



Rice Creek Associates Newsletter

Winter 2019/2020

President's Comments

When I retired from teaching, many people asked what I was going to do next. I frequently replied that I was not sure but that I knew I wanted to do something where I could spend more time at the Rice Creek Field Station. So when I joined the Rice Creek Associates board last year, and now have become President of RCA, I guess it is a natural progression of events that was meant to be.



New Board President Laurel Artz at Rice Creek in earlier times

My love for Rice Creek began as a very young girl, knowing that my grandfather had been involved in the construction of the original facility. Also, my grandmother grew up in the

house just the other side of Fallbrook and had shared memories of the area. As a student I was fortunate enough to literally grow up on campus and attended the Campus School through 8th grade. This meant I got to experience RC often. I went on class field trips and also Girl Scout trips, which were designed to help with the earning of badges and prepare us for camping.

Then, as I got older, I was able to walk from my house in Fruit Valley through the woods to Rice Creek and Fallbrook properties. Since I lived so close to another section of the creek, it became my playground. I spent many days searching for crayfish, avoiding the huge black water snakes, and even crossing the creek and climbing a small hill to visit the Rice Family cemetery. As a high school student I began to cross country ski on the trails that led from the former Greenman Gardens Florist property to meet up with the RC trails with the young man I would eventually marry. Once we started a family, a favorite outing was taking our boys for walks at RC in spring and fall. My sons attended the summer Exploring Nature program and we attended special weekend events. They are now in their 30's and still most trips home involve a walk at RC. Thankfully they share my fondness and appreciation for this special place.

As a teacher in Oswego for 34 years, I regularly brought my classes on field trips to Rice Creek. It was always surprising to learn how many of my

students did not know that this hidden gem even existed and had not visited prior to our field trip. Our typical field trip day consisted of a rotation of two long trail walks which included observation time for drawing and writing, a session inside which always featured the 4 seasons painting by **John Weeks** and time spent observing through the window onto the pond, lunch in the pavilion, and some outdoor games which combined environmental awareness and physical education. The students truly enjoyed the day and went home worn out from all the activity. I worked closely with former Assistant Director, **Diann Jackson** to set up our trips and I attended many various professional development opportunities organized by her during my teaching career.

I have many special spots I love to visit out on the RC trails. I remember skiing through what used to be known as the willow trail, now the blue trail. It led from the fish ladders to the main building but most of the beautiful weeping willows were damaged or lost to an ice storm in the 90s. As a child I was mesmerized by the view from atop the meadow, looking down over the patchwork quilt-like patterns created by the rotating mowing schedule. I still enjoy sitting and looking out over this spot, so peaceful and simply beautiful. The views on the boardwalks are different each visit, so I have observed many changes in the landscape over the years.

It's funny that as a child I always looked for the snarling fox near the door when I entered the old building. He was scary looking but intriguing. Today when I enter the amazing new facility, I still look for him and think to myself, "We have seen a lot together, old friend." I am so happy to still be involved with RC today and honored to serve as RCA president.

- **Laurel Artz**

Director's Report

2019 has been a good year for the Field Station. We were finally been able to hire the Assistant Director **Kristen Haynes**. **Kristen** got her Ph.D. from ESF and started her full-time job at Rice Creek in late August 2019. **Kristen** literally landed on her feet building on her past experience as manager of ESF's Cranberry Lake Biological Field Station in the Adirondack region.

Kristen is already working on a number of projects including, but not limited to, the Canal Forest Restoration Project, introduction of internships and training of students in outreach and environmental programs, and revision and introduction of new outreach programs. We at Rice Creek are very excited and looking forward to a good working relationship with **Kristen**. Please join us in welcoming her to the Field Station.

