

/// THE DIRT



Tom Langen, Ph.D., is a professor at Clarkson University. COURTESY PHOTO

By Terry Platz

The following is a Q&A by Terry Platz of the Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries/Clarkson University and Tom Langen, Ph.D., an associate professor in the departments of biology and psychology at Clarkson University. Langen teaches courses on animal behavior, ecology, conservation biology and global environmental change. A certified senior ecologist and master bird bander, Langen earned his Ph.D. in biology from the University of California, San Diego, and was named a Fulbright Scholar at the International Institute of Wildlife Conservation & Management of the National Autonomous Institute of Costa Rica.



Terry Platz

**Your research involving the management of the environmental impact of roads on turtles in the Adirondack Park of New York state involves predictive modeling of hotspots for mortality of these slow-moving creatures. How do you go about predicting where and when a turtle is most at risk?**

**Langen:** The first task is to locate current hotspots for turtle road-kill. Over the course of two summers, my students and I drove a hundred-mile route, repeatedly, along a set of roads in the St. Lawrence Valley of New York. We recorded the exact location of every turtle, alive or dead, that we detected along the route. Snapping turtles and painted turtles were the most commonly encountered, but we also detected some Blanding's turtles, a threatened species in New York. We found that most roadkill occurred between late May and early July, and most of the road mortality was adult females who were traveling to or from nesting sites.

After we had acquired records of around 200 roadkill turtles, we mapped the locations onto a geographic information system or GIS, which is basically a sophisticated computer mapping application. We used this map to locate clusters of roadkill, which we call "hotspots." Using data from our GIS mapping system and data we collected in the field, we compared the characteristics of roadkill hotspots to road segments where turtle roadkill was uncommon.

We discovered that roadkill was predominately limited to segments of road that passed between two wetlands: Causeways and other places where wetlands occurred within 300 feet of each side of the road. Long causeways that carry a high volume of vehicle traffic and bisect large wetlands are the worst for turtle road mortality. We actually tested our findings across all of northeastern New York by overlaying wetland

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**COMING NEXT WEEK ONLINE**

**Tuesday:** Biomass may not be better than fossil fuels.

**Wednesday:** Growing human population harms environment.



Getting out and bird watching or just enjoying nature can be a romantic thing to do with your valentine. COURTESY PHOTO

## Go green on Valentine's day

Chocolates from Oliver Kita Chocolate Studio are made from free-trade, organic ingredients. KARL RABE/POUGHKEEPSIE JOURNAL

**ON THE WEB**

- » Elm Rock Inn Bed and Breakfast/Harvest Real Food Catering: <http://elmrockinn.com/2013/01/23/elmrock-for-the-holidays>
- » Hyde Park Trail System: [www.hydeparkny.us/Recreation/Trails](http://www.hydeparkny.us/Recreation/Trails)
- » Mohonk Mountain House: [www.mohonk.com](http://www.mohonk.com)
- » Mohonk Preserve: [www.mohonkpreserve.org](http://www.mohonkpreserve.org)
- » Oliver Kita Fine Catering/Oliver Kita Fine Confections: [www.oliverkita.com](http://www.oliverkita.com)

Options include romantic hike, organic candy

By Karen Maserjian Shan  
For the Poughkeepsie Journal

It's almost Valentine's Day. Fortunately, it's easy to celebrate in the green with environmentally sound gifts, goodies and get-togethers.

The Sierra Club, an environ-

mental organization with more than 1.3 million members, offers a variety of environmentally sound tips for Valentine's Day on its website, [www.sierraclub.org/holidays/valentines/tips.aspx](http://www.sierraclub.org/holidays/valentines/tips.aspx).

Some ideas include making your own Valentine's Day cards or buying ones made of recycled materials, purchasing organic flower bouquets or giving potted plants, taking a nature hike with your valentine or going to a concert and giving vintage jewelry or pieces made from recycled metal

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## Obama can boost his legacy by nixing pipeline

On my to-do list this year: Paint the house, do some needed yard work and maybe run a race or two. On President Barack Obama's to-do list? Fix the economy, tackle school safety and guns, fix immigration and take on climate change.

That is the list the president laid out during his inauguration address a few weeks back, a speech no less inspiring than the one he gave four years ago. But unlike four years ago, I'm skeptical of the promises, especially when it comes to the environment.

Four years ago, Obama campaigned hard on the notion that we as a nation needed to — and could — lead the world in



JIMMY BUFF  
THE GREEN LIFE

the fight on climate change.

"With old friends and former foes, we'll work tirelessly to lessen the nuclear threat and roll back the specter of a warming planet," Obama said during his first inaugural speech.

And then he did almost nothing to back that up pledge. In fact, so little was done in that regard that Mitt Romney was able to mock him during the Republican National Convention: "President Obama prom-

ised to slow the rise of the oceans and to heal the planet," he said, while rolling his eyes.

Listening to the president during his second inauguration, it was my turn to roll my eyes when Obama said "We will respond to the threat of climate change, knowing that the failure to do so would betray our children and future generations."

As the saying goes, fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me. My cynicism is not unfounded, either. In the past four years, I have watched as the Obama administration has done little to deal with that "warming planet" bit he trotted out back in 2009. In

fact, the president actually pandered to oil and natural gas producers during the campaign and the debates, touting his record on opening areas for exploration and drilling for both and his "all of the above" energy policy (including the myth of "clean coal") all of which did little to encourage environmentalists.

But Obama does have a chance to redeem himself and soon; that opportunity revolves around the Keystone XL pipeline project to pump tar sand oil from Canada to Gulf Coast refineries. Because the pipeline crosses the U.S.

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