



Rice Creek Associates Newsletter

Fall 2014

Rice Creek's Summer Education Programs for Children and Teens by Diann C. Jackson

This summer saw the return of young people investigating Rice Creek as we welcomed old friends as well as new ones to SUNY Oswego's Rice Creek Field Station summer programs for children. First, in July when Exploring Nature resumed following the construction hiatus and then again in August when the Conservation Field Studies program for teens was offered for the first time.

We were all excited to begin the 2014 Exploring Nature sessions. Crayfish were not always found where they had been, meadows looked very different from the last time children at EN explored them in 2011, and the rainy days provided ample opportunities to find tracks in the mud. Children would share what they found and learned the following morning and the staff provided insights into conservation, ecology, and further education. This year's highlights included the supersized water snakes (yes, there was more than one snake) found near the fish ladders and the friendships that formed among many of the children. Children, parents and EN staff all

agreed it was good to have Exploring Nature back at Rice Creek. Can't wait until next year!

Conservation Field Studies was new for us this year. CFS emphasized the interdependence of Rice Creek's ecosystems through field studies and projects. Participants learned about natural resource management, wetlands ecology, and environmental stewardship. They got a feel for what it might be like during college science classes during aquatic sampling of Rice Creek in two locations. We were excited to include an evening session during CFS. It was still daylight when CFS participants gathered that evening but the day quickly moved into dusk and nightfall. There was about 80% of the full moon that evening. However, the weather did not cooperate for our planned moon/star gazing as well as Persied meteor showers. We anticipate offering CFS again next summer, possibly during July.

We are proud of our quality education programs for young people and appreciate the Exploring Nature Program donations, both small and large, from Rice Creek Associate members. Those funds enabled three children to attend EN this summer at a reduced rate. The RCA Board of Directors enthusiastically agreed to fund one teenager attending the CFS pilot program this summer, again at a reduced rate. I know these scholarships are making a difference in young people lives. Thank you to the RCA membership for your past and continued support.



Science at Rice Creek

Rice Creek Hosts New York Flora Association Weekend Workshop

In early September, Rice Creek hosted a multiday workshop on the identification and ecology of aquatic vascular plants that brought over a dozen botanists to the field station. The workshop was sponsored by the New York Flora Association (NYFA), an organization that is dedicated to promoting field botany and an appreciation of New York's plant diversity.

Aquatic plants are important, but often overlooked components of freshwater ecosystems. Aquatic plants provide habitat structure and substrate that concentrates biodiversity. Submerged plants provide critical forage for waterfowl and other animals including moose. In addition, aquatic plants reduce sedimentation, oxygenate water, and are sensitive to changes in water chemistry. Due to the ease with which aquatic plants can spread and reproduce, many aquatic plants are classified as noxious invasive species. Invasive species degrade habitats and cause substantial economic costs to control.

The aquatic plant workshop was led by Dr. C. Barre Hellquist (Professor Emeritus,

Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, North Adams, MA) and by his son, Dr. C. Eric Hellquist, a Biological Sciences faculty member at SUNY Oswego. Eric is an aquatic and wetland plant ecologist while Barre has conducted taxonomic, floristic, and ecological research on aquatic vascular plants in North America, Asia, and Australia. Barre is a co-author of *Aquatic and Wetland Plants of Northeastern North America* and has co-authored treatments of numerous plant groups for the *Flora of North America* and the *Flora of Australia* among others. In recent years, Eric and Barre have been collaborating on a floristic inventory and ecological analysis of the aquatic vascular flora of Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks.

Botanists came to Oswego from throughout New York as well as Pennsylvania, and Ontario, Canada for the workshop. Participants included professional botanists from academia, the government, and private consulting firms. Graduate students from institutions including SUNY ESF, SUNY Brockport, and Buffalo State also attended. During the workshop, the Hellquists reviewed the identification and ecology of aquatic plants using live material brought to the workshop by participants, material collected during the workshop, and RCFS herbarium collections. Barre also gave presentations based on his over 40 years of experience working with aquatic plants around the world.

On Saturday, following lab and classroom reviews, the group launched kayaks and canoes into Rice Pond. Among the aquatic flora of Rice Pond, participants were alarmed to find the notorious invasive species, water chestnut (*Trapa natans*). *Trapa* had not been collected previously in Rice Pond. Participants removed all individuals of the large floating plant in an attempt to contain its spread. The presence of *Trapa* in Rice Pond indicates that the pond should be monitored yearly to prevent recolonization.



Barre Hellquist holds a sample of invasive water chestnut (*Trapa natans*). This species was collected for the first time in Rice Pond during the aquatic plant workshop. Photo by Andy Nelson.

On Sunday, participants gathered at Rice Creek and then travelled to Fairhaven Beach State Park (Sterling) to explore the plant communities of the large pond at the mouth of Sterling Creek. Fanning out across the pond in kayaks and canoes, participants located approximately 30 species of native and exotic aquatic plant species. The field trip provided an ideal opportunity to review many of the species discussed over the weekend.

Many workshop participants expressed how impressed they were with the Rice Creek facilities. As with classes at SUNY Oswego, Rice Creek provided an ideal setting for the botany workshop to integrate laboratory and classroom learning with fieldwork.



2014

**Nature Education Programs
SUNY Oswego's
Rice Creek Field
Station**

***Celebrate Family and Friends
Weekend 2014***

Rice Creek welcomes all to Family and Friends Weekend 2014. Stop by the new Rice Creek from 9 to 4:30 October 24th and 9 to 3 October 25th.

***Rice Creek Rambles* 11 o'clock
November 8, 22 December 13**

Explore the trails and wetlands at Rice Creek to see fall changes. Join us for these family-friendly naturalist-led fall walks. Those planning to attend are asked to call 315-312-6677 on the morning of the hike to check trail conditions. Since program size is limited, we are not able to accommodate groups to these free Saturday programs. An adult needs to accompany children.

***Story Hour* 11 o'clock
October 18 November 15**

Join us as we share tales of nature, animals' wild ways, and how we relate to our world

around us. These programs are designed for elementary aged children though all are welcome. Since program size is limited, we are not able to accommodate groups to these free Saturday programs. An adult needs to accompany children.

October 18 *Indian Tales for Little Folks* by W.F. Phillips will introduce you to Native American animal creation stories and legends in pictures and words.

November 15 *A Coming of Winter in the Adirondacks* by author Brian Heinz and beautifully illustrated by local artist Maggie Henry of Oswego, NY will tell you more about the signs of the changing seasons.

Sharing Science 11 o'clock

October 11 *Composting Fundamentals* will help you sort out if you need a bin, pile, tumbler. From kitchen scraps to yard waste, learn about the key ingredients for a healthy compost pile. Come and share your tips for successful composting at home. We use a three-bin system at Rice Creek and will explain why.

December 6 *Attracting Birds to Your Yard* will show you several things you can do to create or enhance your yard to encourage birds to visit, stay and return. What are the general rules? How do they differ from season to season? What birds frequent this area?

Bird Banding at Rice Creek will be resuming. Come and observe birds in hand during the

capture, banding and release of resident and migrating songbirds.

Tour Rice Creek Field Station and learn about the sustainability features of our 7640 square-foot energy-efficient main building and facility. Visit the Ruth Sachidanandan Herb Garden. The garden is getting ready for winter but will not be put to bed until after the first hard frost.

- ◆ The building hours are:
Monday to Friday 9:00 am to 4:30 pm
Saturday 9:00 am to 3:00 pm
- ◆ FREE programs most Saturdays
- ◆ Trails are open during daylight hours.
- ◆ Parking is available by the main building and near the gate.

For more information visit www.oswego.edu/ricecreek or call 315-312-6677.

Programs administered by Dr. Diann C Jackson

Memorable moments at Rice Creek

We encourage all members to submit a favorite memory of Rice Creek Field Station. Send it to Mike Holy at fordlep@yahoo.com or mail it directly to the field station. It will appear in a future newsletter.

John Weeks reflects on the early days of the Rice Creek Field Station

An unusually warm and sunny Saturday afternoon provided the backdrop on Sept. 27 for a Rice Creek Reflection on the origins of the field station. Twenty-four people attended the lecture presented by John Weeks, wildlife biologist, teacher, artist, and the first Director of the Rice Creek Biological Field Station.

According to John, he and Don Cox (also a past Director) worked on the concept for a field station for the Oswego State Teachers College. As an arts and sciences institution in the SUNY system by 1962, SUNY Oswego featured a range of liberal and professional studies.

The state had questioned the idea of a field station for what was still in its view a “teachers” college.” John strongly believed that a field station could greatly help to prepare future science teachers in their profession. It was at this point that SUNY Oswego President Foster Brown pushed the field station plan through Albany.



John Weeks displays drawings of Rice Creek Field Station from 1961-1969

The initial site for the field station, proposed by John, was mud pond, also known as Silver Lake. With further input from Foster Brown, a parcel known as Hilton’s pasture ultimately became the chosen site for the station. As a pond would often develop there from storms and disappear within a few days, it seemed a logical choice. Before that area was flooded to create Rice Pond, organisms in the stream leading to the property were identified. The origin of this stream water was Lake Neatahwanta in Fulton.

The land was modified to form a pond covering 26 acres. In the early 60’s, evergreen trees were planted to provide islands of cover for wildlife and meadows were established.



An early view of the station grounds

The plans for the field station building originally proposed a two-story facility allowing for a viewing platform of the surrounding area on top of the second floor. In actuality it became a one-story building. The field station was formally opened in 1966.

Afterward, a grant from the National Heritage Wildlife Trust was awarded to paint field station murals. John himself painted four, illustrating wildlife in each of the four seasons at Rice Pond.



Bulldozer at work preparing the land for flooding

John also designed a diorama of the field station grounds. Under his guidance, college students assisted in its construction. Almost destroyed during the construction of the new field station, it was rescued by Rice Creek Associates and kept in private storage. It has since been returned to the new building, and is available for viewing. The diorama is an historical record of the field station and grounds as they appeared in earlier days.

It was a pleasure to have John present this program and share an important history of the origin of Rice Creek Field Station.

Annual RCA Social Planned at Rice Creek Field Station

Our 2014 RCA Small Grants winners will present brief descriptions of their research findings on Nov. 8 from 2 -5 p.m.

This event is open to the public. The Rice Creek Associates membership is particularly encouraged to attend to learn about current research activity on the field station grounds. The event is free and light refreshments will be served.

You must RSVP to attend. Call the field station at 315-312-6677 or email rcfs@oswego.edu by **Oct. 31.**

Board members needed!

Our Rice Creek Associates Board of Directors is presently requesting additional Board members. In order to function at top efficiency we need at least an additional two members. Please, if you have time to spare for a one-hour monthly meeting with a few more hours in the month to assist with our organization (tasks which can be done at your convenience in your home), contact me at fordlep@yahoo.com or 315-622-1774 for further information. I will be glad to guide you through our organization and answer any questions or concerns you may have.

Mike Holy, Board President

Gift idea for the holidays

Rice Creek Field Station and Rice Creek Associates are offering limited holiday pricing on selected packages. Below is a listing of regular and sale price items:

Rice Creek Field Station mug:	\$5.00
Butterfly Guide:	\$4.95
Invasive Plants Guide:	\$9.95

These package deals will save you \$3.00 off the regular prices:

Mug + Butterfly Guide:	\$6.95
Mug + Invasive Plants Guide:	\$11.95
Butterfly + Invasive Plants Guides:	\$11.90

All make a great gifts for the nature lover in your family. Contact the Field Station at 315-312-6677 or stop by to make your purchase.

**Rice Creek Associates
Board of Directors Ballot**

Three members are up for election. Two are two-year positions; the other is for a three-year position. Please indicate your choices.

Two years:

Don Artz

_____ Write-in nomination

Pat Jones

_____ Write-in nomination

Three years:

Paulia Bates

_____ Write-in nomination

Please complete and send to Rice Creek Associates, Bldg #23 SUNY Oswego, Oswego, N.Y. 13126 or forward to rcfs@oswego.edu.

Reminder- Membership renewal

Memberships in Rice Creek Associates now run for a calendar year. This means that all members must renew their memberships for 2015. Please use the form provided in this newsletter. Questions? Contact Mike Holy at 315-622-1774 or (preferably) fordlep@yahoo.com. Thank you.

Join Rice Creek Associates

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

New Calendar-year Membership

Membership renewal

Level:

Student 5.00

Individual 10.00

Family/Couple 15.00

Contributing 25.00

Sustaining 50.00

Life 250.00

Corporate 500.00

I/We would like to make a tax-deductible contribution to the

General Fund

Trail improvement

Exploring Nature Program for children

in the amount of \$ _____.

Total enclosed (membership + contribution)
\$ _____.

Please make checks payable to:

State University College Foundation/RCA

Return to:

Rice Creek Field Station #23

SUNY Oswego

Oswego, New York 13126

Rice Creek Associates

(RCA) is a support group that was formed in 1986 for the purpose of furthering the goals of Rice Creek Field Station (RCFS). It is the intent of RCA to expand the scientific, educational, and recreational opportunities at the station through community involvement. Over the years, RCA has continued to increase its membership making it possible to fund improvement projects that benefit the station and the community at large.

Current RCA board members

Michael Holy, President
Peter Rosenbaum, Vice President
Holly Eden, Secretary
Paulia Bates
Don Artz
Pat Jones
Michael Schummer

Rice Creek Field Station Staff

Kamal Mohamed, Director
Diann Jackson, Assistant Director
Wendy Fragale, Secretary
Alan Harris, Groundskeeper

Rice Creek Field Station

Rice Creek Field Station is a part of the State University of New York at Oswego. While its primary function is to provide facilities for field oriented research and courses in the natural sciences taught at the college, facilities

are also available for public education and recreation.

The field station houses superb collections, field equipment, and laboratories. It is surrounded by several hundred acres of forest, fields, trails and wetlands, including Rice Pond. School children visit the field station and many individuals and groups use the area for hiking and cross-country skiing.

Rice Creek welcomes dogs. However, to protect sensitive natural features and as a courtesy to other visitors, dogs should be on a six foot leash. Also, be kind and clean up after your pet. Thank you.

Directions: To get to Rice Creek Field Station take Route 104, turn south on Thompson Rd, 100 yards west of the College's main entrance. The field station is 1.4 miles on the right.

Hours:

Monday to Friday 9:00 am -- 4:30 pm

Saturday 9:00 am -- 3:00 pm

Trails are open dawn to dusk daily.

When visiting Rice Creek, please sign in and out at one of the brown registration boxes.

Help us improve our newsletter!

There are many things that you as members can do to assist us in improving the quality of our newsletter.

- **Share** your experiences of Rice Creek with us.
- **Write** a short review on a nature book that you enjoyed.
- **Send** a digital picture you took at Rice Creek that you think we may enjoy.
- **Suggest** ideas that we may include, or programs that you would like to see offered to our members and public.

Send these and any other ideas to Mike Holy at fordlep@yahoo.com, or call him at 315-622-1774. We look forward to providing information that would inform and entertain our members.

Late Summer/Early Fall Photos at Rice Creek



Fungi of all types grow well in autumn



A late blooming Dame's Rocket



A Tussock Moth larva looks for a wintering site



Monarch preparing for migration



Frog in search of a meal



Tree at peak color



Vegetation at Rice Pond changing colors



Milkweed dispersing seeds

Rice Creek Associates
RCFS #23
SUNY Oswego
Oswego, NY 13126

TO: