

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON NATURE CENTER

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2022 Issue



Red fox pup along Rock Ridges Nature Trail at Thousand Island Park. Photographed by Andrew Kane.

Another year has gone by and again I find myself saying goodbye to a couple of board members who have fulfilled a term on the Friends of the Nature Center. Both Leslie Meylor Johnson and Erin Lettiere served three years. During Leslie's term she was tasked with the duties of the Membership Committee chair and assisted the Friends in increasing membership to our largest number, both in terms of dollars and units. Erin took over as the Night for Nature Committee chair and was able to maintain and then improve our largest fundraiser to the most profitable event that the Friends have ever held. A hard task, indeed, on the heels of our previous Night for Nature chair, Heather White. Both of these board members worked diligently in keeping things in check through the COVID 19 pandemic. Thank you, Leslie and Erin! We will certainly miss you!

However, I am very happy to announce that we acquired four new members to the board this year. After a short hiatus, Sue Johnson returned to the board and she is joined by three new members, Lori Arnot, Karen Allen, and Giff Lewis. We welcome these river lovers to the

Friends and look forward to working with them on our many projects that support our mission. Thank you Sue, Lori, Karen, and Giff for joining! More information on each member is written in the following pages.

I was excited to see that the Minna Anthony Common article included in this newsletter is about the beauty of the Rock Ridges Trail, which connects to the trails of the Nature Center along South Bay. Not only am I a fourth-generation summer resident of Thousand Island Park but I too enjoy hiking this trail and finding the abundance of wildlife and beauty to photograph on the trail. And it just so happens that the cover photo above of a fox pup was taken by me along the Rock Ridges Trail this spring. Minna's writings really hit home as we all love the river and its beauty so much. I hope you enjoy the article as much as I did.

Andy Kane
Friends' Board President

The Minna Anthony Common Series

The Nature Trail at Thousand Island Park

[Now called Rock Ridges Nature Trail]

by Mrs. James A. Common

Originally printed August of 1948.

*Reprinted with permission of the
Watertown Daily Times.*

At Thousand Island Park on the St. Lawrence River is a bona fide nature trail, its windings marked, its trees and plants labeled. It is just a path through the woods along the crest of a hill, down into a valley of a hidden creek, up another hill, across a marshy spot, along some rock ridges to the water garden and down a beech woods to the starting point. The distance is less than a mile and a half as the crow flies, but its windings make it seem much farther.

There is a lifetime of study along its way. When walking it, one sees whatever interests him at the time; if trees, there they are, twenty-six kinds; if birds, few places could furnish more; if mushrooms, or mosses, grasses or sedges, wood flowers or shrubs, butterflies or lichens or rocks and soil formation, the path offers them to one and all.

The first ascent is rather steep and leaves little breath to look about. It passes a bed of fat yellow mandrakes just ripening and an expanse of the graceful, low-growing spreading dogbane rung thickly with dainty pink bells. This part was once an Indian trail, which in the long ago led on across the island.

Near the top of the hill a spur leads to a huge pink rock with lichens on its face and blue harebells in its crevices and with shrubs growing so quickly about its borders that it is like a stage. From it there is a magnificent view across the island dotted river. A little beyond is the registry booth.

Now for a space the trail winds in and out among the trees. Sometimes it is soft with pine needles; again it is littered with acorns or beechnuts which the squirrels, small boys of the woods, have started gathering while still green. By far most of the trees are oak, there being four varieties on the trail. Scattered among them is a strong whiff of witch-hazel. Not before had we connected in our minds the shrub in the woods and medicine in our cupboards. Its leaves resemble those of the basswood tree. In October, the whole tree becomes a golden mass when the basal leaves turn to bronze and the bare upper branches are clothed with airy yellow blooms.

Near the witch-hazel clump is a dogwood laden with blue-green berries on red stems and a maple-leaved viburnum, one of the Indian tobacco plants. Here, too, is a hazelnut with long beaks on its seed pods and such sticky prickles over the husk which are hard to brush off the skin. A bladdernut with puffy seedpods and some sweet gale with leaves like ferns and a great deal of arrow wood are found nearby. This latter is a clean and hardy shrub often sold by nurseries for a hedge plant. In May it bears a wealth of white flowers which help the shadbush to make the trail attractive. There are many kinds of berry bushes along the path, among them a strange currant with an interesting odor to its crushed leaves.

In July the noticeable shrubs are the wild roses. They grow from rock cracks and on steep banks in the most unexpected places and are dotted over their tops with lovely pink flowers. Later their red "whips" will be almost as attractive and will furnish the wild wood folk with food throughout the winter.

The Minna Anthony Common Series *continued*

Now the path crosses a dry creek bed on whose steep banks evergreen woodfern and polypodies grow thriftily no matter what the weather. Up it goes then through a grove of white oaks and hickories, past the fern dell, where many species of ferns find a home, and comes out at the sunset rock from which a view of the western sky and the Canadian shore is superb. The whole top of the hill here is level, made of great unbroken stretches of igneous rock. This portion of the trail fascinates the geologist and a collection of the rocks of the island are kept here to add interest.

Beyond, a clump of New Jersey tea has taken root, the leaves of which served as a substitute for tea in the Revolutionary times. The blossoms are white and foamy just now.

After winding through a low place where thrifty brakes make a green carpet of beauty and rare rues grow luxuriantly, the trail passes a very large clump of pale green cushion moss, which must have taken many years to grow. Steps lead down to a rock ledge where dog lichens, Venus' looking glass, bittersweet and purple flowering raspberry hold sway and there reaches another series of level rocks.

The making of soil and progression of plants can be viewed first hand. In shallows of the rock surfaces are patches of light gray reindeer moss (really a lichen), which when dry crackles under foot. Where more soil has collected are beds of dark green hairy cap moss in which we sink as though walking on plush with a six inch nap. Still deeper pockets of soil are filled with blueberry bushes and in the deepest places are stunted pines.

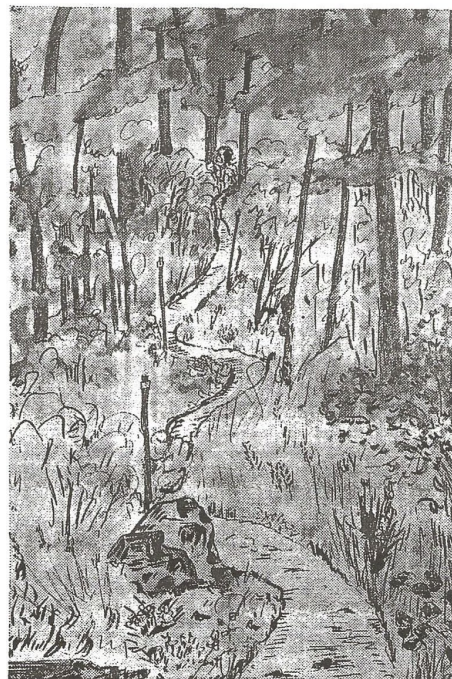
There are flowers too on these rocks, flowers that are different and not found in many places; dainty corydalis with gray-green leaves with drooping pink flowers tipped with yellow; bristly sarsaparilla, and rare woodbetony which resembles a fern; and gall-of-the-earth bearing graceful blossom bells.

Many of the pockets are filled with fly-away grass, a grass which must be seen to be

appreciated. It is straw-colored, not green, grows about 18 inches high and forms a thick mass of very fine stalks so that the whole looks like heaped up foam.

And now we come to an old stone wall, which was built about a spring in the early days of the Park. For many years it held the water supply for the village, pumped to it from the River. Now it has a pool in its center surrounded by smooth rocks. In spring it is beautiful with wild iris, now there are banks of purple lythrum, brown cattails, sedges, water plantain, white water lilies, a rare water calla, plus more. Later there will be the wild sunflowers in the rock cracks, cardinal flowers along the banks, blue pickerel weed and wild rice in the pool.

We have come to the end of the trail for from the water garden the path leads directly back to its start down a steep hill through a beech woods. We have had a glorious two hours --- birds have sung to us; we have seen strange things like live walking sticks, praying mantis and land snails that carry their houses on their backs; we have looked at flowers, seen views, and breathed the ozone-laden air of the woods; we have held communion with nature at her best. ■



Minna's drawing included with her 1948 article.

From the Director

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Peak operating season has begun, and we are gearing up to have a busy summer! We had an amazing *I Love My Park Day* on May 7. Thank you to the fifty-six volunteers that helped get Wellesley Island State Park and the Nature Center prepped for the summer. We were fortunate to have Kohls Cares, Girl Scouts, Fort Drum volunteers, and Friends' board members in attendance. We are grateful for all the projects that were accomplished around the Park! See photos of the event on the next page. Special shout out to our annual volunteers who have made ILMPD a yearly tradition!

In May we welcomed three new NY State Parks seasonal employees – Dana Higgins, Colin Withers and Emma Lynch. Dana is assisting with visitor services at the Nature Center's front desk, Colin with gardening, and Emma with environmental education. We also welcomed Student Conservation Association (SCA) Member, Mirella Yañez from Texas, assisting us with social media and communications. Welcome aboard!



A special thank you to our wonderful gardening team – long-time volunteer and gardener-in-residence Kathy Leskoske, SCA Environmental Educator (Gardening and Land Stewardship) Aliyah Panahi, NYS Parks gardener Colin Withers, and volunteer Cecelia Thompson. I hope everyone enjoys the beautiful colors and scents that our six native plant gardens and Pollinator House have to offer, as much as I do!

As a reminder, the Nature Center is now open seven days a week from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. We have a full lineup of daily programs and special events this summer. I am also happy to report that our beloved Voyageur Canoe program is back this summer! Please, see pages 5–6 for summer highlights and check out our website, Facebook page, or pick up a flyer for our full listing. Cheers to a great summer!

Gabriela Padewska
Nature Center Director

For Your Consideration

Helping Hummingbirds at Home

Here at the Nature Center we set out hummingbird feeders to attract these speedy, iridescent pollinators. Learn about feeding the world's smallest bird in your own backyard in this [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#) article – and if you are ambitious see Audubon's [How to Create a Hummingbird-Friendly Yard](#).

Eleventh Annual *I Love My Park Day!*

Girl Scouts dig in to plant trees in Wellesley Island State Park.



Thank you to the fifty-six volunteers who came out to celebrate the 11th annual I Love My Park Day! Our tasks included cleanups of South Bay Trail and H-Area Boat Launch, leaf blowing, washing benches and chairs, weeding and mulching gardens, planting 35 eastern white pine trees and a dozen native shrubs, as well as sprucing up our Pollinator House.

Thank you to all volunteers for lending a hand and giving back! We are grateful for all the terrific work that was accomplished around the Park!



Kat and Harold clean up.



Weldon family brought leaf blowers!



56 volunteers attend the 11th annual I Love My Park Day at the Nature Center.



Summer Highlights

Program size may be limited.
Preregistration recommended.
Please call **(315) 482-2479** to register.
Face covering encouraged when indoors.

The Nature Center offers programs every day in July and August! For a full listing of our events calendar, please visit our [website](#), [Facebook page](#), or give us a call. All programs meet at the Nature Center and are free unless otherwise stated.

RECURRING PROGRAMS

ADIRONDACK RAPTORS

Friday, July 1 // 1:30pm at the Park Pavilion

Friday, August 5 // 1:30pm at the Nature Center

Join Mark Manske of Adirondack Raptors and his educational birds for an exceptional opportunity to get up close and personal with live birds of prey!

SPIDER'S FISHING CLINICS

Saturdays: July 2, August 20, and September 3

Rod & Reel 11:00am–1:00pm // Fly Fishing 1:30–3:30pm

Hook some new fishing skills with expert fisherman Spider Rybaak! Eel Bay on the St. Lawrence River is a prime location to learn the basics of rod-and-reel sportfishing and fly fishing. Participants over 16 are required to have a freshwater fishing license for this event. BYOT: Bring Your Own Tackle, limited supply available. Program is free thanks to the Barbara & Daniel Butts Enrichment Fund

VOYAGEUR CANOE

Most Weekdays // 9:30am–11:30am

Our 36-foot, 16-passenger Voyageur Canoe is back! Preregistration is required. Must be 5 years old or older to participate. Program may be cancelled due to weather conditions or not meeting the minimum of 8 adult (18+) paddlers. \$4 for adults, \$2 for children under 13 years old.

RIVERKEEPER TRAINING & KAYAKING

Fridays: July 8 and August 11 // 9:00am–12:00pm

Come learn about how you can become a Riverkeeper volunteer while brushing up on your kayaking skills! Perfect for those new to kayaking or more experienced paddlers wanting a refresher on proper paddling technique. *Save the River* will help us learn about the various factors that threaten the health of our river and what you can do to help. Must be 13 or older to participate. Participants will receive a t-shirt and an invasive species guide. \$10 per person.

HAAS THE HERON: THE BEGINNING OF AN ADVENTURE

Fridays: July 22 and August 26 // 10:00am–11:00am

Join *Save The River* for a reading of a heartwarming story about a father great blue heron who anxiously awaits the arrival of his chick. Learn about the fascinating world of this amazing bird and its habitat. After the reading, there will be fun heron-themed activities.

TRADITIONAL IMAGINATION STORYTELLING

Thursdays, July 28 and August 11 // 10:00am–11:00am

Listen to fun and exciting folktales from around the world, retold by professional storyteller Lynn Morgan. Stories are for all ages. Lynn encourages participants to be a part of her wonderful stories.

JULY

THE HOME-SCALE FOREST GARDEN

Saturday, July 9 // 10:00am–11:00am

Come hear author and owner of Cross Island Farms, Dani Baker, read from her book *The Home-Scale Forest Garden: How to Plan, Plant, and Tend a Resilient Edible Landscape*. Dani will share her experiences of becoming a forest gardener and will teach us how to create a beautiful, bountiful edible landscape at any scale. Books will be available for purchase and signing after the reading.

CYBERCHASE WEEK

Sunday–Saturday, July 24–30 // Check online for full schedule

The Nature Center has teamed up with WPBS for the PBS Kids' Cyberchase green initiative! Program themes include pollinators, trees, migration, composting, flowers, guided hikes, and a grand finale on Saturday, July 30th. Participants will earn an awesome Cyberchase certificate.

12,000 YEARS OF A RIVER AND ITS FIRST PEOPLES

Friday, July 29 // 6:00pm–7:30pm

Join Kenneth Knapp, curator of the North Country Archaeology Center, for a presentation of the Haudenosuantee (Iroquois) of the Thousand Islands Region. A question and answer segment will follow – audience members are encouraged to bring any local “finds” for possible identification. You may hold a clue to the ancient past!

GARDENING WITH NATIVE PLANTS TO ATTRACT POLLINATORS

Saturday, July 30 // 10:00am–11:00am

Join Sue Gwise, Horticulture Educator with the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County, for a presentation about attracting pollinators. Sue will cover the best native plants to attract and support pollinating insects. This is a great time to get your questions answered!

AUGUST

CHILDREN'S FISHING DERBY

Saturday, August 13 // 12:30pm–3:00pm

Join the fun at our fishing derby for children 14 and under! Prizes for: Longest, Most Fish Caught, and “Luck of the Draw.” BYOT: Bring Your Own Tackle. Fish must be taken with rod and reel; all legal baits allowed. Derby fee is \$2 per child.

Seventh Annual *Night for Nature*



Friends of the Nature Center

cordially invite you to join us for

Night For Nature

Thursday, July 14th 6-9pm
at Minna Anthony Common Nature Center
Wellesley Island State Park

Beer, wine, apps by Di Prinzio's Kitchen

Music by the Buoy Rockers

Silent Auction & Good Friends!

Tickets \$75 per person

Please RSVP by June 30th to Friends of the Nature Center,
44927 Cross Island Road, Fineview, NY 13640

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



The Walker Family Foundation, NNY Community Foundation, AT Mathews & Dier,
WD Bach Excavating & Marine Construction, White's Lumber, Feather In Flight,
Widrick Auto Sales, Boathouse Marine, Pie Zano's of Watertown/Theresa,
Uncle Sam Boat Tours, Weldon & Weldon Financial Coaching, Griffith Energy,
Bradley's Military Enterprises, Homestead Quality Homes.

Purchase tickets or sponsor online at macnaturecenter.com

THANK YOU to the following 52 *Friends* for joining or renewing their commitment recently

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| Barbara & Addison Vars III | Wellesley Island, NY | Matthew & Sara Elliott | Fayetteville, NY |
| T.I. Association Incp. | Clayton, NY | Maggie Reid | Fayetteville, NY |
| Ted Meylor | Westfield, NJ | Kate Johnson | Watertown, NY |
| Jennifer Coon | Millbrook, NY | Edward Gillett | St. Petersburg, FL |
| Anne Dyet | Grand Island, NY | Riveredge Resort | Alexandria Bay, NY |
| Shelley Lofberg | Wellesley Island, NY | Chuck & Libby Spaulding | Cortland, NY |
| Tom & Irene Carman | Wellesley Island, NY | Bernard & Barbara Forth | Fayetteville, NY |
| Jill Bouvier | Elbridge, NY | Louise Strayer | Tucson, AZ |
| Scott & Cindy Mahoney | Freeport, ME | Dr. Richard & Sally Sauer | Cape Vincent, NY |
| Skip Behrhorst Family | Basalt, CO | Richard Kavanaugh | Alexandria Bay, NY |
| Jane Gillett | T.I. Park, NY | Tom & Julie Tinney | Clayton, NY |
| Amy Brillhart | Brooklyn, NY | Nancy West | Watertown, NY |
| Harold & Susan Johnson | Watertown, NY | Kenneth Sachse | Wellesley Island, NY |
| Audie & Laura Cerow | Clayton, NY | Christopher & Anita Brown | Beltsville, MD |
| Brand & Kelly Gould | Denver, CO | Audrey Tripp | Hartsville, SC |
| S. Tyler Goldberg | Louisville, KY | Jeff & Linda Batts | Hammond, NY |
| Jonathan & Heather White | Watertown, NY | John Tucker | Cape Vincent, NY |
| Dan & Maggie Lort | Wellesley Island, NY | Phyllis Schwartz | Camillus, NY |
| Eric Allen | Fairport, NY | Christina Kotula | Camillus, NY |
| Susan Whitney | Wellesley Island, NY | James & Erin Lettiere | Clayton, NY |
| Mary Beth Branche | Alexandria Bay, NY | Robert & Kathleen Hanna | Clayton, NY |
| Mary H. Arnot | Towson, MD | Barbara Hupp | Wellesley Island, NY |
| Ken & Karen Green | Manlius, NY | Bernard Slate | Clayton, NY |
| Mary Ellen Gilmore | Ponte Vedra, FL | Dr. Aaron & Alys Huizenga | Clayton, NY |
| Pat & Dory Sheldon | Wellesley Island, NY | Cary & Jacqueline Derrigo | Watertown, NY |
| Brian & Kate Breheny | Clayton, NY | | |
| Barbara & Daniel Butts | Clayton, NY | | |

Welcome New and Returning *Friends* Board Members!



Karen Allen and her family have been enjoying the Thousand Islands for over 40 years, spending time at a family cottage in Grandview Park. After they retired in 2010, they built a home on that property and now spend almost all summer and many weekends there. For almost 30 years Karen was a primary school teacher/administrator and now she dotes on her 8 grandchildren and family of 16. Visiting the Nature Center, hiking, and attending Autumn Festivals are activities the whole family enjoys.



Lori Wilson Arnot has been a part of the River community with family that has been living and loving the Thousand Islands for generations. Moving to the River in 2000 was a natural way to move where her heart and family were. Lori is a founder of Zenda Community Garden, working with the Thousand Island Land Trust, and was on the board of TIYLO – Thousand Islands Young Leader Organization. She has been an active member of the joint Town and Village of Clayton Zoning Board of Appeals for 6 years. More recently you can find her teaching yoga classes at River Yoga, operating her massage therapy studio, River Wellness Center, and bringing good food to the area with her husband, John, at Hunner's Market in Clayton. Lori wants wellness for the community and helping to bring nature to more people in the community is a natural fit.



As a native of Watertown, NY and a summer resident of Wellesley Island, **Sue Johnson** is returning to the board of the Minna Anthony Common Nature Center. Her daughter, Leslie, has completed her term and she is pleased to take her place. The Nature Center holds a special meaning to her family since her mother-in-law, Catherine Common Johnson, started the Nature Center program as chairman of the Thousand Islands State Park Commission. Sue is a retired teacher from the Watertown City School Districts and looks forward to many more educational opportunities.



Gifford "Giff" Lewis has lived most of his life in the Rochester, NY area. He has a BS in Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering from Cornell and an MS in Mechanical Engineering Design from Stamford. He retired from Eastman Kodak after a 36-year career. His family has a long history with the Thousand Islands, starting with his great-great-grandfather who spent time tent camping in Grandview Park, across Eel Bay from the Nature Center, in the 1890s. They are frequent visitors to the Nature Center, love hiking the trails with their dog and company, and have attended almost all of the Autumn Festivals over the years.



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**

THE FRIENDS OF THE NATURE CENTER, INC.

BOARD MEMBERS

Andrew Kane, *President*
Jeffrey Hanna, *Vice President*
Jonathan White, *Treasurer*
Karen Allen, *Secretary*
Lori Arnot
Jane Arras
Robin Colello-Poplaski
Richard Gefell
Alysa Huizenga
Sue Johnson
Joseph Leskoske
Gifford Lewis
Kerry Roberge
Meredith Sullivan
Jeffry Weldon

WELLESLEY ISLAND STATE PARK

Steven Cline, *Park Manager*

MINNA ANTHONY COMMON NATURE CENTER

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

Mark Your Calendars!**VOYAGEUR CANOE**

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9:30am–11:30am

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Thursday, July 14
6:00pm–9:00pm

Join the Friends of the
Nature Center for the
seventh annual *Night for
Nature* gala! Live music,
good company, all for a
good cause! Complimentary
beer, wine, hors d'oeuvres
are included. Your generous
support benefits our mission
to continue Minna's legacy
of education, conservation,
and preservation. We look
forward to seeing you!

**CHILDREN'S FISHING
DERBY**

Saturday, August 13
12:30pm–3:00pm

Join the fun at our fishing
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Derby fee is \$2 per child.



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

May–October (Peak Season):

Nature Center open daily

9:00am–3:00pm

Trails open sunrise to sunset daily



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of this newsletter



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for your quality printing services.