

Letter: Preserve Zoar Valley: Just say no to logging

Iaking their way through a forested area within the Zoar Valley Multiple Use Area, above the famously steep and fragile gorge walls, a group of birds are threatened. I have been a long time National and Buffalo Audubon member; I am not aware local Audubon members were asked for feedback about this plan.

I lead a bird walk at the recent Audubon Pilgrimage in Allegany State Park, a habitat not far from Zoar Valley. We identified a good number of birds, which the Connecticut Audubon and NYS DEC say they want to create habitat for in Zoar Valley. Why clear-cut mature forests to create habitat for birds that already live there or near there? Clear cutting opens corridors into the mature forests for invasive insects and plants which destroy indigenous trees and fauna. Also, open corridors in a forest encourage invasive birds such as cowbirds to take over nests, known as brood parasitism. This prevents native birds from hatching their eggs.

Jim McCormac, author of “Gardening for Moths, A Regional Guide,” writes about the need for rotting and drying leaves that trees have dropped to the forest floor, known as leaf litter. Leaf litter contains thousands of moth caterpillars which provide food for young birds. This is the reason why birds migrate to forests to raise their young.

We are so lucky to have this wonderful wild area of pristine, mature forest. A book written by Peter Wohlleben, a forest ranger in Germany, titled “The Hidden Life of Trees, What They Feel, How they Communicate“ writes “many trees create an ecosystem that moderates extremes of heat and cold and stores a great deal of water.“ I would add that trees sequester tens of thousands of tons of carbon out of the atmosphere which mitigates climate change. NYS has a plan to plant 25 million trees by 2033, why cut these existing forests? It makes no sense.

Throughout my adult life, I have visited Zoar Valley many times. Walking in these forests I receive solace and calm and reset my personal compass in a positive way. Why cut this forest?

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