

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Mark Scarlett,  
IRLC President

It amazes me how quickly we fill our summers each year with worthwhile, enjoyable, and interesting things to do. It's as though we are determined to pack an entire year's worth of activities into just two or three months.

True to form, this year is an especially busy one for members of the IRLC Board, starting with a five-hour workshop facilitated by an organizational consultant funded through a grant from the Land Trust Alliance. We hope to come out of this summer-long process with a clearer understanding of our strengths and weaknesses, and an action plan for moving the IRLC forward.

As we noted in our spring newsletter, one of the highlights of this past year was the acquisition of the island at the southwest end of Grass Lake along with a parcel of Grass Lake shoreline abutting Fauteau Road. This purchase was made possible through the timely action and generosity of Elliott and Marjorie Hillback and Dani Baker. The island is a remarkable property, with over 2.5 miles of undeveloped shoreline, and a marvelous addition to the IRLC's Grand Lake Reserve.

We hope you will join us on July 11 for the dedication of this island as the Marc A.F. Baker Island Preserve, in memory of Dani Baker's son. We will precede that ceremony with the Annual Meeting of the IRLC Board at 12:30 at the IRLC Office at 43982 Stine Road in Redwood. As always, members and friends are encouraged to join us for our Annual meeting. We will leave for the dedication shortly after and anyone needing a ride is welcome to meet us at the office. We expect the last car will be leaving no later than 1:30 PM. If you think you will need a ride, please call me at 324-5240, so we can be on the lookout for you.

Those who are interested in attending the dedication should appreciate that the island is undeveloped, so accommodations are primitive. We do hope to have a small boat landing in place by July 11, and we encourage

any who have their own boats (canoes or kayaks especially) to take this opportunity to enjoy a paddle on this beautiful lake. We will have a limited capacity for "ferrying" people to the island (there is a ten horsepower limit on Grass Lake, so boat capacities are also limited). If you prefer a boat ride, please also call me at 324-5240, so we can anticipate the seating needed.

Included with this newsletter is a map with directions to the IRLC office in Redwood, the DEC Boat Launch on Grass Lake, and Jeff and Elaine Garvey's camp. The DEC Boat Launch has no boat ramp, so it can only accommodate smaller, portable watercraft. Count on about half an hour for a paddle from the Boat Launch to the island. The put in at Jeff & Elaine's camp will bring you closer to the island and that is also where we will have motorboat accommodations for anyone looking for a ride.

Last, but not least, please reserve August 22 on your calendar for the Annual IRLC Celebration of the Indian River and its Lakes at Elliott and Margie Hillback's camp on Butterfield Lake. This is our major fundraiser of the year and has always been a guaranteed good time, with outstanding food, and the warm companionship of people like you who love the Indian River Lakes region. Invitations with more details will be sent later in July.

*View from the Marc A. F. Baker Preserve.*



Scarlett photo

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.

### IRLC CONTACTS

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### Board of Directors

Ed Robertson, *Secretary*  
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## Pileated Woodpecker - Adaptable Woodpecker Preservers

At the end of the 19th Century much of the forest of northeastern North America had been decimated to provide land for family farms. Ornithologists and naturalists of the time witnessed the decline of many species that once called the forest primeval home. Species such as Common Raven, many forest hawks and large mammals were being lost from an ever-tamed landscape. Many feared that the great logcock we know as the Pileated Woodpecker would follow it's cousin of southeastern forests, the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, toward the void of extinction. Fortunately the Pileated proved far more adaptable in exploiting the second growth forests and remains an uncommon but widely distributed resident of the forested areas in its range.

This species is the largest of our woodpeckers in most of its North American range. It can be found as a resident throughout eastern North America and across southern Canada to the northern Rockies and Pacific Northwest. They are year-round residents with adult pairs remaining on their breeding range through the seasons. Young birds disperse and there may be other limited movements but this is not a migratory species. The adults occupy mature forest or young forest containing some big trees. In the northeast they have adapted well to suburban areas with some forest but the densest populations occur in areas with continuous mature forest.

The forests of the Indian River Lakes region provide good habitat for this species in areas where logging is done sensibly. Logging that removes most large trees through the practice of hy-grading adversely impacts this and other species of birds that require large trees. While land use practices and ecological factors, such as availability of food and nesting trees, impacts Pileated Woodpecker distribution and density,

they are generally widespread through our area. A density of one pair per square mile is a reasonable estimate for our region. Pileated Woodpeckers are highly territorial with adult pairs chasing intruders from their domain.

Beginning in February-March adult pairs reestablish their pair bonds through courtship and territorial defense. They begin to prospect for suitable nesting trees where excavation of a nest hole will begin in April. As with most woodpeckers in our region they excavate a new nest cavity annually, with old cavities providing homes for a myriad of other wildlife. It is at this time of year that this species is most obvious. Territorial disputes between neighbors and various courtship activities are often accompanied by the *Woick Woick Woick* call of the species. Males will issue a challenge to all potential rivals by their territorial drumming given from perches on trees, telephone poles and other resounding sound sites. Just watching a male drum on the metal crossbar support of a telephone pole is enough to give the observer a headache

As territorial boundaries become well defined neighboring pairs settle down to the critical business at hand of reproduction. Both parents dig the nest cavity with the male, who apparently selects the site, doing 2/3 of the excavation. The female may lay from 3-6 eggs with four being the most frequently reported number. Incubation begins immediately so when the young hatch, it is over a period of several days and they vary in size. The primary foods of Pileated Woodpeckers are carpenter ants and many species of wood boring beetles. Just as both parents participate in incubation of the eggs, they both feed the young. The young are fed by regurgitation a rich high-protein soup of these insects. They grow rapidly and are capable of flight when slightly less than one month old. If one is fortunate

to locate a nest just before fledging the young is often sitting on branches with unkempt crests looking ever the part of a slightly deranged Woody Woodpecker.

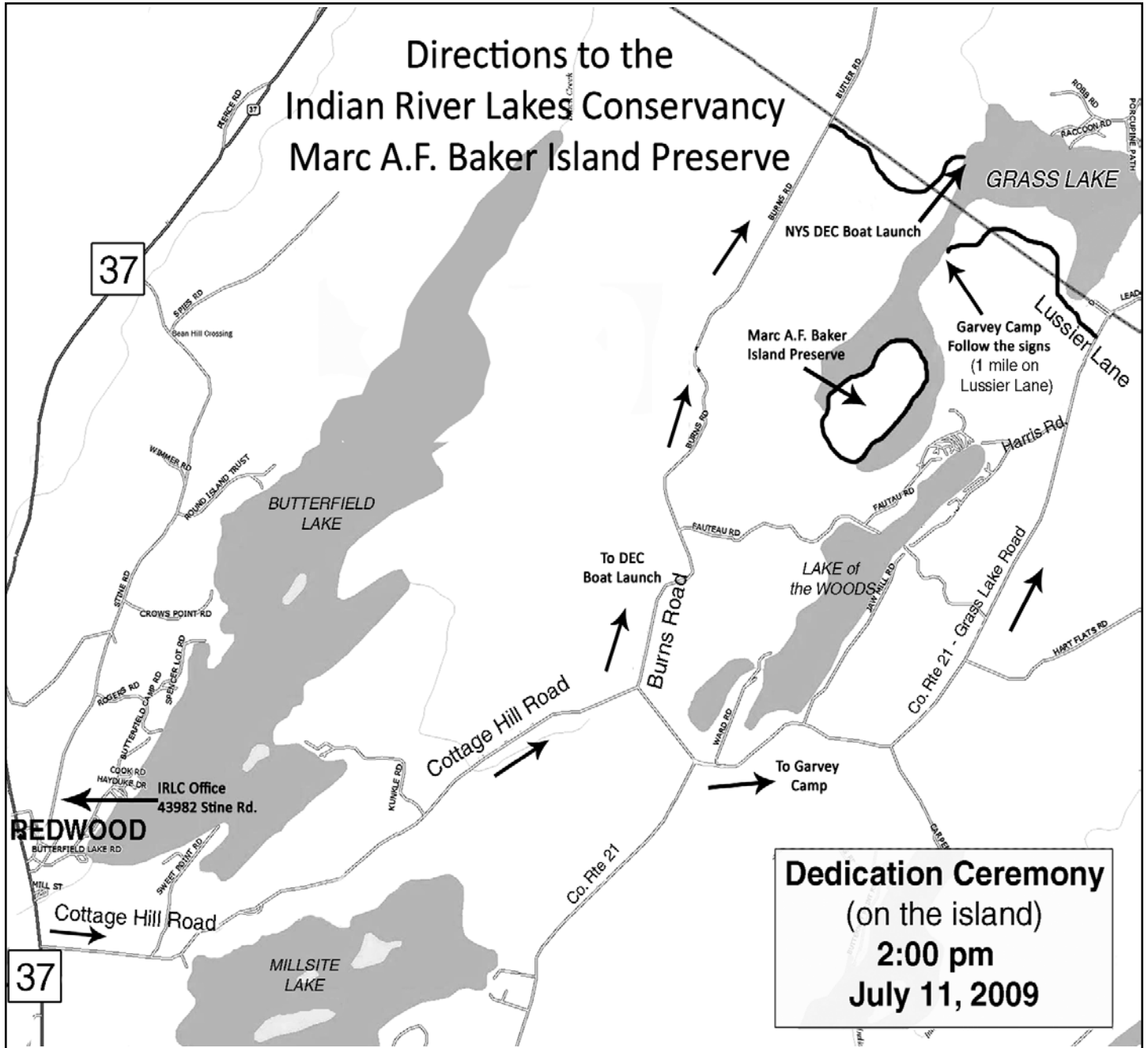
As with many bird species each parent may take part of the newly fledged brood during the day as they all wander the territory looking for food. They may return to the nest cavity or other suitable unoccupied cavities for night roosting and protection from predators. The main threats to this crow-sized woodpecker are large hawks such as Northern Goshawk and Coopers Hawk, which can catch them in flight. They are also vulnerable to large owls, such as Great Horned Owl and mammals such as the fisher that may surprise them at night roosts. After a Pileated Woodpecker survives its first year a life span of up to a decade is probably not unusual.

After the rigors of territory defense and the trials of the nesting season

*(continued on page 6)*



*Gerry Smith is a senior Northern New York ornithologist and consulting ecologist. Gerry is a devoted friend and advocate for grass roots land trusts and the dedicated volunteers who share his love of nature.*



## Conservancy Supporter Remembered

Our Community lost a wonderful friend in March with the passing of Stephen F. Caldwell of Ridgewood, NJ, Redwood, NY and Tucson, AZ.

Steve was raised in Ridgewood, NJ and received his degree from Columbia University. He was an author and poet, a loving son, brother and uncle and an excellent friend to many.

Steve lived independently as a high-functioning quadriplegic at Better Farm

on Cottage Hill Road, Redwood and spent many winters in Tucson. He was an avid birder and could be seen on the roads in the Redwood area in his electric wheelchair, enjoying the great outdoors.

Quoting his obituary, "His closest friends and family were, in his own words, 'invigorated by my perverse joy of life.' He taught others acceptance and love by the openness he dared to share."

Steve donated 86 acres of property from Better Farm to IRLC in 2003 to preserve open space for the community and habitat for birds and wildlife. The diverse property added a beautiful meadow, a large wetland area and some rocky upland to the south east end of the Grand Lake Reserve.

Though Steve will be sorely missed, his inspiring legacy of courage, perseverance, generosity and friendship lives on.

# John Noble and Wendy Getman to Receive Indian River Lakes Conservancy Scholarships

The Indian River Lakes Conservancy works with the schools in our area and serves as the administrative unit for a scholarship program that provides funding for students who are planning to further their education in the field of environmental science. The recipients this year are John Noble, a graduating senior at Hammond Central School and Wendy Getman, a graduate of Jefferson Community College.

John is the son of Weldon and Carolyn Noble of Morristown. He played soccer and basketball during all of his four years of high school. In addition, he participated in band, chorus and stage band, and performed at the NYSSMA solo ratings. He is an altar server at St. John's Catholic Church in Morristown. John plans to attend school at SUNY Potsdam in the fall where he will be majoring in biology. He intends to pursue a career in environmental science.

