

Paddling on the Creek

Taking a canoe or kayak down the Butternut Creek is a unique way to experience our valley. In mid June the BVA and OCCA hosted the second annual Fun Float. Jeff O'Handley, of OCCA, pointed out kingfishers, beaver dams, invasive species and erosion. It was a great way to meet neighbors and visitors and learn about our watershed.



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*The BVA is a 501(c)(3)
that serves the communities
within the watershed of the
Butternut Creek*

NEWSLETTER

Autumn
2019

Protecting and Conserving the Quality of Life in the Butternut Valley

Greetings, Friends of the Butternut Valley

Publishing a newsletter to keep our friends and neighbors informed has been on our "To Do" list for a long time. Now that Executive Director Graham Stroh has been with us for a year, BVA's engine is revved up and we are doing it! So, welcome to this first BVA Newsletter.

In 2007 BVA began as a "twinkle in the eyes" of the late Ben Friedman, with a backyard meeting of a few folks interested in connecting the Butternut Valley community and establishing our BVA mission.

This year our annual Summer Harvest Festival was our 11th and was accomplished thanks to the energetic



Ed Lentz, BVA Board Chair

work of our committee led by Director and Vice-Chair Stacia Norman with assistance from numerous others including Maggie Brenner and Bob Thomas.

BVA's success is due to the hard work of our generous volunteers as well as collaboration with like-minded organi-

zations. We have launched numerous projects and programs including:

- Butternut Creek Assessment
- Fun Floats
- Community Presentations
- Butternut Creek Water Quality Monitoring
- Re-introduction of the American Eel into the Butternut
- Establishment of the Friends of the Otsego County Fair
- New Lisbon Gravel Grinder bike ride
- Environmental Field School

We are looking forward to doing even more in pursuit of our mission:

To protect and conserve the environmental qualities, farming, economic development and cultural heritage in the Butternut Creek watershed.

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30 Miles {
Length of the watershed

4,400 People {
Approximate population

130 Sq. Miles
Watershed area

by Bob Thomas

The Underwater “Stork”

A few years ago Paul Lord, a researcher from SUNY Oneonta, brought his scuba equipment to the Butternut Creek seeking information about the oldest animals in the watershed — pearly mussels. Not only did he find the mussels, he found the creek to be exceptionally clean and healthy.

In some places the mussels were sparse and in other places they were too numerous to count according to the study that he published in 2011. Surprised at one aspect of his study, he found that there were a lot of older mussels but few or no younger mussels. Mussels can live for decades and some may reach 120 years of age.

Knowledgeable about the life cycle of mussels, Paul describes that they

produce eggs that grow into *glochidia* that “hitch a ride” up and downstream in the gills of a fish. These *glochidia* continue to evolve until they drop off and attach permanently to the bottom of the stream, growing into an adult mussel.

The storks in the fairy tales are large white birds that deliver babies to happy parents. The American Eel does the work of the stork for these mussels.

The eel has an interesting life cycle, too. Mature eels from the east coast of North America swim downstream into the Atlantic Ocean to an area called the Sargasso Sea. There, the mature eels spawn and die. The eggs they produced hatch into tiny, nearly clear eels called glass eels that then drift for months on the currents, eventually finding fresh wa-

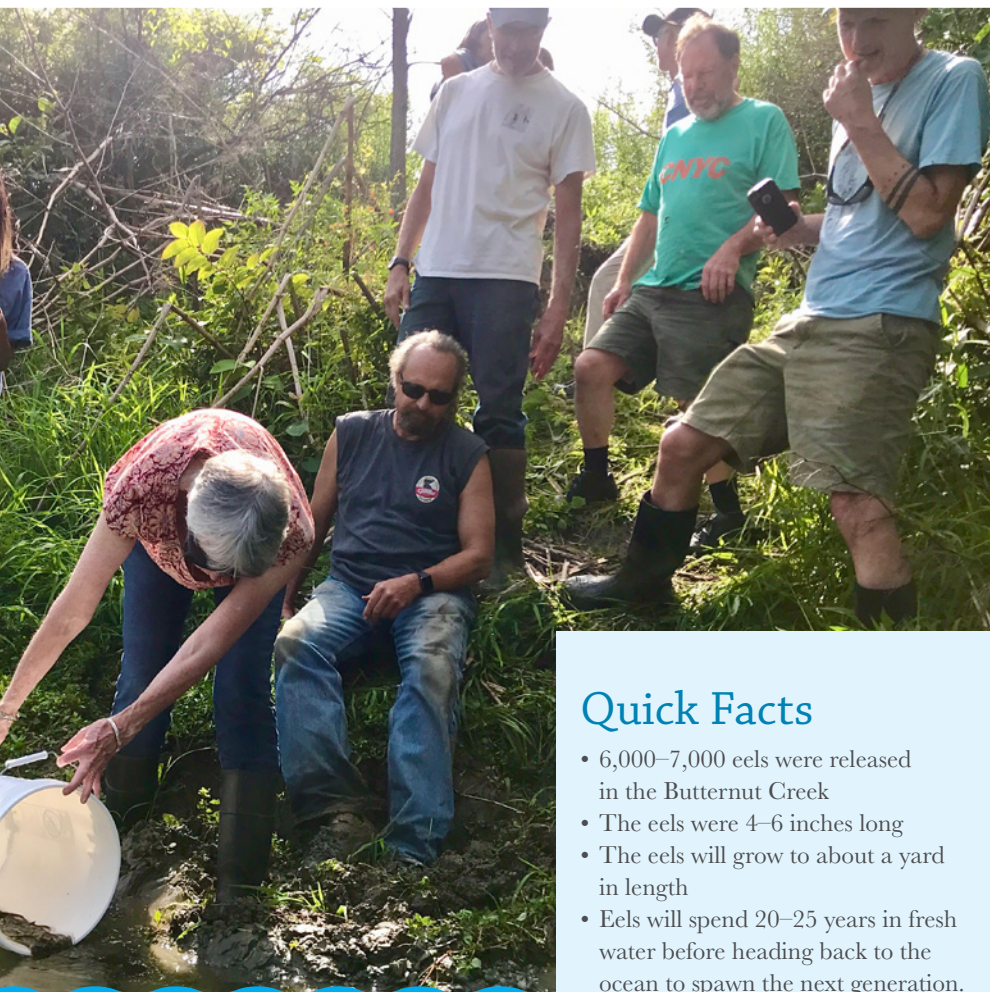
ter and swimming upstream.

Before dams were built, eels could swim upstream through the watersheds along the coast. The dams blocked that migration and eels in those watersheds died out. Up to now, the Butternut Creek watershed had no eels due to dams on the

Susquehanna River. In fact, the young eels have trouble getting past the very first dam they encounter: the Conowingo Dam in Maryland, close to where the Susquehanna River joins the Chesapeake Bay. Since 1928, when the dam was completed, few eels have been able to get past that migration barrier. In the nearby Delaware River, which is free of such large dams downstream, eels have continued to return from the sea regularly.

A program at the Conowingo Dam traps migrating eels and lifts them over the dam assisting their migration upstream. After lining up equipment and obtaining the necessary permits from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Paul Lord and co-researcher Sarah Coney were able to acquire some of the collected eels and truck them north to release. On August 14, approximately 6,500 young eels were released into Butternut Creek. A group of volunteers of Butternut Valley Alliance members and local residents helped transfer the eels from the tank on the pickup truck to the creek at Bailey Road in Morris.

In this way, the underwater “storks” were restored to the Butternut Creek. In the years to come, Paul and his team will continue monitoring them and the restoration of pearly mussels.



Quick Facts

- 6,000–7,000 eels were released in the Butternut Creek
- The eels were 4–6 inches long
- The eels will grow to about a yard in length
- Eels will spend 20–25 years in fresh water before heading back to the ocean to spawn the next generation.

Remembering BVA Founder and Board Member, Ben Friedman

Ben-Ami Friedman, city planner, avid gardener and self-taught historian, died on July 21, 2019. Born in Los Angeles,



CA, Ben-Ami was the son of Meyer and Adina Friedman who escaped the pogroms in Eastern Europe. As a youth leader in Habonim Dror, he grew up living the ideology of Tikkun Olam, Hebrew for “mending the world,” and focused his career on making this

world better through community/urban revitalization and historical/environmental preservation. With degrees in both agriculture and urban/environmental planning, he worked for various national public/private agencies and also as a consultant. Later in life, he dedicated himself to the Butternut Valley creating the General Jacob Morris State Forest in 2006 and envisioning the Butternut Valley Alliance where he served on the board.

Donations for the scholarship may be made in his name to the Butternut Valley Alliance, 111 County Highway 10, Morris, NY, 13808 or online at butternutvalleyalliance.org.

BVA Visionary Scholarship Award

The BVA has established a fund in memory of Ben-Ami Friedman to support scholarships to local high-school seniors. An annual competition will ask students to envision a sustainable future for the Butternut Valley watershed and to present their concepts to our Board and the community.

BVA's goal is to spark an inter-generational, community-wide conversation about the civic, economic, cultural, agricultural and environmental actions needed to make their visions for the future a reality. The student with the winning entry will receive an award to support their higher education at a two- or four- year college or technical/trade school.

by Doug Ernst

Summer Harvest Festival

On August 15, the Butternut Valley Alliance hosted its 11th annual Summer Harvest Festival. True to our tradition of promoting the Morris Farmers Market and our local agricultural community, the Summer Harvest Festival has also grown into a showcase for local restaurants, musicians, and artists.

This festival has something for everyone: a kiddie tractor pull and tractor display by Tired Iron of the Butternut Valley, face painting, historical society dis-

plays and the Binghamton ZooMobile. Also featured are displays from local archeologists, craft and art demonstrations, local politicians, and an expanded selection of booths whose vendors offered vegetables, meat, eggs, baked goods, maple syrup, crafts, jewelry, and other local products. And, perennial favorites — free food and ice cream.

We thank our artists: Jim Whitaker, Diana Schwab, Jason and Simona from Gilbertsville Expressive Movement, Ray Bartoo, and Marilyn Roveland from Butternut Valley Arts and Crafts Center. We also thank our musicians: Khalil Carney, Kimberly Collison, Tom O'Dell, Andre Ernst, Margaret Ernst,

Sebastian Fredette, Sarah Giglio, Alexis Haluska and also Ken Held for providing his sound technician assistance every year. A big thank you goes out to Tina Shields and Paul Tourtellotte who are original members of the Morris Farm Market. And thanks to all the vendors, both new and returning, who shared their time and local goods with us.

The BVA enjoys providing this opportunity for all to pause and enjoy the sights, sounds and tastes of summer while in the company of friends and neighbors in a relaxed, festive atmosphere.

We'll see you next year at the 12th annual Summer Harvest Festival in August!

Our friends from the Binghamton ZooMobile





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Managing Vehicle Speeds

Transportation is something that affects every one of us. Steve Gayle, resident of Butternuts and nationally recognized transportation planner, will present some ideas and engage you in a conversation about how we can provide a safe travel environment for all users.



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BVA Holiday Party!

The end of the year is a good time to celebrate our accomplishments and this year the BVA has a lot to celebrate. Please join us for an informal get-together. Watch our website for details.

Greetings from page 4

As a volunteer-driven organization, we continue to rely on our members and friends, like you, to share with us your ideas, your time, and, yes, your financial support. We are a frugal bunch but we do have expenses and we rely heavily on your generosity, as well as on our business partners, for financial support.

We thank our friends and business supporters at Central New York Tents, Chobani, Empire House Restaurant, Faithful Friends Pet Crematory, Gates-Cole Insurance Agency, Get The Scoop Ice Cream, Logan's Refuse & Trucking, Meadow-Vale Campsites, Morris Garage, Morris Insurance Agency, Mt. Vision Garden Center and Town & Country Tree Service.

So, as we gear up for our annual fundraising drive, which will begin soon,



First Gravel Grinders ride starts in Garratsville.

we ask you to think about all the good things BVA is doing and, with your support, will be able to do in the future.

In that vein, soon you will receive a member survey that seeks your input about what we do well, what we can do better, and how we can best serve our community. We look forward to receiving your comments and suggestions.

Meanwhile . . . Happy Autumn!

Ed Lentz, Board Chair
Butternut Valley Alliance

Please Join or Donate to the Butternut Valley Alliance

The BVA is doing good work in the Butternut Valley for us, for our children and for our children's children. Help us maintain the pace of our work by supporting the alliance with your generous donation. Please also invite your friends

to become BVA members. Donations small or large to the BVA go a long way. Donations can be made by check or online at the Butternut Valley Alliance website:

butternutvalleyalliance.org

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