One of our success stories this year is the establishment of the Canal Forest Restoration Project. We had the honor of distributing hundreds of white oak and white pine trees. We are also working to establish new partnerships with the DEC Tree Nursery at Saratoga Springs and interested individuals and groups in Central New York as possible collaborators and distributors of free trees. **Kristen** and I visited the NYS Tree Nursery in Saratoga so we can benefit from their experience and the Associate Forester, David Lee, gave us a tour of the Nursery starting with seed and acorn extraction to the point where these seeds are planted, overwintered and distributed. This winter we planted over 3,000 seeds hoping to repot them in spring. The good news is that **Jane and George Pauk** pledged \$5000 a year for five years to be used in support of this project. We can certainly use any voluntary effort and monetary support to help with this project.

Other initiatives include the Monarch Waystation where **Alexandra Corsini** raised and released 80-100 monarchs. This project was a great education for all of us. We also established a butterfly

garden with some thirty plants known for their butterfly attraction abilities. In addition, this past spring and summer our floral beds were in better shape than ever before and they were buzzing with thousands of bees, and hummingbirds were frequently observed visiting in particular red flowers. New initiatives to expect next year include the bird feeder WebCam and a second WebCam to tour Rice Pond and a few sites of interest closer to the building, in addition to a number of new outreach programs.

I would like to thank our previous Rice Creek Associates President **Robert Foster** for his leadership of RCA for the past few years. **Robert** kept us all on our toes and introduced many new initiatives which benefit the Field Station. **Robert** was very generous with his time and led many voluntary efforts including improvement of the Herb Garden, the Butterfly Garden, and the Canal Forest Restoration Project to name a few. Rice Creek is better because of him.

- **Kamal Mohamed**

Annual RCA Social

Our annual Social took place on Saturday, Nov. 2. Recipients of the 2019 Small Grant program reported their findings.



From left: Jordyn Dala, Rebecca Wolff, Dr. Daniel Baldassarre, Dr. Poongodi Geetha-Loganathan, Dr. Nicholas Sard, Dr. Nick DiFrancesco

Our Small Grants program for 2019 resulted in a variety of top quality studies. We are optimistic that 2020 will continue the trend.

The topics discussed were:

- Understanding compositions and origins of the glacial sediments at the Rice creek Field Station (**Dr. Nick DiFrancesco**)
- Zoonotic parasites carried by domestic dogs infecting wildlife at Rice Creek Field Station (**Jordyn Dala**)
- Establishing an environmental DNA sampling program for the Rice Creek Watershed: A model system to train students how to apply molecular sampling techniques (**Dr. Nicholas Sard**)
- A comparative study of eggshells of Passeriformes birds (**Dr. Geetha-Loganathan**)
- Examining how variation in habitat characteristics and human disturbance affect box nest use, breeding success, and behavior of three bird species: Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*), Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*), and House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*) (**Dr. Daniel Baldassarre**)
- Characterization of the microbiota of freshwater snails and assessment of its association with infection by trematode parasites (**Rebecca Wolff**)
- Examining how urbanization affects breeding success, behavior, and physiology in the Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) (**Dr. Daniel Baldassarre**)

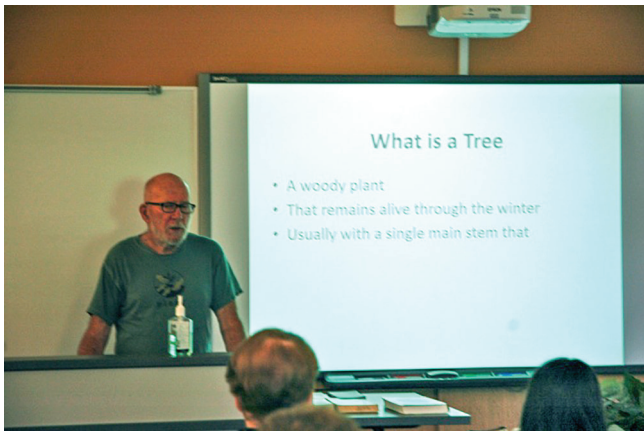
Volunteers needed

Rice Creek Associates is looking for members or other volunteers to play an active role in maintaining the **Ruth Sachidanadan Herb Garden** at the field station. Herb Garden maintenance will take place from May to October and will occur on the first Friday of the month

from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Also, please bring a lunch and beverage. Any one interested should contact the field station at 315-312-6677. Thank you!

