



# Rice Creek Associates Newsletter

Summer 2020

## **Rice Creek Associates’ HISTORY, MISSION, AND GOALS**

*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. 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, which benefit the station and the community at large.*

*As RCA supports the efforts of the RCFS, we join with the State University of New York at Oswego by standing in solidarity with Black Lives Matter and being committed to providing inclusive educational and scientific research opportunities. We strive to create an environment that embraces diversity and encourages participation by any and all students, faculty, staff, and community members.*

## **President’s Comments**

***Note:** Even though the field station building has been closed, the RCA board continues to meet via Zoom, planning and supporting research this summer, and working on all the special projects.*

*With everything happening in the world lately, I purposely chose to write about something many of you may consider fluff. That’s okay; I just needed a break and wanted to think about something simple and beautiful.*

Last newsletter I wrote about how April showers bring mud. My students would say April showers bring May flowers, and Mayflowers bring Pilgrims. What I did not know at the time was May would bring snow! Just two weeks later we were swimming in our pool, experiencing oppressive levels of humidity. Currently we are enjoying a week of beautiful weather. One never knows what to expect here on the edge of Lake Ontario. That is for certain!

My family took a walk at Rice Creek a few weeks back and then spent another morning weeding the herb garden. Both times we saw several others out enjoying the beautiful trails. Happy to report all were practicing social distancing. (Who even knew that phrase in January?) Recently I spent a morning at RC helping to transfer oak tree seedlings to individual pots for the Canal Forest Restoration Project. While there, I was able to view all the growth that had occurred in just a few weeks time in the herb garden, thanks in part to that oppressive humidity. Where it had been growing steadily a few weeks ago it had now burst into a symphony of color, with many plants displaying lush beautiful flowers.

Based on the number of people going past my house each day, many have rediscovered the joy of walking while we have been living life in semi-quarantine. I however have been working on learning to sit still and relax. I just have never been one to sit still. But it is growing on me and I have been noticing the beauty around my home. One after the other my trees, shrubs, and flowers have displayed beautiful blooms and my yard has experienced the full spectrum of the rainbow:

**Red:** tulips, pink and fuchsia rhododendrons, peonies of various pinks, roses, pink crabapple and cherry blossoms

**Orange:** hibiscus, lilies, honeysuckle

**Yellow:** daffodils, forsythia, pond lilies, foxglove

**Green:** basically everywhere

**Blue:** forget-me-nots

**Violet:** crocuses, iris, lilacs, butterfly bush, flowering plum

**White:** magnolia, lily of the valley, dogwood

You get the idea- splashes of color among all the lush greenery that seemed to just burst forth after the May snow. My family had planted these perennials over the last 31 years. We also have many wildflowers that add to the ever-changing rainbow, and ever so many pots of annuals decorate my front porch and backyard deck.

So when you want to sit for a spell, or are ready to take a walk, be sure to take time to look at the beauty around you. It is changing every day this time of year. Come walk the trails at Rice Creek and spend some time in the herb garden, there is always something colorful, beautiful and interesting to view. If flowers are not your thing, enjoy the wildlife and the beautiful scenery. There is so much to see!

**- Laurel Artz**

## **Director's Report**

Because of COVID-19, Rice Creek Field Station cancelled most of its programs this spring and summer. A few of these programs will be offered on Facebook, see details below.

Among the most important and well-established programs cancelled this summer was *Exploring Nature* for children. This is the first time this program is not offered since the completion of the new Field Station building in fall of 2013.

Also, the current situation affected trails and ground maintenance. Because we were short in labor, usually student workers and volunteers, and coupled with equipment failure, our trails were below our standard expectations. However, this has not affected the trail use; we observed more than usual traffic on our trails, which is fueled by the desire of the public to be outdoors and enjoy nature during this tough time.

Other than this our flowerbeds, herb garden, and butterfly garden are flourishing as usual. Please come out and enjoy them. Last year around this time they were buzzing with butterflies, hummingbirds, and thousands of bees. I missed observing this scene from the window of my office.

Also, I would like to mention that although we are planning to open the Field Station on July 17<sup>th</sup>, no visitors will be allowed inside the building, but the trails will still be accessible. We apologize to the friends and neighbors of Rice Creek for the inconveniences COVID-19 has imposed on us and we promise that we will be back stronger than ever to continue offering our services and programs to our local community.

**-Kamal Mohamed**

## Assistant Director's update

### Public Program Updates

As Rice Creek Field Station cannot offer in-person programs at this time, we are pleased to offer two online program series this summer. Both will be hosted on Facebook Live (\*a Facebook account is not necessary to join). Updates on both programs will be shared on the RCA and RCFS Facebook pages, as well as our website: [www.oswego.edu/rice-creek](http://www.oswego.edu/rice-creek). All sessions will end with live Q&A. We hope you will join us, and share this information with those who may be interested!

### Exploring Nature online

With a heavy heart, we had to cancel our 2020 children's summer program, Exploring Nature, due to SUNY Oswego public health directives. However, you can still 'explore nature' with us this summer! **RCA board member Paul Knittel** and **RCFS Assistant Director Kristen Haynes** will be offering short Facebook Live programs for children. Children can watch and ask questions as Kristen and Paul visit Rice Creek's animals and plants, sharing fun facts and offering tips for exploring nature responsibly.

### Research Spotlights

What does a day in the field look like for a Rice Creek researcher? What are they investigating, and why does it matter? How did they get started doing research? We will explore all of these questions and more in a series of Facebook Live research spotlights this summer. Join as we interview researchers in the field—including recipients of RCA's 2020 small grants.



**American Bullfrog (*Lithobates catesbeianus*) in the Rice Creek driveway.**



**Common Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*) visits the pavilion on her way to lay eggs.**



Painted turtle (*Chrysemys picta*) on the Field Station lawn.



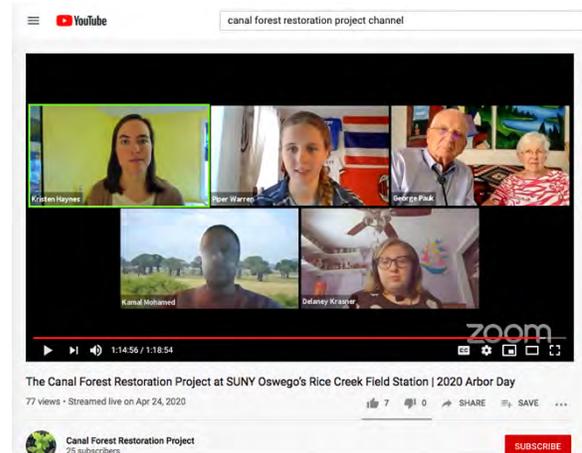
Northern blue flag iris (*Iris versicolor*) growing wild along a Rice Creek trail.

## Canal Forest Restoration Project Updates

RCA is helping RCFS grow native white oak and pine trees that were depleted from central New York forests as the canal industry boomed.

### Arbor Day Webinar Conference

CFRP and Rice Creek Field Station offered a well-attended webinar series on April 24, 2020 (National Arbor Day). Webinar attendees joined live on the CFRP YouTube channel and had the opportunity to ask questions from presenters. In total, seven webinars were offered by 13 presenters on topics ranging from art to wellness and restoration to practical growing tips. We had 113 live views and over 500 same-day views. Thank you to those who joined us! If you missed the live conference, the webinars are archived on YouTube: just search for the Canal Forest Restoration Project and you will find our channel.



Members of the CFRP team deliver a webinar about the project. Clockwise from top-left: Kristen Haynes, Piper Warren (student intern), George and Jane Pauk (project founders), Kamal Mohamed, and Delaney Krasner (student intern).

### How are the trees?

The project trees weathered the winter beautifully and are in full leaf. RCFS staff added landscape fabric and mulch to the tree enclosure to control weeds and provide winter insulation for trees. From seeds started indoors this spring, we have about 200 new seedling trees to add to the project—both oak and pine.

Recently, RCA president **Laurel Artz** and board members **Mary Magistro** and **Sheri Morey** helped transplant donated trees that were badly

pot-bound into separate pots. Their efforts made over 100 trees much happier!



**Kamal Mohamed and Laurel Artz transplanting while keeping safe with masks and sanitizer.**

### How to get a tree

Many of our trees are ready for new homes! If you are local to the Oswego area, you can sign up to get a tree on our website: [www.oswego.edu/ricecreek/canalforestrestitutionproject](http://www.oswego.edu/ricecreek/canalforestrestitutionproject). We will be in touch regarding how and when to pick up your tree(s)—up to two per person. With restrictions this year, we do not plan to attend community events with our trees, so please share word of our project with friends or family who might be interested.



**New native oak transplants.**

### How to help

Please visit our website above to learn how to help the project through volunteering or donation. Thank you!

**-Kristen Haynes**

## Celestial Close Encounters

It is nearly impossible to grow up around here and not know the **Big Dipper**. The Big Dipper has four stars that make up the bowl and three stars in its curved handle. It can be seen throughout the year.

Using the Big Dipper you can also find **Polaris – the North Star**. This was, and still is, the star many seafaring navigators in the northern hemisphere use to determine where they are and how to get to where they're going.

To locate the North Star, use the two stars forming the outer edge of the Dipper's bowl and imagine drawing a line from the bottom outside star of the Dipper's bowl to the top outside star and continue the line about four and a half times the distance between the two stars. The next star in line will be the North Star. Now it just happens that the North Star is part of another famous dipper – the **Little dipper**. The North Star is the last star in the curved handle of that constellation. The Big Dipper is also known as **Ursa Major – Big Bear**, and the Little Dipper is **Ursa Minor - Little Bear**.

When I look up into the night sky at all the twinkling stars, I get mesmerized. I just stare in awe; my breathing slows. I feel as though I am drifting through time and space. So many stars. Of course, not all are stars. A few are planets reflecting the light of the sun and making them look as if they were shining on their own.

Another easy to recognize star constellation is **Cassiopeia**. Like the Big and Little Dippers, it

can be seen in the northern sky throughout the year. It has five stars and appears like a “W” or an “M” or either letter tilted on its side depending upon the time of year. It will be found hanging around near the Big Dipper. It is also called the **Seated Queen**. I will admit, it is not easy to see the “queen” in the constellation, but the five stars are easily seen. Cassiopeia was a queen in Greek mythology. In this constellation, she is seated in a throne and chained to this royal chair as punishment. You’ll have to do a little research on your own as to why she is being punished. It’s an interesting story!

I took an Astronomy course years ago hoping to learn more about the constellations and the mythology associated with them. Instead, I was taught a great deal of cold hard facts and numbers. Imagine a chemical description of what love is - it can be done, but there is no romance in it. I was disappointed. It wasn’t the professor’s fault. I was taught what was in the syllabus. I just had higher hopes.

Perhaps Walt Whitman had a similar experience when he wrote the poem:

### **When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer**

*When I heard the learn’d astronomer,  
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in  
columns, before me,  
When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to  
add, divide and measure them,  
When I sitting heard the astronomer where he  
lectured with much applause in the lecture-room,  
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,  
Till rising and gliding out I wander’d off by  
myself,  
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to  
time,  
Look’d up in perfect silence at the stars.*

Also consider what Ralph Waldo Emerson said about these brilliant points of light we take for granted each night:

*“If the stars should appear one night in a thousand years, how would men believe and adore; and preserve for many generations the remembrance of the city of God which had been shown!”*

One of these nights, between running from your car to your house, take a moment to look up in the sky and take a deep breath, relax and enjoy the beautiful celestial show above you.

**Paul Knittel**

RCA Board member and  
Adjunct Instructor, Biology

## **Roadside Weeds or Wildflowers?**

Summer wildflowers are in bloom everywhere. Some of the finest natural arrangements of wildflowers can be found on display along our highways and byways. All are considered weeds by most people.

In mid-summer, my favorite natural arrangement is a simple one of three colors – yellow, blue and white. It’s a beautiful arrangement using bird’s-foot trefoil, chicory and Queen Ann’s lace - all wildflowers found at Rice Creek Field Station.



**Bird’s-foot Trefoil**

**Bird's-foot trefoil** makes up the base of the natural arrangement. Its flowers are yellow. If you can get close enough to examine it, you may also see a slight tinge of orange. Each flower is small – about half an inch in size attached to thin stems stretching up 10 inches high. There will be dozens and dozens of flowers side-by-side forming a brilliant yellow mass.

Trefoil was once sought after for rock gardens. It was also used as a soil builder since it helps with nitrogen in the soil – like clover, to which it's related.

The term “bird's foot” comes from the shape of its seed pod which is thin and about one inch long.



**Chickory**

**Chicory** can be found locally in three colors - blue, white and pink. Its dried roots are grounded up and used as a coffee substitute or additive. It was used for centuries in cooking. In medicine, it was used for digestive disorders. Chicory's blue blossom is at its best on cloudy days. The blue just pops out in filtered sunlight. In the evening, the blossoms close.



**Queen Anne's Lace**

Topping the arrangement is Queen Ann's lace. Its showy floral discs range in size from 3-6 inches and are nicely spaced apart. It is a beautiful plant to watch from bud to blossom to seed. The opening bud's outer edge forms a ring of pink. When fully in bloom, the tiny white flowers form what appears to be a piece of intricately woven lace. Queen Ann's Lace got its name from a legend that tells of Queen Ann (1665-1714) sewing a piece of lace and pricking her finger, causing a drop of blood to fall upon the lace. If you look closely at some of the white flower heads, you may find the deep red drop of blood in the center of the flower. It is not on every flower. When it goes to seed, the flowers form a cup-shape giving it another common name - “bird's-nest”.

One neighbor I shared a property line with did not appreciate Queen Ann's lace growing in my garden. He asked me in a most disapproving tone, “Why are you growing that field weed?” True, farmers don't care for it. In their pastures, it crowds out preferred plants and taints the flavor of cow's milk. Its tap root is long – anyone who has ever tried pulling it up can testify to that.

Although its flower is white, it has all the aroma of the domesticated orange carrot. I read that it was used to breed the orange carrot and then I read somewhere else that it wasn't. I don't know, that remains a mystery to me.

It is sweet to the taste, second only to beets in the root vegetable world. Some cultures used it to sweeten puddings and other foods.

There are many other wildflowers that you will find gracing the roadsides as you motor along. Some include milkweed – it stands about 3-4 feet high with purple or pinkish flowers, white and red clover, Black-eyed Susan, Daisies, and day lilies. The arrangements of colors and shapes appear to change almost weekly.

The next time you're in a construction zone moving like molasses, use the time to look along the roadside where the weeds are growing. The roadside wildflower bouquets are waiting there for you.

But don't be stopping in the middle of the road to smell the roses!

**-Paul Knittel**

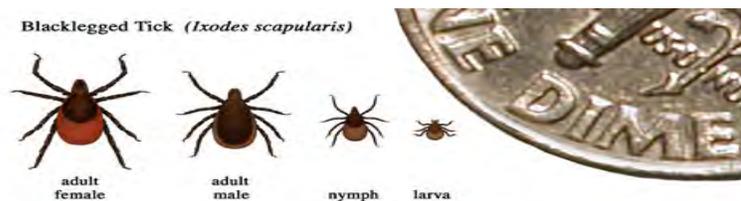
## Primer on Ticks

- Ticks spread Lyme and other serious diseases by attaching to skin and ingesting blood. Disease transmission occurs 12–36 hours after attachment (depending on the disease).
- The most common tick-borne diseases in New York State are bacterial and are usually fully treatable if addressed early. Lyme disease is typically curable if treated within 1 year of infection.
- Ticks spread through direct contact with grass, brush, vegetation, etc. They usually occur no more than 18–24" off the ground, and can be found in natural settings as well as lawns and gardens.
- Ticks can be active anytime temperatures are above freezing.

- **Prevention** is the best way to minimize risk of Lyme and other disease.

Prevention tips:

- Wear long sleeves, tucking pants into socks and shirt into pants.
- Apply insect repellent (DEET or Picaridin) to clothing, paying special attention to exposed skin, socks, waist, wrists/arms, hat, and back of the neck. Alternatively, treat clothes with Permethrin or buy pre-treated clothes—the treatment will last through several washes. Do not apply Permethrin directly to skin. RCFS has insect repellent if you need it.
- While in the field, check clothes



and exposed skin frequently for ticks. Avoid sitting on the ground or low stone walls. Whenever possible, avoid brushing or bushwhacking through vegetation.

- When you arrive home, take a shower and then perform a full-body tick check.
- If possible, put field attire directly into a washing machine and close the door, or in a sealed bag (ticks can wander from your clothes and find you or your pet!). Alternatively, putting your clothes immediately into a hot dryer for 20 minutes will kill any unseen ticks.
- **If you find a tick...**
  - Do not attempt to remove it yourself: Rice Creek and area medical centers have a special tool to remove ticks that will minimize the risk of disease transmission. Alternatively, you can purchase

- one of these tools for yourself and carry it with you when in the field.
- Place the tick in 70% alcohol to kill it. The tick can be tested for Lyme. Upstate University is currently offering this service for free.
  - Wash the bite location with soap and water, and disinfect with rubbing alcohol. Monitor the site for 30 days, looking for a bulls-eye rash indicative of Lyme disease.
  - If you develop a rash or experience flu-like symptoms, seek medical attention.
- For additional information, see the NYS Department of Health's tick website: <https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/pests/tick.htm>

### **How to safely remove a tick**

1. Use a pair of pointed tweezers
2. Grasp the tick by the head or mouth right where it enters the skin.
3. Pull fully and steadily upward.
4. Place the tick in a small container of rubbing alcohol to kill it.
5. Clean the bite wound with rubbing alcohol or hydrogen peroxide
6. Monitor the site of the bite 30 days for the appearance of a rash.
7. If you develop a rash or flu-like symptoms, contact your health care provider immediately.

-New York State Dept. of Health  
[www.health.ny.gov](http://www.health.ny.gov)  
[facebook.com/NYSDOH](https://www.facebook.com/NYSDOH)

## **Rice Creek 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 an RCA logo as a profile picture along with a field station photo.

## **RCA needs your help**

It has been a longstanding practice at RCA to be very generous with regard to sending our newsletter to those members who have been behind on updating and renewing their memberships. Unfortunately, there is a cost to this generosity. It now comes down to either increasing membership fees or deleting members who are far behind on their renewals.

Since its inception in 1986, RCA has been able to function on the initial membership levels. In all that time, membership dues have not seen an increase. Membership support levels are fully voluntary. Our members have been generous through their support to the extent that, with occasional changes in our operating procedures, we have been able to contain costs and perform our daily business.

Therefore, and sadly, this will be the last newsletter any members in arrears for two or more years, and, as a result, be removed from the membership list unless we hear from you soon.

Thank you for your understanding and support.

Please, if you believe in what RCA is doing and has accomplished in the past, send us a renewal at the level at which you are comfortable.

**-Mike**

## **Upcoming 2020 Reflection topics**

Please detach and place this list in a convenient location for future referral for these events. All take place on Saturdays. **We will notify you if events are cancelled or delayed due to coronavirus concerns.**

### **The Herb Garden (Tentative due to covid-19)**

Kamal Mohamed  
August 22, 2020 2PM

### **Fall Gardening (Tentative due to covid-19)**

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

## **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.

## **Membership renewal reminder**

Our yearly membership runs from March 1 to February 28 to prevent renewals from coinciding with the Christmas season. 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](mailto:fordlep@yahoo.com) or 315-622-1774 (leave message).

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

**Please notify us of any changes to your address, email, phone or name. We strive to send our newsletter and event notifications to you in a timely manner. Contact Mike at [fordlep@yahoo.com](mailto:fordlep@yahoo.com) to update your contact information.**

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

**If you have not yet renewed from now through Feb 2021, please do so at your earliest convenience.**

## Join/renew RCA membership

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

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

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**All memberships are Mar. 1 – Feb. 28**

New Membership

Membership renewal

Level:

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student       | 5.00   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual    | 10.00  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family/Couple | 15.00  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing  | 25.00  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining    | 50.00  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life          | 250.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 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)**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Please make checks payable to:

**Oswego College Foundation/RCA**

Return to:

**Rice Creek Field Station #23**

**SUNY Oswego**

**Oswego, New York 13126**

## 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  
Paul Knittel  
Mary Magistro  
Gail Opanhoske  
Andrew McElwain  
Peter A. Rosenbaum

## Rice Creek Field Station Staff

Kamal Mohamed, Director  
Kristen Haynes, Assistant Director  
Wendy Fragale, Secretary  
Alan Harris, Groundskeeper

## Memorable moments at Rice Creek

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](mailto:fordlep@yahoo.com).

- Mike

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

To: