# **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**

Sitting next to a sunny window, absorbing every bit of the warmth it offers, I took a moment to reflect on what I am grateful for this year. Rice Creek is certainly high on my list. So while I usually write about nature, the arts, STEM, current events at RCFS, this quarter I want to take the time to acknowledge the amazing people who keep RCFS and RCA running smoothly, making it such a great place to explore. Sadly, we lost two of the innovators who first created the station and then ensured it would be a place of research for years to come. John Weeks and Peter Rosenbaum each had a vision for which they worked tirelessly, and we hope to continue their endeavors for years to come.

First, let me acknowledge the personnel at the field station. Director Dr. Kamal Mohammed and Assistant Director Dr. Kristen Haynes have gone above and beyond this year to keep the station as accessible as possible, always adhering to the ever-changing COVID guidelines. Kamal's calm leadership and demeanor was so appreciated as we had to navigate and make decisions about when to Zoom, what could be done live, plan for building use by students and other visitors, etc. Kristen has truly been incredible, with figuring out how to run the Exploring Nature Program this past summer, coordinating the Canal Forest Projects, developing programs and newsletters for parents and educators, as well as creating partnerships in the community. As RCA president, their support and assistance have been invaluable.

Wendy Fragale who serves as RCA treasurer and as administrative support for RCFS is the one who keeps track of everything that happens at RCFS and RCA. Her breadth of knowledge of all things Rice Creek and the college in general are amazing. We all count on her for so much.

Groundskeeper Alan Harris, a past RCA board member, is a tireless worker who literally keeps Rice Creek running. He had some extra challenges this year, yet continued to maintain the property, trails, and water level with an incredible awareness and knowledge of what needed to happen and where.

Part time naturalists Linda Knowles and Tim McMonagle have been part of the team creating a nature education newsletter. If you have seen an issue, you know how comprehensive it is, with activities for all subject areas included. If not, you can check it out and subscribe at this link: <u>mailchi.</u> <u>mp/2cb4730b2edb/rice-creek-nature-ednewsletter</u>

The Rice Creek Associates Board is made up of a fantastic group of people. All are passionate about RCFS and its mission. While at this exact moment I am writing we don't know where we will be in terms of COVID guidelines come next semester, we were able to begin holding Reflections talks and had two this fall, plus the Experience Rice Creek event to share the research results of the Small Grants Program recipients. Co-Vice Presidents Sharon Morey and Pat Jones are well into planning for the spring, and we will keep you posted as events are finalized.

Mike Holy, who just stepped down as our secretary, continues to maintain our membership lists and created the quarterly newsletter for years. His experience on the board and his encyclopedic knowledge of all things RCA make him our guru, and we all seek his guidance and expertise. Essentially RCA is what it is today in large part to his efforts and foresight.

Board member Paul Knittel has written several informative and interesting articles for the newsletters and our Facebook site, along with some amazing photos. He has also collaborated with the team creating the Nature Education Newsletter, and more.

Dr. Andrew McElwain was the chair for the Small Grants Program this past year and will continue in that role. He is already well into the tasks involved in collecting funding and applications. We all hope to re-energize the program, which was scaled back due to the pandemic.

And I would be remiss if I did not say how thankful I am to my husband, Don Artz, who just became RCA secretary. He rejoined the board after retiring from SUNY ESF.

Other Board members work quietly behind the scenes, and we have recently added some new members. I can honestly say some exciting things are being planned.

We currently have two student members, Lucas DeLand, and Gabrielle Waters. They each just graduated but will continue on the board for the Spring semester, along with new member Brooke Goodman. These students bring a fresh perspective and have great ideas for how to move forward and encourage student participation. I am so proud to serve as RCA president and I am so grateful to each one of the RCFS Staff and RCA Board members. They make the role a true labor of love for me. Finally, I also thank each of you, our members, friends, and supporters. Thank you for making me still feel excitement every time I have a job to do. What a place, and what a wonderful group of people! Happy New Year!

- Laurel Artz, RCA President

### Assistant Director's Update

As another year draws to a close, I am deeply grateful to all those who contributed to Rice Creek's mission through their work, volunteer efforts, research, or teaching.

To the RCA Board, our many volunteers (including Oswego Rotary Club), our student workers and interns, the professors who have engaged with the station, the staff of Exploring Nature, the contributors to the Nature Ed Newsletter, those who have assisted with promotions and advertising, our conscientious visitors who have reported trail conditions and concerns, the seed collectors for the Canal Forest Restoration Project, those who have donated funds or items to the field station, the Counseling Services Center, Campus Recreation, the Outdoor Club, and all those I may have accidentally omitted: thank you! Your efforts make a tremendous difference.

- Kristen Haynes, Assistant Director, RCFS

#### Save the Date: Celebrate Snow

After a hiatus in 2021, we are planning to bring back our winter festival, "Celebrate Snow," on Saturday, February 19, 2022, with



 Two young visitors at the 2020 Celebrate Snow festival making pinecone bird feeders. Photo by Mary C. Woods for iHeartOswego. a severe weather date of February 20. From noon until 2 pm there will be a variety of family-friendly outdoor activities and attractions including catching and observing snowflakes, craft projects, and mammal tracking, hosted by Rice Creek and SUNY Oswego faculty, staff, and students as well as outside community organizations. At 2 pm, there will be an (indoor) RCA Reflection entitled "Photographing the Best Snowflakes," by Rochester Institute of Technology Professor Michael Peres. Reflection visitors will need to abide by SUNY Oswego's indoor spectator policy, which includes (1) wearing a mask and (2) providing proof of full vaccination or a very recent negative COVID test. We will provide additional details on the festival events in early 2022 on Rice Creek's website and social media pages.

### Students lead expansion of Rice Creek's collections

Rice Creek's collection of 10,000+ vertebrate, invertebrate, and plant specimens has a number of new additions thanks to the initiative and work of undergraduate students. Rice Creek continually receives salvaged specimens of deceased wildlife, and over the past few years, a backlog of frozen specimens had accrued.

Interested biology and zoology undergraduate students have led the effort to tackle Rice Creek's backlog of specimens, all while gaining hands-on experience in vertebrate museum techniques. First was Emily Cieplik, who focused her summer 2021 internship on creating and curating vertebrate specimens. With training by SUNY Oswego professors Drs. Jennifer Olori, Susan Hammerly, and Maria Sagot, Emily and a few other interested students learned how to create re-





search-quality skeletons, care for a dermestid beetle colony, and create mammal and bird study "skins" (similar to taxidermy mounts but less elaborate). Emily created over a dozen specimens during her internship, focusing on skeletons.

Brooke Goodman resumed the specimen work this fall, spending many Saturdays creating bird study skins, largely in a volunteer capacity. Brooke also organized a study skin training session (with Dr. Hammerly as the trainer) for a dozen other interested students. Many might be surprised to learn that this training session took place right next-door to the annual Experience Rice Creek event! In fact, the training session participants watched the small grants presentations over Zoom, which they had projected on the large screen in the laboratory. Kudos to Emily, Brooke, the 11 other students who participated, and Drs. Hammerly, Olori, and Sagot for their efforts.

If you find a deceased animal that you would like to donate, first call RCFS at 315-312-6677 to ensure we can accept the specimen and to arrange for specimen drop-off. Unfortunately, all specimens cannot be accepted due to space limitations. Fresh specimens with little to no damage are the most useful for teaching and research.

### Students lead expansion of Rice Creek's collections

SUNY Oswego Zoology majors Lucas Deland, Gabrielle Waters, and Brooke Goodman have joined the RCA Board as student representatives. Luke was a 2020 small grants recipient and Gabrielle a 2021 recipient — both of their projects were related to parasitism of monarch butterflies. Gabrielle and Luke also cared for Rice Creek's Monarch Way Station, and Luke served as a instructor's assistant during Exploring Nature. Brooke, mentioned above for her work with Rice Creek's collections, is also a curatorial assistant at Rice Creek and has been an active member of Dr. Dan Baldassarre's ornithological research group since summer 2020, studying Northern Cardinals at Rice Creek Field Station. Welcome, Luke, Gabrielle, and Brooke!



▲ Brooke Goodman poses with a Northern Cardinal, and Lucas Deland takes "the spot" during Exploring Nature.



 Emily Cieplik leading a program during Exploring Nature using some of Rice Creek's owl and raptor specimens.

### Rice Creek's Two Webcams Go Live

Thanks to the assistance of Campus Technology Services and Digital Services, Rice Creek now has two live webcams streaming to YouTube and the field station's homepage. One camera is located on the building's roof and pivots among different views. The other is fixed position, pointed at the station's bird feeders. You can find both at the top of Rice Creek's homepage, <u>oswego.edu/rice-creek</u>.

#### **Live Pivoting Webcam**



#### Live Bird Feeder Webcam





### Canal Forest Restoration Project Season Highlights:

- Over 320 sapling trees given to new homes across upstate New York.
   Giveaways, led by intern Robert Salerno, occurred at Rice Creek
   Field Station and at two outreach events: Beaver Lake Nature Center's
   Golden Harvest Festival and an event at the Erie Canal Museum.
- Over 400 seedlings of the year transplanted into pots.
- 2400 white pine seeds, 2100 white oak group acorns, and dozens of black tupelo seeds planted for next year.
- In a partnership with Oswego Tree Stewards and the Office of Sustainability, and with funding from Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District, Rice Creek and the CFRP helped replant the SUNY Oswego Centennial Arboretum with 23 new trees on October 23. The Centennial Arboretum, first established in 1961, is located at the corner of Washington and Sheldon Avenues, but became somewhat neglected and forgotten. A bronze plaque still stands on the backside of Mooreland Hall commemorating the original planting.



 Members of Oswego Tree Stewards, the Office of Sustainability, Rice Creek Field Station, and SUNY Oswego student volunteers pose by one of the trees planted at the Centennial Arboretum.

# A Prescription for Cabin Fever

#### By Paul Knittel

As long as I can remember I have always loved the outdoors. I enjoy seeing the various landscapes with their diverse flora and fauna. Even to this day, as a passenger in a car, I enjoy watching the scenery passing by.

Years ago. I attended a museum exhibit entitled, "Golden Day Silver Night, Perceptions of Nature in American Art 1850-1910" at the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse. I saw some of the finest landscape paintings I had ever seen. They were created by a group called the Hudson River School Artists. I was enthralled with what I saw. What made the experience extra special was that many of the locations of their paintings were places familiar to me - the Adirondack Mountains. Niagara Falls, the Hudson River Valley, and the Catskill Mountains. Their style of painting varied from Impressionistic to highly detailed. I enjoyed the detailed landscape paintings the most. These artists knew their nature well.

Type into your browser the name Asher Durand and either one of his paintings "In the Woods" or "Interior of a Wood" and you will see what I mean. One art critic said of Durand's work, "...such detail, only one with intimate knowledge of the nature of things would be able to do what he has done."

The nature exhibited in these landscapes is one that is inviting. It's easy to get immersed in these paintings. You'll wish you could jump into the paintings and go exploring.

Here are a few more of my favorite artists and an example painting from each of them: Julie Hart Beers, Birch Trees; George Hetzel,



Mt. Marcy, Adirondacks – I purchased this landscape of the Adirondacks many years ago in Saratoga County. It is labeled Mt. Marcy and is unsigned. According to an art appraiser it dates to the late 1800's.

Rocky Gorge; John Frederick Kenesett, Lake George; Frederic Church, Niagara; Jasper Cropsey, Wilderness New York State; and Worthington Whittridge, The Old Hunting Grounds. Several of these paintings are hanging in museums throughout Upstate New York. The name of the museum is usually mentioned along with the title of the painting.

So, this winter, when cabin fever comes knocking at your door, take a road trip to see some spectacular landscapes in the comfort of a warm, welcoming museum (as well as from your car) or visit a library and check out one of the coffee-table sized books featuring the paintings of the Hudson River School Artists.

There are so many ways to explore nature. Enjoy.

# Highlights of Lepidoptera at Rice Creek in 2021

### By Mike Holy

2021 overall was a relatively normal year for butterflies, if anything can be described as normal these days. 33 species were recorded out of a total of 68 documented species since 1996. My surveys began on 8 April and officially ended on 7 Oct. There were many days beyond Oct. 7 that were ideal to search for butterflies but other obligations kept me out of the field. As an example, the last observed butterflies in my neighborhood were seen on a warm Nov. 9- two Clouded Sulphurs, both nectaring on dandelions, just about the only

nectar source available at that time.

A pleasant surprise was observing a Striped Hairstreak. I have not recorded Hairstreaks at Rice Creek since 2015, and that was also a Striped. This year's individual alighted on my windshield as I parked my car in the lot. Fortunately it was cooperative to the point of allowing me to access my camera in the trunk to take photos.

Although larvae for the Giant Swallowtail were observed on the Rue in the herb garden, no adults were recorded. This is the second straight year I saw no adults, but the fact that larvae are present indirectly indicates their presence.

There was a great turnout of Monarchs at Rice Creek. They maxed out at 176 individuals on August 24. I anticipated many more in the coming weeks but recorded far less for the remaining season (76 on August 31, 62 on September 7, 58 on September 13, 11 on September 20 and only 3 on September29).

Photographing a Bronze Copper and a Wild Indigo Dusky Wing on August 9 made that day a memorable one. Both are seen only occasionally at Rice Creek. Seeing them both on a given day is a treat.

I have a respect and admiration for butterflies that have outlived their usual life spans. This Great Spangled Fritillary had most likely emerged in late June/early July. Here it was on August 24. Amazingly, many butterflies



Striped Hairstreak on car windshield August 3, 2021





▲ A female Wild Indigo Dusky Wing Skipper depositing eggs on a False Blue Indigo plant in the herb garden



▲ Great Spangled Fritillary

can maintain strong flights with relative little of their full four wings. It leads one to believe that most of its wingspan is more useful in attracting a mate or used as a warning pattern to deter predators than for actual flight. This Fritillary has much more wing area to lose before its flight is compromised.

I could go on and on about this summer's adventures but I will end by discussing a beetle I found after many years of not observing it on the grounds. The photo at right shows a Dogbane Leaf Beetle on, strangely enough, Dogbane! I used to see them more commonly in July. I noticed this one on September 20. They used to be quite common on the trail past the metal bridge and in the upper field. The Dogbane in both areas now is greatly diminished. This one was located in a good patch of Dogbane along the Blue Trail in the middle field.

There are always interesting things to observe at Rice Creek, whether they be insects, birds, wildflowers or mammals. No two days of walking the trails will be the same. All it takes is a slow ramble and an observant eye. Try it- you'll like it!



▲ Dogbane Leaf Beetle

# Rice Creek Reflection: Beekeeping, September 25, 2021

By Mike Holy

On Saturday, September 25, beekeeper Jim Howard, accompanied by assistant Jake Garcia, presented a Reflection on beekeeping. Jim illustrated his expertise of many decades by sharing innumerable facts not only about bees in general but also on monitoring hives for optimal harvesting of honey.

I share here some snippets of his wealth of knowledge, in no particular order:

- Honey prices at present sell at \$9/ lb. Beekeepers are paid about \$85 per hive for pollination services. Queen bees can sell for \$35.00 each. 1000 hives are needed to make a nice living, 500 not so much.
- Bees can communicate with keepers if one takes the top of the hive off without a smoker. Smoke is recommended, though, when working with hives. A "cool" smoke is best used.
- Bees have a typical lifespan of 38-46 days. They simply wear themselves out. Drones take 24 days to develop before hatching; workers: 21 days; queens: 16 days. Queen bees are longer, fatter, and have no body stripes. Although queens can live for seven years, Jim keeps his for two years. The first queen to hatch in a hive attempts to kill the other queens. A strong brood of bees indicates a strong queen. Drones appear in hives by late April in our area.
- There are fewer bees inhabiting a hive in the fall compared to the summer. A typical size is 20,000 individuals, increasing to 30,000 during the winter. The first few days after hatching a bee stays in place and moves its abdomen up and down to keep the hive warm. Temperatures in a hive can range from -7°F outside the bundle of bees to +97°F in the center of the bundle. There are no dead bees in a healthy hive: certain bees have the job of removing dead bees their entire life. The hive brought to the field station contained about 300 bees. The inner cover of a domestic hive is used to reduce moisture. Each of Jim's hives has a check sheet so he can maintain healthy hives. Each day a hive is opened requires a three-day bee "recovery."
- Foul broods must be burned to prevent contamination from spreading to other hives. Nosema is a springtime disease similar to flu. Mites also reduce hive size.



 Jim Howard uses his charts and sample hive to discuss beekeeping. Assistant Jake Garcia is standing to his right.



▲ Jim answers a question from an attendee.

- The ball of bees in a hive tends to move in an upward direction. Bees toward the outside of the ball take food to the inside; bees on the inside take waste to the top. The wax used to make combs helps to keep things together. Bees have two stomachs: food is passed back and forth in them to make honey.
- When pollinating Bartlett pears, it is best to have the bees pollinate the blossoms toward the trunk (Blossoms then turn red.). In spring, 1000+ beehive growers travel to California to help pollinate almond trees.
- Factors causing bees to swarm: not enough food in the hive, hive is too large, or they

are not "happy" with the queen. The old queen leaves with the swarm.

- Bee stings at bone joints can help alleviate arthritis — called apitherapy. A bee venom sac will take 1.5 minutes for it to complete pulsing. No one in the audience volunteered to be stung, so Jim did it to himself.
- To prevent bears from attacking hives, bacon is placed on electric fences to teach them to stay away.

And there you have it — the buzz about honeybees.

### 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 rca@oswego.edu with any questions.



# Winter Solstice at Rice Creek

photos by Laurel Artz







# —Items for Sale—

<u>Books</u>	NON-MEMBER PRICING	RCA MEMBER PRICING		
Field Guide: Butterflies at RCFS	\$3.50	\$3.00		
Field Guide: Invasive Plants at RCFS	\$7.00	\$5.50		
Field Guide: Mammals at RCFS	\$8.00	\$6.00		
Field Guide: Insects at RCFS	\$8.00	\$6.00		
Field Guide: Birds at RCFS coming soon -				
Coloring Book: The Flora and Fauna				
of Rice Creek	\$2.00	\$1.00		
Rite in the Rain Notebook	\$5.00	\$3.50		

### **<u>Rice Creek Field Station Promotional Items</u>**

Ceramic Mug\$5.00	\$3.50
Coaster (one of three designs, or set of three)	
Individual\$5.00	\$3.50
Set of 3\$12.00	\$9.00

### <u>Honorary Items</u>

(available Monday- Friday when RCFS front desk staff is available or at RCA event)

Ruth Sachidanandan Oswego Tea Note Card and Envelope (each)\$1.00	\$0.50
John Weeks Note Card and Envelope (each)\$5.00	\$3.50
John Weeks Art Prints (each, not matted & not framed)\$20.04	0 \$15.00

Exact change is appreciated when paying by cash

- or -checks payable to: Oswego College Foundation/RCA

Thank you!



# **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 9:00 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.

# Important RCA Newsletter Delivery Change

As a consequence of trying to reduce operating costs, the RCA Board has decided that starting with the Summer 2021 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, Mike Holy at <u>fordlep@yahoo.com</u>.

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

# 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, Newsletter Editor Nicholas DiFrancisco Michael Flanagan Paul Knittel Gail Opanhoske Gabrielle Waters, Student Representative Luke Deland, Student Representative

# Rice Creek Field Station Staff

Kamal Mohamed, Director Kristen Haynes, Assistant Director Wendy Fragale, Secretary Alan Harris, Groundskeeper

# Membership Renewal Reminder

Our yearly membership runs from March 1 to February 28 to prevent renewals from coinciding with the Christmas season. Renewal category rates have not changed, despite our ever-increasing costs. If you have any questions concerning your current RCA membership, contact Mike at <u>fordlep@yahoo.com</u> or 315-622-1774 (leave message).

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. Contact Mike at <u>fordlep@yahoo.com</u> to update your contact information.

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

### Membership renewal can now be done online!

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

### 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 <u>rca@oswego.edu</u>

# Join/renew RCA membership

Name			
Address			
City		State Zip	
Email		Phone	
Date			
ALL MEMBERSHIPS AF	RE MARCH 1 – FEBRUAR	Y 28	
New Membership	Membership	renewal	
Share name in newsletter	s? 🖸 Yes 🖬 No	)	
LEVEL:			
		<ul> <li>Family/Couple (\$15.00)</li> <li>Corporate (\$500.00)</li> </ul>	
I/We would like to make a	a tax-deductible contributi	on in addition to membership fees to the	
General Fund	Trail improvement	Exploring Nature Program for Children Small Grants Program	
in the amount of \$			
TOTAL ENCLOSED (mer	nbership + contribution):	\$ Date	
		<b>Ecks payable to:</b> Oswego College Foundation/RCA <b>Return to</b> : Rice Creek Field Station 193 Thompson Road   RCFS #23 Oswego, New York 13126	

# Make a Gift

Visit oswego.edu/rice-creek/about-rice-creek/rice-creek-associates 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

**Your Gift** 

Gift Amount \*

3. Click RCA under "Scholarships& Funds"

\$

PLEASE SELECT YOUR AREA OF SUPPORT: Where the need is greatest

**Other or Multiple** 



**Areas of Support** 

2

**Rice Creek** 

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# We're social!

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designation.



### 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/?hl=en



### Find us on YouTube at:

Rice Creek Field Station | youtube.com/channel/UCvyF3fZP9dmZP1Nr5rIUOiA



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