

Newsletter IRLC

Indian River Lakes Conservancy

WINTER 2008



Grass Lake January 12, 2008 by Mark Scarlett

The goal of the Indian River Lakes Conservancy is to preserve the natural character of the area, with a focus on protecting clean water, fish and wildlife, and the scenic vistas along the shores of the lakes and the Indian River and to educate ourselves and the community about the natural habitat in which we live.

Formed in 1998 to conserve critical lands in the Indian River Lakes Area of Northern New York, the IRLC is a non-profit land trust with 501(c) (3) tax exempt status operating in a manner consistent with the published standards of "Land Trust Alliance", a national organization.

CONSERVANCY UPDATE

We are grateful to everyone who has worked so hard on behalf of the Indian River Lakes Conservancy during the past year. With no paid staff, the IRLC depends entirely on the good will and generosity of the many volunteers who care deeply about the future of this region. We thank each of you for the contributions you have made of your time, talent and money to make this a better place.

Among their many accomplishments in 2007 our volunteers made significant progress developing an environmental inventory of the IRLC service area. This inventory is an ambitious undertaking and an essential objective of the Strategic Plan adopted by our Board in 2006. With guidance and expertise provided by environmental consultant Gerry Smith and funding provided through the New York State DEC Conservation Partnership Program administered by the Land Trust

Alliance, the inventory will provide us with a clearer understanding of the biological diversity within our service area and help us focus our limited resources on those conservation efforts that will best serve our mission.

In keeping with a stewardship plan for the Reserve developed with the assistance of DEC Forester Glenn Roberts in 2005, volunteers this past summer cleared a third trail from Burns Road to Grass Lake. This completes the development of more than three miles of trails to the east of Burns Road in the Grand Lake Reserve. These trails give the public access to a beautiful and rugged landscape of mature forest, rock ridges, and undeveloped shoreline that will also provide area schools with an important resource for environmental education in their own backyard. Local teachers should contact Board member Shirley Carpenter to discuss their interest in this special educational opportunity.

The IRLC Board continued to evolve in 2007 through the addition of Redwood resident Rick Lopez and the election of new officers, with Mark Scarlett serving as President, Sandy Hillback as Vice-President, and Jeff Garvey as Treasurer. Ed Robertson, after years of leadership as IRLC President, is continuing to play a vital role on the Board as Secretary, strategic planner, and our liaison with local governments.

Perhaps most notably in 2007, the IRLC celebrated its 10th year of service with the opening of a new office in Redwood. The ribbon cutting for the office was a highlight of this year's wine and cheese reception, the main IRLC fundraising event of the year that was, once again, generously and admirably hosted by Sandy and Margie Hillback. The new office was quickly put to good use as the host site for a regional meeting of area land trust officers and representatives of the Land Trust Alliance Northeast Office and the New York State

DEC/Conservation Partnership Program.

The year ahead offers wonderful opportunities to further the good work already begun and to launch new initiatives to preserve and protect the Indian River Lakes region. We hope you will continue to join us in pursuing the vision we share for this very special and unique place.

TURTLE ISLAND

Turtle Island, in the northwest area of Butterfield Lake, has been donated to the Conservancy. The small, bare, undeveloped rock isle is used by plovers, gulls, herons and other birds. Fish frequent the shallow water around Turtle Island adding to the tranquil aura of the place. Many thanks to Howard and Dianna Schnettler, of Theresa, for this generous gift.

SANTWAY PARK

IRLC is partnering with other contributors to assist The Village of Theresa in their effort to revitalize Santway Park. The 31 acre park was donated to the village in 1927 by Dr. Frederick Santway and his wife Mary. Public meetings were held starting last fall to gather ideas and suggestions from villagers and other interested parties. The master plan is now complete. Plans include a new parking area, signage, new hiking trails, cleaning up the gorgeous and extensive Indian River frontage and building a wooden observation platform extending into the on-shore wetland area. Please contact IRLC if you are interested in volunteering to help with any projects at the park. If you are not familiar with Santway Park it is definitely worth a visit. It's on Riverside Drive in Theresa. Two large stone columns mark the entrance.

GRAND LAKE RESERVE

Stewardship of the Grand Lake Reserve, with more than 1000 acres of undeveloped land spanning both Butterfield and Grass Lakes, has long been one of the IRLC's highest priorities. The Grand Lake Reserve was first inventoried by DEC Forester Glenn Roberts in a report he prepared for the IRLC in 2005. His report included a proposal for the development of several walking trails that would improve public access to the rock ledges, mature forests, abundant wetlands and pristine shoreline that highlight the Grand Lake Reserve landscape.

Volunteers began to implement this plan in 2006 with the development of more than a mile of trail from Burns Road to Grass Lake, including side trails to a nineteenth century sugar house site and a panoramic overlook of the southwest arm of Grass Lake. Last year, volunteers extended the 2006 trail along a northerly return route from Grass Lake back to Burns Road, completing a loop of more than 2.5 miles. This return trail features several dramatic rock outcrops, glens, and wooded ridges that are well worth the effort required.

This year we plan to continue developing a color coded scheme for the trail markers along the Grass Lake trails and, with sufficient funding, develop an additional parking lot at the northerly Burns Road trailhead. Most importantly, we hope to move to the west of Burns Road to open side trails off the existing path to Butterfield Lake. The first of these trails will include a dramatic overlook of the wetlands leading to the easterly end of Butterfield Lake.

Please look for a schedule of trail clearing days in the Spring issue of our newsletter. The trail days offer a special chance to enjoy the company of some good and friendly people, to get close to a very beautiful and unusual landscape, and to limber up with a bit

of good exercise along the way. Hope to see you there.

2007 MEMBERSHIPS AND DONORS

We gratefully acknowledge the following individuals and organizations whose gifts to the IRLC in 2007 have helped conserve for future generations the natural resources of the beautiful Indian River Lakes region. Thank you for your thoughtful generosity.

Sami Abdelatif, Judy Adams, Bob & Alice Andrews, Phillip Bajjaly, Dani Baker, Karen Bald & Nadine Gardner, Dave & Debbie Bearup, David Bearup, Jr., Fred & Rosemarie Belcher, Bob & Betty Belge, Peter Berzins, Steve and Kay Bolivar, Jim and Gail Borkman, Mary & Bill Bostick, Barbara Brakeman, David Brandt, John & Elizabeth Briggs, Janet Buckland, Charles Burlingame, Michael & Carol Buzzell, Harold & Shirley Carpenter, David Carse, Henry Carse, Peter Carse, Jeff & Priscilla Cashmore, Laura Cashmore, Mike Chetwin, Robert & Beverly Cliffe, Gerard & Kathleen Cole, Phyllis Connelly, Paul & Bridgid Cook, Bruce P. Coyne, Phyllis Dake, Ellen & Nick Darabane & Hotton, William Delaney, Tom & Shann Deng, Nancy Dickerson, Steve & Vici Diehl, John & Judy Dixon, Verna Docteur, Elaine Dooling, Marlene Douglas, Brian Felder, Tony & Lori Felder, Barbara Fenton, Lee & Bev Fischer, Wallace Freeland, Richard & Helen Fuhrman, Randy & Martha Gardner, Matt & Aimie Garlock, Jeff & Elaine Garvey, David & Christine Gascon, Peter Gaskin, Mildred Gimber, Norman Gitzen, James & Elizabeth Golembeski, Art & Carol Hallatt, Bob & Pat Hallott, Elliott & Jackie Hillback, Elliott & Marjorie Hillback, George Hills, Priscilla Hiter, Debbie & Fred Hoffman, Jurgen & Judy Hoomans, Guy Hunneyman, Brandon Hunneyman, Jordan Hunneyman, Cheryl Hurley & Walter Dutcher, Robert & Betty Jennejohn, Anne Johnson, Elliot S. Klass, Lawrence LaRue, Richard LeClerc, Richard Lopez, Marcia Luce, Leonard Main, Tyler Malotte, Ken & Marcie Mann, Ron & Barbara Mann, Dave & Gretchen Martin, Kim Martusiewicz, Joshua Mayo, Steven J. McDonald, Martha McFall, John McMahon, T.C. McQuade, Rebekah Mead, Andrew & Luann Elizabeth Meyn, Dr. & Mrs. Thomas Morgan, Richard & Patricia Muller, Kevin Murray, Bethany Neuroth, Allan Newell, John & Angie

Ninos, George W. Nugent, Jon Ostrander, John & Stephanie Palmer, Louis Panunzio, Terry Panunzio, Joe & Edie Pasquini, Richard Peal, Mike Pellett, Dr. & Mrs. Dale Porter, Richard & Sonja Prekert, Mary Regan, Edward & Denise Robertson, Carl & Arlene Rode, Leon Ross, Brian Roulin, Robert & Susan Rusch, John Sandwick, Richard & Sally Sauer, John & Elizabeth Scarlett, Mark & Louise Scarlett, Doug & Jan Scott, Shari Scott, Al & Carol Sealy, Bruno Serrao, Michael & Cynthia Sheehan, Jeffrey R. Smith, Thomas & Shirley Snelson, William & Kathy Sommer, John R. Steinbeck, Chris & Tami Storey, Donald & Vicky Storey, John Sundbeck, Richard & Sharon Sweet, Sara Te, Dr. Kenneth & Shirley Thomson, Butch & Kathy Tipper, John & Paula Tobin, David Van Epps, Roland & Nancy VanDeusen, Karen VanEpps Peters, Amy York Wakefield, Robert & Janet Wakefield, Gerald Walsh, E. Mary Washburn, Edmund Waszkiewicz, Craig & Sally Waterstraat, Harland & Doris Waterstraat, Donald Wilcox, Judith & Charles Willis, Don & Phyllis Wingerath, David & Lynne Wurster, Allan & Bonnie Wysocki, Stephen & Deborah Wysocki, Dave & Mary Lou Zimpfer, Butterfield Lake Association, Grass Lake Association, and the Millsite Property Owner's Association.

Donations were received in memory of the following:

Jeff Cowen, Missy Jennejohn, George Robertson, Richard Schafer, Donald Storey, Sr.

We want to be sure that we properly recognize all our donors and ask that you let us know of any errors you may find in our list.

CHARISMATIC BIRDS OF THE INDIAN RIVER LAKES REGION

Part 5

By: Gerry Smith

Most of the birds I have written about in this series are partial to the wild areas of the Indian River Lakes. Species such as Bald Eagle and Common Loon would rather be as far away from human contact as possible. They do not adapt well to frequent disturbance by our species and seek their own spaces well away from human dominated habitats. The subject of this essay is the opposite of those species, as it seeks the structures that we build, regardless of its

fondness for the occupants. The Eastern Phoebe is one bird species that has greatly benefited from the arrival of European colonists with their structures of many overhanging nooks and crannies. This species chooses rock crevices similar sites for nesting under natural conditions but European style houses and the proliferation of bridges has greatly increased the number of available nesting sites. We do not know if Eastern Phoebes frequented the longhouses of the Iroquois but my bet is this adaptable species did.

The Eastern Phoebe is a flycatcher, a member of a tribe of species that efficiently pluck flying insects from the air. It is, however, the most northerly member of it's family with many wintering in the southeastern United States. Most other flycatchers species travel deep into the neotropics for the winter. It's ability to catch early spring season insects in sheltered places and to utilize leftover berries explains why this species may appear at our latitude at least 4-5 weeks before any of its relatives. In warm years with warm bubbles of air moving north this species regularly appears in the last third of March and the first few days of April. In the Indian River Lakes they return to occupy cottages and outbuildings long before most serious snowbirds of the human species have begun their northward migration.

Male Eastern Phoebes arrive before their mates and begin to actively defend their territories with the constant flat "fee-bee" song that is familiar to their cottage owning human hosts. As the female arrives courtship feeding, song and other activities solidify the pair bond. The male often hovers in flight before potential nesting sites as if encouraging the female, who will largely build the nest, to consider these sites. For an early arriving species nesting is often delayed until well into May and may be related to

the advancing season's development of a good flying insect food source. Once nesting begins the female builds an exquisite cup nest composed largely of mosses and lichens under an overhang on a building, She then begins to lay eggs and incubate the nest occupying it at night while the male perches nearby. This is the point where depending on the pair's site choice interactions with humans may begin to become a bit tense. If the nest is over an entrance and the human occupants come home after dark the female may flush into the building causing problems for all involved. If this happens and it is possible for humans to use alternative entrances/exits until the young fledge everyone will experience less stress and the human hosts will be helping the birds.

The 3-6 eggs hatch and the parents become very busy during all daylight hours until the young leave the nest in two to three weeks. Cottagers will notice that the male's song is heard much less frequently as he is very busy with other parenting duties. It is particularly critical to avoid human disturbance once the young are fully feathered as they could fledge prematurely and get into trouble on the ground. As with all young birds if this happens pick up the bird and return it to the area of the nest. If the young persists in being a "jumper" place it in a nearby tree or shrub and the parents will continue to care for it. Once the brood is fledged the parents move the young nearby and care for them until they are independent. In some parts of upstate New York and farther south this species may attempt to raise two broods in a season. In the Indian River Lakes area given the often-harsh conditions of early spring a single brood is the norm.

If a second brood is not attempted the breeding pair will often remain near their breeding site well into September. As both adults

undergo their annual molt, where all feathers are replaced over a period of weeks, they are less obvious but the male can't seem to resist the urge to sing his monotonous song occasionally. After the molt singing seems to increase for a while particularly on warm sunny days following the passage of a fall cold front. Most members of this species migrate between mid September and mid-October. A few individuals may linger into early November feeding near buildings on cluster flies and other structure related insects. If you see a phoebe after mid-October look at it carefully to make sure it is this species. A colorful western relative, the Say's Phoebe, has been recorded in New York State as a wanderer from the mountain west. The off-track Say's usually appear in late fall in New York. Any Eastern Phoebe present after mid-November is probably ill, injured or otherwise impaired and is likely to be sorted out of the gene pool prior to the return of this wonderful species to the Indian River Lakes the following spring.

Next time Golden-winged Warbler, a species for which our area is critical to its survival

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Know someone who might be interested in joining? Please give us their name and address

ⓉContact me regarding Conservation Easements

ⓉI have included IRLC in my will ⓉPlease contact me with information about including IRLC in my will

Indian River Lakes Conservancy

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