

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON NATURE CENTER

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2023 Issue



Winter blankets the Wellesley Island State Park campgrounds. Photographed by Andrew Kane.

Winter is upon us as the glistening white snow covers the remnants of fall lying upon the ground. The sun emits the only warmth as icicles melt from the branches of the various trees and bushes in the forest. Along with the snow comes the opportunity to pull the snowshoes from the closet, strap them on, and head out into the beautiful winter wonderland. If you have never been out on the trails of the Nature Center in the winter, you are truly missing a fabulous moment. Not only are the trails sparkling, but your chance to see the wildlife among our 600+ acres improves since the foliage has fallen from the forest. Deer, owls, eagles, fox, bobcats, and more types of wildlife live in the forest. Don't worry if you don't own a pair of snowshoes as we have quite a few pairs and in different sizes.

The fall season was a buzz this year with programs and events at the Nature Center. We held hikes teaching about invasive species, hikes learning about

bats, storytelling programs, critter craft programs, fishing lessons, spider programs, and so much more! And I would be amiss if I forgot to mention the Autumn Festival held in October. The weather was not as nice as last year but we still welcomed over 1,500 people to the event. Highlights of the festival are within the newsletter.

Don't forget to read Minna's article as she teaches us about one of the most beautiful birds in our area, the goldfinch, and how it adapts to the winter. She writes with so much detail that you can't help but picture the goldfinch in your mind. She was truly a very knowledgeable woman about the environment and wildlife in our area.

Andy Kane
Board President
Friends of the Nature Center

The Minna Anthony Common Series

Goldfinch Turns Green in Winter

by Minna Anthony Common

*Reprinted with permission from the
Watertown Daily Times.*

As soon as the acquaintance of a particular bird, tree or flower is made it seems as if that species has suddenly become so common, so frequently is it encountered. Almost everyone knows goldfinches in summer even if they do not call them by name. Goldfinches are those bright yellow canary-size birds with black wings so often seen hovering around the sunflower and cosmos stalks in the gardens and picking the seeds from thistles and goldenrod in the open fields. But to know goldfinches in the winter is a different thing because then they are dull green birds with darker wings. As they fly about in the chill sunshine a glint of yellow glances at intervals across the flock. No sooner is it noticed then it is gone and then the question arises as to whether it was imagination or only the play of light on the glossy feathers. As a fact the winter coat is meagerly washed over with gold which shows only in certain lights.

Except during the nesting season, July and August, goldfinches live in flocks. Although they are not migratory but stay right here all the time, there are seasons when they are not much in evidence. One of their disappearances is during April and May just when other birds are most conspicuous. It is then that the goldfinches retire and change their coats from the dull greenish winter color to the flashing gold of summer. The other disappearance is in fall before they have

collected into winter flocks, for at this time they are losing their gay nuptial feathers and like all birds, feel lazy during the process.

After the autumn change to the dull green-brown they gather into small flocks and may be seen almost any day flying about near the edges of woods or undulating above the weedy fields. "Undulating" expresses exactly the flight of goldfinches – up and down, up and down, beating the wings on the upstroke and gliding on the down; they progress through the air on even waves. In summer the downward glide is always accompanied by a few clear notes, "per-chick-o-ree, per-chick-o-ree;" and even in the winter a goldfinch sometimes forgets the chill and calls a few times. The peculiar flight is enough to identify a goldfinch flock at any time.

Goldfinches in July have a lengthy and varied song, a song which has caused them sometimes to be caged like canaries. On bright sunny warm winter days they often whistle bits of this song, perhaps for practice, but more likely from abundant happiness.

If in the flower border any beds of cosmos have been left standing then there will be many seeds and almost surely at some time during the winter the goldfinches will come to feed. Being almost the same size as English sparrows and much the same shape, since goldfinches too belong to the sparrow family, they may not attract notice at first. But goldfinches feed by clinging to the stalk with one foot above the other and bending and twisting their heads about to pick the seeds with a charming grace of movement. Should an English sparrow ever alight on such a slender stalk he would lose his balance. The natural feeding place of the English sparrow is on the ground.

After the flight characteristics and the feeding habits of goldfinches are learned, they will be noticed about the North Country surprisingly often during the winter months. ■

From the Director

Dear Nature Center Community,

The past fall was filled with signature Nature Center events as well as several new programs. The 43rd Annual Autumn Festival was a family favorite – this beloved event always draws a crowd, and this year was no exception! See photos from the fun-filled day on pages 5-6. Thank you to all the volunteers and community partners who make this event a continued success!

Volunteers truly make a difference! From assisting with special events like Autumn Festival, welcoming park patrons at our front desk, volunteering as a Friends' board member, or dedicating time to work on a long-range project – the Nature Center wouldn't be what it is today without its volunteers. On the next page read about Mrs. Caroline Batterson, the 2022 recipient of the Minna Anthony Common Trailblazer Award. She inspires all of us with her tireless dedication to New York State Parks and her unbridled love of nature.

Life in Northern New York is intimately tied to the seasons. There is a familiar rhythm that pulses throughout the year but is felt most acutely during the colder seasons. Remember to get outside this winter – we look forward to welcoming you at our First Day Hike, Ice Fishing Clinic, or at one of our Free Snowshoe Days. See our calendar on pages 7-8.



Ice forms abstract art on the forest floor. Photographed by volunteer Cecelia Madore.

As 2022 winds down and winter slowly comes into view, let's take a moment to celebrate the past year. From all of us at the Nature Center: wishing you and your families a happy holiday season and a joyous 2023!

Gabriela Padewska
Nature Center Director

For Your Consideration

Winter Hiking Safety

Some of the best outdoor experiences can be found in winter! Rather than staying indoors, prepare for cold weather recreation with these helpful tips from the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC): www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/112826.html

Caroline Batterson receives the 2022 Minna Anthony Common Trailblazer Award

L-R: Darlene Sourwine, Kathy Leskoske, Kerry Roberge, Andrew Kane, Caroline Batterson, Molly Farrell, Gabriela Padewska, Joe Leskoske.

Congratulations to Caroline Batterson, the recipient of the 2022 Minna Anthony Common Trailblazer Award! Caroline was recognized on September 8th for her long-standing commitment to the Nature Center and New York State Parks. She played an integral role in developing the Nature Center's exhibit and collections database – cleaning, photographing, and documenting hundreds of wildfowl decoys and taxidermy. Caroline remarkably volunteered over 1600 hours towards this project! Caroline, THANK YOU for your dedication!



Caroline Batterson at award ceremony



Caroline (left) with photograph of a Nature Center cross-country skiing competition led by her late husband, Joe Batterson



THANK YOU to the following 48 *Friends* for joining or renewing their commitment recently

Greg & Cynthia McLean	Clinton, NY	Stan & Barb Eldridge	Watertown, NY
Dr. David & Ann Hertzog.	Yardley, PA	Todd Atkinson Family	Vero Beach, FL
Wink Beadel	Wellesley Island, NY	Brad & Mary Pat Adams	Wellesley Island, NY
Steve Kreckman	New Cumberland, PA	Allison Latcheran	Pittsburgh, PA
Mike & Jennifer Smathers	Farmington, NY	Robert Nassau	Wellesley Island, NY
Christopher Murray	Clayton, NY	Donald & Kelly Coon	Watertown, NY
Charlotte Wellins	Wellesley Island, NY	Daniel & Luran Throop	Tequesta, FL
Joseph Vay & Dr. Mary Beth Robinson-Vay	Rochester, NY	Don & Sheila Smith	Wellesley Island, NY
Ali Fernaays	Rochester, NY	Manford & Victoria Jerome	Wellesley Island, NY
Erica Hoffman	Atlantic Beach, FL	Robert & Judy Parmiter	Newark, NY
John & Amanda Mrowka	Cape Vincent, NY	Peter & Laurie Pike	Watertown, NY
Mike & Amy Phelps	Naples, FL	Ronald & Betty Ann Jacobs	Alexandria Bay, NY
Bruce Alexander	Dexter, NY	Donald & Kate Dixon	Coventry, CT
Larry & Jo Ann Golden	Bonita Springs, FL	Laura Yehle	Wellesley Island, NY
Richard & Leslie Tolman	Chesterland, OH	Shari Hogan	Dexter, NY

