



# Rice Creek Associates Newsletter

Spring 2015



## Science at Rice Creek

### **Will the Monarch Butterfly become the next passenger pigeon?**

Many people have observed that the Monarch butterfly was not very common here last year. It was not until July 14 that I had seen my first individual. To compare, previous years have produced sightings in early May with a June date as the latest arrival time for a season.

A recent article on Syracuse.com had estimated a population of 1 billion in 1996. The population has declined about 90% since then.

Monarchs are known to fly thousands of miles between the United States and Mexico every year.

Scientists have listed a number of causes for their decline. Habitat loss is one. Deforestation of their wintering locations in Mexico is another. Most of that loss is attributed to illegal logging. Abnormal weather conditions also take a toll.

A link has also been found between genetically modified crops (GMOs), which can withstand heavy dosages of herbicides and pesticides. The herbicides eliminate milkweed commonly growing along the roadsides and fields near the sprayed crops. Milkweed, as most of you know, is the food plant for Monarch larvae. The milkweed is killed by the herbicides, and the pesticides kill the Monarch larvae. Other Monarchs can no longer lay eggs on the milkweed in these locations because it no longer exists. Though not yet proven that GMO crop expansion is causing a decline of Monarchs, at this point there is a strong correlation between increased herbicide resistant crops, fewer milkweed plants, and fewer Monarchs.

Additionally, the 2007 mandate for corn ethanol increased the price of corn. This encouraged farmers to grow more on grassland where milkweed also grows, making still less milkweed available to Monarchs.

Some \$200 million is being spent to restore 200,000 acres of habitat suitable for Monarchs across the U.S.

While it may appear alarmist to link Monarchs to passenger pigeons, their population decline is certainly cause for concern.

I am very interested in Monarch observations this year. Contact me at [fordlep@yahoo.com](mailto:fordlep@yahoo.com) or leave a message at the field station stating your first sighting of the year and the location (I am even interested in hearing from our RCA members who live out of state.) as well as any other Monarch information you can share for the coming season. Elsewhere in this newsletter is a notice of a Rice Creek Reflection by Janet Allen on May 2. She can give you information on how to attract Monarchs and other butterflies to your gardens as well as talk about how to grow milkweed.

-Mike Holy



## Nature Education Programs at SUNY Oswego's Rice Creek Field Station

Since program size is limited, we are not able to accommodate groups to these family friendly free Saturday programs.

An adult needs to accompany children.

**Rice Creek Rambles**      11 o'clock  
April 18                      June 6, 20

Explore the trails and wetlands at Rice Creek to see the latest spring arrivals. Join us for

these family friendly free naturalist-led spring walks. Those planning to attend are asked to call 315-312-6677 on the morning of the hike to check trail conditions.

### Story Hour

April 11

11 o'clock

May 9

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. SUNY Oswego's Rice Creek Field Station offers Story Hour in support of SUNY's partnership with the *Read Aloud 15 Minutes* national initiative.

**April 11** Crinkleroot is your guide to the outdoors to the joys of nature. Learn what to you can seek and find when exploring nature during *Crinkleroot's Guide to Walking in Wild Places* by Jim Arnosky.

**May 9** **Let's Go Hiking** is a cooperative trail and tracking board game for ages 10 to adult.

### Sustainable Art

April 25

11 o'clock

May 30

Inspired by the natural setting of Rice Creek, create art that will encourage you to think about the ecological, social and economic elements of sustainability. Join us at 11 o'clock on these Saturdays for activities connecting children, families and adults to the natural world and art. No experience is needed. These free hands-on workshops are appropriate for those aged 7 to adult. Children under age 12 need to be accompanied by an adult. Since program size is limited, preregistration is required and we are not able to accommodate groups. Pre-registration

required. To register, call (315) 312-6677 before the deadline.

**April 25 Celebrating Earth Day Every Day  
(Register by April 15)**

Have you ever looked at an item before tossing it into your recycling bin and wondered how could it be reused? Join us as we recognize Earth Day by reusing and recycling household materials to make fun and unique items.

**May 30 Nature Critter Creations (Register by May 20)**

Back by popular demand. Using pods, cones, feathers and dried grasses, we will invent whimsical and festive critters.

***Celebrate Alumni Reunion Weekend 2015***

Rice Creek welcomes Alumni, family and friends to Reunion Weekend 2015. Stop by to see Rice Creek from 9 to 4:30 June 5<sup>th</sup> and from 9 to 3 June 6<sup>th</sup>. Check the Reunion Weekend schedule for when tours of Rice Creek will be leaving campus.

Registrations are being accepted through early June for *Exploring Nature* summer program for children and *Conservation Field Studies* summer program for teens. For more information and registration materials visit [www.oswego.edu/ricecreek/programs](http://www.oswego.edu/ricecreek/programs).



*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.

- ◆ The building hours are:  
Monday to Friday 9:00 am to 4:30 pm  
Most Saturdays 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/programs](http://www.oswego.edu/ricecreek/programs) or call  
**315-312-6677**

Programs administered by Dr. Diann C Jackson

## Fields and Woods- then and now

My interest in science and nature came early. At about five years old, I became interested in butterflies, a cabbage white having gone through a chain linked fence and bumping me in the face in our suburban back yard. From that point on I remember swatting down butterflies with a badminton racket to "collect."

At ten years, I was allowed to walk to friends' houses nearby to play. One in particular had a yard that backed up to a large field, which in turn bordered Smoke's Creek in Lackawanna, a suburb whose northern boundary was the southern boundary of Buffalo.

Stepping into that field was a whole new world; to me, it may well have been an African jungle. The chance to explore it, the trails within, the "strange vegetation," the insects (yes- butterflies especially), the birds, the creek bed, it was just incredible.

Soon after finding this field, it was cleared for a street with a dozen or so houses.

It wasn't too long after that I discovered two smaller neighborhood fields a few blocks down and another, the largest, at 17 acres, about a half-mile away. (Weekly family picnics to Chestnut Ridge Park in Erie County, slightly over 1200 acres, provided the opportunity to search for woodland species.)

From early spring and into the fall I would visit those fields almost daily, right up to my junior year of high school. I knew every nook and

cranny of those fields, ground holes, trees, bushes and where each species of butterfly, if there at that moment, would most likely be seen. Despite that, there were always surprises. Although development was all around, these were places where I could get away and experience what little nature they could provide.

It's been decades since then, and all those fields are long gone. When I think of the variety of species I would find by visiting them, and realizing that there is nowhere left for them to survive, it saddens me. Biodiversity lost once more.

In 1980 I came to the Oswego area; in 1982, I took a graduate course at the Rice Creek Field Station. As I turned onto that long road leading to the building that first day, I could feel that this was a special place and immediately fell in love with it. What had started with one course has continued with years of peace, tranquility, reflection, and "the thrill of the hunt." Although my particular interest is Lepidoptera, I am not so narrow as to miss the beauty and wonder of the flora and fauna that I encounter every day I am in the field. Rice Creek provides for me the feeling of those early years of natural discovery and appreciation that only nature can provide. And, unlike those neighborhood fields, the grounds at Rice Creek are here to stay, preserving local biodiversity as well as serving as resting areas for organisms passing through.

Visit Rice Creek. Walk the trails. Do so without a music device or your cell phone. Take your walk slowly and look around you. I guarantee that, if you are observant, you will discover something different each time you partake.

- Mike Holy

## Rice Creek Reflections:

Two events are scheduled in the coming months. Please consider attending.

**Sat. May 2, 2 p.m. Habitat Gardening.** Learn how to Grow native plants to provide habitat for birds, butterflies and other creatures. Presented by Janet Allen, president and founder of Habitat Gardening in Central New York. One of this group's projects is to plant milkweed for Monarch butterflies.

**Sat. June 27, 2 p.m. Exploring Special Habitat.** Hear Andy Nelson, retired Director of the Rice Creek Field Station, gives a presentation of unique habitat in our area.

Light refreshments will be served at both Reflections. Each event is free and open to the public.

## Memorable moments at Rice Creek

Please share with us a special experience you've had at Rice Creek. It will appear in a future newsletter. Send it to Mike at [fordlep@yahoo.com](mailto:fordlep@yahoo.com).

## Reminder- Membership renewal

Memberships in Rice Creek Associates now run for a calendar year. Please use the form provided in this newsletter. Questions? Contact Mike Holy at 315-622-1774 or (preferably) [fordlep@yahoo.com](mailto: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

Conservation Field Studies for Teens

in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Total enclosed (membership + contribution)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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  
Don Artz, Secretary/Treasurer  
Paulia Bates  
Robert Foster  
Alan Harris  
Pat Jones  
Dick Kaulfuss  
Sheri Morey  
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, 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. (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](mailto:fordlep@yahoo.com), or call him at 315-622-1774. We look forward to providing information that would inform and entertain our members.

Spring images at Rice Creek



Jack-in-the-Pulpit



Not a rolling stone- it has gathered moss!



Horsetail and fern



Time for a new season of milkweed

All photos by Mike Holy

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

TO: