



Rice Creek Associates Newsletter

Winter 2014-2015

Director's Comments: Another Year at the Field Station

I'd like to take this opportunity to reflect on the progress made at the Field Station in the past year since the completion of construction.

With regard to the facility in its post construction phase, most of the outstanding issues were resolved. These changes included a new ceiling, lab cabinets and tables, adjusting the internal environment of the building, drainage around the pavilion and observatory and some issues concerning the sidewalks and some of the landscaping. Unresolved issues include the installation of four security cameras, door card access for staff and users of the Field Station, and an automatic gate opener. The last two items will eliminate the need for keys. These were initially scheduled to be resolved on two occasions and are rescheduled now for January 5th. The plan now is to have them in place for spring 2015. The landscape contractors also will redo the lawn next spring since they now have agreed with us that the existing lawn is below specifications. Once the new lawn is in place, we will go ahead with other landscaping plans to restore most of the annuals/perennials we had at the old Field Station in addition to new plants.

We have made excellent progress managing the grounds. They had been unattended while the Field Station was under construction. We were able to maintain the four trails and add new signs to help trail users follow the right path. These signs, which show "you are here," provide weatherproof maps showing the trails and direct users as to where they are on the trail. Maps were placed in many places including where trails begin and intersect. We have heard positive comments from many users that the trails have never been better. We are planning for further improvements in the future to include more signage and placing marks on trees to indicate the color of the trail as well as marking the road where the green trail crosses the drive way. I thank all volunteers and temporary workers who contributed to improving the trails. The college administration has agreed to improve the gate area and provide signage suitable and consistent with the new look of the Field Station.

Before construction, the fields were managed through a 4-year mowing cycle to provide a mosaic of habitats that boosts biodiversity including birds, butterflies, and small mammals. These plots have also been used for numerous field studies. Since this cycle was interrupted by construction, this year we had to start a new cycle. The entire area, approximately 8.5 acres, was mowed and put

on a new 4-year cycle. Mowing such a large area in one season could not have been possible without new machinery and the dedication of Alan Harris, volunteers, and temporary workers.

We also made headway in controlling invasive weeds. Large areas have been cleared of multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*) and garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*). Both constitute a threat to native plants in our area. Many volunteers have supported our effort in this area including the boy scouts, lead by Tony Contento, and many student volunteers, organized by Nick Ransbury. We are grateful for their work and we plan to build on this effort in the coming years to keep invasive weeds under control. A third invasive weed, the giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), is infecting a small area off the orange trail. Its watery sap makes skin sensitive to sunlight and can result in severe burns. It was reported to and is being handled by contactors on behalf of New York State.

This past year, Rice Creek Associates (RCA) funded seven research projects totaling more than \$9,000. RCA also sponsored five very successful reflection talks that were reported on by Mike Holy in previous newsletters. Also, Rice Creek hosted the Flora of New York workshop on aquatic plants and a regional conference on the bog turtle. Our public education programs resumed this year. These included nature education programs, Exploring Nature for Children, Conservation Field Studies for Teens, and research and natural history displays. Of these, Conservation Field Studies for Teens was a new program. For more information about our education programs and Saturday schedules please see this link:
http://www.oswego.edu/academics/opportunities/rice_creek_field_station/programs.html.

- Kamal Mohamed



Science at Rice Creek

Field Station Website: A Wealth of Information

Winter is often looked at as a depressing season where nature shuts down until longer and milder days return in the spring. This is especially true for individuals who do not partake in outdoor winter activities. Nature lovers who fall into this category actually have an opportunity to experience the wonders of Rice Creek year round.

Rice Creek Field Station's website contains a wealth of information regarding what the field station has to offer. Simply go to www.oswego.edu/ricecreek.

The top left of the main page lists five headings under "Rice Creek Field Station." Here I will discuss some of the offerings under "Digital Rice Creek."

As you click on "Digital Rice Creek," five categories show: Biological Sciences, Physical Sciences, Publications, Presentations and Rice Creek Media.

Under Biological Sciences, there are links to Fungi, Plants and Animals recorded on the station grounds.

The Fungi list is based on observations made between 2002 and 2005.

The Plants link will bring you to an introduction that includes a section on how to use the digital plant guide. The contents link brings up 3130 pictures of plant species (plants, flowers and seeds) recorded on the grounds representing some 725 species. The map link contains keys identifying the trails as well as the vegetation types throughout the grounds. Ponds, vernal pools, beaver dams and stone walls are also identified. Links to a glossary, index of plant names and a statistical summary are also present.

The Animals link will lead to a pictorial reference to the butterflies of the Rice Creek Field Station and a butterfly checklist. A vertebrate spreadsheet link will list Rice Creek vertebrates. A printable bird checklist is also available.

Under Physical Sciences, links to the Student Meteorology Site, current weather and opportunities in the Physics Dept. on campus are provided.

The publications link gives anyone access to Field Station publications produced between 1974 and 2008, natural history guides funded through RCA, a guide for the Ruth Sachidanadan Herb Garden, and some previous RCA newsletters.

The Presentations category lists recent Rice Creek Reflections sponsored by RCA. You can choose a presentation and follow through the power point as given by the presenter. Finally, the Rice Creek Media section is a very enjoyable collection of images, podcasts, articles, photos explaining Rice Creek's early

history, and a photographic view of the new field station's construction.

No matter what the weather outside your window, one can bring the wonders of all seasons at Rice Creek into your home. The website provides opportunities to identify the multitude of organisms that can be observed when more favorable weather conditions return for walking the Rice Creek trails.

- Mike Holy

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 Dr. Peter Rosenbaum. Dr. Rosenbaum had served on the original steering committee in 1985 for what later became Rice Creek Associates and has served since then as a member of the RCA Board. He has filled the roles as President, Vice-President, and Small Grant Chair. Peter, along with Andy Nelson, has been a major player in establishing RCA's Small Grants Program. These grants have enabled countless students to perform original research on the field station grounds and have given them valuable experience in writing scientific papers and presenting their findings in public venues.

We congratulate Peter for his guidance and dedication to the ongoing success of Rice Creek Associates.

Recent events

Rice Creek Reflection: Anatomy of Fishes

On Saturday, Oct. 11, Dr. Andrew McElwain, visiting professor at SUNY Oswego, conducted a program on the anatomy of fishes.

Unlike many other animal groups, all fishes do not share a unique defining anatomical characteristic from a common ancestor. Some, like the African lungfishes, can even spend significant time out of water.

He went on to explain that the Hagfishes (Mixiniidae) do not have well-defined vertebrae but instead possess a notochord. Topics such as gills, air-breathing fishes, fins, and scales were also discussed.



Dr. McElwain explains fish classification

After this brief introduction, attendees were invited to observe a number of lab stations containing fish skeletons, scale types under microscopes, specimens and dissections, as well as live specimens. Dr. McElwain and his students were available to answer questions from the audience as they observed these displays.



Attendees examine fish displays

RCA Social 2014

Our annual RCA Social was well attended and included a number of SUNY Oswego students. As has become the custom at this event, our 2014 Small Grant recipients briefly discussed their research and findings.



2014 RCA Small Grant Recipients. Left to right: Dr. Poongodi Geetha-Loganathan, Brianna Robinson, Robert Katz, Dr. Sofia Winstam, Calee Wilson, Katherine Hilburger, Jessica Kretchmann



Approximately 60 RCA members, students and guests attended the annual RCA Social

Book Review:

Last Child in the Woods

Saving Our Children from Nature – Deficit Disorder

by Richard Louv

Published nearly ten years ago in 2005, *Last Child in the Woods* resonates today as strongly as ever with teachers, community leaders, and especially parents. In this well-researched book, Richard Louv passionately describes the continuing and disturbing trend of children separating from the healing properties of nature. Louv presents study after study linking children's increasing time spent away from outdoor, unstructured play to some of the most common societal maladies of our time, including depression, obesity, poorer school performance, and higher crime rates. Louv names this trend as "Nature-Deficit Disorder" and provides numerous examples of how our increasingly technological society has increased this disorder throughout our country.

Louv reports his story in seven parts, starting with "The New Relationship Between Children and Nature", which describes the need for children to spend regular, unstructured time outside as often as possible. He continues to present his findings in twenty more chapters divided in six more parts, covering issues from "Part III: The Best of Intentions: Why Johnnie and Jeannie Don't Play Outside Anymore", to "Part VII: To Be Amazed". All parts and chapters are supported with scores of documented research studies as well as numerous and fascinating personal anecdotes from children, parents and educators from around the country.

After reading this thought-provoking book for the second time, Louv's convictions still uphold continuing trends I notice today. Our dependence on computers, video games, email, social media, cell phones, I-pads and I-phones can, and often do, take up so much more time in a child's day. Increasing time spent in front of a screen means less time spent in creative play and, most especially, outdoor creative play that, Louv claims, is essential for a child's healthiest development- physically, mentally, and emotionally.

This book could easily make you rethink your commitment to Rice Creek Field Station and the opportunities it offers all of us for our children and our community's children. Rice Creek can encourage Louv's vision of a safe, accessible place for all children to discover and study nature, and to enter a world of natural wonder and healing. *Last Child in the Woods* is a book that warns us either to provide regular, unstructured outdoor play for our children or to expect them to suffer increasingly negative consequences.

Reviewed by Paulia Bates



2015

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 Saturdays 11:00 am
January 10 & 24 February 14 March 7 & 28

Snow and ice or winter thaw? We will have to wait and see what the winter winds bring us. Join us for these family friendly free naturalist-led winter walks at Rice Creek. Come dressed for the weather. Those planning to attend are asked to call 315-312-6677 on the morning of the hike to check trail conditions. Since program size is limited, we are not able to accommodate groups. An adult needs to accompany children.

Story Hour ***Saturdays 11:00 am***

As the seasons change, it is time to gather 'round the warmth of a good story. Join us at 11 o'clock as we share tales of nature, animals' wild ways, and how we relate to our world around us. Since program size is limited, we are not able to accommodate groups. These programs are designed for elementary aged children though all are welcome. An adult must accompany children. There

is no fee for these programs. SUNY Oswego's Rice Creek Field Station offers Story Hour in support of SUNY's partnership with the ***Read Aloud 15 Minutes*** national initiative.

January 31 ***Winter's Tale*** by Robert Sabuda is a masterful pop-up take of winter animals and habitats.

February 21 Wildlife photographers capture the curious moments of wildlife in the woods as they come upon a snowman who is the ***Stranger in the Woods*** by Carl Sams and Jean Stoick.

March 21 Join us in a game of **CAMP**. This nature game covers topics that range from the migratory habits of birds to safety rules while ice fishing! With four levels of difficulty offered, anyone above the age of 4 can play.

Winter Bird Study ***Fridays and Saturdays***

Drop by most Fridays and Saturdays and spend a few minutes with our feathered friends. Be a citizen scientist as you count the birds at the Rice Creek feeders from our indoor viewing area. This is a great project for all ages and the entire family.

Registrations are now being accepted for ***Exploring Nature*** summer program for children and ***Conservation Field Studies for Teens*** summer program. For information about scholarships and registration materials visit www.oswego.edu/ricecreek/programs.

- ◆ 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 or call
315-312-6677

Programs administered by Dr. Diann C Jackson

Memorable moments at Rice Creek

Occasionally while I am out looking for butterflies, they notice me as well. As some species can be territorial, they either will dive at me or circle around until their curiosity is satisfied. Others become a bit more inquisitive and will land on me. The accompanying photo shows a Red Admiral butterfly resting on my jeans near my boot.



Mike Holy

We encourage all members to submit a favorite memory of Rice Creek Field Station. Send it to Mike Holy at fordlep@yahoo.com or mail it directly to the field station. It will appear in a future newsletter.

Mike Holy, Board President

Winter Scenes at Rice Creek



Jim Anderson



Andy Nelson



Diann Jackson



Kamal Mohamed

Board member needed!

Our Rice Creek Associates Board of Directors is presently requesting additional Board members. In order to function at top efficiency we need at least one additional member. Please, if you have time to spare for a one-hour monthly meeting with a few more hours in the month to assist with our organization (tasks which can be done at your convenience in your home), contact me at fordlep@yahoo.com or 315-622-1774 for further information. I will be glad to guide you through our organization and answer any questions or concerns you may have.

Reminder- Membership renewal

Memberships in Rice Creek Associates now run for a calendar year. This means that all members must renew their memberships for 2015. 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 _____

___ 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)
\$ _____.

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
Holly Eden, Secretary
Paulia Bates
Don Artz
Pat Jones
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, 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: