# Rice Creek Associates Newsletter



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RCA members: stop into the field station and ask any staff member for a courtesy car window cling. A promotional sticker to place in a car window, which displays below as white print.



### **President's Comments**

Laurel Artz. RCA President

Happy Summer! Hopefully you have been able to visit the Rice Creek Field Station and experience the splendor of the flowers in the herb garden for yourself. Or perhaps you have taken a walk and seen the lush green growth from the abundance of rain so far this year. Although, I hope you wore your boots as some of the trails have been swampy from that rain.

While walking at RCFS recently, I noticed the different generations of many plants. This is clearly exhibited by the succession of trees and shrubs as you move throughout the property. I used to point out some examples of this when walking with my students on our yearly field trip. It made me think of the other ways we look at generations in science, such as when I taught about Gregor Mendel and his genetic research with generations of pea plants which led to an understanding of dominant and recessive traits.

I also thought about the generations of students I have taught. By the end of my career, I was teaching several second generation students. I so enjoyed seeing my former students in their new stages of life. On each year's field trip the majority of the students, although they lived in Oswego City and Town, had never been to RCFS. Again and again, I heard from them that this was the best field trip ever! I wish I knew how

The best field tilp evel. I wish I knew how

Comfrey with a Bumble Bee

many of them made return trips with family or friends.

As the station prepares to host another summer of the Exploring Nature program, I wonder if any of them are second generation. Hopefully these new students will develop a passion for studying nature and being outdoors so that another generation might return in the future.

This summer we have students and faculty from the small grants program doing research, as explained further inside this newsletter. Some of these projects are looking at generational changes in animals.

Recently my baby granddaughter, Maddie, made her first trip to visit RCFS. Admittedly, she slept through much of it nestled in her stroller, lulled to sleep by the motion. Yet it was a momentous occasion for us as it was the first time three generations of Artz's were together enjoying the experience. I have mentioned in previous articles that both my sons make sure to visit RCFS whenever they come home to Oswego for a visit. Now my granddaughter is joining us in these wonderful outings.

Thank you for supporting the RCA so we can continue to ensure the RC experience for current nature lovers and future generations to come.



## **Assistant Director's Update**

Kristen Haynes, Assistant Director, RCFS

This spring, Rice Creek hosted or attended over 50 programs for the public and students. In my tenure as Assistant Director, that was a new record, and a far cry from where we were at the height of the pandemic. Rice Creek was certainly alive this spring, thanks in large part to the contributions of our student interns and dedicated volunteers who together provided much of our programming. I'm so grateful for all of their support and energy. Highlights of our spring programming included:

Hosting an NSF-funded Partners in International Research and Education (PIRE)
 Academy group of 17 students and several scientists, hailing from New York State, Argentina, and Brazil. The group spent the weekend doing hands-on tree ring coring and analysis at Rice Creek and engaging in discussions related to climate research and policy.

- An excellent lineup of events related to artist Alberto Rey's Biological Regionalism exhibit, and a stellar Reflection on Ticks and Disease, as highlighted separately in this newsletter.
- Hands-on composting programs at the Children's Museum of Oswego around Earth Day, organized by our interns.
- The third-annual Arbor Day Webinar Series, with an amazing lineup of five speakers secured by CFRP intern Robert Salerno, including a New York Times bestselling author. If you missed the series, you can find recordings at <a href="mailto:bit.ly/OzArbor-Day">bit.ly/OzArbor-Day</a>.
- Our Junior Naturalist club's "Mud Madness," "May Flowers," and "Pondering Pond Life" programs, which had record attendance in June.

- Birds Up Close: Bird Catching & Banding, offered by Professor Daniel Baldassarre.
- The restart of monthly Telescope Observation Sessions, thanks to the efforts of emeritus faculty member Dr. John Zielinski and other members of the Physics Department.

We hope you'll join us for our upcoming events this summer, which include our Junior Naturalist walks on the first Saturday of each month, guided nature walks on the other Saturdays, and Telescope Observation Sessions on July 8, 9, and 10; August 5, 6, and 7; and September 2, 3, and 4 (weather permitting). For additional information, visit our website at <a href="mailto:oswego.edu/rice-creek">oswego.edu/rice-creek</a>, where you can see our full program lineup right on the homepage. If you'd like to sign up for our monthly program email, you can do so at <a href="mailto:linktr.ee/ricecreek">linktr.ee/ricecreek</a>.



► PIRE Academy participants measure and core trees to analyze tree rings. Photo credit: PIRE Academy.



▲ Children examine pond samples at our June Junior Naturalist program. Photo credit: Amy Murphy.



■ RCA Board Student Representative Brooke Goodman holds a Downy Woodpecker at "Birds Up Close" before releasing it. Photo credit: Bob Ruggio.

# Surprising Bird Feeder Visitors

This spring we were treated to a array of visitors to our bird feeders including Baltimore Orioles, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, a Fox Sparrow, and the usual crew of Mourning Doves, Red-Winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, Northern Cardinals, Black-capped Chickadees, Blue Jays, American Goldfinches, and more. In addition, we had a few more unusual visitors: an American Crow, a juvenile Red-Tailed Hawk, and a raccoon! To see who's visiting the Rice Creek feeders, you can check out our live bird feeder webcam on YouTube by searching for Rice Creek Field Station.



◆ A furry visitor at the Rice Creek bird feeders (below.) A juvenile red-tailed hawk, spotted by professors Eric Hellquist and Dan Baldassarre, spent a few days hanging around our bird feeders (left.)



### RCA Reflection on Tick-Borne Disease

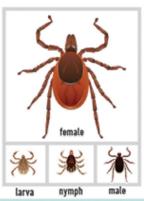
Respectfully submitted by Don Artz

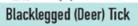
On Saturday, April 23rd, Dr. Stephen Rich presented a timely and very informative Rice Creek Reflection talk on tick-borne diseases. While the presenter spent time discussing Lyme Disease and a number of other tick-borne diseases, Dr. Rich focused his presentation on an assessment of the risks associated with exposure to these diseases resulting from a human encounter with a tick.

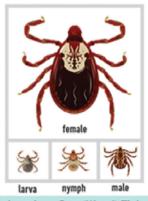
Dr. Rich began his presentation with the statement that "Fear is a pervasive emotion..." which is not conducive to good decision making, and so we should instead focus on risk-based decision making and not allow fear to drive or make decisions for us. He went on to say that ticks and the diseases they carry often drive a fear reaction in human beings, which can and should be mitigated by good information and an understanding of the risks in a particular human-tick encounter. Not all ticks carry the same level of risk for human beings, and so the reaction to a tick bite should be tempered by the risk inherent in that particular case.

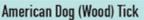
There are three fundamental things to understand about tick exposure risk:

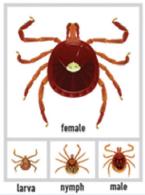
- What is the tick species and stage of life?
   There are only three species of tick that feed on humans in North America: deer ticks, dog ticks, and Lone Star ticks. In general, larval ticks carry a very nearly zero risk of disease transmission to humans, while female and nymph ticks pose a higher risk of infecting a human host.
- 2. What common diseases are carried and transmissible by which ticks? Deer ticks carry Lyme disease as well as Anaplasmosis. Dog ticks carry Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. Lone Star Ticks carry Ehrlichiosis. In humans, the most pervasive tick-borne diseases are those carried by deer ticks (Lyme and Anaplasmosis), but still the percentage of ticks actually carrying these diseases is relatively low in most cases.











Lone Star Tick

3. How do ticks find and attach themselves to a host (human or otherwise)? Ticks "quest"—they do not fly, drop or jump. They crawl to the end of a branch or grass frond, then wait and grasp their victim as they pass by.

While the first two variables are difficult or impossible to control, understanding them can help assess the risk of infection in the event that you are bitten by a tick. However, the third risk factor can be mitigated by our actions: wear light-colored clothing, long pantlegs tucked into socks, do a "tick check" after spending time outdoors. We can also attempt to reduce the source of ticks by mowing yards and reducing brush, spraying yard perimeters, and implementing deer/tick population controls, however these source-based mitigations have a number of inherent problems associated with them and are generally not exceptionally effective.

Okay, so now you've done your tick check and discovered an embedded tick...don't panic! Another risk-based assessment to make is how long the tick has been feeding. A tick that has fed for a short time is less risky for disease transmission than a tick that has fed for a longer time. for instance, the estimated transmission time for Lyme disease to most likely occur is between 24 and 48 hours (although it can occur as soon as 12 hours), so if you do a tick check immediately after being outside and find a tick then your risk of Lyme infection is very, very low if the tick is removed as soon

as possible. This is due to the manner in which ticks feed – through a "slurp-spit" mechanism over a long period of time: "spit" is how the transmission occurs, but intake ("slurp") is required before outtake ("spit") occurs. It is important to note that different pathogens require different times to transfer to the host, so the type of tick involved is important in understanding the risk of that encounter.

Finally, the infection status of the tick is a risk assessment measure to consider. Remember, the tick itself is not dangerous-it is the disease (if any!) that is within the tick that you have to worry about. Once you remove a tick, Dr. Rich strongly urges us to send the tick in for testing at a laboratory equipped to test for these tick-borne pathogens. Upstate Medical University (provides free testing), as well as TickReport.com (of which Dr. Rich disclosed that he was a principal owner of the company), are both able to provide these testing services. Having the tick tested has both a personal benefit to the individual (answering the question, "Have I possibly been exposed to a disease by this tick?"), as well as a public health benefit through reporting and data collection for research purposes.

Dr. Rich's ultimate goal was to give us some facts and understanding of the risk factors associated with a tick bite, which will hopefully allow us to approach tick bites less with fear and anxiety, and more with a calm and sensible reaction to being bitten.

# **Exploring Nature Scholarships Awarded**

As we ready ourselves to welcome over 100 Exploring Nature participants to Rice Creek, I want to extend my sincere thanks to our RCA members who generously donated to the Exploring Nature scholarship fund over the past year. Thanks to your donations, we awarded ten scholarships to high-need families for this year's program, funding over

80% of their registration costs, and totaling \$1,160.

These awards mean so much to the children and families who receive them. We had many families with extreme financial need this year, and I feel incredibly grateful that thanks to your support, we could secure a spot for these 10 children.

If you would like to contribute to next year's Exploring Nature scholarship fund, directions for giving can be found on the Rice Creek Associates webpage (oswego.edu/rice-creek/about-rice-creek/rice-creek-associates) and at the end of this newsletter. Thank you in advance for your continued generosity! It does indeed make a world of difference.

Since 1983, Exploring Nature, Rice Creek's summer youth program, has given young people hands-on learning experiences in nature with the goal of inspiring them to care for their world. Participants learn about natural history and ecology through exploration, observation, games, and creative activities. Youth ages 5-16 can participate for one or two weeks.



▲ Exploring Nature 2021 participants

## Celebrate Family and Friends Weekend at Rice Creek!

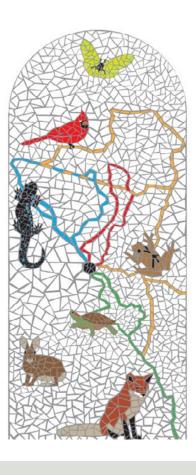
Mark your calendar and watch for further details—Rice Creek will once again celebrate Family and Friends Weekend with open hours Friday, October 21st, 2-5 p.m. and Saturday, October 22nd, 1-5 p.m. A silent auction of a variety of donated artworks with the theme "Inspired by Nature" will be a new feature this year. A variety of artistic media and creative interpretations will be represented. Tours of Rice Creek Field Station, live music and refreshments will also be provided on both days.

## Coming Soon to the Herb Garden

On view at Family and Friends Weekend will be the newly-installed herb garden sculpture, "Harmony" by SUNY Oswego art student Kayla Kitchener. Originally from Clymer, NY, Kitchener is entering her senior year studying art and psychology. Kayla is creating a tall, two-sided mosaic panel with detailed natural imagery. Funds raised through the silent art auction will help fund the permanent outdoor sculpture. Many thanks to Ben Entner from the SUNY Oswego Art Department and board member Michael Flanagan for helping organize this project. This has been in the works for over three years but was put on hold due to the pandemic.

"Harmony" will provide an illustrated example of the intent behind the herb garden, as well as animal life seen throughout its trails. The front design is meant to best describe the activity of insects within the garden, which includes different stages of butterfly life, bees, and the Oswego Tea Flower. The back design includes the trail map combined with common species throughout the area. The side and bottom detailing includes a winding Virginia Creeper vine. (Kayla Kitchener)





## **About 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, please 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., located 100 yards west of the College's main entrance. The field station is 1.4 miles on the right.

#### **Hours**

Monday to Friday 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Saturday 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Trails are open dawn to dusk daily.

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

# **Important**

#### **RCA Newsletter Delivery Change**

As a consequence of trying to reduce operating costs, the RCA Board has decided that starting with the Summer 2022 edition, all future newsletters will be sent by email. Members without email addresses will still receive a mailed copy.

If you have shared an email address with us but still wish to receive a mailed copy, you must notify our newsletter editor, Laurel Artz, at RCA@oswego.edu

We always appreciate your support and want to continue to serve you in the most convenient manner.

Thank you!

# Rice Creek Associates Awards Three Small Grants in 2022

Dr. Andrew McElwain, coordinator for Small Grants Program

The Rice Creek Associates Small Grants Program has awarded three investigators with funds for scientific research in 2022.

Dr. Poongodi Geetha-Loganathan, Associate Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at SUNY Oswego will be working on a project entitled "Characterization of Fungal Pathogens Threatening Snapping Turtles." Snapping turtles are an imperiled species, and Fusarium fungi can invade eggs and cause mortalities to turtle embryos. The goal of this project is to determine how these fungi are spread throughout snapping turtle populations towards understanding the role of fungal pathogens in population declines.

Samuel Krebs, who is a M.S. student in Wildlife Ecology and Management at SUNY-ESF, will be working on a project entitled "Winter Foraging Ecology of Birds and Mammals on Staghorn Sumac in the Central New York and Finger Lakes Regions." Staghorn sumac is an early-successional shrub, its berries and seeds are consumed during the winter by birds, and additionally the seeds and bark are winter food resources used by cottontail rabbits. However, these food resources contain phenolic chemical compounds that make them difficult to digest. The goal of this study is to determine whether animals can detect the time at which these chemical compounds breakdown making them safe to eat.

Jordan Meeker, who is a B.S. student in biology at SUNY Oswego, will be working on a project entitled "The Prevalence and Intensity of Helminth Parasites in Wild and Domestic Canids from Fecal Samples at Rice Creek Field Station." Helminths are a broad category that includes parasitic worms that independently evolved in different lineages. This study seeks to reveal whether there is spillover of parasites from coyotes and/or foxes to domestic dogs and vice versa since dogs and wild canids share the trails at Rice Creek Field Station, and several parasite species can commonly be transmitted by means of fecal-oral contamination between each canid species.

# **Telescope Observation Sessions**



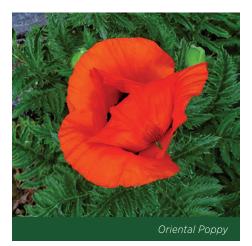
The general public is invited to join astronomers John Zielinski and Scott Roby for an evening at Rice Creek Field Station's observatory. Participants will have the chance to gaze through the observatory's large 16" wide telescope inside the rotating dome to view celestial objects like the moon and constellations. Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars will be visible starting in August.

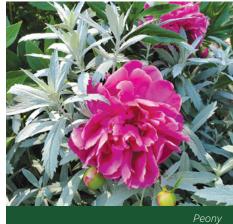
Since clear weather is needed for observing the night sky, interested participants should call (315) 312-6620 after 7 pm on the evening of each event to hear a recorded message announcing whether or not the observation session will take place that evening.

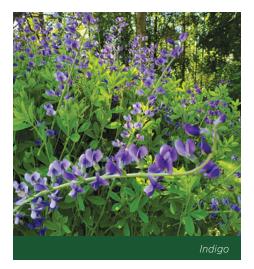
The 2022 dates (weather dependent) so far include:

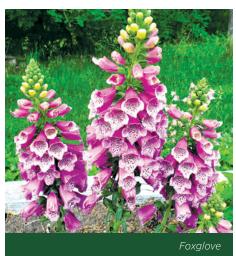
# Friday, August 5th through Sunday, August 7th and Friday, September 2nd through Sunday, September 4th

For questions about this program, please reach out to Rice Creek Field Station staff at 315-312-6677 or rcfs@oswego.edu.









#### How to Know the Wildflowers

By Paul Knittel

I was looking at a book from 1902 about fern identification and was greatly impressed with the many ink illustrations of the ferns. I was familiar with the author, Frances-Theodora Parsons, but not the illustrators, Marion Satterlee and Alice Josephine Smith.

Satterlee, I learned was the illustrator of my all-time favorite wildflower identification book, How to Know the Wildflowers by Mrs. William Starr Dana published in 1893. Smith is Dana's sister.

What I really enjoy about both books is that they are more than just identification guides. They not only provide the scientific taxonomy and general descriptions, but they share interesting natural history facts written from the perspective of the author. These books are not your usual ID books with dull illustrations and dry facts.

How to Know the Wildflowers was the first field guide to wildflowers issued in America. It sold out in five days and was praised by such people as the naturalist John Burroughs, author Rudyard Kipling, and Theodore Roosevelt.

The descriptions of our most common wildflowers are arranged first by color and then within their color group, they appear by the time of the season. Interesting origins of many of the common names are given. Depending on what edition you acquire, there are ink drawings and/or watercolor illustrations accompanying many of the descriptions. In the newer additions, the botanical information has been updated.

Mrs. Dana developed her love and knowledge of wildflowers by spending time in the Hudson River Valley at her maternal grandparent's home near Newburgh, NY. Upon the passing of her husband, she sought



Frances Theodora Parsons

solace in the woods and fields taking note of her observations. She was a highly respected botanist, although not schooled in botany in the typical manner.

Mrs. William Starr Dana and Frances Theodora Parsons are one in the same person. Mrs. Dana remarried and used her first name and the last name of her second husband when she published her second book.

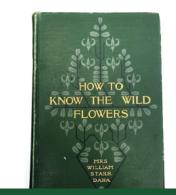
Outside of her nature studies and writings, she was a fascinating individual. Her first husband was a naval commander who died in the flu outbreak of 1890. Her second husband was in academia and later a foreign diplomat to Mexico. He, unfortunately, died in an auto accident in Mexico City. She supported the women's suffrage movement and was involved in state-wide politics.

Her books, both old and newly reprinted, can be found online and in bookstores that deal in used books. I highly recommend getting your hands on one of the late 1800s or early 1900s hard copies. They have beautiful covers with gold lettering on a green background. The books themselves are objects of beauty.

How to Know the Wildflowers is a classic American wildflower book that every nature enthusiast should have in their library. It is not only informative, but an enjoyable read as well.



Cover: How to Know the Ferns



Cover: How to Know the Wildflowers



Cardinal Flower



Illustration from How to Know the Ferns



Showy Lady's Slipper



Wild Columbine

### **Students**

- Show commitment of support for public environmental education
- Fund any educational or environmental projects
- Join a community of individuals who care about nature and the environment
- Reduced rates on merchandise and field guides

#### Join now for just \$5!

Call us at 315-312-6677 or email <a href="mailto:rca@oswego.edu">rca@oswego.edu</a> with any questions.



# —Stay Connected with Nature—

Community involvement is essential to making RCA a success and here are some ways you can help:

**Join the RCA** friends' group or update your membership online:

- Go to www.oswego.edu/rice-creek/about-rice-creek/rice-creek-associates
- Scroll down to membership! All memberships support RCA events and projects.

#### Make a monetary gift to SUNY Oswego online:

- Go to alumni.oswego.edu/givenow
- Select "Other" and search for "Rice Creek Associates" RCA gifts are payable to The Oswego College Foundation, Inc., a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation. Donors receive acknowledgments via written communication that includes a receipt for income taxes.

**Attend an event!** Remember, it's community involvement that makes RCA events a success.

- RCA holds numerous free events throughout the year
- Information can be found on the RCA Facebook site and RCFS website.

#### Volunteer your time! Here are a few ways:

- Become a board member, meeting one hour monthly.
- Dedicate a small amount of time to help with miscellaneous grounds projects such as gardening or light trail maintenance. Sign up at <a href="mailto:rcfs@oswego.edu">rcfs@oswego.edu</a>



### Don't miss RCA's electronic communications!

Tip: To avoid RCA's mail from landing in your spam mail, be sure to add rca@oswego.edu to your email contact list!



## 2022-23 RCA Reflection Series

**Tribute to Peter Rosenbaum**September 11, 2022

Inspired by Nature Silent Art Auction October 21-22, 2022

Presentation of Small Grants Research Projects November 12, 2022 • 2 p.m.

> Kindred Kingdoms Wildlife Inc. Rehabilitation Center, Jean Soprano December 3, 2022 • 2 p.m.

> > Fishing, Mike Huyn February 4, 2023 • 2 p.m.

Landscaping- Pruning Native Plants, Fernando Araya, Plant CNY March 25, 2023 • 2 p.m.

Butterflies, Mike Holy May 13, 2023 • 2 p.m.

Plant Succession in Wetlands, Jim Seago June 24, 2023 • 2 p.m.

Visit to the Herb Garden, Kamal Mohamed September 16, 2023 • 2 p.m.



### We're social!



#### Find us on Facebook at:

Rice Creek Field Station facebook.com/ozricecreek

Rice Creek Associates facebook.com/rice.creek.92



#### Find us on Instagram at:

Rice Creek Field Station instagram.com/ozricecreek



#### Find us on YouTube at:

Rice Creek Field Station youtube.com/channel/ UCvyF3fZP9dmZP1Nr5rlUOiA



### **Current RCA Board Members**

The operational policies of Rice Creek Associates are managed by its Board of Directors. Directors are elected from the general membership and serve three-year terms.

Laurel Artz, President

Pat Jones, Co-Vice President

Sheri Morey, Co-Vice President

Wendy Fragale, Treasurer

Don Artz, Secretary

Andrew McElwain, Small Grants Chair

Michael Holy

Nicholas DiFrancisco

Michael Flanagan

Paul Knittel

**Brooke Goodman, Student Representative** 

### **Rice Creek Field Station Staff**

Kamal Mohamed, Director

Wendy Fragale, Secretary

Kristen Haynes, Assistant Director

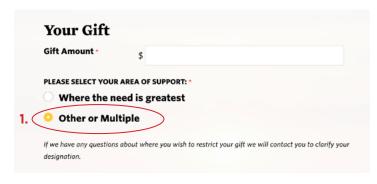
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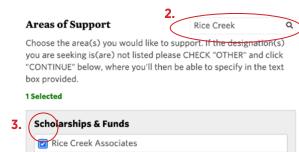
Alan Harris, Groundskeeper

### Make a Gift

Visit <u>oswego.edu/rice-creek/about-rice-creek/rice-creek-associates</u> to make your gift. If you wish your donation to go toward a specific project or cause, please let us know by phone or email (315.312.6677 or rcfs@oswego.edu)

- 1. Under 'area of support' choose "Other or Multiple"
- 2. Type in Rice Creek in the search box
- 3. Click RCA under "Scholarships& Funds"





# Membership Renewal Reminder

Our yearly membership runs from March 1 to February 28. If you have any questions concerning your current RCA membership, email Don Artz at RCA@oswego.edu.

We consider all member information confidential and will not share it with any other groups or businesses.

Please notify us of any changes to your address, email, phone or name. We strive to send our newsletter and event notifications to you in a timely manner.

Our Board of Directors thanks you for your support and looks forward to bringing you the best that Rice Creek has to offer.

in the amount of \$

**TOTAL ENCLOSED** (membership + contribution):

#### Membership renewal can now be done online!

To renew and/or donate online, go to <u>alumni.oswego.edu/RCAmembership</u>

#### To members who donate through SUNY system payroll:

Thank you to our members who donate through SUNY system payroll deductions. In the past these donations have been directly applied to RCA general funds. If you wish your donation to be applied to your annual membership or any other RCA specific program please email us at <a href="mailto:rca@oswego.edu">rca@oswego.edu</a>

Join/renew R	.CA membersh	ip		
Name				
Address				
City		State	_ Zip	
Email		Phone		
Date				
ALL MEMBERSHIPS A	RE MARCH 1 – FEBRUAR	Y 28		
☐ New Membership	☐ Membership	renewal		
Share name in newsletter	rs?			
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 contributi	on in addition to membership fe	es to the	
☐ General Fund	☐ Trail improvement	☐ Exploring Nature Program for Children ☐ Small Grants Program		

Please make checks payable to: Oswego College Foundation/RCA

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Return to**: Rice Creek Field Station 193 Thompson Road | RCFS #23 Oswego, New York 13126



Rice Creek Associates RCFS #23 Oswego, New York 13126

T0:



#### PLEASE SAVE THE DATE:

Gathering in honor of

# Dr. Peter A. Rosenbaum

Sunday, September 11 at 2 p.m. Rice Creek Field Station