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# CONSERVATION CHRONICLE

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## New in 2016 Growing Season

### Environmental Field Office (EFO)

The Conservation Team is now based out of Ganondagan's former visitor's center as the new Seneca Art and Culture Center is open! This new office provides a base for environmental planning and meetings as well as a permanent hub for the Conservation Team and NYS Parks Boat Launch Stewards!

### Oak Savanna Restoration Grant

Ganondagan has been awarded a \$40,000 grant from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). This grant was co-written with the Finger Lakes Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (FL-PRISM). The Nature Conservancy estimates that only 1% of oak savanna habitat remains in the US, and New York State has only 1 oak savanna remaining (located in Rush, New York). This opportunity to restore what was historically Ganondagan's Oak Savanna is of utmost importance to preserve the rare species specific to oak savannas, as well as grassland species in decline.

### Staff Additions

Ganondagan's team has expanded to include new employees and stewards! Joining Whitney Carleton (NY Works Project Coordinator), Alexis Vanwinkle (Supervising Conservation Steward), Patty Wakefield-Brown (Lead Boat Steward):

Kyle Webster, Supervising Conservation Steward; Brigitte Wierzbicki, Lead Conservation Steward; Emma Kubinski, Grassland Steward; and Conservation Stewards: Kinsey Ashe, Mary Benincasa, Dan Ruede, and Brandyn Balch (with efforts at Seneca Lake State Park).



Jack-in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*) is one of the many spring ephemerals in bloom!



Participants birding at Ganondagan's Sunrise Birding Event

## THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING US!

Thank you to our donors and volunteers for your invaluable support!

Donated plants increase our site biodiversity and help us fill in gaps post-invasive species removals to effectively keep invasive species out.

A big thank you to our donors so far:

Victor Garden Club, Genesee Land Trust, Andy J., Helen E., Eileen W., Lorie T., Michael H., and SUNY ESF FORCES

So far this year we have logged 1000 volunteer hours, and received hundreds of dollars' worth of donated plants.

Please consider joining Ganondagan's restoration efforts- your donations and volunteer time are crucial for conserving Ganondagan's flora and fauna. We can't do it without you!

**Call or Email:** 585-742-7432; [brigitte.wierzbicki@parks.ny.gov](mailto:brigitte.wierzbicki@parks.ny.gov)

**Stop by at the EFO:** 1488 Route-444, Victor, NY 14564

**Check out us on the website:** [www.ganondagan.org/environmental-team](http://www.ganondagan.org/environmental-team)

You can find our desired plant donation list through the link above!



Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*) donated to the Green Plants Trail



Grassland Restoration: Aquinas students pitch in for invasive removals!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### URBAN VS RURAL: A COMPARISON OF BIRD WATCHING AND LANDSCAPING

PLACE: MEET AT GANONDAGAN'S EFO  
DATE: JUNE 12  
TIME: 9-11:30 AM



Join Ganondagan's birding specialist, Alexis Vanwinkle, for a bird-watching comparison between Ganondagan's Pollinator Grassland (rural) and downtown Victor (urban). Event also includes planting of bird-friendly species. Bring binoculars and field guides, if you have them. Please wear close-toed shoes and weather-appropriate clothing. You will need to drive two miles to the Victor Library part way through the event.

### INVASIVE SPECIES REMOVALS



Join our team in restoring Ganondagan's grassland and forest habitats for native plants and animals! Removing invasive plant species is one of the most effective ways to protect local flora and fauna.

JUNE 16 8:30-10:30 AM	JUNE 23 5:00-7:00 PM	JUNE 26 9-11 AM
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## JULY EVENTS

### NATIVE AMERICAN DANCE & MUSIC FESTIVAL

JULY 23 & 24 (10 AM - 6 PM)

#### REMOVAL DAYS

JULY 11 (9-11 AM)

JULY 26 (3-5 PM & 5-7 PM)

## Event Recap

### Sunrise Birding

Event participants and staff joined Ganondagan's ornithology specialist Alexis Vanwinkle, President of the Genesee Chapter of the Audubon Society June Summers, and avid birder Amy Kahn in the Oak Unit Grassland for a beautiful birding hike and breakfast. Bird species identified include the Tree Swallow, American Goldfinch, Field Sparrow, Yellow Warbler, and Red-winged Blackbird. With the high level of participation and enthusiasm, we are hoping to add this as a recurring annual event!



Participants met up in the Oak Unit for a beautiful morning of birding!

### Volunteer Events

Over 250 volunteers from RIT, AmeriCorps, Allendale Columbia School, Aquinas Institute, SUNY ESF FORCES, Pittsford Sutherland High School, Paychex, Catholic Community Services, and others joined Ganondagan staff for multiple events including tree planting, invasive removals, ash tree inventories, and site maintenance. In addition to these large-scale events, we want to stress the importance of our dedicated individual volunteers and their commitment to advancing Ganondagan's restoration projects.



Allendale Columbia students tackled Fort Hill's garlic mustard!

**FEATURED FAUNA**  
Eastern Bluebird, New York State bird



Eastern Bluebird eggs found this April!

Alexis Vanwinkle leads the Eastern Bluebird Nest Box Monitoring Program on site. This monitoring program works to conserve Eastern Bluebird populations, which are still recovering from competition with aggressive introduced species such as House Sparrows and European Starlings. Visitors to Ganondagan are very likely to glimpse a flash of bright blue as our Eastern Bluebirds fly by, but please do not disturb these nest boxes!



Four chicks hatched about two week later!

**Featured Project:**  
**Oak Savanna Restoration**

A rare habitat in decline across the United States and especially in New York State is in the beginning stages of restoration, thanks to a \$40,000, 2-year GLRI grant.

Of Ganondagan’s 250 acres of grassland area being restored, the Oak Unit refers to a 75-acre grassland area. The Oak Unit is accessible from a small gravel parking lot off RT-444, and is a prime candidate for restoration, as its historic plant composition is believed to be that of an oak savanna. Oak savannas are grasslands with scattered oaks as the dominant tree species. These grasslands were historically preserved via fire- prescribed burns or lightning strikes, and thus include fire adapted species, such as native wildflowers, warm-season grasses, and white and bur oaks. With the site’s Seneca history, it is likely Ganondagan’s grasslands were maintained with prescribed burns. With European colonization and agriculture, the grasslands have degraded. Encroachment of woody growth (shrubs and trees) and non-native invasive species have altered the landscape.

The restoration project’s goals include shrub and tree removal, mapping invasive species for their eventual removal, and seeding and planting of native plants, specifically those that are fire-adapted and represent oak savannas. The eventual goal post-restoration is to maintain this area with prescribed burning. The project is led by Kyle Webster, who supervises Grassland Steward Emma Kubinski, SUNY Brockport students Kira Hansen and Wyatt Jackson, and Excelsior Conservation Corps members. ❖



Kyle Webster surveying in the Oak Unit