



# THE NIAGARA EXPLORER

*Newsletter of Adirondack Mountain Club Niagara  
Frontier Chapter*

## Message from the Chair

Friends,

Having access to the outdoors, either locally in Upstate New York or in the Adirondacks or even in our National Parks and Forests across the country has always been a privilege that I've enjoyed, and I know that if you're reading this newsletter you share that enthusiasm with me. As the winter season approaches, I want to encourage you to combine your connection with others with your love of the outdoors in the upcoming year by sharing your outdoor adventures with others. I would humbly suggest that the best way to do that would be to open an invitation to others in the ADK community and be a guide or co-guide on an outdoor adventure!



We have a very active community here in Western New York, and access to plenty of outdoor spaces in less than a 60 minute drive. My goal would be to see our Chapter sponsor at least 2 outings per month. I intend to support that by committing to lead at least one hike or other activity over 2025. It's easy to join me on this – plan a hike and invite others by sending an email to Frank Meyer, our Outings Chair.

— Jonathan Coupal

### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!**

The Chapter is still seeking a volunteer to fill the positions of **Education Chair and Newsletter Editor**

If interested, please reach out to Chapter Chair, Jonathan Coupal.

### What's Inside

#### November 2024

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## November Program

**November 12<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 pm, program by Mike Radomski, Winter 2024 Grand Canyon Adventure**

Mike Radomski will take us through the Grand Canyon on a whitewater adventure! He will discuss the logistics of his private whitewater raft trip from winter 2024 which was filled with big rapids and epic views of the Grand Canyon. He will describe all of the major rapids: House Rock, Hance, Horn Creek, Granite, Hermit, Crystal, Bedrock, Deubendorf, Upset, and Lava Falls Rapids. Mike will also showcase the many amazing hikes at Nankoweap Granaries, Havasu Canyon, Thunder River and Thunder Spring, Blacktail Canyon, Elves Chasm, Redwall Cavern, Deer Creek, and Pumpkin Spring.



Mike Radomski, former Chair of ADK-NFC, is the founder of Outside Chronicles and the WNY Hiking challenge. He is an avid outdoor enthusiast who enjoys hiking, climbing mountains, paddling whitewater, and fly fishing. Mike became an Adirondack 46er in 2020, a Winter 46er in 2022, the Catskill 3500ers in 2023. He is a New York State Licensed Guide (#8040) and a whitewater raft guide through Zoar Valley, Letchworth State Park, and the Black River. Mike earned a master's degree in Great Lakes Environmental Science and is trained in Wilderness First Aid, CPR/AED, and Swiftwater Rescue L4.— **Programs Co-chairs Pam Sander and Larry Moses**

## October Program Recap



**October 8, 2024**—Our October main program featured author and journalist, Randi Minetor, who presented captivating tales from her non-fiction stories of the fatal mistakes people make when they venture into unfamiliar wilderness in our national parks. At this well attended meeting (we had more than 50 people in attendance), Randi offered insights into why people are driven to challenge themselves no matter the odds against their safe return and provided helpful tips on how to avoid disasters in a national park. Randi gave examples of seemingly experienced outdoors enthusiasts who were not exempt from succumbing to tragedy.

From her “Death in the National Parks” series, Randi described how lives were lost due to forgetting critical steps in trip preparation, forging off into wild lands far too challenging for their level of experience, refusing advice, and ignoring weather reports and warnings from rangers and more seasoned adventurers. Randi described how some people took unnecessary chances or overestimated their own skill level, while others perished simply because they were in the wrong place at the right time. Some people fell victim to lightning strikes or falling rocks, and campers becoming a source of food for hungry grizzly bears. Randi also told stories of how people fell prey to other people who set out to kill them, banking on the seclusion of the backcountry, the lack of witnesses, and the likelihood that high cliffs or deep canals will hide their misdeeds forever.

## October Program Recap (cont'd)

Randi and her husband Nic set up a display with a nice selection of her books for purchase and our Librarian, Karen Coupal, selected several for our library! You can find her books on Goodreads and Amazon.

Author and journalist Randi Minetor has written more than 90 published books, primarily about America's national parks, hiking, birding, nature, and historic cities across the country. A working writer for more than 40 years, Randi and her husband Nic have crisscrossed America since 1992, have seen all 50 states, and almost all of the 431 units of the National Park system. — **Programs Co-chair Pam Sander**

### Education Program

The **6:15 Education Session** will be Backcountry Meals Part II: a continuation of the discussion of Meal Planning and Preparation, including types of packable food, determining your calorie needs and ensuring adequate nutrition for your next outdoors adventure. There is a field trip scheduled the following Saturday to see stoves in action!

### Looking Ahead...

**Tuesday, December 10, 2024**—The return of our Traditional Potluck Dinner! This will be a night of great potluck foods, holiday cheer, and door prizes! If you plan on attending, please bring a favorite dish to pass and your own utensils. Further information including meeting time to be announced in the upcoming weekly and December newsletter.

### Conservation Corner

#### **Take Action:**

\*Erie County is updating its Forest Management Plan and is requesting public involvement. Several ADK members recently joined 30 individuals on an Erie County led ranger hike to Forestry lot #1 on Genesee Road in Sardinia to learn more about that particular forestry lot and the Forestry Management Plan Update process. We discussed the forest habitat and what types of recreational activities are available at that forestry lot. The forestry staff emphasized that public input will help determine how the Forestry Management Plan is written. Currently public input is being sought using an on-line survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/T8B6GN8>. As an outdoor recreational group we are interested in keeping or expanding hiking trails at the Sardinia Forest Lot or possibly creating some on other forestry lots. Something else to keep in mind is that at the time these lots were originally purchased, the world was not experiencing an imminent climate crisis. What other benefits does a forest provide besides timber? A forest contributes to improving the health of the environment for humans and animals by decreasing global warming, sequestering carbon, lowering the temperature, providing wildlife habitat and corridors for animal migration. Spending time enjoying nature provides many physical and mental benefits. Please write in a comment if the answers provided do not include an option you believe is important for the plan to consider. Express your views on whether the undeveloped forest plots should be part of New York States commitment to the 30 x 30 global campaign to protect 30% of ecologically productive lands and waters by the year 2030.

Background information about the Forest Management Plan update can be accessed at [Home | Erie County FMP \(wixstudio.io\)](#).

## Conservation Corner (cont'd)

### In the news:

**Zoar Valley** – Letters to the editor have increased voicing citizen's concerns about the DEC plan to log over 1000 mature trees in a mixed hardwood forest in the Zoar Valley Multiple Use Area that abuts the protected Zoar Valley Unique Area. Read about a recent ADK hike to the proposed area to be logged in the newsletter trip reports section to learn more.

**The Zoar Valley Coalition will be presenting several public informational meetings about proposed logging at the Zoar Valley Multiple Use Area.** *ADK-NFC is not a member of the coalition but has been asked to provide this information to our local membership to clarify information that was recently printed in The Buffalo News.* Find out the ongoing meeting dates and times at: <https://zoarvalley.org/events/>

**Conservation Event: Tree planting at Tift Nature Preserve**—Date and time to be determined for a Saturday in November.

**Conservation Committee meetings** Tuesday, November 19<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm. Jerry will host the meeting at his home, call #716-208-0724 for directions. All members are welcome to attend in person or by zoom to find out the latest conservation news. The zoom link will be in the Weekly ADK Email. —**Lynn Rehfeld-Kenney, Conservation Chair**

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### Where to find us

**Website:** [adk-nfc.org](http://adk-nfc.org)

**MeetUp:** <https://www.meetup.com/adk-nfc/>

**Facebook Group:** [ADK-Niagara Frontier Chapter](#)

**Follow us on Instagram** ([adk\\_nfc](#))

**Membership:** If you would like to join the Niagara Frontier Chapter you can sign up at a monthly meeting or online at <https://www.adk-nfc.org/membership/>

[Chapter Outings & Events Calendar](#)

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### Trivia Challenge

Throughout ADK's long history, many ADK chapters have volunteered to host an ADK Fall Outing. This is a time when local chapters get an opportunity to show other ADK members the special outdoor places they enjoy. When did the Niagara Frontier chapter host the 59<sup>th</sup> Fall Outing in the western NY region?

A) 2000 B) 2007 C) 2011

Answer on page 9

## Trip Reports and Outings

**October 12, 2024**

### Hike in Zoar Valley

On a gorgeous Fall morning, eight hikers joined leaders Pam and Lynn at Wickham Road, part of Zoar Valleys public Multiple Use Area (MUA), in the town of Otto, NY, near E. Otto Road. This 92-acre section has recently been designated by the NYSDEC, District 9, for clear cut logging. Mr. Herb Darling, Sr. gifted ownership of the entire Zoar Valley property to the people of NYS, with his intent that it remains “forever wild.” We marveled as we walked in the diverse ecology that includes beautiful native trees, plants, and wetland areas that will be ravaged if the DEC accomplishes their proposed logging. We viewed breathtaking and majestic tulip, black cherry, and maple trees (many of considerable monetary value) that have been spray painted with ugly, orange and blue markings, and also many young, second growth trees amidst sunlit, open areas. This logging plan is a project devised by NY/CT Audubon and NYSDEC Region 9, and after logging, the plan includes the creation of a 10’ tall, 20’ wide, deer exclusion slash wall. A slash wall (an experimental concept) is designed to create “forested” and shrubby bird habitat for songbirds and game birds, habitat that already exists in Zoar and throughout the southern tier. We heard the sounds of many birds in our 3 hours in this forest which is home to abundant wildlife and loved by hikers and the local community. Small game and deer hunters will lose access to this property if the logging comes to fruition.

This hike was intended to provide people with possibly the last chance to see this beautiful property. The logging will cut down over a thousand 100+ year old marked trees on their way to reaching old growth status at 180 years, damage many smaller trees, tear up rich woodland soil and wetland areas, and remove the important buffer zone to the protected Unique designated area which is near the Zoar rim. From a safe distance from the gorge rim, we spent time gazing out over the massive gorge area that is home to old growth trees. There are only 3% of old growth forests in all of NY State.