Highlights from the 43rd Annual *Autumn Festival*



Little Lawrence enjoys the pumpkin patch



The Velasio family builds a scarecrow



The Rorick family plays a round of corn javelin



L-R: Cathy Cullen, Kim Cullen, Lynn Morgan



Thank you WIFD for offering tours!



Catherine and Caroline Taylor in the sunflower room

Highlights from the 43rd Annual *Autumn Festival*

Grace Elliott holds a rabbit in the petting farm



Scotts siblings take turns on the apple cider press

**Thank you
to our sponsors!**

Alexandria Bay: Price Chopper • FX Caprara • Bob William's Valero
North Country Seed & Feed • Phinn's Redemption Center (A-Bay & Clayton)
T.I. Bait Store • Gouverneur Savings & Loan • 1000 Islands Painting & Carpentry
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Morrison's Furniture • Jonathan & Heather White • Rick & Michele Gefell

Clayton: Lyric Coffee House • River Rat Cheese • Hunner's Market
River Wellness Center • River Yoga • Seaway Marine Group • Clipper Inn
The Golden Cleat • Stone Tree Maple • Green Acres Goose Control
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Constableville: Adirondack Asset Auctions
Liverpool: Feather in Flight Productions
Redwood: Route 37 Building Supply
Fairport: Karen & Tom Allen
Oswego: Ontario Orchards



Cortez family with a spectacled owl



Winter Calendar

Preregistration recommended.
Please call **(315) 482-2479** to register.
Face covering encouraged when indoors.

RECURRING EVENTS

FEATHERED FRIENDS

Saturday, January 7 and March 4 // 11:00 a.m.—Noon

Every winter the Nature Center builds a bird feeder station to help the wintering bird population. Birdseed will be provided to feed the birds. Our feathered friends may even land and take seed from your hand, or your head! All ages are welcome.

FREE SNOWSHOE DAYS

Saturday: January 14, February 18, and March 11 // 9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

Gear up – for free! Take a pair of snowshoes out on our trails and explore winter! Weather permitting: seven inches of snow is needed to take our snowshoes out on the trail. Please call for conditions. Visit the Nature Center during open hours to sign out your shoes.

PACK BASKET CLASS

Saturday, February 4 and March 18 // 9:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.

Have you ever wanted to weave your very own pack basket? Come join a small class to learn this traditional craft. This is an all-day workshop, please bring a lunch. Space is very limited, please call to reserve your spot. Fee is \$100.00; payment is due when reserving your spot. This class is recommended for adults.

JANUARY

FIRST DAY HIKE

Sunday, January 1 // 10:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

Kick off the New Year in the outdoors! Join us for this annual event held across New York State. Hikes are self-guided all day– choose your own adventure! An easy, guided, family-friendly hike will be offered at 1:00 p.m. Snowshoes will be provided if conditions allow. Please call to preregister.

WINTER EXPLORATIONS

Saturday, January 14 // 1:00 p.m.—2:00 p.m.

The winter months provide some of the best opportunities for viewing wildlife along our trails. Come brave the cold and the wind and learn about plant and animal adaptations to winter, winter tree identification, and more! Snowshoes will be provided if there is enough snow.

BALD EAGLE WATCHING

Saturday, January 21 // 10:00 a.m.—Noon

The bald eagles are here! Wellesley Island is one of the best places in New York State to see these magnificent birds. We'll search for these cold-weather visitors along frozen waterbodies and in the treetops overhead. BYO binoculars and dress for cold, windy weather.

ICE FISHING CLINIC

Saturday, January 28 // 10:00 a.m.—Noon

Join local fishing guide Azriel Snyder for a step-by-step instruction of ice fishing on Eel Bay! Augering the ice, tip-up setup, and baiting will be demonstrated. Meet at Eel Bay boat launch, near Campsite Area H. No restrooms on site, the Nature Center is a 2-minute drive away.

FEBRUARY

DOG SLED DEMONSTRATION by RIVER FEVER MUSHING

Saturday, February 11 // 10:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m.

Ever wonder what it takes to run a dog sled team? Come meet local dog sled team River Fever Mushing! Watch the dogs in action with a live demonstration followed by a meet-and-greet at the end. This is an outdoor activity; please dress for all weather conditions.

A LOUD WINTER'S NAP

Saturday, February 18 // 1:00 p.m.—2:00 p.m.

Join us for a reading of the book *A Loud Winter's Nap* written by Katy Hudson. This is a hilarious kids' story you don't want to miss. After the story we will head outside for some winter outdoor fun. Please dress to play outside in the snow.

KIDS' WEEK!

Wednesday, February 22 – Sunday, February 26 // 10:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m.

School's out! This winter break, stop by the Nature Center for some winter fun! We will have programs daily. Topics include fairy houses, storytelling, bird bingo, snow flea discovery, winter track identification, and a scavenger hunt!

MARCH

SNOW FLEA HUNT

Saturday, March 11 // 1:00 p.m.—2:00 p.m.

Come join us on a fun hunt for the amazing, but very tiny, snow flea! We will take a hike through the woods to see if we can find this small creature. Learn what a snow flea is, and how to find them – no worries, snow fleas won't bite!

BARN QUILT WORKSHOP

Saturday, March 25 // 9:00 a.m.—Noon

Have you ever seen quilt patterns painted on wood? Even if you don't have a barn to hang one on, join us to learn this regional artform! Quilter Barb Hearn will lead you step-by-step to make your own. Class size is limited. Preregistration required. Workshop fee including materials is \$30.

Highlights from Holiday Bonanza!



Thank You!



Alexandria Bay

Big M Supermarket
Treasure Island Shoppe
Cranberry Boggs
River Living Furniture & Giftware
Buoys Boutique
North Country Seed & Feed
Riveredge Resort

Local Business

Captain Spicer's Gallery, Clayton
Feather in Flight, Liverpool
Runnings, Watertown
Tully's, Watertown
Hannafords, Watertown

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generously support us!*





MISSION STATEMENT

The Friends of the Minna Anthony Common Nature Center support environmental education programming that fosters conservation of local ecosystems, encourages outdoor recreation, and inspires our visitors to develop an increased respect for the natural world.



The Friends of the Nature Center, Inc. works in partnership with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.



New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation

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Snowshoeing Season is Here!**FREE SNOWSHOE DAYS**

Saturdays: January 14, February 18, and March 11

Gear up – for free! Take a pair of snowshoes out on our trails and explore winter! Weather permitting: seven inches of snow is needed to take our snowshoes out on the trail. Please call for conditions. Visit the Nature Center during open hours to sign out your shoes.

Snowshoes are also available to rent (conditions permitting) whenever we are open! We carry sizes ranging from toddler (3-6 years old), children's (4-8 years old), youth (8-12 years old), adult women's, and adult men's. All rentals are \$3 per day. Snowshoes must be returned by 2:30 p.m.

FRIENDLY REMINDER: Most membership levels include free snowshoe rentals. Become a Friends' member this winter!



New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation

**Minna Anthony Common Nature Center**

Wellesley Island State Park

44927 Cross Island Road

Fineview, NY 13640

(315) 482-2479

HOURS OF OPERATION**October–May (Off Season):**

Nature Center open Wednesday—Sunday

9:00am—3:00pm

Closed Mondays and Tuesdays

Trails Open Sunrise to Sunset Daily



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of this newsletter



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for your quality printing services.