



Spring 2025



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**Keep up with information about the Nature Center!
Visit us on the web and social media!**



<https://www.IndianCreekNatureCenterNY.org>



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[@IndianCreekNatureCenterNY](https://www.instagram.com/IndianCreekNatureCenterNY)



Contact the Nature Center by email: IndianCreekNatureCenterNY@gmail.com
or by mail: Indian Creek Nature Center, PO Box 286, Canton, NY 13617

Greetings from the Indian Creek Nature Center Board!

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Mailing address:

Indian Creek Nature Center
PO Box 286
Canton, NY 13617

ICNC is located west of Canton
at 770 Co Rd 14,
1 mile east of Rensselaer Falls

Letter from the ICNC Board co-Presidents:

Indian Creek continues to be a refuge and source of deep connection with nature for all of us. Whether we're out for a walk across the boardwalk to the new observation platform or going on the Lowland trail to the lean-to or out to the rebuilt observation tower or walking the Wildflower Loop, the Center offers a place to observe and learn. For over 50 years, Indian Creek has focused on conservation education for our community, young and old.

Join us for spring and summer programs, our annual dinner meeting April 26th with speaker Curt Stager, and June 3rd and 5th when we host 5th graders from around the region for Conservation Field Days!

Last year over 700 students joined us each day for Field Days with outdoor educators staffing numerous field stations around the Center. Teachers and students expressed great appreciation throughout the day and in follow-up letters. We're grateful for all the help we received.

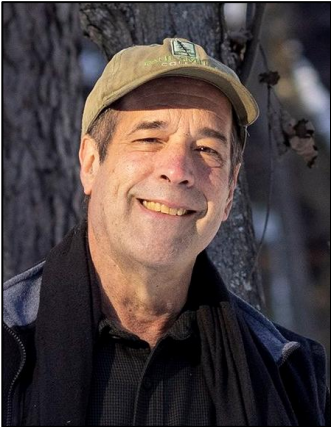
Looking to the future, Indian Creek Nature Center has begun discussions with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, regarding the construction of an education center building. The building would house displays and provide lab and classroom space for visitors and school groups. Stay tuned!

Cathy Shrady, co-President
Tom Vandewater, co-President

Recently, students from the Ogdensburg City School District came to Indian Creek Nature Center to help [Nature Up North](#) install trail cams as part of their North Country Wild (NoCo Wild) animal monitoring project. The newsletter cover picture shows the installation in progress.



Please join us on Saturday, April 26, 2025, for the Indian Creek Nature Center Annual Meeting and Dinner



The meeting will be on Saturday, April 26 at Sergi's Italian Restaurant in Potsdam, NY. Reception begins at 5:30pm with a cash bar. Buffet-style dinner will start at 6:00 including antipasto salads, vegetable and meat dishes, as well as sides and dessert. A brief meeting will begin around 6:45 with the talk starting at about 7:00.

This year, we welcome Dr. Curt Stager as he talks about The Deep Indigenous Presence in the Adirondacks.

The cost is \$30 dollars/person.

Please make dinner reservations by going to the program link on our website <https://www.indiancreeknaturecenterny.org/>

Payment online can be made with PayPal, or you can pay when you arrive at the meeting. Only payments by cash or check made out to Indian Creek Nature Center can be accepted at the meeting location.

All memberships are now on a calendar year schedule.

If you are a **LIFE** member or if you have already paid your membership for **2024**, Thank You!

If not, consider becoming a **MEMBER** of the Indian Creek Nature Center!

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Student member (in school or college) | \$10 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Senior Citizen member | \$10 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Individual member | \$20 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Family membership | \$30 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ICNC Patron | \$100 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ICNC Life Member (nontransferable) | \$200 <input type="checkbox"/> |

Membership for 2025 New Renewal

Please notify us of any address changes!

Name _____

Address _____

Please consider an additional donation! \$ _____

City _____

State _____ ZIP _____

New and renewing members!

Do you want your newsletter sent to you:

- By email
- By regular mail
- both email and regular mail

Phone _____

Email _____

We **never** share member emails or contact information with any outside entities.

Please make checks payable to: **Indian Creek Nature Center**; PO Box 286; Canton, NY 13617

You can join or renew through PayPal on our website: <https://www.indiancreeknaturecenterny.org/>

Indian Creek Nature Center is run by North Country Conservation Education Associates, Inc. a section 501(c)(3) organization that relies on memberships, grantors, and donors. Your donations are tax deductible.

Do you have something to say about your experience at the ICNC?

If so, please contact Indian Creek at: indiancreeknaturecenterny@gmail.com or send us a Message through Facebook.

If you have photos or other items for the newsletter, please send materials to the editor, via email trybulj@potsdam.edu

Spring and Summer 2025 Public Programs!

Check our website, Facebook, or Instagram for updates on programs

All programs, unless otherwise noted, take place at Indian Creek Nature Center, meeting at the main drive back parking area off County Rt 14. Directions at

<https://www.indiancreeknaturecenterny.org/> Please **RSVP** for programs if indicated.

Public programs are provided free of charge by volunteer naturalists and educators.

SPRING WILDFLOWERS AT ICNC

Spring ephemerals should be in full bloom and trees will be getting ready to leaf out at the Wildflower Loop; join botanist Anne Johnson at the East Entrance for an enjoyable springtime stroll around the loop and beyond.

Leader: Anne Johnson, ICNC Board member

Date: Saturday, May 3, 9:30am – 12 noon

SPRING BIRD WALK

Come and join us on World Migratory Bird Day to celebrate the return of numerous species of migrant birds to the North Country. We'll look for migrant birds (and residents) in forest and wetland habitat, as well as from the observatory deck. Binoculars are available to borrow. Be prepared for bugs and perhaps a little mud!

Leaders: Dr. Susan Willson, bird ecologist and SLU Assoc. Professor, and Eileen Wheeler, birder and ICNC Board member

Date: Saturday, May 10, starting at 8:00am

SPRING WORKDAY

Join Board members and volunteers for a workday to clean up from winter and prepare for the season ahead. Please come help with trail maintenance and other projects. All levels of experience welcome! Gloves and boots recommended. Tools provided.

Leaders: ICNC Board members

Date: Saturday, May 10, 1:00pm – 4:00pm

DRAGONFLIES OF THE CENTER

Dragonflies and damselflies are aerial acrobats that can be found in and around many aquatic habitats. We will check out the ponds and various trails and fields of the Center. All ages and levels are welcome! Some nets will be provided, but feel free to bring your own equipment. Insect repellent is recommended.

Leader: Jan Trybula, ICNC Board member

Date: Saturday, June 21, 10:00am – 12:00noon or later

REMOTE WILDLIFE MONITORING: DRONES!

Have you ever wondered what local wildlife is doing when we aren't watching? Learn about different ways that people study wildlife using drones! During this session, you'll get to see both aerial and aquatic drones in action as we explore the skies and the waterways in Indian Creek Nature Center.

Leader: Dan French, ICNC Board member

Date: Saturday, June 28, 10:00am – 12:00noon

DISCOVERING POND LIFE

Join Nature Up North to explore the waters on Indian Creek Nature Center! Their summer naturalists will teach you how to catch and identify common macroinvertebrates that can be found at Indian Creek, and what they can tell us about the water quality at the nature center. Water shoes are recommended, and swim trunks are only needed if you're getting in the water with us. We may even have waders!

Leaders: member of Nature Up North

Date: Saturday, July 19, 10:00am – 11:00am

TREE IDENTIFICATION

Forester Martin Duffany will lead a tree identification walk at Indian Creek Nature Center. Meet at the Indian Creek parking lot, rain or shine, please dress appropriately.

Leader: Marty Duffany, ICNC Board member

Date: Saturday, August 23, 9:00am – 11:00am

CONSERVATION FIELD DAYS

On June 3 and June 5, the ICNC Board will host ~700 fifth graders and ~20 presenters from around St Lawrence County.

During Conservation Field Days, students will learn about a variety of topics both interesting and educational and take guided field walks at the Center, learning about our local ecosystem and associated plants and animals.

This is a special event in cooperation with participating local school districts. If your school district is not involved, please reach out to the Board at

IndianCreekNatureCenterNY@gmail.com

Poetry Corner

Coy-Wolf

The young Coy-Wolf has a milky yellow coat, and matching eyes like pearls. Her acute senses are like a cool river. She slows, from her flight, through the forest domain, coming to stand motionless in the noon sun. Quietly she smells a gentle, summer breeze.

--- Thomas Robarge



Nature in Focus: The Eastern Coyote

By Jan Trybula, ICNC Board member

The eastern coyote (*Canis latrans* var.), also called the coywolf, is the dominant canid predator in the Northeast and the most abundant large predator in the Adirondack Park. That said, coyotes are relative newcomers to the Northeast. The prevailing theory states the Great Plains wolf (*Canis lupus nubilus*) and the eastern wolf (*Canis lupus lycaon*) were hunted and went locally extinct, giving coyote populations the opportunity to expand. Coyotes were first seen in New York in the 1930s, but their range has greatly expanded since the 1970s. Few direct interactions occur with people since, like most wild animals, they typically shy away from people.

