon.

In addition to the lecture, the lunch will serve as the **BTG annual member meeting**. As such, attendance at the lunch is restricted to **Sustaining Life Members** (Life Members who have paid current year's dues of \$35). [To become a Life Member or pay 2022 dues, please click here](#). If you are not sure whether you are a Life Member or whether you have paid your dues already, [please email us](#). **Tickets for the luncheon will go on sale in late spring.**

- Leslie Renjilian and Jeanne Wiebenga
 - photo by Jeanne Wiebenga of Femke, the female adult osprey, in June 2020
-
-



Robins vs. Worms

by Betsy Burgeson
Supervisor of Gardens & Landscapes
(and Contributing Editor to the BTG Newsletter!)

Gardeners are always looking at soil - whether under their nails or in their garden beds. To me, nothing is more exciting than working in the garden for the first time each spring - taking in a deep breath of that fresh "earth" smell while watching the robins hop around feasting on worms that have helped create the beautiful rich dark soil.

This spring I am rooting for the robins (and anything that eats worms) as they may be our only hope for controlling the most aggressive, the most disheartening, the most ironic invasive pest I have ever seen...the ASIAN JUMPING WORM. Also known as Alabama Jumpers, Crazy Worms, Snake Worms or the wonderful combination of CRAZY SNAKE WORM, they are invasive worm species in the Genus *Amyntas*.

I have always been an advocate for worms and vermicomposting but what once was friend has become an unbeatable nemesis. They spread faster than gossip and are more voracious than a 13-year-old boy at a taco bar. I grew up learning that worms were good things to see in the garden and now I dread finding them throughout the gardens of Chautauqua Institution. They make the soil appear beautiful, rich and nicely turned over, but it is a façade. What they leave behind looks like coffee grounds that are devoid of nutrients and turn to dust when it dries out. They throw the entire ecosystem out of balance, as most invasive pests do, but the real kicker is that - unlike other invasives - there is not much we can do to control them. The researchers I have spoken with said,

at this point, since we have them throughout the gardens the best thing we can do is see what plants can co-exist with these invaders and mourn the loss of the diversity we had before. I am not usually a Debbie Downer and I am trying to stay hopeful. I will continue to educate myself and the Gardens Team on the importance of minimizing the spread and I encourage all of you to do the same.

And if you are walking the grounds this season and happen to see a crew of gardeners spontaneously break into cheers for robins you now know why and are more than welcome to join in!

-text and photo by Betsy Burgeson. Betsy also supplied the clever preview line "Trowel & Error..." Thanks, BB! In the photo, please note the worms on the surface of the granular soil they created, both hallmarks of the Jumpers.

For more information on Jumping Worms:

[Cool Green Science Blog: Jumping Worms: The Creepy Damaging Invasive You Don't Know](#)

[Invasive Jumping Worm Fact Sheet for Homeowners](#)

[Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Website on Jumping Worms](#)

[National Park Service Species Spotlight – Crazy Snake-Worm Factsheet](#)



Solomon's Seal

Correction: in the February Newsletter, I incorrectly identified the flower above as doghobble (*Leucothoe*), when in fact it is **Solomon's Seal (*Polygonatum*)**.

Kudos to the sharp eyes of Jane Ellison and Jack Gulvin and thank you both for sending me an email about the mistaken identity. To the rest of you: pay attention! I need all the help I can get.

The flowers of both the doghobble and the Soloman's Seal remind me of drooping lilies. With your help, I hope to have a **regular Drooping of the Lilies memorial** in this newsletter with a list of those BTG members we have lost. If you know of a BTG member who has died, [please email me so that I can include their names](#) under the *Solomon's Seal* in future issues.

- Leslie Renjilian
- Photo by Angela James



Ash vs. Borer

In 2015, there were 243 ash trees on Institution property in Chautauqua; today there are 19. The reason is the **Emerald Ash Borer**, a jewel beetle from China which arrived in the US in 2002 and has killed over 50 million trees so far, with no sign of slowing.

In 2018, working with an arborist to determine which trees should be removed and which might be saved, Chautauqua removed over 150 trees and began treating the remaining 75 trees. Some responded well but many became infected in spite of the treatment. In 2021, CI re-evaluated the benefits of continuing to treat the ash and decided to remove all of the remaining ash except the big one by Lenna Hall. It was a reasonable decision for the Institution which has to weigh many factors in determining their budget.

However, the **mission of the BTG** is much simpler - to promote and preserve the beauty of the Chautauqua grounds...and...the **conservation and expansion of our tree canopy**. Since our founding in 1913, the BTG has partnered with the Institution in conservation efforts. In that spirit, the BTG Ash Tree Initiative was conceived and the BTG board voted in January to pay for **ongoing treatment of 18 ash trees**. Betsy Burgeson identified these 18 because they are healthy and well-situated, and responded to previous treatment.

As soon as the ash trees leaf out this spring, an arborist will come out to install ports in the bases of the ash to administer the insecticide. The treatment will have to be repeated every two years until the plague is over. Naturally the trees will be monitored and if any fail to respond and become infected, they will be removed.

We would like to **thank the following people who have donated** to the Ash Tree Initiative:

Lauren and Dave Benson
Gayle and Andrew Camden
Susi and Dave Dailey
Dede and Dan McEvoy
Shelia Penrose

If you would like to **add your support** to the Ash Tree Initiative, please email me or donate on our website.

- Leslie Renjilian
- photo by Betsy Burgeson of a piece of ash bark showing the burrowing tracks of the ash borer larvae



Bird News: Some Good, Some Bad

First, the bad news: A PRESS RELEASE from The Jamestown Audubon Community Nature Center:

Jamestown, N.Y. – To stem the spread of Highly Pathogenic **Avian Influenza**, regional nature conservation organizations are encouraging residents to join them in following the recommendation of the Cornell Cooperative Extension to stop activities that cause birds to gather. These activities include pausing all bird feeding and bath filling. For more information, [click here](#), but for now, **please take down those bird feeders.**

And the good news: A PRESS RELEASE from the New York Department of Environmental Conservation:

'**Greater Niagara**' **Birding Trail** Includes 36 Locations in Five Western New York Counties New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Basil Seggos today announced the grand opening of the Greater Niagara segment of the **New York State Birding Trail** to highlight the State's world-class and wide-ranging birding opportunities. For more info, [click here](#).

Editorial Note: The NYS Trail is not in Chautauqua County yet, so let's work on that!

- photo by Jeanne Wiebenga of her backyard feeder in Chautauqua (before she took it down!). I believe her guests include an American goldfinch (top left), a house sparrow (top right), and a dark-eyed junco (on the bottom), but Gentle Reader, I do hope you'll [let me know](#) if I'm wrong!



Sneak Peek into the 2022 House & Garden Tour

[Click here](#) for a **virtual "Kitchen Tour"** of the houses on this year's in-person tour, which will be held on **July 14, 2022**.

Tickets are going fast, but there are still a few left and you can still get yours by clicking the green button below.

Proof of vaccination and indoor masking will be required on tour day. We have cut the number of tickets by one-third this year to reduce crowding.

- Leslie Renjilian
- Photos above and on the linked "Kitchen Tour" by Angela James

[Purchase Tickets for the House & Garden Tour](#)

Welcome Charter Members to the Henrietta Ord Jones Society

Suzanne Aldrich
Joan Alexander
Elaine Arciszewski
Rita Argen Auerbach
Caroline Van Kirk Bissell
Margie Buxbaum
Barbara Brady
Barbara Branch
Judith Doebke
Kristen Doebler
Bob Jeffrey
Chris Flanders
Jennifer and Kent Francois
Lisa Ann Gierszal
Paula Gierszal
Marjorie Gingell
Elizabeth Goodwin
Cheryl Gorelick
Carla Hengerer
Erica Higbie
Sarah Hughes
Selina and Robert Johnson

Jeannette Kahlenberg
Liz Keough
Nancy Kyler
Susan McKee
Dennis McNair
Alan Nelson
Linda Nelson
Jerry O'Connor
Janine Obee
Mary Lou Parlato
Maria Perron
Rosemary Rappole
Leslie and Tim Renjilian
Joan Smith
Sydelle Sonkin
Nick Stupianski
Sharon Thawley
Meg Viehe
Susy Warren
Katherine White
Vince Zaleski
Barbara Zeugel

Add your name to the list! Charter Membership is **still open** for the Henrietta Ord Jones Society.

Known as "The Little General," Henrietta Ord Jones founded the Bird and Tree Club in 1913 and donated the land for the Arboretum two years later. This society supports the House and Garden Tour, a BTG tradition for almost 70 years.

Membership in the Henrietta Ord Jones Society is **\$150**. Members of the HOJ Society will receive **a ticket to the 2022 House & Garden Tour** and **an invitation to a special event** this summer. The names of those who **sign up by April 1** will be published in the 2022 House and Garden Tour Ticket Booklet and will be thanked by name in the Chautauquan Daily. We are so grateful for your additional support.

p.s. If you would like your name listed differently, please let me know! That's important stuff and I apologize if I've gotten it wrong in the newsletter.

[Join the HOJ Society](#)

