

NEWSLETTER

Fall Issue • OCTOBER 2020



Bright foliage on South Bay Trail facing Murray Isle

GLORY OF AUTUMN FOLIAGE

While attendance within the Nature Center was down this summer due to the pandemic, the trails outside have never been busier. Upon further reflection, what more could we nature enthusiasts ask for than more people enjoying the outdoor scenery of this lovely place?

This fall, like this summer, may have a different feeling at the Nature Center. Our beloved Autumn Fest has been canceled for the first time in over 40 years out of concern for people's health. However, the staff and Friends have found a new way to celebrate fall in smaller gatherings that same weekend with a festive pumpkin patch.

Furthermore, during the week, we would normally greet large yellow school buses full of eager students ready to embrace the unique habitat of Wellesley Island. Squeals of delight and laughter would visit one through the woods as learners enter the

butterfly house, walk the trails, or learn about insects dwelling under a decaying log. Obviously, this cannot happen this season, yet our creative staff has found new ways to share these experiences online with inquisitive learners in their own backyards – more information will follow...

While this could seem disheartening, we must welcome it as an opportunity to celebrate fall in a different more private manner. After all, the glory of autumn foliage along the River will continue to impress. Such glory is mentioned and celebrated in Minna's article this quarter, reminding us how lucky those of us are who can bask in their soft, vibrant colors. For our friends unable to return to Wellesley Island State Park this fall, we will do our best to take photos and share them on social media. See you on the trails.

Matt Elliott,
Board President

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON SERIES

October Foliage has Many Colors**Sugar Maple Displays Every Tone and Shade****Fall Dress is Brilliant***October 24, 1931*

The following is an excerpt from a column written by Mrs. James A. Common. Reprinted by permission of the Watertown Daily Times

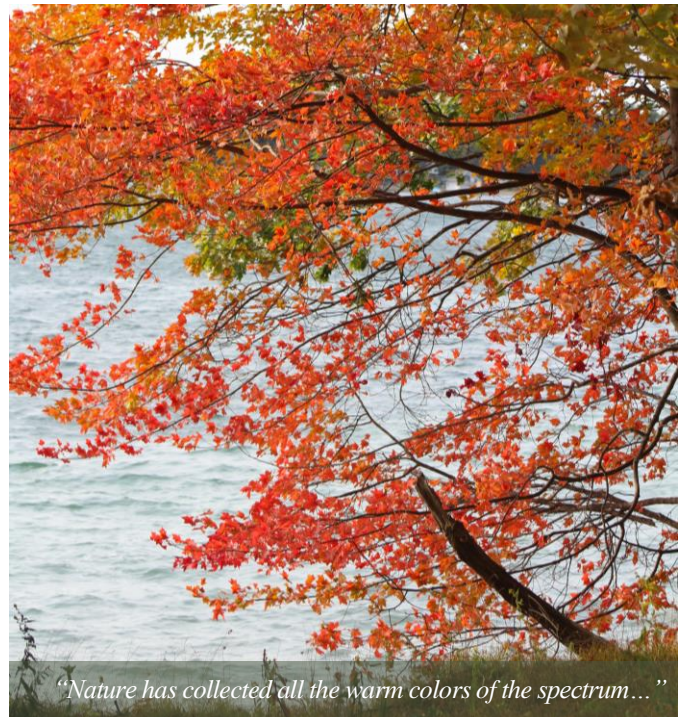
We natives of the North Country do not realize the hold that the glory of the maple's autumn foliage has upon us until we spend an October elsewhere. Then it is we miss an intangible something. A desire for gold may have lured us away, but a desire for gold, fleeting transient perhaps, but none the less real beckons us to return, to come once more and behold. The coffers of all Christendom heaped and piled together could not gleam with a richer luster than a sugar maple woods in October. There Nature has collected all the warm colors of the spectrum with every tint and shade and intermediary tone and displays them together in one glorious color fest. Red and auburn, scarlet and maroon, pink and orchid, mauve and russet, cream color, yellow, tan, gold and orange are all at hand, sometimes several in one leaf.

Botanists claim that the formation of red is due to an over supply of sugar. During the growing season the leaves are food factories combining the carbon of the air with materials brought up in the sap from the roots in the earth to form starch, sugar, and other substances from which the tree is fed. This food-making power is performed by sunshine and chlorophyll, a substance in the leaves which is made up of several pigments with the green one predominating. In the autumn, the chlorophyll is broken up into the substances of which it is composed. The green passes out first leaving the

yellow to become the prevailing color. In the summer, the sugars manufactured by the leaves are rapidly used by the tree. But when the temperature is cooler and the sugars are not used so fast as they are formed, then the excess turns red, the more the brighter.

No one has ever satisfactorily explained autumn coloring nor why one soft maple bears gorgeous spotted red and yellow leaves year after year while its replica ten feet away is plain light yellow; nor why one single branch of some tree is always red; nor why swam maples have a monopoly of pinks and scarlets and the black maples never show even a fleck of red; nor why all the leaves on one sugar maple are yellow bordered with red while another similar tree is tiered from root to crown with blended gradations like a color scale. But we do not have to care why, the beauty of the panorama along our streets and country roads and woodland paths is reason enough.

The autumn sun shines softly and a shower of gold and red floats to the ground to lie for a few hours. Enjoy the beauty of the fall foliage and its many colors.



FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Since reopening in July, the Nature Center has been happily busy and staff have been safely leading programming. We presented 55 public programs serving 378 attendees in July and August – that’s almost one program daily! Visitors have been steadily exploring our exhibits and trail network. While not as busy as previous years, we nonetheless welcomed over 5,000 Nature Center patrons during July and August! At the peak of summer we were running through about a hundred trail maps every day!

Also in August, our SCA Supervisor, Lauren Eggleston, started a new role with fellow environmental organization Save the River. She will be heading up educational programs as their new Program Coordinator! Lauren was with the Nature Center as a year-round seasonal employee since 2018, she assisted with environmental education and the Student Conservation Corps

(SCA) program. We will miss her, and wish her success in her new role!

September signals back to school. Kim, our Education Coordinator, has been hard at work writing new curriculum for our fall and winter iterations of our acclaimed *Virtual Field Trip* videos and activity guides. Stay tuned for new hands-on environmental education content!

Minna was right – fall foliage in Northern New York outshines the entire state. I’ve never seen such vivid autumn leaves until I moved here. Come experience the sunset-colored trails for yourself! We hope to see you at our pumpkin patch or other upcoming programs this fall! Bookmark our website and Facebook page for updates on November and December programs.

Warmly,



Gabriela Padewska
Nature Center Director



View from Nature Center terrace overlooking Eel Bay

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION



We were recently selected by Parks & Trail New York as a top pick to visit this fall! Their blog post entitled *Autumn at Wellesley Island State Park Beckons You* highlights Park amenities and Nature Center trails and programs. Read the post here:

www.ptny.org/newsandmedia/e-news-1/2020/09/autumn-wellesley-state-park-beckons-you

STUDENT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION (SCA) MEMBER UPDATE

Our SCA members continue to be all-stars, despite the curveballs thrown at them by the pandemic. Veronica dazzles us with online posts that keep our bigger online community up-to-date on what's happening on the trails. Robin has risen to the challenge of spontaneous programs, and has been teaching visitors about snapping turtles, painted turtles, and (of course) Scrappers the chipmunk. Sydney has led tours through the Butterfly House and has successfully raised around one hundred butterflies. See what they have been up to...

"You are the sky.
Everything else —
it's the weather."
—Pema Chodron

A page from Veronica's Nature Symbolism Hike



Veronica with her Nature Symbolism Hike on Eel Bay Trail



Robin releasing a snapping turtle hatchling on Pond Trail



Snapping turtle hatchling found in our parking lot

Veronica: I hike and photograph the trails, which has turned me into a self-proclaimed naturalist! One of my more recent projects was my *Nature Symbolism Hike* on Eel Bay Trail. I used my photography of Wellesley Island and paired it with quotes from various authors, poets, and naturalists. I've been wanting to do a meditation hike, but with COVID-19 this self-guided program seemed to be the perfect solution. I am constantly brainstorming new and exciting ways to keep others engaged with our social media outlets, and to drive them to get outdoors. I am currently coordinating a series of photo contests. Wellesley Island is such a gem and I am grateful to grow as an environmentalist!

Robin: Common Snapping turtles are aquatic and make themselves at home in just about any slow-moving freshwater wetland. These turtles are rarely seen on land, but females can be spotted during nesting season from late April to early November. An ideal nesting spot is a warm, sunny area with soft soil. Snapping turtle nests are often found near busy roadways and far from water, so always be mindful during nesting season! These photos were taken in late August when we collected seven hatchlings that were found in the MAC Nature Center parking lot! They were safely moved to Pond Trail where they will continue their life adventures.

Sydney: Did you know Monarch butterflies fly 2,000-3,000 miles each year to escape freezing cold temperatures? These butterflies arrive in Mexico in early November as the celebrations for "Day of the Dead" or "Día de los Muertos" begin. To learn more about the Monarch migration and its importance to Mexican culture, we presented a program called *Monarch Migration*. People also joined us for our final release of Monarch butterflies. It's time for these guys to start heading south of the border!



Sydney releasing Monarch Butterfly to journey south



We celebrated Mexico, our Monarch's final destination!



Nature Center regulars, siblings Levi & Cecelia participated

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING SEVENTEEN MEMBERS FOR JOINING OR RENEWING THEIR COMMITMENT RECENTLY

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Miron	Manlius, NY	Mr. & Mrs.	Syracuse, NY
Sarah Baldwin	Clayton, NY	Steve Martin	
John & Leslie Bober	New Canaan, CT	Anna Johnson	Wayland, MA
Michael Burns	Manlius, NY	Deanne Scanlon	Chaumont, NY
Mr. & Mrs.		Phyllis Schwartz	Camillus, NY
Stewart Dutfield	Delmar, NY	Angela Storer	Danville, PA
Mr & Mrs. Paul Garrett	Wellesley Island, NY	& Family	
Dr. & Mrs. David Hertzog	Morrisville, PA	Ken White	Ithaca, NY
Daniel Keohane	Natick, MA	Chris Murray	Syracuse, NY
Joanne LaFontaine	Clayton, NY	Jenny Spencer	Watertown, NY

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

From July through October, the Nature Center offered eight free fishing clinics with expert angler and author Spider Rybaak – four rod-and-reel clinics and four fly-fishing clinics. Thank you to the *Barbara & Daniel Butts Enrichment Fund* for your generous sponsorship of these popular outdoor programs!



Barb Butts (center) and Spider Rybaak (right) help bait a hook during a free fishing clinic on our Eel Bay dock

AUTUMN FEST CANCELLED, PUMPKIN PICKING STILL ON!



A plethora of pumpkins! Pictured from left to right: Harold, Sydney, Darlene, and Robin.

With the health and safety of our community, staff and volunteers in mind, and in keeping with state and local guidelines, the Friends of the Nature Center have made the decision to cancel the 42nd annual Autumn Fest scheduled for October 10.

Each fall this event welcomes more than 1,000 people to the Nature Center to celebrate the changing season with crafts, games, food and fun. This event is also one of our largest fundraising events of the year. Canceling Autumn Fest, in addition to our other major event, A Night For Nature, has a significant impact on our organization's operations. Therefore, we kindly ask for your generous support so that we can continue to provide educational and outreach programming for the river community.

In lieu of Autumn Fest, Columbus Day weekend we are offering a **pumpkin patch and related programs!** Come pick your own pumpkin and donate any amount! Our sugar pumpkins were grown on-site with organic practices. The pumpkin patch is open rain-or-shine 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. daily from Friday, October 9th through Sunday, October 11th. Please note that the pumpkin patch and Nature Center are closed from noon to 1:00 p.m. See the next page for related programs and how to register. Thank you for your support!

October Events

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.



SPIDER'S FISHING CLINICS

Saturday, October 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



PUMPKIN PICKING

October 9 through October 11

9:00am—Noon and 1—3:00pm

Pick your own Wellesley Island-grown pumpkin! Our pie pumpkins are grown in our patch with organic practices and are ready for your next feast! Suggested Donation: small pumpkin \$2, large pumpkin \$3.

Pumpkin patch is open rain-or-shine 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. daily from Friday, October 9th through Sunday, October 11th. Please note that the pumpkin patch and Nature Center are closed from noon to 1:00 p.m.



NATIVE AMERICAN THREE SISTERS

Friday, October 9

1:00—1:45pm

Corn, beans, squash were such important foods they were traditionally called the “Three Sisters” by Native Americans. Learn about the cultural significance of these crops and how they were grown together. Afterwards, pick your own pumpkin in our patch! Free pumpkin door prizes.

**SEARCHING FOR FALL****Saturday, October 10****10:00am—10:45am**

2 acorns, 3 red leaves, 4 migrating birds – join us on this immersive scavenger hunt for signs of the season. Afterwards, pick your own pumpkin in our patch! Free pumpkin door prizes.

**SEED TO PUMPKIN****Sunday, October 11****1:00—1:45pm**

Let's dissect a pumpkin! Learn how pumpkins grow and the science of what makes them fruit. Afterwards, pick your own pumpkin in our patch! Free pumpkin door prizes.

**AUTUMN MANDALAS****Saturday, October 17****10:00—11:00am**

Fall lends itself beautifully to trilside art! Warm-up your observation skills using our seasonal color wheel scavenger hunt, and then create an ephemeral mandala made from fallen leaves and natural materials.

**TURTLE TOUR****Saturday, October 24****1:00—2:00pm**

Come hear all about the Nature Center critters and what turtles you may see in the St. Lawrence River! Learn about different species and what types of habitat each prefer – after the tank talk you will have the opportunity to test your turtle knowledge on a scavenger hunt with a fall twist!

**THE TOO-SCARY STORY****Saturday, October 31****10:00—11:00am**

Do the spooky woods at night give you the heebie-jeebies? Join storyteller Kim Cullen in a scary story-time and an interactive hike activity. Become brave explorers as we discover the not too-scary secrets of the forest. Halloween costumes encouraged.

THE MINNA ANTHONY COMMON TRAILBLAZER AWARD



Kathy and Joe Leskoske received the Minna Anthony Common Trailblazer Award. Symbolically, they were presented with the award on Minna Anthony Common's birthday – September 11th. Friends of the Nature Center President, Matt Elliott, gave the Leskoske's a painting and shared poured beverages in honor of their outstanding dedication to the Nature Center.

Kathy started volunteering at the Nature Center in 2005, with Joe joining shortly thereafter in 2006. As long-serving volunteers as well as year-round Wellesley Island residents, Kathy and Joe have become fixtures in the Nature Center community.



As our expert gardener in-residence, Kathy knows the eight Nature Center gardens and Butterfly House like the back of her hand. She selects plants, maintains the gardens, and trains volunteers and staff on gardening best practices. Kathy has also recruited other gardeners to volunteer with us! Her devotion is incredible!



Joe is one of our most versatile volunteers. Detail-oriented craftsman, volunteer educator, and former Friends of the Nature Center board member – he assists with projects at the confluence of artistry, intellect, and brawn. He recently rebuilt the rock wall around our grass garden with volunteers from Fort Drum.

Kathy and Joe – we deeply appreciate and commend your volunteer service to the Minna Anthony Common Nature Center! Congratulations!



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

WELLESLEY ISLAND STATE PARK STAFF

•

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

A WEEKEND OF FALL FUN!

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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