Rice Creek Reflections

Trees



On Sept. 28, former RCA Director **Andy Nelson** presented a reflection on trees. With his sixty years+ of observing trees, he began by laying the framework for his presentation. Foremost, he stated that the only way to adequately learn and remember trees was through memorization. With that said, trees are:

- Woody plants
- Remain alive during the winter
- Possess a single main stem up to 30 feet tall

Names of trees. Trees have common names originating from the local language and may or may not have a direct relationship to the particular tree itself. Common names can differ from one location to another.

Trees also have technical, scientific or taxonomic names. For these, Latin is used. Each tree has a genus and species name. Such names are usually permanent, but may be changed for valid reasons

with accompanying valid publication for the change.

Other terms. **Andy** also introduced the concepts of range, habitat, native and introduced. A **range** is a naturally occurring geographical area where an organism is found. A **habitat** is a site where the plant actually grows. **Native** refers to a plant growing in an area without human help. **Introduced** refers to plants growing where they are not normally native.

Having laid this groundwork, Andy proceeded to describe various tree species:

Conifers are cone-bearing trees. Those with scale-like leaves include Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) and Northern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*). Evergreen needle-like leaves are represented by Eastern White Pine (five needles), Red Pine (three needles), and White Spruce. Conifers possessing deciduous needle-like leaves are the European Larch and the Japanese Larch.

Broad-leaved Deciduous trees may have a simple leaf structure or a compound one. The leaves on the stem may be arranged alternately or opposite of other leaves. Leaves of deciduous trees may be palmately or pinnately lobed, unlobed, pinnately compound, opposite compound or alternate compound (See, this is where the memorization factor must kick in!).

Some examples:

- Simple, palmately lobed: Maples (Sugar, Norway, Red and Silver)
- Simple, pinnately lobed: Oaks (Red, Swamp White)
- Simple, unlobed (Eastern Cottonwood, American Elm, Black Cherry)
- Pinnately compound (Box Elder)
- Opposite compound (White Ash)
- Alternate compound (Black Walnut)



Andy Nelson leads a group to observe trees at the field station.

After a short break, the group proceeded outside, where **Andy** identified and spoke about various trees directly located on the immediate grounds. Some of the trees he highlighted included Tulip Tree, Norway Maple, Green Ash (most common at the field station), Mountain Ash (not a true “Ash,” and a good example of the unreliability of using common names), American Elm and American Chestnut.



Fungal blight-infected trunk of an American Chestnut tree. It will not survive the attack.

As always, we thank **Andy** for sharing his expertise on the world of plants.

2020 Reflection series

Our Reflection Events for 2020 is set. We will offer a variety of programs on what we hope are interesting and informative topics. Please mark your calendars with the future events. All events are on a Saturday.

Ticks and Disease on a Changing Landscape

Stephen Rich

March 21, 2020 2PM

Wetland Plants, Invasive Species, and Native Plants

Jim Seago

April 18, 2020 2PM

Canal Forest Restoration

George and Jane Pauk

June 20, 2020 2PM

The Herb Garden

Kamal Mohamed

August 22, 2020 2PM

Fall Gardening

Fernando Araya

September 19, 2020 2PM

Presentation of Small Grants Research Projects

Rice Creek Associates

November 7, 2020 2PM

Rivers end Bookstore nature selections

November 14, 2020 2PM

Erratum

Editor's note: The Fall 2019 issue of the RCA newsletter incorrectly stated in an article on bats that they are blind. Bats do indeed see. I regret the error.

Assistant Director's Update

My thanks to many people for welcoming me so warmly to Rice Creek and Oswego! I am very excited to be serving the campus community and general public alongside RCA. I look forward to working together to further the Rice Creek mission.

I am pleased to share our winter (January through March) public programs lineup at Rice Creek. Special events include the following:

- **Celebrate Snow!** • January 18, 2020, 9 am until 3 pm • A family-friendly festival celebrating all things snow. Activities include snow-themed arts and crafts, snow animal building, mammal tracking on snowshoes, a presentation on the science of snow, and much more! Tickets are \$1 through the campus box office online or at the event. Open to all ages. Full details at calendar.oswego.edu/event/celebratesnow.
- **Full Moon Owl Prowl on Snowshoes** • February 8, 2020, 7 pm • Naturalist-guided snowshoe walk to identify owls by sight and sound. Tickets are \$1 through the campus box office online starting in January. Space is limited so get your tickets early! Adult-sized snowshoes are available. Open to all ages.
- **Valentine's Day Story Hour & Crafting** • February 15, 2020, 11 am • A naturalist will share a Valentine's Day-themed nature storybook, and then we will make a Valentine's Day gift for birds and squirrels: pinecone feeders! This free event is designed for children, but open to all ages. Please call 315-312-6677 to sign up.
- **Nature-themed Board Gaming** • February 22, 2020, 1–3 pm • Beat the winter blues with drop-in board gaming! We have games appropriate for younger (ages 4 and up) and older (ages 10 and up)

children. Free program, no signup necessary.

- **Maple Syrup Story Hour & Activities** • March 14, 2020, 11 am • We will read a special maple-themed story and then work together to build a human tree. Maple treats available for purchase. Free event for children ages 4 and up. Please call 315-312-6677 to sign up.
- **Amphibian Migration** • March 2020, Time & Date TBD • Come experience the amazing springtime migration of wood frogs and mole salamanders to breed in forest ponds. This natural phenomenon occurs over only 2–3 nights each year when the weather conditions are just right. To join us, email your contact information to rcfs@oswego.edu and we will alert you when the migration is taking place!

Additionally, we invite you for **Rice Creek Rambles**, Saturdays at 11 am (January 4, 11, 25; February 1, 8, 22, 29; March 7, 21, 28). Adult-sized snowshoes are available. Winter topics include mammal tracks, winter birds, and winter tree identification. Free, no signup necessary. Finally, we also invite you to be a citizen scientist through **Project Feederwatch**. Drop in Saturdays between 9 am and 3 pm and spend a few minutes watching birds and recording what you see. A naturalist can help with bird identification. Looking ahead, **save the date for Exploring Nature 2020**: July 6–10 (week 1) and July 13–17 (week 2). Exploring Nature is a summer program for children ages 5 to 16. Scholarships are available. Registration information will be updated at www.oswego.edu/exploringnature. We're on Facebook and Instagram! @ozricecreek

-Kristen Haynes

2020 Small Grants Program planning taking place

Preparations for our annual RCA Small Grants program are now underway. Look for

announcements early this year (2020) in the Oswegonian, Pal-Times, RCA Facebook page, campus digital signage and flyers on campus and in town.

Amendment to RCA By-Laws

The amendment to our By-Laws regarding the addition of student members to our Board was approved by the responding membership. Section 3 regarding the election of Board members now reads:

Section 3. Election of Board Members.

The President of the Board shall appoint a nominating committee consisting of at least three RCA members to compile a slate of candidates. Voting will take place in the Fall meeting or by mail. Individuals receiving the most votes will become members of the Board. There are no restrictions concerning the number of times a person may be elected to serve on the Board. In addition, any interested person may nominate oneself for a Board position. In the event that positions on the Board become vacant after a fall election, the Board may appoint by majority vote interested persons to serve temporarily until the next election.

The Board may appoint a non-voting SUNY Oswego student(s) to a Board position of Student Representative, whose purpose would be to solicit student membership on campus, promote RCA events, disperse information about RCA and Rice Creek Field Station, present student membership concerns to the Board, and offer opinions on Board actions.

Talk on tree health held

On Saturday, October 12, a special talk took place at Rice Creek, organized by Dr. Kamal Mohamed, director of the Rice Creek Field

Station. Joe Chairvolotti, the forester at Oswego Co. Soil and Water Authority, presented views titled Current and Potential Threats to Forest/Tree Health in Oswego County.

Among the organisms he spoke about were the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, Asian Longhorned Beetle, Oak Wilt, Spotted Lanternfly and Emerald Ash Borer.

Because most of these invasive organisms are not native to Oswego County, their presence can increase exponentially. Unfortunately, native species that become infected lack resistance to them.

The effects are devastating. The habitat becomes degraded through loss of native species, recreational activities are impacted, economic losses are sustained and risks to public safety occur.

Joe proceeded to discuss each invasive in more detail. One example, the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, is an aphid like organism introduced from Asia. It can infect and kill a Hemlock tree in as little as four years. Although it first arrived in Virginia in 1951, it was first observed in New York in 1965. Hemlock trees provide a cool stream for trout and prevent erosion along streams. Without Hemlock present, both benefits are negatively affected.

The Emerald Ash Borer is an invasive species also from Asia. It is less than one-half inch in length and was first recorded in Oswego County in 2017. It was first observed in Michigan in 2002 and western New York in 2009. Its larvae feed on the cambium layer of trees, the living tissue from which the xylem (water conducting) and phloem (food conducting) tissues arise.

On its own, Emerald Ash Borers move approximately one to two miles per year. This can be extended to several miles if infected firewood is transported away from the area of infestation.

Female Ash Borers produce from 60-100 eggs per year and may be present for several years before being detected. That said, they potentially kill trees within one to two years. Infected trees have been documented to fall in large pieces, sometimes with devastating effects.

The impacts from Emerald Ash Borers are huge. They affect public safety, property damage, legal liability, and economic and ecological wellness.

There is much to know about these invasive species and the others mentioned. Visit the NY Department of Environmental Conservation website, www.dec.ny.gov or Oswego County Soil and Water District, www.oswegosoilandwater.com, for more information.

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

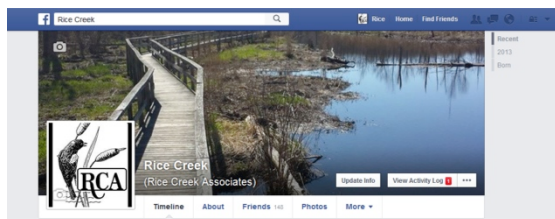
Saturday 9:00 am -- 3:00 pm

Trails are open dawn to dusk daily.

When visiting Rice Creek, please sign in and out at one of the brown registration boxes.

Rice Creek is 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 a field station photo as its cover page, like so:



RCA Board Elections

Following our fall vote, **Pat Jones**, **Sheri Morey** and **Maria Sagot** were re-elected to serve three-year terms on the Board.

Current RCA Board Members

Laurel Artz, President
Pat Jones, Co-Vice President
Sheri Morey, Co-Vice President
Wendy Fragale, Treasurer
Michael Holy, Secretary, Newsletter Editor
Maria Sagot, Small Grants Chair
Andrew McElwain
Peter Rosenbaum
Matt Gorman, 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. Last year the RCA Board approved a measure to move renewal from Jan. 1 to prevent renewals from coinciding with the Christmas season. Our renewal category rates have not changed, despite our ever-increasing costs. If you have any questions concerning your current RCA membership, contact **Mike** at fordlep@yahoo.com or 315-622-1774 (leave message).

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

We consider all member information confidential and will not share it with any other groups or businesses.

Memorable moments at Rice Creek



RCA member and former Board treasurer Don Artz enjoying a day at Rice Creek. Laurel, his wife, is our newly elected Board President.

Please share with us a special experience you've had at Rice Creek. A picture is not required. It will appear in a future newsletter. Send it to **me** at fordlep@yahoo.com. - **Mike**

Join/renew RCA membership

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Date _____

All memberships are Mar. 1 – Feb. 28

____ New 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 in addition to membership fees** 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



**Rose-breasted grosbeak on a spring day
May 6, 2007**



**Late season bloom on Purple-flowering
Raspberry August 14, 2006**



**Least Skipper, smallest skipper in CNY
August 1, 2007**



**Dried sap from cut limb at Rice Creek
May 14, 2012**



**Bracket fungus
May 21, 2012**

Rice Creek Associates
RCFS #23
SUNY Oswego
Oswego, New York 13126

To: