



Spring 2019

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Indian Creek Nature Center
PO Box 286
Canton, NY 13617

indiancreeknaturecenterny@gmail.com



From the Board President, Nick Hamilton-Honey

As I write this, there is still snow on the ground, but my thoughts turn to spring. At the Extension Learning Farm, March means maple. Warmer days and nights at or below freezing means the sap will be running. People mostly think of sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) as producing the sap for all things maple, but all maples (*Acer* spp.) produce sap. The sugar maples have the highest sugar content.

Some mark the return of spring with the “hey, cutie” of a courting black-capped chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*). Others might turn to starting seedlings and planning their garden beds. We move from the season in which the earth is covered in a blanket of (mostly) white snow, with the dark greens of pines (*Pinus* spp.) and hemlocks (*Tsuga canadensis*) and the brown-grey of dormant trees, to the season of vibrant spring greens and the early colors of violets (*Viola* spp.), trout lilies (*Erythronium americanum*), and Northern blueflag (*Iris versicolor*). The earthy smell of the forest reawakening in spring is lovely and invigorating, while the smell of amorous striped skunks (*Mephitis mephitis*) is not so pleasant, but nonetheless a sign of spring! Migrating spring birds will turn Indian Creek into a riot of both sound and color.

Springtime at Indian Creek Nature Center also brings flooding to several of our trails. Early spring means the Grasse River floods at the northern end of the Upper and Lower Lakes Wildlife Management Area. Later the Oswegatchie River floods at the southern end of Upper and Lower Lakes. This flooding provides

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Spring and Summer 2019 Public Programs!

Public programs are provided free of charge by volunteer naturalists and educators. We ask that you **register** with the program leader **prior** to the date of the event by calling or emailing the leaders.

Unless otherwise noted, groups will meet at the Nature Center Main Entrance parking lot.

FRUIT TREE SPRINGTIME CARE: PRUNING, DEVELOPMENT AND RESTORATION

A program to acquaint the novice as well as the more experienced fruit grower with tree care techniques from the ground up, from pruning and training young plants to renovating old, neglected trees. Master Gardener Don O'Shea, with decades of experience working with fruit trees, will share information on tree biology, pruning to enhance sound structural growth, fruit production and tree health, tool tips and mistakes to avoid. This class is free but pre-registration is required (important in case of changes due to bad weather). **Call Don prior to the program** of April 13, 2019. We'll meet at the pavilion, main entrance parking lot of Indian Creek Nature Center.

Leader: Don O'Shea, (315) 393-5137

Date: Saturday, April 13, 2019, 9:30am – 12:00noon.

TUESDAY MORNING BIRDING WALKS

Have a fun time discovering our seasonal birds at ICNC. We are asking registrants to contact the trip leaders for details on time and meeting place.

Leaders: Mary Beth Warburton @ 315-212-0722, msmarybeth.warburton@gmail.com, Ann Beaulieu and Joan Howlett @ 315-212-8674, hobauworks@twcny.rr.com

Dates: Tuesdays, April 16, 23, and 30

SPRING WORK DAY

Join Board members for a workday to set the Center in order from the winter. Tools will be supplied or bring your own. There's plenty of work for all.

Leader: Roger Hutchinson (315) 386-4795

Date: Saturday, May 4, 8:30am – 12:00noon

WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY!

Celebrate World Migratory Bird Day by attending a bird walk with ornithologist Susan Willson and board member Eileen Wheeler. Whether the birds are returning to Indian Creek to nest or just passing through, there will be lots of bird song and colorful species to observe.

Binoculars, long pants, and insect repellent are recommended.

Leaders: Susan Willson & Eileen Wheeler 315 386-2482; eiwheeler@yahoo.com

Date: Saturday, May 11, meet at 7:30am

MACROINVERTEBRATES

Come discover the small wonders of our water! All aquatic macroinvertebrates start life as eggs. Some animals, such as water boatmen (Hemiptera) and leeches, do not change much as they grow – like humans, they get bigger but look basically the same. Some insects, however, change (metamorphose) quite dramatically as they grow. After hatching, the insect may go through several stages before reaching adulthood. Depending on the species, it may go through a larval stage, a nymph stage, or both. To experience these macroinvertebrates check the Facebook page for more information on this program, <https://www.facebook.com/IndianCreekNatureCenterNY/>

Leader: Casey Sukeforth

Date: TBD, check our website or Facebook page

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

Date: Saturday, June 8, 10:00am – 12:00noon or later

NATURE OF HART'S FALLS

Come enjoy a short walk on this St Lawrence Land Trust Preserve. As we walk through the fields, we'll keep our eyes out for a variety of June butterflies that are nectaring on flowers or flying amongst the field grasses. Along the river we'll keep our eyes out for dragonfly and damselfly activity - some special species that breed in the Grasse River may be found here. We won't ignore the flora either - If we're lucky we may even find the early flowering orchid - shining ladies' tresses!

Directions from their website: *South of Canton onto County Route 27 (Park Street) for 2 miles. At the four way stop, turn right onto County Route 25 (Canton – Russell Road) and drive for 3.3 miles. Turn right onto Town Line Road (right before the sign for the Town of Russell, the road sign is missing), and travel to end. Make a left onto the Pyrites – Russell road, and within 100 feet, Hart's Falls will be on your right, soon marked by St. Lawrence Land Trust signs.*

Leader: Steven Daniel natdisc@gmail.com or (585-732-7095)

Date: Saturday, June 25, 10:00am – 1:00pm?

WILD EDIBLE PLANTS, PLUS A LITTLE MEDICINE

Learn some of the historic and current uses of many common wild plants, both native and naturalized. Focus is on edible plants but will touch on herbal medicine as well. Come dressed for the weather, and for ticks, too.

Leader: Paul Hetzler, Horticulture and Natural Resources Educator at Cornell Cooperative Extension of St. Lawrence County, (315) 379-9191, ext. 232.

Date: July or August, TBD, check our website or Facebook page

NATIONAL MOTH WEEK CELEBRATION AT INDIAN CREEK

Each year National Moth Week highlights the ecological importance and incredible biodiversity of moths with locally sponsored “moth night” events across the country and around the world. Join us at ICNC this July for a night of discovery in celebration of NMW. We will set up a black light and use sugar baits to attract a variety of moths for us to identify, photograph, and discuss. Bring a headlamp or flashlight, a camera, and your curiosity. Mosquito repellent might be helpful as well. (cf. <http://nationalmothweek.org/>).

Leader: Ray Erickson (315) 379-9235

Date: Saturday, July 20, 9:00pm – 11:00pm

Keep up with program changes! Visit us on Social Media!

On the web: <https://www.indiancreeknaturecenter.us>

On Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/IndianCreekNatureCenterNY/>

On Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/indiancreeknaturecenterny/>

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE CONTINUED...

breeding habitat for insects and amphibians. Please be mindful that walking in these flooded areas disturbs that habitat.

The DEC will be replacing the Observation Deck this summer. Years of flooding and an industrious beaver have made this observation area unsafe. While the rebuilding project limits our ability to be out over the marsh, the new deck will allow us to enjoy the views for years to come. DEC has also ordered a sign for the main entrance, since our current sign has seen many better years. The Board is also working with DEC to get power to the nature center building. Keep your eyes peeled for this project, which will hopefully use solar photovoltaics.

This newsletter is filled with events and programs that ICNC will be hosting in the coming months. Make sure to read through the newsletter, mark your calendars, and sign up for the excellent programs!

The Annual Dinner is April 24th and is once again at the Sergi’s in Potsdam. Cocktails are 5:30 p.m. to 6 p.m., dinner is 6 p.m. to 7 p.m., and our presenter is at 7 p.m. We are pleased to have Ray Bowdish as our presenter this year. Ray’s bio and a brief description of his talk can be found in this newsletter.

The ICNC Spring workday is May 4th. Come out to the nature center and help clear trails, paint the John Green lean-to, seal the “new” kiosk, and much more.

Conservation Field Day will be held on June 7th. Anyone interested in volunteering should contact me at indiancreeknaturecenterny@gmail.com.

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

If so, please contact Indian Creek at: indiancreeknaturecenterny@gmail.com

If you have photos or other items for the newsletter, please send materials to the editor,

Jan Trybula via email (trybulj@potsdam.edu)

Poetry Corner

Ancestral Flights (A Parallele)

By Andrew Carpino

Away away the siege of heron.
Away away the siege of heron.
Great forms streaked in blue and gray.
Great forms streaked in blue and gray.
Away the great blue heron streaked
and away gray forms siege.

With grace from primal winds,
With grace from primal winds,
The suns lost in your eyes dawn,
The suns lost in your eyes dawn.
Lost winds of suns, with grace,
dawn the primal from your eyes.

Along these banks they nest.
Along these banks they nest.
Stand sentinel in the cold shallows.
Stand sentinel in the cold shallows.
Shallows along these sentinel banks
nest the cold they stand in.

In great winds and shallows primal
they stand these eyes.
The lost nest with suns.
Away sentinel from the cold gray dawn,
siege your forms along the banks.
Away blue heron streaked in grace.



Photo by Ray Erickson

Please consider becoming a member of the Indian Creek Nature Center!

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

If you are already a member, look at your newsletter address. The top right of your address shows the season and year that your membership expires. The last letter identifies your membership category.

Student member (in school or college) \$10 ☐
Senior Citizen member \$10 ☐
Individual member \$20 ☐
Family membership \$30 ☐
ICNC Patron \$100 ☐
ICNC Life Member (nontransferable) \$200 ☐

Membership for 20_____New ☐Renewal ☐

Please notify us of any address changes!

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Please consider an additional donation! \$_____

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We send complimentary newsletters to
schools, libraries, and other entities.

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

You can also join or renew through PayPal on our website: <https://www.indiancreeknaturecenter.us/>

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.

Nature in Focus:

Great Blue Heron



By Eileen Wheeler

As you can see from the heading on the front of this newsletter, we have updated our logo! This stylized image of a Great Blue Heron was designed for us by Brien O'Keefe. Thanks, Brien!



Photo by Eileen Wheeler

The Great Blue Heron, *Ardea herodias*, is the most common and largest of North American herons. They are usually between 5 and 6 lbs and approximately 4 feet tall with a 6-foot wingspan. They live an average of 15 years, although a banded Texas bird was found to be 24 years, 5 months old!

You might notice these interesting birds flying over our area in Spring as they make daily foraging trips to and from their rookeries or nesting colonies. Notice that in flight, the head and long neck are folded back on the shoulders, the long legs are trailing straight out in back, and the wings beat slowly and deeply. To some folks, this sight elicits a comparison to a flying, prehistoric cousin!

Nests are usually built in tall trees in or near standing water which reduces predator access. The nest is a platform of sticks and reeds gathered by the male but built by the female. Large rookeries in places where there is abundant food nearby may have over a hundred nests, often several in each tree. Females lay 2-6 eggs; both parents incubate for almost a month. The young fledge at about 2 months.

Hérons are waders, typically wading very slowly along the shoreline of marshes and streams. Their diet is mostly fish but also may consist of frogs, mice, and insects. Often, they will stand still waiting for a meal to swim by. A long, s-shaped neck allows them to rapidly strike prey at a distance with their dagger-like bill. Great Blue Herons can hunt day and night due to the high number of rod-type photo-receptors in their eyes that permit night vision.

While the heron population has recovered well from the feather hunters of the early twentieth century, heronries remain vulnerable to habitat loss, climate change, predators, and human disturbances.

At the Indian Creek Nature Center, Great Blue Herons are uncommon, but may be seen along the shore of the ponds by the boardwalk or in shallow water from the Lowland Trail as well as other places. But tread lightly: they flush easily with a grunt or squawk as they fly off. They may detect you before you see them!

References:

- All About Birds, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/greatblueheron>
- Sibley, David; Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior, 2001.
- 2nd Atlas of Breeding Birds in NY, 2008, Donald McCrimmon, p.160.
- Audubon Society Encyclopedia of N. American Birds. 1991, p. 499.

Volunteer Interview – Peter O’Shea

by Eileen Wheeler, 1 March 2019

An author and naturalist originally from New York City, Peter O’Shea loves to share his knowledge and experience in the natural world with people of all ages. He came north in 1962 after retirement as a sergeant from the Bronx police force, and settled in Fine, NY, in the foothills of the Northern Adirondacks.

Peter grew up in Flushing, Queens, at a time when there were still farms and natural areas to explore. One of his formative experiences happened on a bike ride when he suddenly flushed a group of pheasants, prompting him to get a bird field guide and look them up. He witnessed the land change drastically after World War II, quickly becoming an urban environment. The loss of so much habitat spurred him to become an advocate for the environment and the plants and animals in it.

Peter’s interest in Indian Creek Nature Center began in the early 1980’s, joining the Board in 1986 and continuing until 2000. He led field trips on wild flowers and breeding birds, helped install the posts on our long boardwalk, and led nature walks with students on Conservation Field Days. He still leads a popular animal tracking walk every January.

Some of his favorite memories at the Center include seeing a great horned owl who was being mobbed by crows go after and knock a crow to the ground, sending the harassers on their way. On another walk, an 8-year old boy found a huge garter snake working its way through the branches of bushes, instead of on the ground. A night walk was another favorite, hearing wood cock and snipe calling at the same time. Reminding us of the diversity of wildlife we have, Peter has found bear, and on another occasion, bobcat tracks. Apparently, the bobcat leaped, leaving tracks 11 feet apart in the snow!



Photo by Dorothy Szczepinski

Peter feels Indian Creek Nature Center and Upper and Lower Lakes Wildlife Management Area are important as a wildlife corridor helping connect Canada with the Adirondacks, and he supports the Adirondack to Algonquin Initiative. He would like to see us enhance our profile and expand our environmental education saying, “It is vitally important to give children nature education. I believe each one of us is entrusted to be stewards of the land. We have to leave this earth in better shape when we go. I want to contribute.”

Thanks, Peter O’Shea, for many informative, memorable walks, always opening our eyes to the amazing nature around us!



Photo by Jan Trybula

Please join us on Wednesday, April 24 for the Indian Creek Nature Center Annual General Meeting & Dinner!

Agroecology – Systems Interactions

by Ray Bowdish



Ray Bowdish is an instructor, farm owner and Coordinator of the Wagner Institute for Sustainability and Ecological Research (WISER) Center, housed in the Biology Department at SUNY Potsdam. Ray has worked on a variety of sustainability and ecology projects over the years and is primarily interested in ways we can improve education and actions that affect our personal and community health. His courses in Sustainable Agriculture and Current Topics in Agroecology provide authentic grower experiences and investigate the complexities of growing and consuming local foods.

His talk *Agroecology -Systems Interactions* is designed to introduce how systems theory and modeling can help us understand how agriculture affects human communities and their encompassing environments.

The meeting will be on Wednesday, April 24 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. Ray's talk will begin about 7:00.

The cost is \$25.00 per person. Please make reservation and payments by April 15.

If you have questions, please contact our president, Nick Hamilton-Honey at 413-885-5725
Or email at indiancreeknaturecenterny@gmail.com

people attending _____ X \$25.00 per person = total amount enclosed _____

Please make checks payable to: **Indian Creek Nature Center**

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