



Rice Creek Associates Newsletter

Summer 2015

Director's Message

With the onset of spring season the staff at Rice Creek is working hard to complete many projects placed on hold during winter.

The Ruth Sachidanandan Herb Garden is in its best shape this spring. It is well maintained and packed with plants assigned for each of the four beds. This season we also brought back some herbs which were discontinued in the past, such as Oswego tea and purple foxglove. The area around the herb garden was leveled and mulched to address the erosion issue it was suffering from since the completion of the new building.

The trail designations are in good shape. We examined the signs placed on the trails last year and replaced the faded/damaged ones. We placed new signs where the trails cross the driveway to alert drivers to these crossings.

New this year, we placed two dog stations with disposable bags, one at the gate and one next to the garage, to encourage dog owners to clean up after their pets. Although these have been installed for just two weeks now, we have heard many positive and encouraging comments from users. We plan to add two more next year.

This year, we did some major improvements at the gate area. The parking area was paved with

stone dust and a drainage ditch was dug around it to keep it dry for users. Shrubs and perennials were transplanted around the parking area. We plan to finalize the gate landscaping after installing new Rice Creek signage.

Rice Creek staff, temporary workers, volunteers, and our intern Steven Auyer, an undergraduate from SUNY Potsdam, performed the work. We would like to acknowledge Steven's hard work and dedication and Alan's leadership, which made it possible to complete these projects and many others.

The Field Station hosted the bog turtle research group led by Drs. Peter Rosenbaum and Lori Erb. The Field Station assigned its research lab and visiting assistant professor office to the researcher approximately from late May to the third week of June.

The Field Station is also hosting the New York Waterfowl & Wetlands Network 2015 Inaugural Meeting, scheduled to meet in late July. This group meeting is organized by our visiting assistant professor Dr. Michael Schummer, who is an active member of Rice Creek Associates Board of Directors and a friend and regular user of the Field Station, for research and teaching.

As usual around this time of the year, Rice Creek is ready to offer its Exploring Nature for Children and Conservation Field Studies for Teens.

Rice Creek has a number of projects underway which we hope to complete by the end of this year. A wireless weather station has been purchased. It will be installed on a pole between the pond and Rice Creek main building. Its main computer will be housed in the research lab, room 118. Besides the regular weather parameters, the weather station has a separate unit with four props to measure soil moisture and temperature and water temperature. As of now we are debating the best method to install it and selecting the right pole/tower. We are planning to dedicate this weather station in memory of Dr. Lucina Hernandez, our previous field station director.

A second major project we are working on is the lawn. This is a construction issue but unfortunately we have to deal with it. The lawn was not done according to standards. Some areas have less than 1 inch of topsoil, patchy, with steep slopes, which are not safe to mow, or have more weeds than grass. To correct this, the lawn will be aerated, reseeded, and fertilized.

The third major issue is landscaping. This is also a construction issue. We are planning to do it in two stages using temporary workers and volunteers. This will involve preparing the sites by bringing in topsoil and mulch and placing them in the areas where we plan to landscape. After that we will name, purchase, and transplant our selected plants. If it becomes too late in the season we may not be able to find the correct plants and we will need to postpone that next stage until the spring of 2016.

Landscaping will include three areas to the north of the main building and two areas south of the building.

We requested that Rice Creek be included in the signage project being done on campus. We will have a larger sign placed at the gate and a smaller one placed on the small island to the west of the parking lot next to the building. The gate sign will carry the Field Station name on both sides,

which will make it visible to drivers coming from either direction. As for installing an automatic gate opener, we identified a person who will do the installation; the work is scheduled for early summer.

As you can see we have many projects requiring a lot of work. We welcome volunteers who can help us and transform the Field Station into a place we can all be proud of.

- Kamal Mohamed



Science at Rice Creek

#1: Update on Monarch Sightings

In the spring issue of our newsletter, I discussed the current decline of the Monarch population in North America. Since then, I am pleased to report a personal sighting of two Monarchs simultaneously in the middle field at the field station (June 17) as well as a sighting from RCA member Steven Skubis “of a single monarch butterfly fluttering around and landing on a milkweed patch about our mailbox on Baylis Street near George-Washington Boulevard or

close to Shineman Center at SUNY Oswego at 10:30 am 18 June 2015.”

I also received a letter from RCA member Herb Lightner, reminiscing about the numbers of Monarchs he experienced years ago as well as his intent to notify me of his first sighting.

This information is very significant. Please contact me with your sightings throughout the season at fordlep@yahoo.com or leave a message at the field station by calling 315-312-6677. Thank you.

- Mike

#2: Reptile Research



May 2015 at RCFS
photo by Diann Jackson

Peter Rosenbaum prepares to weigh a bog turtle in the Rice Creek Field Station Research Lab. This summer's study on the elusive bog turtle has its base of operations at Rice Creek.

