

Chautauqua Watershed Notes
For the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy
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Learning to be Part of the Solution

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For the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy



Leah Hopkins wages war against litter by picking up trash along a Chautauqua Watershed roadside.

They walk among us, camouflaged. The only way we know of their existence is by their droppings. Usually active during the hours of darkness, the “Ollapodria hemiptera” can destroy the natural beauty of our surroundings and cause havoc for wildlife.

“Ollapodria hemiptera,” more commonly known as litterbugs, seem to be ravenous, thirsty creatures. Often their droppings are food related, consisting of fast food containers, pop and water bottles, cans, and Styrofoam cups. They don’t seem to be very health conscious either and often consume numerous bags of chips and candy bars, strewing the wrappers along roadways, in parks and

in our waterways. Even though it might seem like a losing battle, good citizens are fighting back to eradicate this nuisance and clean up the watershed.

One of these good citizens is my niece, Leah Hopkins. She is a student in Mrs. Forbes’ fifth grade class at Fredonia Elementary School. Her teacher gave Leah an opportunity to earn some extra credit in science, along with some tasty treats at a local restaurant. Her task? To make it Earth Day, EVERY day by safely collecting trash in her yard or neighborhood and bringing evidence of her altruistic adventure to school. Mrs. Forbes also gave each student two trash bags and some vinyl gloves.

After getting the assignment, Leah went to visit her grandparents in Bemus Point. Together, they set out to fill the bags by going down to Chautauqua Lake near the Village Park. They were pleasantly disappointed to find very little litter in this area. The debris consisted mostly of tissues and cigarette butts. But, determined to wage war against rubbish, they walked along a roadway near the expressway. Here they found everything from a kitchen sink drain to brake shoes, to baby diapers, shorts, a towel, pop bottles and cans, food containers and about a gazillion water bottles. When asked about this experience, Leah remarked, “I was shocked at how much litter there was and how bizarre some of it was.”

On Monday, back at school, Mrs. Forbes was delighted with her students and their trash-filled bags. But, not satisfied with just one litter gathering weekend, she started planning a beach clean up on Lake Erie in Dunkirk for her conscientious crew. She has also been approved for a "Learn and Serve Grant" entitled, A.C.T.C.L.E.A.N. or All Children Together, Cleaning Lake Erie and Nature. The grant will provide funds for a day trip in June to the Dunkirk Harbor front and East Beaches to clean up litter. Mrs. Forbes stated, "Cleaning up the polluted land and water areas will benefit the animals (who live there) and the people who use those areas recreationally. It will also beautify a public eyesore." Her endeavors are not only providing a real life connection to the science unit on ecosystems, they are discouraging students from being part of the litter problem by encouraging them to be part of the solution.

I say, "Hats Off!" to young citizens like Leah and teachers like Mrs. Forbes. They are working hard to protect and beautify our valuable natural surroundings. More of us need to think twice before we discard our debris out the car window. Trashcans were put in parks and along the roadways for a reason. So, the next time you feel yourself starting to morph into the dreaded "Ollapodria hemiptera," resist the temptation to leave your droppings on the ground and "can" them instead!

The Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy is a private, not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) organization with a mission to preserve and enhance the water quality, scenic beauty and ecological health of the lakes, streams and watersheds of the Chautauqua region. Its urgent focus is to conserve the endangered natural shore lands of Chautauqua Lake, which provide fish and wildlife habitat and pollution filtering functions essential to a healthy lake. Only four miles (10%) of the lake's shoreline remains in a natural, undeveloped condition. The Conservancy is funded primarily through membership donations. Its 2008 annual membership campaign is currently underway. It is presently raising funds to conserve the Chautauqua Lake's most important remaining natural shoreline habitats, undertake programs to address the root causes of the conditions that fuel lake plant growth, and manage its preserves. It is the only local organization conserving lands in perpetuity for these purposes. Please contact the Conservancy at 664-2166 to join for 2008!