
https://buffalonews.com/opinion/another-voice-biodiversity-crisis-demands-preservation-at-outer-harbor/article_91993166-300b-11ec-adcd-cfc9506798d6.html

Another Voice: Biodiversity crisis demands preservation at Outer Harbor

Lynda Schneekloth

Oct 18, 2021

Support this work for \$1 a month

Today a majority of Americans believe that climate change is an urgent problem to address, according to a recent survey by the Pew Research Center. However, most Americans appear unaware of the ongoing and urgent biodiversity crisis facing us, the Sixth Great Extinction, equally as dangerous as climate change.

In “Amid climate fears, scientists also sound alarm on biodiversity” a New York Times article from Oct. 15 outlines the agenda of the 15th UN Meeting on Biodiversity in Kunming, China. Why is the meeting not joined with the Glasgow COP 26 UN Climate meeting as both global crises have been caused by human action? And why is biodiversity so important?

Somewhere in the evolution of modern, industrial culture, humans forgot that our life depends on natural processes – the diversity of all the plants and animals that provide food, oxygen and all the material from which we build our human world. The rapidity of climate destabilization causes great harm to natural systems with changes in temperature and moisture and traumas as fires and hurricanes. But the great driver of global extinction is the appropriation of land for human’s needs and wants, destroying natural ecosystem.

To slow extinction rates and provide ecological services to support humans, we must take action now. The plan, 30x30, recently supported by nine philanthropic groups with \$5 billion, aims to safeguard at least 30% of the planet's land and oceans by 2030. But the preservation of ecosystems must happen everywhere as all land is local. We in Western New York have an incredibly rich natural heritage to protect: Great Lakes, a globally significant "Important Bird Area" and a designated international Ramsar site that puts us on par with the Everglades. But we also need to identify, protect, conserve, restore and connect the multiple habitats that are less pristine, often contaminated, each with a story. Places like the Outer Harbor, formerly a huge wetland until we filled in for the port closed 50 years ago.

And just think, that without our help and on barren dirt and debris, vegetation arrived and grew and now provides homes for birds, mammals and hundreds of insects, including monarchs. Only hardy species such as cottonwoods and walnuts could and did survive to provide a functioning ecosystem, much more robust than anything we could replace it with. Protecting these types of lands has to be one of our contributions to the biodiversity crisis through selective restoration and not replacement with low-ecological-value grass lawn and some new plantings.

Let's not appropriate the emerging biodiversity by building an amphitheater to be used eight times a year that could happen anywhere.

Lynda Schneekloth is a member of the Western New York Environmental Alliance.