Eastern coyotes are often described as predators feeding on prey from rabbits to deer. But the eastern coyote is more of a generalist. They eat insects, amphibians, and birds, as well as fruit and vegetation. But don't worry about their impact on game populations. Studies show they don't appreciably reduce game available to hunters... still, hunting of coyotes continues. Disrupting the social structure of coyotes through hunting actually results in more coyotes. Usually, only the dominant (alpha) male and female breed in a social unit. But if either is killed, multiple breeding pairs form to try to establish themselves as the alpha couple.

While there are nineteen recognized subspecies of coyote, the eastern coyote is not one of them. Rather, the eastern coyote is a recognized hybrid between coyotes, wolves, and dogs. Recent genetic studies have shown that the eastern coyote is only about two-thirds coyote, with the remaining one-third being nearly equal parts gray wolf, eastern wolf, and domestic dog.

Eastern coyotes are the size of a medium-sized dog. Males are about 20 inches at the shoulders weighing about 50 pounds, while females are slightly shorter and weigh about 40 pounds, but size varies. Eastern coyotes are larger than their western counterparts. Some studies show that female eastern coyotes weigh 20% more than male western coyotes! Perhaps this is because of their hybrid genetics. In fact, although they are not deer specialists, studies have shown that in areas of high deer population densities, eastern coyotes are larger and have more wolf DNA.

References

- Monzón, et al. 2014. Assessment of coyote-wolf-dog admixture using ancestry-informative diagnostic SNPs. *Molecular Ecology*. 23(1): 182-197. doi:10.1111/mec.12570
- National Park Service. Species Spotlight: Eastern Coyote, *Canis latrans* var. <https://www.nps.gov/articles/netn-species-spotlight-eastern-coyote.htm>
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Eastern Coyote. <https://dec.ny.gov/nature/animals-fish-plants/eastern-coyote>
- Project Coyote. Why Coyotes. <https://projectcoyote.org/act/learning-hub/coyote-profile/>
- Wild Adirondacks. Mammals of the Adirondacks: Eastern Coyote (*Canis latrans* var). <https://wildadirondacks.org/adirondack-mammals-eastern-coyote-canis-latrans-var.html>
- Wildlife NYC. Eastern Coyote (*Canis latrans*). <https://www.nyc.gov/site/wildlifeny/animals/coyotes.page>

Winter Animal Tracks

by Daniel French, ICNC Board member
with photos by Daniel French

The North Country has been blessed (or cursed depending how you look at it) by a blanket of white gold this winter. Several winter storms accumulating several feet of standing snow shows that Punxsutawney Phil might not be that unreliable of a winter predictor after all. Phil and his hibernating friends tend to stay indoors during the winter, but if you take a walk out on a trail in winter or early spring you'll still see signs of lots of animal activity.

Have you ever been walking at Indian Creek Nature Center in the winter and pointed out some tracks to your friends? Maybe you told them with mild confidence that they were coyote tracks, but in the back of your mind you really weren't sure, and it occurred to you a dog could have easily made the same tracks. In this article, we'll give you some of the basic tricks to identifying common animals that you'll see on trail.

Squirrel tracks, I think, are some of the most mis-identified tracks around. In deep snow, these animals will leap through the snow leaving behind what many mistake for rabbit tracks. These tracks have two large feet in front of the track and two smaller feet between them towards the back. The larger prints are actually their hind legs, and the smaller prints their front legs, so why are they reversed in the print? Like rabbits, when squirrels leap through the snow they land on their front feet first, then bring their hind legs forward to start the next jump, placing their hind legs in ahead of their front feet to set up the next jump.



So how do you tell squirrel and rabbit tracks apart?

Primarily, you look at the pattern of their front feet.

Squirrels tend to land on their front feet simultaneously, leaving parallel sets of tracks as they bound through the snow. Rabbits, on the other hand, offset their front feet as they land, sometimes going so far as to place them one in front of the other. In addition to the pattern, rabbits also have larger hind feet in relation to their front feet than squirrels. Because they're made to jump, you'll also see a greater distance between tracks from rabbits compared to squirrels.

There are only two animals that leave behind tracks with deep, pole-like holes. You can guess which one we saw plenty of – deer. Deer and Moose have hooves, so their tracks look like a pair of thick crescent moons coming together, sometimes with a pair of dots behind them. When walking around Indian Creek Nature Center earlier this year I would often see the imprints of the deer body in the snow as well, which would fill in their hoof prints. These tracks resembled what appeared to be large snowshoe prints, but were spaced much too far apart to be made by any person. Deer try to bound through the snow like rabbits when it is particularly deep, which we experienced plenty of this year.





In contrast with the large body imprints and deep leg holes the deer would leave, the tracks of mice or voles are very shallow and can be found scattered throughout the woods. They look like tiny versions of rabbit and squirrel tracks, lasting for only a few feet between the snow wells around trees or from their den exits. Mice and voles leave great tracks if you can find them, because they're so light that they don't typically sink into the snow as they walk. They also tend to have a distinct tail drag pattern between their feet. In the spring their tunnels will begin to be revealed as the snow melts. As they move through their tunnels their body heat will melt the snow, which then refreezes into ice and forms sturdy walls. You're most likely to find these trails around areas of thick brush, like your garden, or around the bases of trees.

Finally, both fox and coyote have tracks similar to that of a dog, all three species being from the canine family. Fox and coyote, however, walk with perfect steps. That means that they place their hind legs into the holes left behind from their front legs as they walk, leaving behind only 1 pair of tracks, rather than 2 pairs. That's how we know that these tracks weren't caused by a dog, because dogs will leave behind a smattering of paw prints as they walk. We believe that the tracks we found were coyote tracks due to their size. Coyote are larger than fox, and will leave larger paw prints as a result. Both animals have 4 toes, with fox tracks being slightly thinner on average than coyote. You may also find bobcat tracks with resemble these as well. However, bobcat tracks typically lack the imprint of claws. Like house cats, bobcats can recess their claws into their paws, an ability that canines lack entirely.



There are, of course, lots of other animals that you may find near our trails at Indian Creek. Racoons have 5 fingers, and their prints look like miniature people hands. Porcupines tend to create a trough as they waddle through the snow, and their quills leave behind brush strokes in the snow. Their trails also tend to end at the base of trees, and they may be spotted sleeping in their branches. Birds also leave behind tracks as the scavenge on the ground for food, and if you're lucky, you may see wing imprints from where a bird took off. If you have time before the snow melts, take a walk on one of the trails at Indian Creek and see the tracks before they disappear!



Above: Bird tracks in the snow.

Right: Bird body and wing impressions left when a bird took flight.

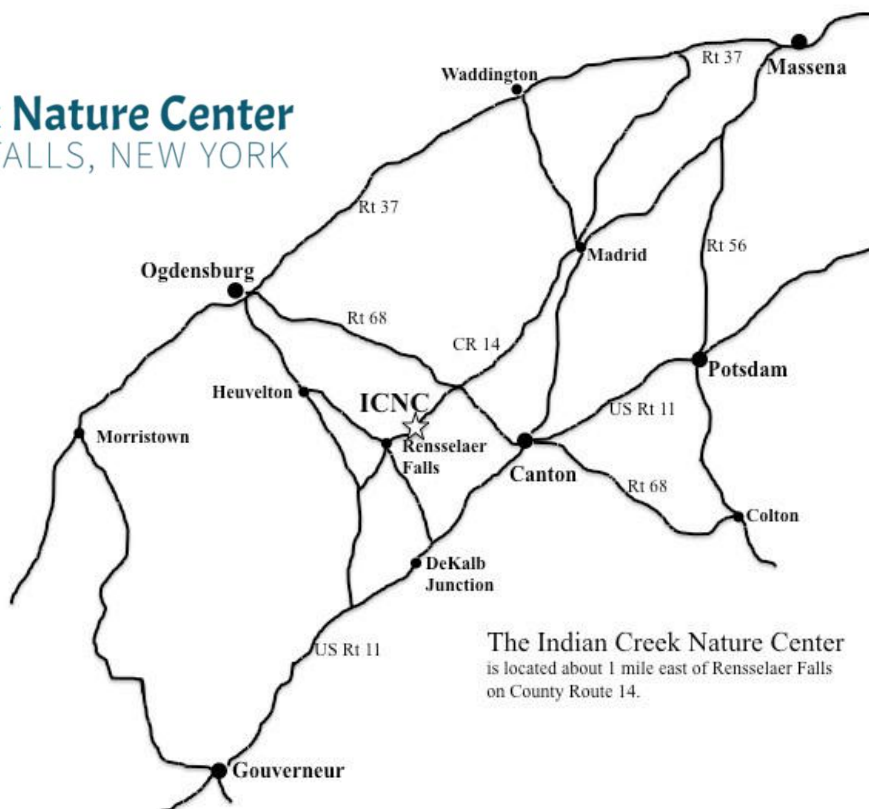
Photos by Jan Trybula

INDIAN CREEK NATURE CENTER
PO BOX 286
CANTON, NY 13617

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Indian Creek Nature Center
RENSSELAER FALLS, NEW YORK



The Indian Creek Nature Center is located about 1 mile east of Rensselaer Falls on County Route 14.