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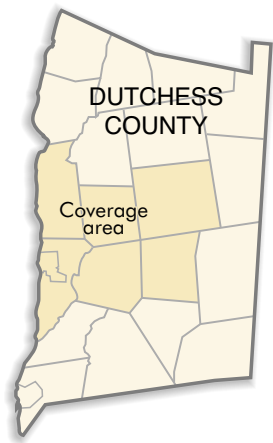
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# DUTCHESS COUNTY FOCUS

SATURDAY, JANUARY 22, 2011



## Tired of snow? Cary Institute scientist to explain why it's good

**White stuff protects trees, kills off pests**

**Anthony P. Musso**  
For Focus

While most people cringe when snow is in the weather forecast, scientists at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies in Millbrook embrace the prospect of snow.

For those still skeptical, microbial ecologist Peter Groffman, Ph.D., a member of the Cary Institute's scientific staff, will prove that snow is a healthy process that protects soil productivity, plant growth and freshwater resources at the "Snow is Good" program at 7 p.m. Jan. 28 at the center's auditorium on Route 44.

**Warming is apparent**

Climate change is often noted during the summer with heat waves, hurricanes and severe thunderstorms. In the Northeast, however, climate warming is more obvious in winter.

"The climate has been changing quite a bit more in the winter than it has in the summer," Groffman said. "With temperatures rising,



Courtesy photo

Peter Groffman, Ph.D., above, will talk about the ecological benefits of snow at 7 p.m. Jan. 28 at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies in Millbrook.

there is less snow cover and less ice on the lakes. ... Some of the effects are good, and others are problematic." Groffman said during re-

cent winters, the region has experienced infrequent frigid temperatures when compared to past winter seasons. "It used to get down to mi-

nus 25 degrees every five years or so," he said. "I don't think it's been that low since 1994 in this region." While home heating bills are lower because of the

**If you go**

**What:** "Snow is Good," a talk by Peter Groffman, Ph.D.

**Where:** The Cary Institute for Ecosystem Studies, 2801 Sharon Turnpike (Route 44), Millbrook.

**Cost:** Free. No prior registration necessary.

**Call:** 845-677-7600

**Web:** www.ecostudies.org.

change, the lack of extreme cold temperatures allows some destructive species in the region to thrive. "The hemlock woolly adelgid is killing all the hemlock trees here," Groffman said. "One night of temperatures falling to minus 25 degrees will kill the bug, but in absence of colder temperatures, the species thrives and ... causes major tree loss."

At the program, Groffman will introduce attendees to the Cary Institute's website to review data showing how the climate and weather is changing in the region.

The institute has documentation dating from 1983 that

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# Research shows snow benefits forests

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shows a significant shift in the climate over time. Groffman said similar records from the Mohonk Preserve in Ulster County going back more than 100 years show similar results.

Snow in particular provides protection for tree roots and soil during. Without an adequate snow cover, forests in the region suffer.

"Snow, from an ecosystem point of view, is really good because it protects the soil by acting like a blanket on it and keeps it from freezing," Groffman said. "It also protects the roots of plants. If we have less snow, the soil ... tends to freeze more and can be damaging to the roots and organisms that live in the soil."

When studying snow and its effect on trees, the Cary Institute scientists focus on local forests.

"The forests in this area used to have quite a bit more snow cover that they do now," Groffman said. "Now, the blanket of snow is gone, and it is a much tougher environment for the forests."

**Helping the community**

"Snow is Good" is part of the institute's Friday night lecture series. William Schlesinger introduced the series shortly after being named president of the Cary Institute in 2007.

"We want people in Dutchess County and the Mid-Hudson region to have a better understanding of what we do here," Schlesinger said.

"Also, as a nonprofit organization, we wanted to give back to the Town of Washington and Dutchess County."

Schlesinger said that he hopes the Jan. 28 lecture will shed light on the negative side effects of too little snow.

"A lot of people don't realize that when you have a snow pack, it actually insulates the soil underneath it so that soil will stay active, not frozen for much of the winter," he said. "Forests in the region have evolved with that kind of expectation, so an abrupt change in climate such as we are in-



Darryl Bautista photos/Poughkeepsie Journal file

Local forests used to have much more insulation from snow cover in the winter than they do now, research shows, something that could have a negative impact as winter temperatures continue rising.



flicting on the planet is disrupting the evolutionary environment that they've been in."

Climate change and the effect it has on our surroundings are complex issues, and Groffman said most people are baffled by it.

"There is a tremendous amount of uncertainty and

confusion about climate change," Groffman said. "It's been difficult for people to understand the science of it and difficult for them to come to some type of conclusions on whether or not the climate is really changing and whether we should do anything about it." A question and answer ses-

sion will follow the lecture. "One of the points that I'm going to try to make... is how people can come to grips with the science and what they think about it. One of the ways is to participate at local forums

like the ones that we offer at the Cary Institute," he added.

Anthony Musso is a freelance writer. Reach him at focus@poughkeepsiejournal.com



## LaGrange to fill O'Hare's board seat

**John Davis**

Focus

FREEDOM PLAINS — The LaGrange Town Board plans to appoint someone by early February to fill the board vacancy created by the recent appointment of Stephen O'Hare as town justice.

O'Hare, an attorney, asked to be appointed to the justice post after it became vacant with the election in November of Stephen Greller as Dutchess County Court judge. Greller, a Republican, was a LaGrange town justice for about five years.

O'Hare, a Republican, took the oath of office Jan. 2 as town justice. He was a member of the Town Board since February 2006, when the board appointed him to fill the vacancy created by the election in November 2005 of Jon Wagner as supervisor.

O'Hare then won a special election in November 2006 to

complete Wagner's term as a councilman. O'Hare and Wagner, a Republican, were re-elected to four-year terms in November 2009.

Wagner said LaGrange is losing a good councilman but gaining a good town justice.

"He has just been a consummate member on the board," Wagner said.

LaGrange residents interested in being appointed to the vacant Town Board seat should notify the supervisor or contact the leadership of their local political party committees. The committees interview candidates and recommend them to the Town Board, Wagner said.

The board decides who it will appoint after interviewing recommended candidates.

The annual salary for a town councilman is \$7,800.

Reach John Davis at jpdavis@poughkeepsiejournal.com or 845-437-4807.

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Once you submit your event, it will usually show up the same day and often within hours of submission. The staff at the Journal's Data Desk checks all submissions to ensure they contain all critical information and they follow our style. Please be sure to supply contact information in case we have questions.

Our goal is to include every event open to the public in our calendar, making it the mid-Hudson Valley's most complete events source. If your group has a schedule for the rest of the year, send it to us and we'll list all the events now. If you have any questions, please call 845-437-4883.

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