

NEWSLETTER

Fall Issue

OCTOBER 2, 2017



THE NATURE CENTER FLOCK

This time of year, the butterflies and the birds aren't the only migrating creatures at the Nature Center. After Labor Day, our summer seasonal help has mostly returned to school; our volunteer campers have left for their regular lives; and some retirees have opted to head South for warmer weather.

This Fall we have been lucky enough to have Student Conservation Association (SCA) members, working with us to participate in conservation and service based learning projects while receiving extensive on the job training. All members have completed an undergraduate

program, often in natural science, so they are a great asset to the Nature Center!

This month's timely Minna article on bird migration was chosen by SCA member, Nathaniel Young, who in return, also wrote a wonderful article on bird flocking for this newsletter. Over your next visit, we suggest you introduce yourself to one of these fabulous youngsters and start a conversation, you will enjoy it!

If you are interested in volunteering at the Nature Center, we could use your help! There are always projects and we have something for everyone, regardless of interests. We look forward to seeing you soon!

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON NATURE CENTER

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON SERIES - ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 24, 1931

BIRD TRAVELERS START FOR SOUTH

FLOCK FORMATIONS
FREQUENTLY INDICATE
SPECIES

SUMMER BROODS MATURED

Game Birds Fly South By Families
While Blackbirds Leave in Great
Flocks—Food Habits Are Similar
While Traveling.



By MRS. JAMES A. COMMON

The summer season is passing and nature is preparing for a rest time. Shagbark hickories, first of all trees to drop their leaves, are already almost bare. Virginia creeper drapes the roadside fences with rich crimson; the swamp maples, which soon will be fiery scarlet, are now faintly pink. The thornapple trees on the hillside are dotted thickly with bright red fruits; wild grapes

hang in purple clusters waiting to be ripened by a frost; roadsides are gorgeous with autumn's brilliant floral display, asters—a study in themselves—white, lavender, mauve, purple; goldenrod as yellow as the metal which gave it its name; chickory, blue as a summer sky; and interspersed everywhere, Queen Anne's lace for trimming. Noisy crickets sing incessantly; late-hatched butterflies of the species which live over winter are fluttering about the goldenrod or summing themselves flattened against a tree trunk. Birds chipping quietly are darting about succeeding somehow in keeping almost out of sight behind the clustered leaves. They have already started on their journey southward.

Ever since the summer broods were old enough to care for themselves the parents birds have been idling about, eating, preening, moulting, for each fall most of them get a complete set of new feathers, and now very plump and neat in somber colors they are in fine trim for the long trip. The young meanwhile have been gaining in power of flight and are ready to join the flocks of mature birds.

Each species has its particular flock formation so characteristic that familiarity with these groupings serves as the best means of identification at this time of year. Few birds go

south singly. Most of the game birds go by families so their flocks number usually from three to 15 birds. Often males go together and the females and young start off at a different time. Geese go in a V with a most domineering old gander for leader; blackbirds fly in cloud-like flocks of 100 or more.

There is continual change in the blackbirds' ranks with no distinct leaders. Those behind with a spurt advance swiftly along above the top of the flock striving for first place, others immediately do the same and the first ones drop a little, it is continual movement within movement. Robins, with a nature foreign to their summer frankness, slink furtively from bush to bush. One characteristic however, they do not lay aside, that of flirting the tail just after alighting, and by this action they may always be known. Bluebirds are especially cheerful about their travelings and sing happily and almost continually, in low tones. All species of native sparrows hobnob together more or less, although throughout the summer they have lived in very different localities. They eat quantities of weed seeds.

The food habits of birds traveling in companies are apt to be similar. Seed-eaters, the sparrows; tree-insect eaters, the warblers; wild fruit eaters, the tanagers, towhees, and thrushes;

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON NATURE CENTER

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON SERIES (CONTINUED)

and those preferring tree borers, the downies and nuthatches, are often seen together.

Yet food is not the only reason birds migrate, for the phoebe, a flying insect eater, stays until frosts are severe, even though the swallows and all his own kith kin, the fly-catchers, departed a month ago. The yellow warbler left the county about the middle of August while his cousin the blackpoll, of similar food habits, will stay until late in October.

Migration is a phenomenon and does not need explaining, just accepting and enjoying. A thing understood often loses the mystery which made it intriguing. Some birds go 100 miles, some 10,000 miles and no man knows why. Some go by one route and some by another and the same kinds go the same routes year after year and arrive at given places at given dates.

One way to come north, perhaps another to go south, and no one knows the reason. There are facts and facts to be learned about migration even if it cannot be understood. Much has been found out in the last two decades by bird banding.

Formerly birds were shot when their habits excited interest. Old bird books are full of such sentences; as, "I took three specimens and found all had, etc." Now a book will say, "The same song sparrow was found to return to the same locality for—years"; or "The date on which the juncos appear here has varied only three days in—years." This is progress.

When neighbors or friends start for Florida or California, or Europe everyone has a feeling of interest. When someone accomplishes a long walking tour, or bicycle trips, or an airplanes voyage, the interest is universal. We gaze

and wonder at the traveler and crowd each other for a closer glimpse. So knowing the destinations whither our feathered friends are bound should induce an added interest in them.

The flock of preacher-birds on its way to any place in South America; that band of rose-breasted grosbeaks will soon be in Equador, through a few may get side-tracked into California; those jolly bobolinks will probably winter in Paraguay; and those wood pewees, will they continue to whistle their violin like calls to the natives of Peru? Then the band of 20 or so warbling vireos, year after year, they come, they breed, they go, and no man knows where.

- Reprinted with permission from the Watertown Daily Times.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

This article from Watertown Times gives some local, up-to-date information on Goose populations and hunting.

<http://www.watertowndailytimes.com/news05/growing-goose-numbers-spell-local-success-draw-a-crowd-20170925>

Enjoy this video from National Geographic on Canada Geese

http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/goose_canada

Remember to like us on Facebook for realtime updates and events calendars. Look for "Minna Anthony Common Nature Center - Friends."



THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON NATURE CENTER

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Changing leaves and shortening days mark the end of our busy summer season. In the summer, I always enjoy listening to the memories of people who have been camping at Wellesley Island State Park for decades. Families who have been coming here, often to the same campsite, for such long periods of time have strong bonds with this park and the Nature Center. You can learn a lot about how the park developed and changed over the years by listening to their stories.



Just today I was talking with a man whose family farmed the land that was to become Eagle Area camp loop, the current beach, and the pavilion building. He told me where I could find the cement pad that once supported his family's ice house. I love hearing stories about how people interacted with the land that was to become Wellesley Island State Park in past decades because it helps us to understand how we came to be what we are today. It allows you to picture what the island might have looked like when Minna and her children were exploring what would eventually become Minna Anthony Common Nature Center. It enables us to better understand how the family farms that once dotted Wellesley Island still shape the park today and influence how we interact with it. Their stories allow us to have a stronger sense of place and a greater understand of our role within the storyline. Summer, to me, is the season of new stories and family memories.

But even though I enjoy learning new stories about the Thousand Islands during the summer months, autumn is definitely my favorite season. There is a unique smell to the air in autumn - maybe it is just the smell of wet leaves, but to me it signals the end of summer and the beginning of cool, fall days. I like watching the leaves turn colors and drift to the ground and I love the bountiful harvest from summer gardens that can be shared with family and friends. But ultimately, fall is a season of change.

This fall will certainly be a season of transition at the Nature Center as we prepare to move back into what I have taken to calling "the Real Nature Center". The renovations are nearly complete and we are looking forward to reacquainting ourselves with our main building and converting the Temporary Nature Center back into a maintenance garage. I have grown accustomed to the Temporary Nature Center though, so I think it will be as strange to see it return to a maintenance garage as it was to turn what normally is our maintenance garage into the nature center. We appreciate the hard work of everyone who has been a part of the Nature Center renovations and the work being done to design our new exhibits. It has been a team effort!



Fall also marks the coming of the biggest event of our calendar year, the Autumn Festival. This will be our 39th Autumn Festival and the second in Heron Area Camp Loop. There will be several new vendors at the Festival selling everything from cheese curds and maple syrup to hand woven black ash baskets and watercolor paintings. There is truly something for everyone at Autumn Festival. This year we hope to have sunny, warm weather instead of rain and we hope to see you there!

- Molly Farrell, Environmental Educator II

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON NATURE CENTER

FLOCKING ARTICLE - NATHANIEL YOUNG, SCA MEMBER

Dense clouds of starlings swirl over barnyards and fields, alighting to gobble down leftover crops and spilled livestock feed. In marshes and ponds, hundreds of screeching Red-winged Blackbirds surge through the cattails, feeding on the bountiful insects emerging from the water. In your own backyard, you may notice quiet bunches of sparrows or finches at your feeder or hopping through the bushes. Though the hustle and bustle of breeding season tapered off in July, you have likely noticed that there is a new sort of energy taking hold of the birds over the past few weeks.

Throughout the breeding season, most species of birds are quite territorial and aren't very friendly with other birds outside of their immediate family. However, as babies leave the nest, learn to fly, and reach some level of self-sufficiency, these birds become much more social. They begin to join up with neighboring families, giving up their territorial claims so that they can hang out with their new friends.

As autumn progresses, these flocks can easily grow to numbers running in the hundreds or thousands. In some species, such as Canada Geese, these flocks wander from location to location depending on food availability and even migrate thousands of miles together. Other species are more sedentary, such as American Crows, who roost together at the same location each night and then break up into smaller groups each morning.

You have probably heard the expression, "Birds of a feather flock together." As a birder, it irks me a bit when people say this (even though I know they don't mean it literally), because it is often quite normal to see birds of different species flocking together. Next time you happen upon a band of

chickadees, take a closer look and see who else you can find with them. Nuthatches, Downy Woodpeckers, and Kinglets are among their most frequent companions, but throughout both fall and spring migration you are also likely to find colorful warblers, tanagers, and vireos in the mix.



So why do birds gather in flocks? The best reason may be safety in numbers. If a predator such as a hawk or falcon comes around, your chance of being targeted and potentially eaten is a lot smaller when in a group. Furthermore, foraging in a group means that you have more eyes on the lookout for predators, ready to sound the alarm call. This not only allows you to respond more quickly to

predators, but also to relax your guard and spend more time looking for food instead of scanning your surroundings for danger.

But by joining a flock, doesn't that mean that you face more competition when looking for food? Yes, but consider this: if you were a goose looking for a recently cut cornfield where you know you will find a lot of leftover corn to eat, would you care if other geese came along and ate up that corn with you once you found the field? No, there's a whole field of it! Since food – whether it be corn, berries, insects, fish, or what have you – is often clustered, competition with other birds becomes less of an issue compared to finding those hotspots of food in the first place. You might miss some of those hotspots on your own, but in a flock, just one member's discovery might mean that everyone gets a meal.

May you enjoy all the avian congregations forming this time of year, from the humble little bands of chickadees and nuthatches to the awe-inspiring multitudes of blackbirds and waterfowl!

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON NATURE CENTER

Please Support Our Sponsors

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A NIGHT FOR NATURE

We want to sincerely thank our sponsors, donors, and guests for a tremendously successful Night for Nature. We were so happy with such an outstanding show of support - roughly 200 people attended!

The food was fantastic, the music upbeat, and the conversation stimulating! Who knew we could have so much fun while raising over \$22,609 to support the Nature Center interior redesign capital campaign?

The Friends of the Nature Center depends upon the generosity of the River community. Without your aid, time and commitment, we would not be able to provide the environmental education so critical today.

Please thank and support this years sponsors - let them know how much their selfless generosity means to all of us.

We can't wait to see you all again!

- Heather White, Chair of the Night for Nature



The Thousand Islands Club set for the event. Thank you to the countless volunteers who help make this such a special occasion. We couldn't do it without you!



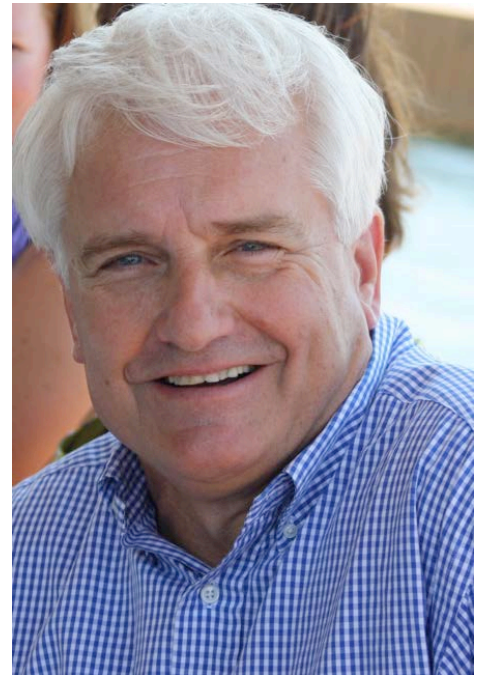
Betsy Campbell and Susie Ambrose toast their father, Charles J. Elliott, while sitting on a bench purchased in his memory.

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON NATURE CENTER

THE C. MICHAEL ELLIOTT TERRACE

The Friends of the Nature Center have received a substantial donation from Wellesley Island resident, Kathryn Elliott. The newly renovated Nature Center will have an outdoor terrace dedicated to Mrs. Elliott's late husband, C. Michael "Mike" Elliott.

Michael received a degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering from Clarkson University in 1973, and an MBA from LeMoyne College in 2002. Specializing in water treatment, Mike became a partner at Stearns and Wheler, and later the Water Business Group Manager for GHD in Cazenovia, New York. He also served as the president of the Clarkson Alumni Association, as well as Central New York Chapter president. As a dedicated volunteer, Mike was part of the Campaign for Clarkson, helping the University to raise \$115 million. In 2003, he was awarded the Golden Knight Award, Clarkson's highest alumni honor, for his outstanding service to the University.



Mike had a lifelong love of the St. Lawrence River, and was a Friends of the Minna Anthony Common Nature Center (MACNC) board member. Michael's father, Charles J. "Chuck" Elliott, also served as a board member and the Elliott family has been a part of MACNC since its inception. He instilled his love of the River in his children, Sarah, Elizabeth, and Matthew.

"Mike loved the River, and was committed to helping others appreciate the natural world. The outdoor terrace is a fitting space to promote a love of nature while honoring Mike's passion for life on the River." said Kathryn Elliott.

The Minna Anthony Common Nature Center (MACNC) is currently under a complete structural renovation that will be completed by fall 2017. Once the structural renovations are complete, Hadley Exhibits (Buffalo, NY) will install all interior features and exhibits. The C. Michael Elliott Terrace will be located on the northern side of the Nature Center, and serve as a resting spot for visitors to take in the beautiful view of Eel Bay.

"We are extremely grateful for Mrs. Elliott's generous donation in memory of her late husband and fellow Friends' board member C. Michael Elliott," said Kerry Roberge, President of the Friends of the Nature Center Board. "This gift will support the ongoing transformation of the Nature Center, and we will see the benefit of her generosity for years to come"

- Stefanie Kring, Friends Board Member

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON NATURE CENTER

EDUCATION SPOTLIGHT



Substantial hard work and preparation are the essential ingredients for sustaining a successful school field trip program. Each year, we host school field trips at the Nature Center from September through the end of June. During the 2016-2017 academic year, 2,316 students, pre-K – 10th grade visited the Nature Center, totaling 338 contact hours. The total number of hours spent teaching does not however, accurately reflect the time required to run an effective school field trip program because it omits time spent developing new curriculum to meet changing science education standards,

planning individual field trips, setting up for the program, and cleaning up after the school bus leaves.

The Nature Center would be unable to maintain a successful and growing school field trip program without the help of a dedicated group of volunteers, our SCA members, partnering organizations, and fellow park staff. All of these individuals do their part to help prepare for, set up, run, and clean up from our school programs. The involvement of many helps ensure the workload demanded by our school programs remains manageable. Our school programs volunteers include: Linda Adams, Nancy Boynton, Maryellen Carol Barb, Eldridge, Barb Hearn, Sue Johnson, Joe Leskoske, Kathy May, Lynn Morgan, and Heather White. This year the Nature Center was fortunate to have 10 S.C.A. Members who made a wonderful addition to our team, and I was very appreciative of their help. I was honored to work alongside the following SCA Members: Yasmine Bonemery, Emil Bunyea, Jake Osborne, Savannah Owmbly, Ryan Pettus, Nicholas Mazzie, Ashley Rubacha, Nathaniel Young, Tamarata Wague, and Joey Wohl. I thank all of our school program volunteers and SCA members who have worked hard alongside me to make our school trips a remarkable success! I greatly appreciate your help!

I would also like to recognize and thank the following organizations and their staff: Kate Breheny from Save the River, Debbie Scholes of Clayton Island Tours, Terra Bach from the Thousand Island Land Trust, and April Fredric from the Indian Lakes Conservancy. The Nature Center partners with a myriad of local organizations throughout the year for programming and to share resources, but our spring On the Water school field trips would not be possible without the help of the staff from these four organizations.

I ensure our school programs remain relevant and valued by keeping up to date with changes in science curriculum standards. Heather White, a volunteer, retired teacher, and Friends Board member, and I have been working together to develop new curriculum designed to fit the changing needs of our teachers. I appreciate Heather's expertise as a teacher and the input she can provide as we move to expand and redevelop our curriculum. Updating our curriculum helps ensure teacher will continue to bring their students to the Nature Center for decades to come.

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON NATURE CENTER

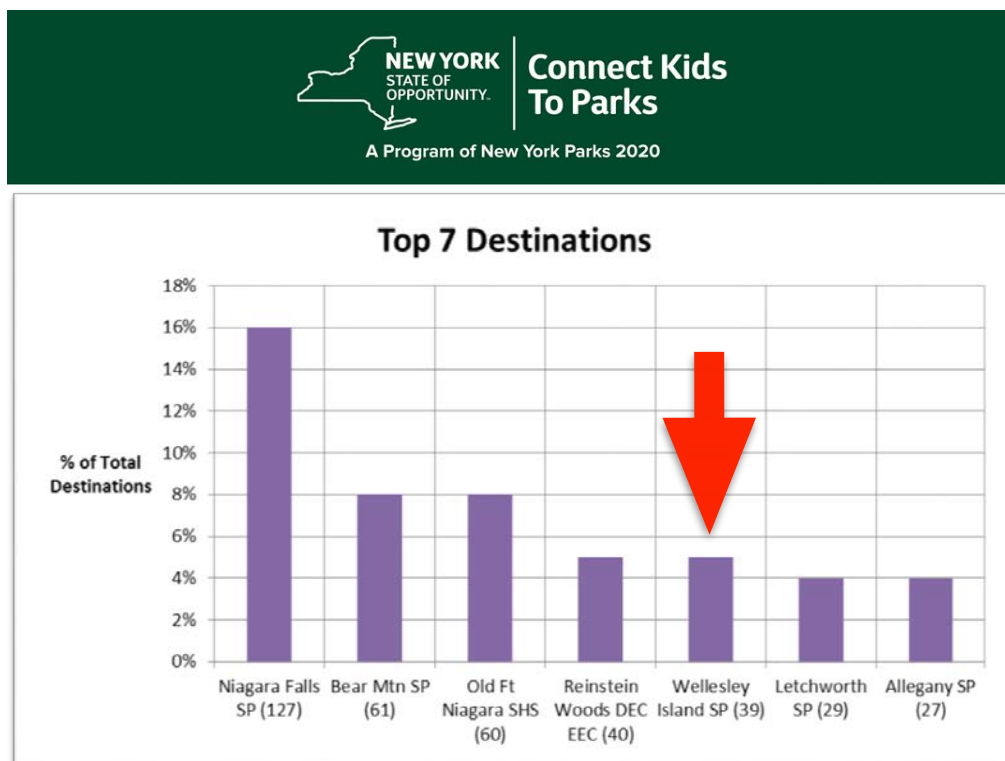
CONNECTING KIDS WITH NATURE

Our hands on environmental educational classes provide students with a direct connection to nature that all young children desperately need. Exposure to nature in childhood allows for the development of a stronger sense of place and connection to the natural world that will persist through a lifetime. At the Nature Center we have been seeing an increase in the number of children afraid of the outdoors or who have never been in the woods, and our school programs help break through that barrier by creating memorable experiences for children. These positive interactions with the natural world drive children to encourage their families to return to the Nature Center on their own. A positive experience during a school field trip can provide a stepping off point for developing a lifelong appreciation for and connection to the natural world.

I know I would be unable to maintain our outstanding school programming without our dedicated volunteers, SCA Members, and partnering organizations. I want to thank everyone involved as I couldn't have done it without you!! My dedicated volunteer team is always looking for new members to help with the growing needs of our expanding school program schedule. If you enjoy teaching children and would like to become a volunteer please contact me, (Kim) at the Nature Center. I would be happy to welcome more volunteers to our teaching team.

See you in the "outdoor classroom."

Sincerely, Kim Cullen – Environmental Educator



The Connect Kids to Parks program helps fund school field trips to the Nature Center. Despite construction, The Minna Anthony Common Nature Center was 5th for use of this grant! Thank you to so many for helping connect kids with nature!

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON NATURE CENTER

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THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS JOINED OR RENEWED THEIR COMMITMENT RECENTLY:

Bess and Peter Carl

Kerry Roberge

John Tucker

Stan and Barbara Eldridge

Kathleen Morris

Stefanie Kring

Linda Beck

Nancy Seeley

Ann and David Hertz

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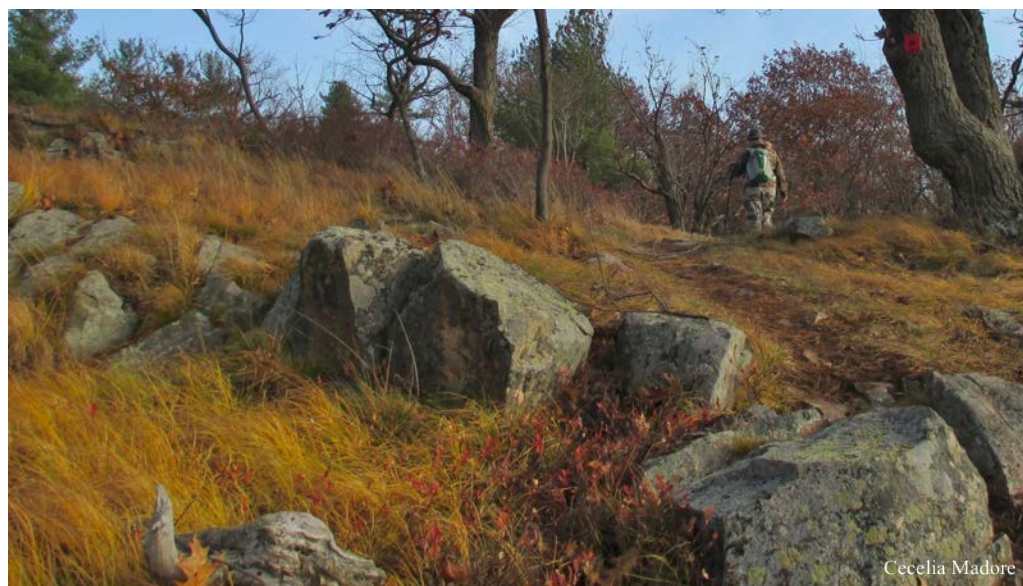
Syracuse, NY

Wellesley Island, NY

Thousand Islands Park, NY

Thousand Islands Park, NY

Thank you for your continued support!



Cecelia Madore

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON NATURE CENTER

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Members of the Friends of the Nature Center provide the critical means and resources necessary to support the cherished education and preservation found here. Most of our members rejoin annually and for that we are continually grateful.

Birch - \$25 Quarterly newsletter, 10% discount at our gift shop, discounts on some program fees, and a Minna Anthony Common T-Shirt (redeemable at the Nature Center).

Maple - \$75 Quarterly newsletter, 10% discount at our gift shop, discounts on some program fees, and a Minna Anthony Common T-Shirt (redeemable at the Nature Center).

Oak - \$150 Maple level benefits and an *Empire State Pass* that grants unlimited day-use vehicle entry to ANY New York State Park until March 2019.

Hickory - \$250 Maple level benefits and an *Empire State Pass* that grants unlimited day-use vehicle entry to ANY New York State Park until March 2019.

Please call or visit our website for more details - www.macnaturecenter.com

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.

MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION FORM



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

Thank you supporting the Minna Anthony Common Nature Center by becoming a member of our Friends organization or by making a donation. We hope to see you soon!

Name: _____

Street: _____

City: _____ State/Prov: _____

Zip/Code: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

☐ I would prefer to receive our newsletter via email.

☐ I would be interested in volunteering at the Nature Center.

Alternate mailing address? _____

Yes, I want to help.....

This is a:

☐ New Membership ☐ Renewal

☐ Donation

General Donation amount: _____

Membership Level:

☐ Birch (\$25)

☐ Maple (\$75)

☐ Oak (\$150)

☐ Hickory (\$250)

Please make checks payable to "Friends of the Nature Center".

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON NATURE CENTER

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

39th Annual Autumn Festival

Saturday,

October 7th 10:00am-4:00pm

Join us at the Nature Center for this family friendly fall day. Come enjoy craft and food vendors, live music, farm animals, arts and crafts, a scarecrow contest, birds of prey demonstration, dog sled demonstrations, and more.

Admission: Children 12 & under \$1 or free with non-perishable donation for local food pantry

Adults \$3 Military & Seniors \$2



Luminaries on North Field Loop

Friday, October 28th, 6-8pm

Take a guided evening stroll along North Field Loop following the light of handmade luminaries. Experience the magic of the fall woods in the early evening and then come back to the Temporary Nature Center to enjoy coffee, cider and light snacks.


Please preregister.



**MY
NATURE
CENTER**

Goal: \$920,000

Raised: \$221,898

Please remember the Nature Center naming campaign this holiday season! 

An engraved brick, leaf or bench is a great gift for your loved one and for nature!

Friends of the Nature Center, Inc.
Minna Anthony Common Nature Center
Wellesley Island State Park
44927 Cross Island Road
Fineview, NY 13640

Hours of Operation:
Museum 8am-4pm
Trails open sunrise to sunset



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**