The research is supported through partnerships between SUNY Oswego and a consortium of conservation organizations.

Rice Creek Associates (RCA) is now on Facebook.

To connect with RCA on Facebook, sign up for Facebook by visiting www.facebook.com/ or sign in using your existing account. When linking to RCA as an added friend, search for **Rice Creek** like you would search for a new friend. You will know you have the right link to add RCA when you see this RCA logo as a profile picture along with the Green Trail's boardwalk as its' cover page; like so:



Thank you RCA Members

The Board of Directors would like to express a heartfelt thanks to all our members for their continued support, not only through your annual membership, but also for the many donations to fund scholarships to the Exploring Nature and Conservation Teen Programs as well as general fund donations.

It is through such generosity that we are able to support our Rice Creek Reflection series and the many projects on the station grounds that need our support!

Honorary membership award announced

The RCA Board of Directors, upon the recommendation of Dr. Kamal Mohamed, Director of the Rice Creek Field Station, has approved Honorary Lifetime Member status to Michael Holy.

Mike had served on the original steering committee in 1985 for what eventually became Rice Creek Associates. He served as Vice-President and President briefly in the middle 1980s. Joining the Board again around 2001, he was again elected Vice-President, becoming President a few years later and serving through the present. Mike also has worked on and off as membership and events coordinator and has been our newsletter editor since the spring of 2013, having instituted four seasonal newsletters per year.

We congratulate Mike for his guidance, dedication, and many roles to the ongoing success of Rice Creek Associates.



SUMMER 2015

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
June 6, 20 July 11, 18, 25
August 1, 8, 15

Beat the heat in the shady woods and wetlands at Rice Creek. Join us for these family friendly free naturalist-led walks. Those planning to attend are asked to call 315-312-6677 on the morning of the hike to check trail conditions.

Rice Creek Reflections Saturday, June 27 from 2 to 3:30 pm

Exploring Special Habitat
Hear Andy Nelson, retired Director of Rice Creek Field Station, give a presentation about a unique habitat in our area.

- ◆ 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.



www.oswego.edu/ricecreek/programs
315-312-6677

Rice Creek
FIELD STATION
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
AT OSWEGO

Rice Creek Reflections: Habitat Gardening

A sunny and seasonably warm Saturday afternoon set the background for Janet Allen's presentation on habitat gardening. Janet, founder and president of habitat Gardening of Central New York, began with a description of the goals of the typical conventional gardeners: plant for prettiness, convenience and neatness.

Most of these gardens consist of many non-native species. Furthermore, grass lawns cover more acreage than the acreage in all our national parks combined.

The bases for habitat gardening are to provide food, water and shelter for raising young, be they insects, birds, amphibians, reptiles or mammals. Native grasses and plants will provide these requirements, right down to the biota that live in the soil.



Janet went on to name some specific plants and the reasons for including them in your yard. Trees like hemlocks and dogwood and shrubs provide a good cover for birds. Tree snags provide a place for perching and nest building to raise young.

Janet offered a number of suggestions to increase the likelihood of a variety of fauna to be attracted to your yard. Among them were:

1. Leaving leaf and twig debris in your garden instead of bagging for curbside collection. These provide nesting material for birds and habitation for spiders to construct webs. (You don't want spiders? Then you may get fewer birds!)
2. Plant Swamp Milkweed instead of Common Milkweed or other varieties. Swamp Milkweed does not spread like other varieties. This will prevent plants taking over an area or growing in your lawn.
3. Native bees need nesting places. A small wood pile for bumble bees and trees for paper nest attachment as well as houses for wood nesting bees will bring these pollinators into your yard.
4. Plant Redbud trees for leafcutter ants. These trees also attract deer and birds like Bobwhites, which feed on the seeds and also use for nesting. Redbud's early blossoms draw in nectar seeking insects, including many early season butterfly species.
5. Natural landscaping will provide the basic elements needed for a balanced ecosystem and provide a pesticide free zone for organisms.
6. Cultivars and nectar amounts. Cultivars, plants that are bred from native plants to exhibit certain characteristics, may actually be detrimental to many insect species. They may not produce the usual amount of nectar, or the flower petals may be modified in a way that prevents the insect from obtaining nectar. Native plants, those known to naturally grow in your specific area, are the best choice for your garden, providing a food source that local insects readily identify.

Lastly, Janet stated that biodiversity is not optional. Ultimately every organism, including humans, is joined in a web of life that must remain balanced if we are to survive as individual species. As organisms are lost in this web,

imbalances result. We can do our part in maintaining ecological balance by nurturing and attracting native species through replacing our mono-cultured lawns with native vegetation.

For more information on Habitat Gardening in CNY, go to www.hgcny.org.

- Mike

Memorable moments at Rice Creek

As neighbors of Rice Creek, we've enjoyed hours of fresh air and happiness right outside our back door. Living in Fruit Valley for 28 years and raising our three children here has truly been a privilege for my husband and me.

When we first moved in, during 1986, snowmobiling was very popular on the trails during the winter months. Then cross-country skiing took over and the snowmobiles disappeared. Now, snowshoeing is the most popular winter sport.

For several years, we would invite friends over for New Years Eve and ask them to bring their skis. We would enjoy skiing the trails as a way of welcoming in the new year.

Our children attended Nature Camp at Rice Creek Field Station every summer, learning about pond life, the herb garden, and being good earth stewards. They still freeze their kitchen scraps to compost and bring home to us from New York City and Buffalo.

Over the years, we have delighted in watching for deer, opossum, heron, hawks, coyote, grouse, turkeys, woodpeckers, hummingbirds, orioles, grosbeaks, raccoons, rabbits, and cardinals. I am waiting to see an owl.

Occasionally, we redirect college students who got twisted around in the wrong way on the trails. One of my favorite Rice Creek stories took place during the summer of 1996. Rice Creek dried up, and our family took a walk down the creek bed toward the lake. Something caught my eye along the walk, nestled in a tree root. We investigated and found several old bottles. We all kept pulling out old milk, Ponds cold cream, bitters, Tab, Fresca, and medicine bottles! They were all colors, green, blue, amber, green, white and all sizes. It was quite an adventure for three kids ages 8, 10, and 12, as well as their parents. It seems as though, the Conway family used the areas as a dump and the tree roots protected the bottles from damage. So we packed up the bottles, bought an antique bottle book and researched out prizes. It was a fun family memory!

We are very lucky to live in paradise and hopefully someday make more memories with grandkids!

- Ernie and Patti Mears

Rice Creek Biological Field Station and its trails are an extension of our back yard. How lucky are we?

Biking, skiing, wandering and being able to walk through the fields to attend Exploring Nature sessions.

Jewel weed, crayfish, snakes, wildflowers, salamanders, bugs, butterflies, pollywogs, frogs, animal tracks, and enthusiastic and motivating teachers. What more could a kid ask for?

For several years, our two kids happily got up early to trek off through the fields to learn about the woods. The Exploring Nature summer program was fun and rewarding. I even tagged along with the class from time to time learning right along with them. It was wonderful to observe the enthusiasm the kids had for getting

down and dirty with mother nature. They had a whole new respect for their natural environment.

I saw smiles galore from everyone involved. Memories were made that we will all keep with us indefinitely.

Thanks for this amazing opportunity to explore, learn and appreciate.

- Pat Jones

I have a lot of memories of Rice Creek and the Old Biological field station. I remember hiking all the trails out behind our house, playing in the streams, climbing trees and chasing snakes. I remember taking courses with naturalists and learning about all the amazing things that were happening in my backyard and discovering that just beneath the surface amazing things were taking place. That excitement led me to turn over every log and rock to see what is beneath; it took me to Costa Rica on a Biological term abroad, led me to Aspen Colorado, and still influences my curiosity to this day.

- Chris Jones

I was lucky enough to have Rice Creek in my backyard growing up, but it wasn't until participating in the summer programs at Rice Creek that I really explored the woods behind my house. I remembering learning about the fish ladders and catching crayfish. I learned it's okay to get a little dirt under your nails and that nothing feels as rewarding as coming home after spending the day playing out in the sun. The teachers I had are people I will remember forever and the memories I made will last a lifetime.

- Katie Jones

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.

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

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. Thank you.

Join Rice Creek Associates

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

____ 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 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.

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.

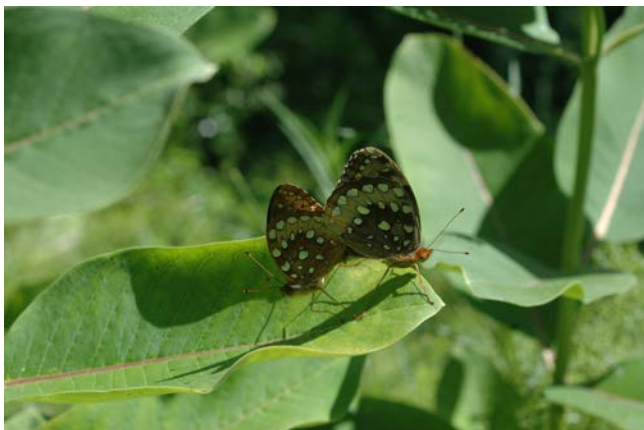
Summer images at Rice Creek



Cattail in bloom



Brown-eyed Susan



Mating pair of Great Spangled Fritillary
Butterflies



Tree Frog on frond of Sensitive Fern



At the fish ladders of Rice Creek along Blue Trail



Cardinal Flower



Snail enjoying cattail



A Fungus among us

All photos by Mike Holy

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

TO: