

NEWSLETTER

Fall Issue

SEPTEMBER 28, 2016



Cecelia Madore

NATURE'S ENGINEERS AT WORK

Over the next few years NYS Parks will be developing a plan to decommission the earthen dam that impounds water in the Middle Trail pond. The goal of this project is to restore the natural flow of streams running through the large wetland system that cuts across much of Wellesley Island.

The earthen dam and causeway currently disrupt the flow of water through that system and into South Bay, preventing the easy movement of nutrients, wildlife, seeds, and more. Notching the dam to slowly release water will stimulate beaver to come to the pond and build a dam to replace the manmade

structure as beaver respond to the sound of running water.

As Minna described in this quarter's article, beaver play a critical role in the structure and function of an ecosystem. By building and maintaining dams that will eventually be abandoned, beaver help drive successional patterns in forests and wetlands, creating habitat for numerous plants and animals.

Removing the earthen dam will allow us to restore the vegetative and hydrologic function of that portion of the wetland complex. Beaver activity will help maintain the area as a pond. Stay tuned for more information as the project develops.

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON NATURE CENTER

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON SERIES - ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED MAY 23, 1931

BEAVER MEADOW ATTRACTS BIRDS

FLATS OFFER MANY INTER-
ESTING SIGHTS TO OBSERVE

BLACK DUCK SEEN IN CREEK

Meadow is Covered With Masses
of Blue Iris in June-Haven For
Many Varieties of Birds Banging
From Swallows to American
Bittern.



By MRS. JAMES A. COMMON

Every field, every woods, every garden, yes, every place where even the smallest plant can find a foothold has something to offer those who care. Probably Beaver Meadow flat contains a greater variety of interests than most places. It challenged the engineers who constructed a highway across it; it furnishes an immense expanse of level ice to those who enjoy skate-sailing and kindred sports.

There in March clumps of bright red osiers delight the eye of the passing motorist; while in June the whole is covered with masses of blue iris. At this season, when flooded and soggy, the flat seems at first sight to be rather uninteresting, yet here congregate flocks of migrating sandpipers, snipe and plover, more than any other place in this region.

A steep rocky hill where a glacier ended long ago, encircles the meadow on the south. It is dotted with a few trees and topped with a typical north country woods; beech, oak, maple, black cherry, and ash. A spring, crystal clear, comes out from a projecting rock and starts off gaily, only to lose its identity all too soon in the swamp. Here several woodchucks have their holes and may often be seen as they come out and sit with their paws dressed over their chests surveying the world before venturing far afield.

A rock beneath a blossoming wild apple tree offers an inviting seat so with field glasses in hand we sit for a time. Hundreds of red-winged black birds in a great linden tree farther up the hill are rendering a musical melody. Though there is no wind the tree's leaves are all a tremble with the number of birds fluttering about its branches. How they do sing!

Back and forth, low over the water, a dozen more swallows skim. The grace of their flight never loses its power of attraction, but as they come near and for an instant tip

sideways to make the turn we try to decide their species by this brief glimpse of the breast color. Those that are pure white beneath are tree swallows; forget our presenting and come out from their hiding places behind the tufts of marsh grass and start probing for food. That is what we had desired but scarcely had hoped to see. There were a half dozen kinds migrating together, evidently, but apparently paying no attention to each other. One, a long-legged, long-billed bird came to the edge of the hill and commenced idly poking into the soft mud along the bank. He kept steadily at work for a half an hour then rose slowly with wings drooping and went to the next piece of open water. When we saw the color of his dangling legs, we knew his name, Yellow-legs. I understand he is a game bird and makes a succulent meal, but I should think the hunter might forget to shoot in watching his curious actions.

From the first we had noticed in a clump of half-grown rush a brown pointed stick. Now suddenly, it came to life and flapped off across the swamp - and american bittern. Later we heard its plunk, plunk, a pile-driver love song produced by the bird with many contortions.

Now came from high in the air "weet, weet," plaintive and wild. Louder and louder it grew until finally three birds wheeled into sight and aligned in the center of the marsh. They held their heads high a moment, then

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON NATURE CENTER

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON SERIES (CONTINUED)

seemingly satisfied, started calmly hunting food. Their striped head proclaimed them a Wilson's snipe. "Kill-dee-kill-dee," we heard and a whole flock of silver wings came cavorting over the hill top. Some alighted on the pasture beyond and two came so close to us we could see their black velvet collars. As they alighted a bird we had not noticed before arose and fluttered away showing a white patch on his back just as the flicker does, and two white outside tail feathers - the pectoral sandpiper. A black duck appeared sailing along the creek that flows across the center of the marsh. Then we had a treat indeed, for unexpectedly for

above a large bird dropped almost at our feet. Plainly we were not seen.

It was tall and stately and long-legged like all the sandpipers. It held its bill straight toward the sky showing its pure white under parts while it turned slowly around as if to show off its feathers to the best advantage. Down the side of its neck was a band of dull red, its wings were mottled brown. Then it saw us and instantly was gone. This was a female phalarope, one of the most unique of birds, for except that she lays eggs the eggs she does not either work toward raising the family. The mail builds the nest, incubates the eggs, and feeds

the young. He even wears the more modest attire and has no red band on his neck. This was a fitting close for the afternoon, so we started back toward the road. Instantly all sandpiper sounds ceased, and except for the red-wings and swallows not a bird was in sight of all the multitudes that were feeding so calmly a moment before. It truly made us self-conscious to feel so many eyes, themselves unseen, peering at us from behind every weed clump. Yes, even this flooded and soggy marsh of May has much of interest to offer.

- Reprinted with permission from the Watertown Daily Times.



THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON NATURE CENTER

FROM THE DIRECTOR

I do not think it is possible to talk about this summer without talking about the drought. We had very little rain through the spring and summer which had a profound impact on our younger trees that lack deep tap roots and the fruit crop produced by many plants. The grass and gardens around the Nature Center clearly showed signs of drought stress. We would water the gardens but within a few hours the heat would cause the plants to once again lose turgor pressure and droop. In the end, we ended up letting some of our gardens dry out and die back to conserve water.

The browning of plants and trees during a drought is an example of a defense mechanism. The plants are trying to conserve energy so they have enough reserves to leaf out again either later in the season after the drought abates or the following spring, if they are perennial. It takes a lot of water and energy to maintain leaves on a deciduous tree (that is one of the disadvantages of being a deciduous tree) so when one of the resources needed to maintain those leaves becomes scarce, namely water, it is more advantageous to let the leaves die than to further deplete energy reserves. Older trees with deeper tap roots are less susceptible to drought because they can draw water from deeper ground water reserves. One or two years of drought will not impact them as much as it does younger trees that lack deep tap roots. If the drought persists, however, those trees will begin to be impacted as well. That is what researchers are noting in the redwoods and giant sequoias of California after five years of extreme drought.

We are particularly susceptible to droughts on Wellesley and in much of this region due to our shallow soils. Soils that form atop granite bedrock tend to be shallow because granite weathers slowly and as a result, the soils dry out more quickly. Many of the grasses and flowering species that live in this region are adapted to dealing with soil moisture levels that can vary dramatically over the course of a growing season. For example, you may see grasses or flowering plants growing into moss. The moss helps the plants access more water resources because moss can absorb many times its weight in water. Those same species are also adapted to dying back and entering dormancy if soil moisture levels drop too significantly. They will green up again when moisture returns.

I think the most notable impacts of this summer's drought however, were on wildlife. Many plant species that flower and fruit either did not produce fruit or flowered later in the season after we had some rain. I noticed recently while leading a hike on North Field Loop that our hickory trees produced very few nuts and the nuts they did produce are very small. Any that dropped to the ground were quickly devoured by wildlife. Our pumpkin patch in the butterfly house field was obliterated by deer and turkey in early August because there was very little else available for them to eat. Usually at that time of year wildlife are eating low bush blueberries, raspberries, and anything else within their reach. This year the raspberries never ripened around the butterfly house field. People also reported seeing more wildlife this than usual because wildlife had to travel greater distances to find adequate food resources. Having to travel larger distances causes them to expend more energy resources during the growing season making it harder for them to prepare for winter.

It will be interesting to see how this summer's hot, dry weather impacts the fall and winter season. Maybe the warm water in the rivers and lakes will cause us to receive a lot of snow this winter? I would much appreciate that as it would provide ample opportunities for people to come use our new snowshoes that received virtually no use last winter. We will be offering moonlight snowshoe hikes again this winter in December, January, and March. There are many fun opportunities to be had at the Nature Center through the fall and winter. Check out our upcoming events section for more information and we hope to see you there!

- Molly Farrell, Environmental Educator II

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON NATURE CENTER

SUMMER ACTIVITIES AND VISITORS



Rick West's "Birds of Prey" program just before construction began at the Nature Center.



The Lost Lady Bug Project -Kit Tyrrell released a 9 spot ladybug (endangered in NYS).



Ann Mazur explains how her dogs help manage geese populations in the park.



LJ White and Terren Farney lead students on a hike.



Ryleigh Sontee, Elouisa Haen, and William Haen, the 3rd Annual Kids Fishing Derby winners with Spider Rybaak at the end of June.

Volunteer Opportunities

Front Desk Operations Particularly Important Between May and October

If you enjoy talking to people and witnessing nature in action (you never know what will walk in the front door!) then come learn about the ins and outs of our front desk. You are bound to learn more about the Nature Center, be shown plenty of trailside pictures, and learn the answer to the question "what's the best loop to hike?" if you become one of our volunteer front desk attendees. This is a much needed and appreciated volunteer position! Please let Darlene know if you are interested.

School Field Trip Volunteer Naturalists

Volunteer Naturalists are critical to the success of our school field trips and help us to achieve the goal of smaller group sizes for our field trips. Become part of a student's memory from their field trip to the Nature Center by becoming a volunteer naturalist. Lead interpretive hikes, give a fur talk, or conduct a macroinvertebrate study. We will show you the ins and outs of our school programs and you will be able to shadow as many groups as you would like prior to taking a group out independently. We are looking for dependable people with fairly flexible schedules for this volunteer position. Please contact Kim if you are interested in joining us.

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON NATURE CENTER

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Watertown Daily Times

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Maple

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Thank you to our Birch Sponsors!

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Morgan Stanley - Jeff Barnard

Jason Poplaski and Robin M. Collelo-Poplaski

Richard Newcomb & Rev. Deborah Johnson Newcomb

Special Thanks to The T.I. Club and David Knapp!

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 - over 175 people attended!

The food was fantastic, the music upbeat, and the conversation stimulating! Who knew we could have so much fun while raising over \$26,000 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 take note of this years sponsors. Please thank and support them - let them know how much their selfless generosity means to all of us.

Otherwise, mark your calendars! Next years Night for Nature event is **Thursday, July 20, 2017 at the TI Club!**

We can't wait to see you all again!

CONNECTING KIDS WITH NATURE

We are happy to announce that the Minna Anthony Common Nature Center has had more teachers apply for the **Connect Kids Transportation Grant** than any other Nature Center in NY State with 24 field trips booked to date!

This speaks to the incredible importance of this Nature Center; it's wonderful staff, volunteers, naturalists, and the beneficial programs offered. Congratulations!

We must sincerely thank the passionate, caring teachers who value this very special experience and continue to bring students here.

New York State Parks in cooperation with Governor Andrew Cuomo's office is offering the Connect Kids Transportation Grant funded by NYS Environmental Protection Fund. This grant opportunity will provide \$500,000 to NYS teachers, whose school qualifies, with each teacher who applies being eligible for a \$750 grant to reimburse transportation costs. Sadly, so often school districts, PTA's, and teachers cannot take field trips due to strict budget constraints. This grant is on a first come first serve basis so please help spread the word to any teachers you know.

Kim Cullen, the Minna Anthony Common Nature Center Program Coordinator, provides high interest lessons with a strong educational value on a *tight* budget. Please consider providing a material on her current "**wish list**"?

Wish List

Ziplock Baggies: sandwich size and gallon size

Laminate sheets

Crayola watercolor markers

Bird seed: black oil sunflower

Roll of Large White Poster Paper

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON NATURE CENTER

A NIGHT FOR NATURE



Cynthia Kane, Elisabeth Zielinski and Robert Hagemeister celebrating nature! Guests ate and laughed their way through the event!



Dave Knapp and Meredith Gould kept the event fun and lively. They made it such a wonderful time!



Rita and Rob Gefell helped dance the night away.



Lynn Morgan, Peyton Taylor, and Kimbrie Cullen enjoying the evening.



We launched our new interpretive game, "Conservation Jenga" at the event. Everyone had fun and learned a lot too!



Sisters-in-law, Jo and Kathy Elliott enjoying the silent auction and the festivities.

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON NATURE CENTER

Volunteer Opportunities

38th Annual Autumn Festival **Saturday, October 8th, 10am-4pm**

There are a myriad of volunteer opportunities at Autumn Fest. Please call Darlene if you are interested and she will help you find a job and a suitable time slot. Thank you in advance for your help!

The Festival would not be possible without the help of our volunteers!

Fall Clean Up Day **Saturday, November 5th, 9:30am-1pm**

Come help us clean up our grounds and prepare for winter. We'll rake leaves, pick up the branches our friendly porcupine cut from the oak tree, look for trail damage, and more. If you are planning on staying for the duration, please bring your own lunch. Pre-registration is appreciated.

Help Wanted! **Luminary Creation** **Any Time, Thursday, October 27th or Friday, the 28th**

We will be making luminaries for our October 30th program all day. Please come and help if you can. Please call to let us know if you plan on coming to volunteer. If these dates do not work for you but you are interested in helping us make luminaries, please call us to schedule a time.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Lynn Morgan, master storyteller, engaging children and adults along the banks of the Saint Lawrence River.

Why Volunteer?

Since retiring from teaching, I have spent a considerable amount of time volunteering at the Nature Center. For example, in the summertime, I enjoy interpreting from the bow of our 36-foot Voyageur Canoe. It is always interesting and fun!

Throughout the school year, there are numerous school field trips coming to the Nature Center. Guiding these groups on some of our trails is wonderful! Their excitement is contagious, especially since we never know what critters we might see along the way.

Volunteering at the Nature Center enables me to interact with so many children as we explore and share together along the trails, which is most satisfying and rewarding.

There are numerous opportunities to volunteer at the Nature Center using your talents and interests. Call the Nature Center today and find out how you can help at this wonderful treasure in our backyard!! You will discover that you will receive more benefits than you give.

- Lynn Morgan, Board Member, Volunteer

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON NATURE CENTER

FALL PROGRAMS 2015

315-482-2479

Spider's Fishing Programs

Saturday, October 1st

Two programs are offered:

Basic Fishing from 11:00am to 1:00pm and Basics of Fly Fishing from 1:30pm to 3:30pm

Join Spider on the Nature Center dock as he shares his knowledge and love of fishing. Spider brings a limited number of fishing poles, hooks, bobbers, and worms. This is a free program, but donations to the Friends of the Nature Center are welcomed to defray the cost of this and other programs.



Lost Ladybug Project – Did the released 9-spotted Ladybugs survive?

Sunday, October 9th, 11am-3pm

Join Leah Tyrrell, Environmental Conservationist associated with Cornell Cooperative Association and search for 9-spotted Ladybugs by the butterfly house where she released the bugs this summer. Use sweep nets to help find 9-spotted ladybugs and any other ladybug species that may be present. Prizes will be awarded to participants who can spot a 9-spot and capture it so it can be photographed and recorded. Help us monitor this important population of native pollinators!

Trail Tales

Saturdays, October 15th and November 19th, 10am

Perfect for younger children, accompanied by an adult. A naturalist will first read two stories to the children and then lead the group in an activity (a hike or craft, weather dependent) themed to match the stories.

Exploring Fall

Saturday, October 22nd, 1pm

Join us on a hike to search for signs of fall along our trails. We may even gather nuts for Scrappers, our chipmunk, to eat this winter and supplies for natural garland we are planning to make at our annual Holiday Bonanza.

Moonlight Guided Hike

Friday, December 16th, 6:30pm

Follow the full moon through the forest with a Naturalist! Experience the nocturnal world guided by magical moonlight. Listen for the call of the Barred Owl or the bark of a Red Fox as the natural world prepares for a night of activity. Preregistration is required.

Natural Garland Workshop

Saturday, December 17th, 1pm

Come use all sorts of natural objects to create a beautiful garland you can hang on your tree or over your mantel this holiday season. Pick out what you want to use from the assortment of things we have collected, drill a hole in it, and string it onto wire. This is a craft loved by both men and woman! If you are able, please bring your own drill. Preregistration is required.

Ongoing Programs

Junior Naturalist Program

Visit the Nature Center and become a Junior Naturalist. This three part series is full of fun activities to do outside. Complete all three packets and receive a Junior Naturalist patch. This program is recommended for ages seven and up. \$3 per patch

Natural Birthday Parties at the Nature Center

Make this a birthday special for your child with a Natural Birthday Party at the Nature Center.

Children ages 5 to 12 can choose from seasonally appropriate themes such as Turtles, Exploring Ponds, Trees, Beavers and more. Call the Nature Center for more information or to schedule a party.

Members \$45; Nonmembers \$60.

Find us on 

Please like our Facebook page "Minna Anthony Common Nature Center - Friends" for realtime events, programs, and updates.

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON NATURE CENTER

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THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS JOINED OR
RENEWED THEIR COMMITMENT RECENTLY:

Kerry Roberge

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Watertown, NY

Syracuse, NY

Our sincere thanks!



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 2016.

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 2016.

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

38th Annual Autumn Festival **Saturday,**

October 8th 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**

Saturday, October 29th, 6:30-9pm

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 Nature Center to enjoy coffee, cider and light snacks. Come in costume and be eligible to win a prize for best costume!

Preregistration is appreciated.

Hike for Hunger

Saturday, November 12th, 12:30-3pm

Help stock our local food pantries by joining us for a hike for hunger on Saturday, November 14th. Bring a non-perishable food donation to participate. Guided hikes will leave the Nature Center at 1pm and 2pm but you are welcome to hike on your own throughout the day.

Preregistration is appreciated but not required.

MY
NATURE
CENTER

Goal: \$300,000

Raised: \$50,137

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**