



# Rice Creek Associates Newsletter

Summer 2016



## Science at Rice Creek:

### Spring Lullaby

My spring lullaby has waned and I so miss it!  
The spring peepers have silenced their chorus.  
Now the garumph of bullfrogs and the chirping of  
tree frogs replaces this lullaby.

The chorus frogs, better known as spring peepers,  
lulled me to sleep. They made our pond their  
breeding ground and home beginning in March.

Spring peepers offer up a trill but comforting  
sound. I would crank open the bedroom window,

even on the chilly nights, and settle in to the  
serenade.

Spring peepers are tan or brown and are less than  
one inch in length. They have a small cross on  
their backs that is not always evident. The males  
are the singers expanding and deflating their  
vocal sacs to lure the females.

Our cold April made me worry that they would  
not be singing for long but peepers can survive  
temperatures as low as 46 degrees. They reside  
all over the US east of the Mississippi and into  
central and eastern Canada. They are nocturnal,  
feeding on beetles, ants, flies, and spiders. Their  
tadpoles eat algae and other pond bugs. Breeding  
time is March until June and a clutch can contain  
up to 1000 eggs. No wonder they are so loud and  
can be heard as far as one to two and a half miles  
away depending on their density.

Spring peepers live an estimated three years.

Their habitats are dwindling with the loss of  
wetlands, so dig a pond and bring this chorus to  
your backyard.

My lullaby can be yours too. You can listen to  
spring peeper recordings on line. Just google,  
enjoy and then get your shovel and start digging  
so you can anticipate their return in the spring.

**- Pat Jones**

## Human Nature and Nature at Rice Creek

In 2003, W.E. Hamilton and D.Y. Sullivan of Penn State University wrote a prize-winning essay titled, “Do We Need Nature?” In their words:

*“Not for everything. We have spent the better part of 10,000 years trying to insulate ourselves from nature. We don’t need nature to love our fellow humans or to win the wars we fight. We don’t need it to satisfy all of our comforts or for all of our entertainments...”*

*We do need nature, though, to repair the damage from our dreams and from our actions.*

*We also need nature for its perspective on our existence. We need it for its timeless pauses. We need it for the miracle of the water strider and the improbability of the flying beetle. We need nature to surprise and amaze us... We need nature for its billions of years of possibilities and experiments. We need it to teach us how to survive. We need it for its peace and for its presence. We need it for its future, and we need it for its power of forgiveness.”*

In the immediate Oswego vicinity, there is a place where one can go to enjoy the benefits that nature alone can provide: the grounds and trails of the Rice Creek Field Station. Over the years Rice Creek Associates has supported the field station in its efforts to facilitate access and reflection to anyone feeling the need to surround oneself in a natural setting, if only for a few brief moments.

- Mike

## Summer 2016 at Rice Creek Field Station

Our summer at Rice Creek has been busy. We have some exciting news to share with our members. The work on landscaping started the third week in June. This has been in the planning for the last three years. We are proud to say that Rice Creek staff and volunteers (students and general public) prepared the beds for the plants.

Seven beds were set around the main building. Four of these were at the front of the building at the north and east side; the other three were at the back on the south side of the building. The front beds are in the dedication tree area, which is designed mainly to provide cover to the pump installation unit; the walkway on the west side of the circle will have perennials of different flowering color and time; the area along the foundation will have shade tolerant plants; and the sign area will have early spring annual, decorative plants. I included a photo of what the sign area will look like (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1. Plan for the sign area, courtesy of Mary DePentu.**

The two areas at the back of the building are the fence area and the area behind the weather Station Lab on the southwest side of the building. There will be shrubs behind the Weather Station

Lab and vines to cover the fence. Photos of these two areas are shown in Fig. 2.

The last area is the water feature on the southeast side just behind the lecture hall. This area will have shrubs and wildflowers. Mary DePentu selected the plants, in consultation with the Field Station staff. Along with landscaping the entire lawn area will also be redone. This involves aeration, reseeding, and watering. We expect to have a beautiful lawn at the end of this process.



**Fig. 2: Plan for the fence area, courtesy of Mary DePentu.**

We are continuing with our plan to improve the trails. Last summer we introduced the “You are Here” signs, placed at trail beginnings and where trails intersect, to improve navigation. Vandals pulled out some of these signs, so this summer we have a plan to make them permanent. In addition we developed a plan to mark all the trails with their appropriate colors to make it easy for trail users to find their way through. Once the trails are marked, we will place them on a three-year schedule for remarking. This summer we will start with the orange trail; depending on time and staff we may do a second trail. We also labeled plants (trees, shrubs, and some herbs) mostly along the green trail for public education, thanks to help from Zachary Mayer.

We also were able to remodel the area around Lucina’s Weather Station on the southwest side

of the building. We used the funds donated for this purpose to purchase some of Lucina’s favorite plants with blue-shade flowers to decorate the area. A few spots still need more plants, which we will do next spring.

Some work has also been done on the Ruth Sachidanandan Herb Garden. The benches were repaired and polished, thanks to Robert Foster. A large planter was added to the center of the garden with beautiful rose-grass and red *Petunias*. We will use the planter to feature different plants for different seasons and different years. We are also planning to add more benches, perhaps two, to the herb garden.

Both the herb garden and the rain gardens need constant attention. The Field Station has a limited staff and there is so much to do in summer. We are in need of committed volunteers to help with the herb and rain gardens and the trails work. Ideally we prefer to have committed volunteers who would come regularly to perform a specific function at the Field Station. You may also recruit friends and neighbors who have an interest in public service. In the absence of a commitment for a specific function those who may have at least two or more hours on a given day may give us a call a day before and we will have the right tools and a function ready for them. Please call the Field Station at 312 6677 or 312 2785.

**-Kamal Mohamed, Director**  
Rice Creek Field Station

## **Rice Creek Reflection: Save the date!**

Since the Wild Edible Reflection presented by Lytton Musselman on May 11, 2014, we have had many requests to present another wild edible session. Mark your calendars for Saturday, July 30 at 10 a.m., as Lytton has agreed to do another. He will give a 40-minute lecture followed by a walk on the trails collecting and tasting wild edibles. This event is free and open to all.



## SUMMER 2016

### SUNY OSWEGO'S RICE CREEK FIELD STATION

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

An adult needs to accompany children under age 17.

#### *Rice Creek Rambles*

**11 o'clock these Saturdays:**

**July 9, 16, 23, 30; August 6, 13**

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

*The Flora of the Permaculture  
Living Lab: SUNY Oswego  
Illustrators' Perspectives*

*now through August*

Rice Creek is pleased to partner with the SUNY Oswego's Permaculture Living Lab (PLL), Research and Individualized Student Experiences (RISE) and the Graphic Design course on Digital Illustration to showcase some of the artwork that will be a part of the PLL App. You can view the exhibit during weekday or weekend hours.

- ◆ 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/rice-creek/programs](http://www.oswego.edu/rice-creek/programs)  
315-312-6677

*Rice Creek*  
FIELD STATION  
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK  
AT OSWEGO



## Sharing My Experience of Rice Creek...

I recently visited Rice Creek Field Station for the first time in over 25 years. I brought my kids, Ava (10) and Luke (6), to hike the trails and view some of the collections on display. I was especially excited to show them the butterfly collections. For years they've been travelling to Nana and Papa's house in Oswego and are used to seeing my butterfly collection in the case my dad made, still hanging on the wall in the guest wing.

Though I relocated to the New York City area over 15 years ago, I loved growing up in Oswego. I have fond memories of summers there, including taking nature classes at RCFS. My favorites were the butterfly collecting classes with Mike Holy. In chatting with Diann Jackson during our recent visit, she advised me that the classes now have a focus on conservation and not collection.



My childhood butterfly and moth collection

That said, I still have fond memories of chasing the elusive Great Spangled Fritillary with my butterfly net through the fields and pastures of Southwest Oswego. My brother and I spent hours outside, searching for rare butterflies. We raced past many common Cabbage Whites and Yellow Sulphurs pursuing Black Swallowtails and Mourning Cloaks. We road our bikes all over to

find fields full of flowers before the hay in them had been cut. We stayed up all night spreading a mixture of beer and rotten fruit on trees in the woods hoping to attract some Underwing or Sphinx moths.

The excitement created by these programs at Rice Creek wasn't contained to Southwest Oswego. We took our butterfly nets on family vacations to Wisconsin and North Carolina hoping to find new species that our friends in upstate New York hadn't had a chance to catch. We proudly showed off our trophies when we returned home.

Years later, Rice Creek's nature classes still have a lasting effect. This past summer I read Mr. Holy's column on the plight of the Monarch. It's definitely the first time I really identified with a species that both was once abundant and had become scarce during my lifetime. It was one that I had a lot of contact with. Growing up, they were everywhere. Now Monarch populations are declining at an alarming rate. Golfing in New Jersey this past summer, I spotted two Monarch butterflies. I couldn't get close enough to tell if they were male and female (fingers crossed) but I could tell they weren't Viceroy's, a more common Monarch mimic. My friends teased me about chasing butterflies on the course, as I thought to myself, my time has been spent so much better chasing butterflies outside as they were more than likely spending theirs inside, playing video games!

If you haven't visited Rice Creek in a while, make some time to do so. There have been lots of changes. There are lots of places to peacefully engage nature. The classroom and laboratory facilities are state-of-the-art. A garage that was once a classroom for one of my bug collecting classes 30 years ago houses a tractor for trail maintenance.

If you have a chance to get your children into the Exploring Nature programs at RCFS, I highly recommend it. At best, the lessons learned about

nature and our world are invaluable and most likely won't be covered in a typical classroom. The conservationist groundwork laid lasts a lifetime at best. At worst, it gave my parents a well-deserved break from us during the summer. I'll be bringing my kids again this summer.

- **Nathan Morey**

### **Rice Creek Associates (RCA) is on Facebook**

To connect with RCA on Facebook, sign up for Facebook by visiting [www.facebook.com/](http://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:



### **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.

### **Join Rice Creek Associates**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ New Membership (Calendar year)

\_\_\_\_\_ Membership renewal

Level:

_____ Student	5.00
_____ Individual	10.00
_____ Family/Couple	15.00
_____ Contributing	25.00
_____ Sustaining	50.00
_____ Life	250.00
_____ Corporate	500.00

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

\_\_\_\_\_ General Fund

\_\_\_\_\_ Trail improvement

\_\_\_\_\_ Exploring Nature Program for Children

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

Total enclosed (membership + contribution)

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

Please make checks payable to:

**Oswego College Foundation/RCA**

Return to:

**Rice Creek Field Station #23**

**SUNY Oswego**

**Oswego, New York 13126**

## **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).

### **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., 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](mailto:fordlep@yahoo.com), or call him at 315-622-1774. We look forward to providing information that would inform and entertain our members.

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

TO: