

# NEWSLETTER

Winter 2021 Issue • December 2020



*A painted sunset flows into the wintery Narrows in February*

## Bring the Cheer of Outdoors Inside

Each quarter we revisit an article from Minna Anthony Common in order to keep her spirit and wisdom alive. Almost one hundred years later, her writing reminds us of the consistency of the natural world and gives us something with which to compare our current experiences. This quarter's article is interesting as Minna not only teaches of the usefulness of certain plants, but also consistently warns of the overuse and abuse of these resources; discussing the delicate balance one must maintain when benefitting from nature's bounty.

Also striking in this article is the time at which it was written. 1931 saw a historic turn-for-the-worse in the Great Depression. Millions were home, unable to work and facing terrific personal daily hardship. For Minna's readers, turning to

nature, or in this case carrying a bit of nature indoors, was a terrific way to bring color and joy to one's situation.

Today, as more of us isolate through the global pandemic, we are lucky to have a place like Wellesley Island State Park to find our own joy. As a reminder, taking natural materials from the park is not allowed, but taking photos (digital, mental or otherwise) can warm the spirit and the home this winter. So let's all learn a little from Minna, and find some comfort in the beauty of nature.

See you on the trails soon!

Matt Elliott  
*Board President*

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**The Minna Anthony Common Series**

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**Winter Plants Are Discussed****MANY OF THEM MAY BE USED TO ADVANTAGE****BITTERSWEET IS POPULAR***by Mrs. James A. Common (1931)**Reprinted by permission of the  
Watertown Daily Times*

The fore-handed housewife planned her winter bouquets months ago. She may have grown in her garden the old-fashioned silver schilling and the new style straw flowers or perhaps she gathered in July fresh-opened pearly everlastings and stored them away until the present time or in September she picked her lily-of-the-valley seed stalks of gay red berries. However, not all of us are fore-handed.

Various berries if gathered in the early fall when first ripened will look fresh for months even in our warm houses. Bittersweet probably comes to mind first. It is such a gay berry, rich red enclosed in an orange husk lined with yellow. Bittersweet will most likely be a thing of the past, since so many people pick it so ruthlessly, tearing and uprooting the vines to get every berry bunch. The excuse, "Well, if I don't pick it someone else will," seems too many to excuse their ruthlessness. Next in line is probably the Northern holly or swamp red berry, loveliest of all winter decorations. For its own well-being it is a good thing that it hides itself deep in the swamp where it is often unapproachable. Clitonia is not so well known. Left alone the fruits fall in November, but they will cling for years if picked early enough.

Baneberry is another plant of the thick woods, its berries forming a head on a two-foot stalk. Each berry is shiny white and has a short red stem connecting it to the main stalk.

Cromwell is a little known plant of waste lands. It has its day in September. Then its green leaves wither and drop off leaving thickly strewn along its branches the tiny shiny white berries. These make one of the loveliest of winter decorations, but must be brought in with great care and not disturbed in the vase later, as they fall if jarred.

All these plants are only for the prompt, for those who do things when they should be done. Unfortunately, there are people who are neither forehanded nor prompt and for them Nature in her kindly way has kept some good things in reserve.

In the berry line there is the wild smilax, a beautiful clump of blue-black fruit clustered in a tight grouping. Where a stiff, formal, and stately bouquet is in order the teasel is the best plant to use. It often grows four feet tall and branches like candelabra. The seed heads are as large as eggs and bristle with thorny points. Teasels take paint excellently if artificially colored plants are admired. Their natural soft gray tones are preferred by most people as they harmonize with almost any house furnishings.

Commonest of all usable decorative seed stalks are milkweed pods. They are most individual plants, each one having grown as it pleased, so it is necessary to be selective when gathering the stalks. Their coloring is superb, soft silky gray outside and smooth satiny yellow within. There are people who enjoy coloring this lining to suit their fancy or to harmonize with the place where the bouquet is to stand.

A very beautiful rich dark brown decoration is made by the fertile fronds of the sensitive fern. These may be found in any damp thick woods and may be gathered even after the snows have fallen.

So, even if one is neither forehanded nor prompt, there is still some winter bouquets that may be found to finish off that empty-looking corner and bring the cheer of outdoors inside. ■

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## From the Director

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Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As the official start of winter is around the corner, and the year is almost over, I can't help but reflect back on 2020. Of all the great work the Nature Center did, I am proudest of the adaptability and resiliency of not just those working with the Nature Center but of the community that surrounds this special place. With a roller-coaster of Covid-19 procedural changes being issued almost weekly, your support for our work was the constant. I am grateful to staff and SCA members that pivoted to continue connecting people to the natural world, and to the Friends board, volunteers, members, donors, sponsors, partner organizations, visitors, and our online community for their outpouring of support. One thing was made especially clear this year—people rallied around the Minna Anthony Common Nature Center. We owe you all a big year-end THANK YOU!

I am also grateful for Minna's article this quarter. We see the artist side of Minna—using her naturalist skills to advise us on natural beauty. She talks of “winter bouquets” and the aesthetic and decorative uses of plants. It reminds me of the Danish concept of *hygge*. Hygge translates loosely to “cozy,” and it's focused on winter practices that support nature connection, creativity, and community. Her message reminds me to stay grounded in life's simple pleasures this winter. One practice that fulfills this intention is bird watching. Birds make me happy. I've been birding for close to a decade, and while my binoculars have gathered dust recently, the excitement and bliss of birding never gets old. A personal highlight of the past month was leading our Bald Eagle Watching program. Additionally, later this month we are partnering with Parks Canada on the annual *Christmas Bird Count*. Reasons to be grateful, indeed!

This winter we have a diverse lineup of programs—including several birding programs! We are offering another Bald Eagle Watching program, and monthly bird feeder programs. Also, make sure you don't miss our signature Luminary Hike! Or maybe attend our Trail Volunteer Training, for a reason to get outside for a good cause.

When short days and a long winter take their toll, one can find cheer in nature. Wishing all of you and your families a merry winter! Hope to see you in the New Year 2021!

Warmly,

Gabriela Padewska  
*Nature Center Director*



*A hairy woodpecker at our birdfeeder*

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## For Your Consideration

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**Did you know that our region is the second largest bald eagle wintering grounds in New York State?**

Check out this webpage from the NYSDEC entitled [Bald Eagles in the St. Lawrence River Region](#). It's confirmed, Wellesley Island is one of the best places to see these magnificent birds! See them flying near the shoreline, perching near the river, or hunting on the ice.





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**Student Conservation Association (SCA) Member Reflections**

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*Our 2020 SCA members last February: Robin (left), Veronica, and Sydney*

**Robin Hall:** My 10-month term with the Student Conservation Association allowed me to gain valuable experience and gave me the chance to make connections that I will carry with me in my future. Despite all of the Covid-19 regulations, the Minna Anthony Common Nature Center staff gave me every opportunity to grow and develop into a skilled environmental educator. I also was given the chance to connect with a variety of animals – my favorite being Ajax, our Common Snapping turtle. Despite all of the challenges I faced during this term, I found strength that I did not think I was capable of and will always be grateful for this program. I am excited to continue my journey with all of the knowledge that I have gained this year.

**Veronica Hayes:** Living on Wellesley Island and serving at the Minna Anthony Common Nature Center has been the experience of a lifetime! I loved walking the Nature Center's trails every week and learning about nature through observation. It was such a delight to engage the public through social media and share my photography with everyone. The programs I created were full of interesting people and always left me feeling inspired. I genuinely loved the work I did and can't imagine doing anything else! I am very grateful for SCA, the Nature Center, and all the Friends members that made this experience possible for me.

**Sydney Kelly:** As I drove down the interstate in a foreign country to return to my new home on Wellesley Island, I couldn't help but feel a sense of excitement but anxiousness. I had just dropped my mother off at the airport in Canada, and it was the first time I ever truly felt alone. The life-long friends I met made me quickly realize I was not alone. As I reminisce on my time with the SCA, I cannot help but feel a sense of accomplishment and appreciation for my growth and the people who helped me grow. My experience with the SCA is one that I will always value.



## Virtual Field Trips

March 2020, was a time to remember. Before the Nature Center was ordered to close, I was busy teaching winter trips and finalizing plans for the spring. During the school year teachers use our on-site trips to give students the opportunity for a hands-on learning experience. Throughout the school year, I work closely with teachers to tailor lessons to fit curriculum needs. By doing so, we help local schools fulfill their needs, and it creates connections to the outdoors. Each year we average over 2,500 students. So when schools announced that they would continue with remote learning for the remainder of the school year, the Nature Center knew we needed to do our part.

The Nature Center needed to create a way for students to connect to the outside world without traveling to the park. So the Nature Center team put our heads together (virtually) and started developing the Outdoor Classroom campaign on our Facebook page. It was a series that encouraged families to get outside in their own backyards. It was a very successful campaign reaching over 10,000 people!

The next step in our online outreach plan was to develop Virtual Field Trips. The goal was to create virtual lessons with activities that could be done in a schoolyard or backyard. Virtual Field Trips were developed for grades K-4. They consist of a YouTube video lesson, and a downloadable Activity Guide containing a fun article jam-packed with vocabulary words and an outdoor activity that can be done anywhere. I am pleased to announce that we have successfully launched spring and fall trips. Stay tuned for our winter Virtual Field Trips coming out in 2021.

Check it out! Get outside and have some fun!

Kimberly Cullen  
*Education Coordinator*



### KINDERGARTEN

#### Living and Non-Living Things

[YouTube lesson – Kindergarten](#)

[Activity Guide – Kindergarten](#)



### FIRST GRADE

#### Seasonal Change

[YouTube lesson – 1<sup>st</sup> Grade](#)

[Activity Guide – 1<sup>st</sup> Grade](#)



### SECOND GRADE

#### Seeds & Plant Life Cycle

[YouTube lesson – 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade](#)

[Activity Guide – 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade](#)

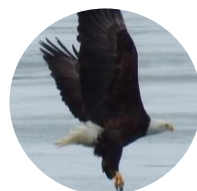


### THIRD GRADE

#### Trees

[YouTube lesson – 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade](#)

[Activity Guide – 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade](#)



### FOURTH GRADE

#### Bird Adaptations & Migration

[YouTube lesson – 4<sup>th</sup> Grade](#)

[Activity Guide – 4<sup>th</sup> Grade](#)

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# Winter Events



Scan to see the full  
calendar of events on  
our website

*Program size is limited. Pre-registration required.*  
Please call **(315) 482-2479** between the hours of  
8:00am—4:00pm, Wednesday through Sunday to  
register. *Face covering required.*

## **FREE SNOWSHOE DAYS**

**Saturdays: January 2, February 6, and March 13**

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. Visit the Nature Center during open hours to sign out your shoes.

## **BIRD FEEDER PROGRAMS**

**Saturdays: January 16, February 20, and March 6**

### **PROJECT FEEDER WATCH 10:00—11:00am**

Become a citizen scientist and help us identify and count birds at our feeders! All data will be submitted to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's *Project Feeder Watch*.

### **FEATHERED FRIENDS 11:00am—Noon**

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

## **JANUARY**

### **FIRST DAY HIKE**

**Friday, January 1 // 10:00am—3:00pm** Visit us for this annual tradition! This year all hikes are self-guided.

### **FAIRY HOUSES**

**Saturday, January 9 // 1:30—2:30pm**

If you believe in magic and pixie dust, our winter Fairy Houses program is for you! We'll read a story about exploring the magic of the forest, then build fairy houses on the trails. Dress for playing in the snow.

### **ICE FISHING CLINIC**

**Saturday, January 23 // 10:00am—Noon**

Join local fishing guide Aziel 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, Nature Center is a 2 minute drive away.

### **LUMINARY HIKE**

**Saturday, January 30 // 5:30pm; 6:00pm; 6:30pm.**

Join us for our signature illuminated night hike! North Field Loop transforms into a magical landscape with moonbeams and trail-side paper lanterns lighting the way. Snowshoes will be provided if there is enough snow.



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## FEBRUARY

### TRAIL VOLUNTEER TRAINING

**Saturday, February 6 // 1:30—2:30pm**

Did you know you can help the Nature Center just by hiking? Many times hikers are the first to see important issues on the trails! Come learn what to look for with NY State Parks Trail Technicians, Brittany and Liam. Snowshoes will be provided if there is enough snow.

### INDIAN RIVER LAKES CONSERVANCY WINTER HIKE

**Saturday, February 13 // 1:00pm**

Come join Nature Center staff in exploring the winter woods with the Indian River Lakes Conservancy at the Redwood Hill Preserve. Please contact the Indian River Lakes Conservancy ([indianriverlakes@gmail.com](mailto:indianriverlakes@gmail.com)) for additional information. Snowshoes will be provided if there is enough snow.

### BALD EAGLE WATCHING

**Saturday, February 13 // 10:00—11:00am**

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.

### FULL MOON HIKE

**Saturday, February 27 // 6:30—7:30pm**

Come hike the moonlit trails with us! We'll see what stars and planets the night sky has to offer, and then hike to catch a glimpse of nocturnal wildlife. Bring a red flashlight if you have one. Snowshoes will be provided if there is enough snow.

## MARCH

### NATURE DETECTIVES

**Saturday, March 13 // 10:00—11:00am**

Ever wonder who made those tracks you passed in the woods? Let's be Nature Detectives! We'll explore and learn about the animals that are active during the winter months. Children and adults welcome. Snowshoes will be provided if there is enough snow.

### SPRING EQUINOX RESTORATIVE YOGA

**Saturday, March 20 // 10:00—11:00am**

Help your body transition from winter to spring with restorative yoga. Certified Yoga Instructor Barbara Eldridge will guide us through gentle yoga movements with meditation. BYO yoga mat.

### SNOW FLEA HUNT

**Saturday, March 27 // 1:30—2:30pm**

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!



THANK YOU TO ALL WHO SUPPORTED MAC NATURE CENTER!



### THANK YOU to the following eleven members for joining or renewing their commitment recently

Daniel & Lauren Throop Tequesta, FL  
 Vickie Schneider Caledonia, NY  
 Anne Dyet Grand Island, NY  
 Al & Jane Arras Manlius, NY  
 Alena Roberts Hammond, NY  
 Jean Gianfagna Watertown, NY  
 Jeffrey & Elle Hanna Fayetteville, NY

Mike & Linda Toomey Amherst, MA  
 John & Rosemary Swedrock Wellesley Island, NY  
 Allison Stevens & Dave Nowers Peaks Island, ME  
 Donald & Linda Blauvelt Naples, FL

### THANK YOU to all sponsors, vendors, and individuals who donated despite the cancellations of *Night for Nature* and *Autumn Festival*

[Watertown Savings Bank](#) Watertown, NY  
[Weldon and Weldon Financial Coaching](#) Watertown, NY  
[Price Chopper Supermarket](#) Alexandria Bay, NY  
[Cerow Agency](#) Clayton, NY  
[Bradley's Military Enterprises](#) Evans Mills, NY  
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SUPPORT  
THE LOCAL  
BUSINESSES THAT  
SUPPORTED  
US!



**THANK YOU** sponsors and NY State Parks essential workers for improvements completed during Covid-19 Nature Center closure

### C. MICHAEL ELLIOTT TERRACE



Our terrace, named in honor of past board member and dedicated Nature Center advocate C. Michael Elliott, was completed this past spring. Located at the back of the Nature Center, the C. Michael Elliott Terrace offers picturesque views of Eel Bay. Now our students and visitors have a new place to sit, make memories, and enjoy nature. Thank you to the Elliott family.

### NORTHERN NEW YORK COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



Thank you to the Northern New York Community Foundation for generously supporting our Capital Campaign and sponsoring needed improvements to our front desk area. The original 1969 reception desk was refinished, and an ADA-compliant service counter was added to make our front desk accessible to all visitors. Matching oak cabinets and a back counter were installed. Improvements were completed this past winter during our closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Minna Anthony Common Nature Center Announces Endowment Fund**

Northern New York Community Foundation Partnership Ensures Mission Will Advance

**WELLESLEY ISLAND** —The Minna Anthony Common Nature Center announced today it has partnered with the Northern New York Community Foundation to launch the **Minna Anthony Common Nature Center Endowment Fund**. Through this fund, the Nature Center is positioned well for future growth and its mission and work will be supported in perpetuity. Each year the Nature Center welcomes nearly 40,000 visitors to enjoy a broad range of nature-based events, programs and educational opportunities.

“The Nature Center is an important asset for the entire region, and through this new endowment fund we will be able to ensure its legacy and impact for generations to come,” said Matthew Elliott, president of the Friends of the Nature Center Board of Directors. “We are exceptionally grateful to the Northern New York Community Foundation for its careful stewardship of this endowment and thank everyone who has given so generously in support of our mission.”

As stewards of the fund, the Community Foundation offers the community a specialized charitable giving platform where donors can confidently support the organization and its efforts. The Community Foundation has provided a \$25,000 partnership gift to help establish the endowment.

“The Nature Center has been such an important part of the lives of many and has also opened the eyes, hearts and minds of generations of students as they began to explore their own relationship with the environment. Through this collaborative partnership, we can join forces to build sustainable resources to keep the Center’s important work and mission strong and healthy in an enduring way. We are excited to work with the Center to connect donors who want to see this important work continue responsibly and with added stewardship forever,” said Rande Richardson, Community Foundation Executive Director.

The community can contribute to the Minna Anthony Common Nature Center Endowment Fund and support the organization’s efforts by making a charitable donation, providing a legacy gift, a bequest, or through a retirement plan or life insurance designation.

To discuss legacy planning or other charitable giving options to support the Minna Anthony Common Nature Center Endowment Fund, contact the Northern New York Community Foundation, 315-782-7110, or [info@nnycf.org](mailto:info@nnycf.org). Secure online giving is also available at [nnycf.org](http://nnycf.org), where you can designate your gift to support our Nature Center’s Endowment Fund. Visit [macnaturecenter.com](http://macnaturecenter.com) to learn more about the Minna Anthony Common Nature Center and how you can support its efforts. ■





### 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.



**Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation**

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS THE FRIENDS OF THE NATURE CENTER, INC.

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Kimbrie Cullen, *Education Coordinator*  
Darlene Sourwine, *Outreach Coordinator*  
Mary Jean Jones, *Bookkeeper*

### WELLESLEY ISLAND STATE PARK STAFF

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Steve Cline, *Park Manager*  
Bill Carr, *Assistant Park Manager*



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**Visit our Gift Shop!**

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**WELLESLEY ISLAND JEWELRY COLLECTION**

We are excited to introduce our new Wellesley Island Jewelry Collection — sold exclusively at the Nature Center's gift shop! These river-inspired pieces, created by Lizzy B Designs, make great gifts that embody Wellesley Island pride and support the Nature Center.



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**

Nature Center open Wednesday—Sunday

9:00am—3:00pm (closed noon—1pm)

Closed Mondays & Tuesdays

Trails open sunrise to sunset daily



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