The primary purpose of the MUA area is for public enjoyment and recreation. The slash wall will have a locked gate that will exclude animals as well as people from accessing their public lands. Logging will fragment an intact forest canopy that many song birds require, increase the spread of brood parasitizing brown-headed cowbirds that reduce the survival rate of songbird chicks, exacerbate the spread of invasive plants and insects, damage the hydrological system and fragile seep ecosystems and fill tributaries that flow into the gorge with sediment, all of which will jeopardize the Zoar Valleys protected Unique area. — **Pam Sander and Lynn Kenney**

**Are you a current ADK member?** We will soon be switching over to the ADK membership list as supplied to us by the ADK. However, the ADK is running late in processing new members and adding them to the roster. If you are not a current member please renew SOON since if you are not on the list, you will not be getting any newsletters in the future! See our Facebook page for details—<https://www.facebook.com/groups/>

## Library Corner

On Saturday, September 21, 2024, at a gathering of some 50 people on Wickham Road in East Otto, I met a woman who mentioned a little book called *Beyond Zoar Valley*. She recommended the biography about a woman that emigrated from Germany that was written by Edna Busekist, granddaughter of Carrie Meier Busekist. Edna was born in 1912 on her grandparent's North Otto farm and attended the same one-room schoolhouse that Carrie's children attended. A graduate of Buffalo State Teachers College (now Buffalo State University), and Cornell University, Edna taught in NYS schools before finishing her teaching career in Minnesota. In retirement, she taught English to Asian refugees and lived to be 86 years old.

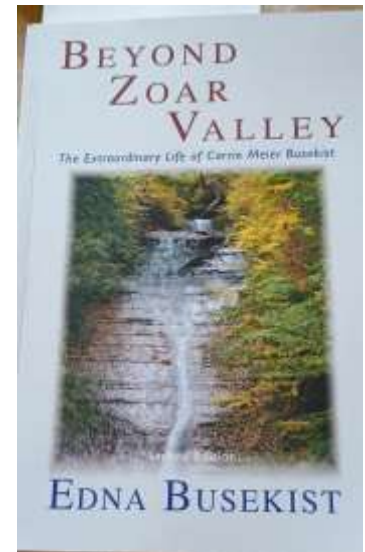
The first edition, written in 1984, saw limited distribution, and is extremely hard to find. This 2022, second edition, was inspired by Cattaraugus High School alumni Ernie Dankert and other classmates, whose goal was a second edition in time for Otto's 200-year anniversary. The original edition was re-typed, researched for historical accuracy, and required very few edits. The second edition also includes a meaty Appendix section that provides the legacy of famous Zoar area people (Anna Botsford Comstock, a Cornell graduate, and famous entomologist), the sesquicentennial celebrations of 1972, dairy farming of the 1950's and 1960's, Hurricane Agnes of 1972 (the costliest hurricane damage in the US at the time that caused 28 deaths in Salamanca), and the historical writings of Zoar (1934) and the Town of Otto (1893).

The biography of Carrie Busekist starts with her passage to the United States from Germany in 1865. From Hamburg, Carrie experienced constant sea sickness, hurricane winds (damaging the main mast) a ship fire, food rationing, births, and deaths. After a quarantine on Staten Island, she and her family journeyed by train (and boxcar as their money ran out), then on foot to the Village of Waverly, the present-day Otto in Cattaraugus County.

Carrie (born Friedarike "Ricka" Meier) came to America at age 21, was employed as a "hired girl", working for and living with a local family. Carrie married a widower, Friederick, and began her new life in a log cabin, located between Skinner Road and Zoar Valley. Carrie and "Fred" started a family, earning a living by selling products from the farm, and buying or bartering with locals for essential goods and services. Life in the frontier era of the 1860's gives readers a glimpse into the harsh and difficult day to day life from a woman's perspective. Carrie lost two children (after childbirth, and from Typhoid Fever), scrimped and saved to buy a farm (after years of renting), faced alienation by locals who considered her "low German", and faced constant financial troubles after her husband's early death to cancer. Interspersed between these sad hardships, is a life where family, church, and simple pleasures abound.

The book includes maps of the Otto area, pictures, genealogy references, and QR codes to obtain more detailed information. Anyone with a love of history, genealogy, life in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and especially the beautiful and unique Zoar Valley area will enjoy this book. Available on Amazon and Goodreads.

—Pam Sander



## Picture Page

### Hike in Zoar Valley



## Picture Page



Hike in Zoar Valley





## Our Executive Committee

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### **Librarian**

Karen Coupal

### **Digital Communications**

Emma Piascik



Geneva, OH - Photo Credit Peggy Naughton

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## Trivia Challenge Answer

**B) 2007**

The NF chapter hosted the 59<sup>th</sup> Fall Outing the weekend of September 28-30, 2007. Chapter members led outings throughout Buffalo and the surrounding WNY area. Richard Schraven organized the event with the help of many chapter members to make this a memorable event for the out of town participants.