Wendy is a 2007 graduate of Copenhagen Central School. She is graduating from Jefferson Community

College in August of 2009 with as Associate in Science degree in Liberal Arts/Mathematics and Sciences with a major concentration in Science. Wendy has been a dean's list student, and her course work has been highly concentrated in the biology discipline. She will be attending the Environmental School of Forestry/ Syracuse University for the fall 2009 semester where she will be majoring in environmental science. In addition to her interest in the environment and ecology, Wendy is an outstanding athlete. She has been a two-sport participant at the intercollegiate level having played women's soccer and basketball at JCC. She was a member of the Region III championship soccer team during the fall 2008 season. Wendy enjoys all outdoor activities, particularly those associated with water sports, camping and hiking. She is most interested in pursuing a career involving renewable resources and alternative energy.

Annual scholarships are available for local high school graduates, a Jefferson

Community College graduate going on to study in the field of environmental science, or a child or grandchild of any IRLC member or lake association member.

Funding for these scholarships is provided by Indian River Lakes Conservancy membership, donations and funds from an auction held annually at the Butterfield Lake Association picnic. Conservancy members are planning several fund raising activities this season to benefit the scholarship fund.

## About the IRLC

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 the Land Trust Alliance, a national organization

\_\_\_\_ Renewal

## INDIAN RIVER LAKES CONSERVANCY ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FORM - 2009

\_\_\_\_ New Member

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Permanent Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Seasonal Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership - \$20.00

Supporter - \$35.00

Conservator - \$50.00

Total Check  
Enclosed:

Protector - \$100.00

Benefactor - \$250.00

Eagle - \$1,000.00 and above]

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Scholarship Fund

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Endowment Fund

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Stewardship Fund

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ for the purchase of the Grass Lake parcels, including the Marc A. F. Baker Island Preserve

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

**This is a pledge**, please bill me in equal installments  Annually  Quarterly over the next \_\_\_\_\_ years.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Donation in Memory/Honor of \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to: *Indian River Lakes Conservancy* and mail with this form to: P.O. Box 27, Redwood, NY 13609 .

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

Please contact me  regarding Conservation Easements  with information about including IRLC in my will  I have included IRLC in my will



# Rare Plant Communities Thrive in Indian River Lakes Area's Unique Geology

By Anne Johnson

As a botanist I enjoy exploring for plants in the North Country in all kinds of habitats. A number of years ago I had been reading about the Indian River Lakes region and wanted to explore the area, so was very happy to read in the newspaper that a new land conservancy had been formed. I wrote to Ed Robertson and he was kind enough to invite me to explore and provided me with a map of the conservancy property as it was then. I had read old geologic reports and was intrigued by the area. It is situated on the Frontenac Axis, a bridge of rock, which links the Adirondacks to Algonquin Park (the pre-Cambrian shield) in Canada. Apparently, along the sides of this bridge was extensive metamorphism, resulting in interesting rocks and minerals and, of course, plants. A number of the plants are locally rare as they are at a range limit or are restricted to a habitat uncommon in the north county (such as the rich limestone woods or the acidic rocky shoreline outcrops).

Many plant assemblages unique to the North Country occur in the region. The red cedar and occasional pitch pine stands along the shores of Butterfield Lake, with bearberry on rocky ridges, are the sort of community you see closer to the Thousand Islands and near Kingston, Ontario. The fens rimming the southern portion of Grass Lake are more common within the Adirondacks, and the rich limestone woods in the area are more common in the central and eastern portion of the state. Quite a few plants seem to be at their range limits here. Pitch pine is near its northern and eastern limit; black oak, while sparse here, is at its northern limit, as are swamp white oak, red cedar, and shagbark hickory. The Indian River Lakes Region is an area of relatively high floristic diversity due to these zonal boundaries.

Rocks ranging from acid sandstone to crystalline limestone make for the

high variety in plant life. Sparsely vegetated acidic rocky tops occur above the lakes, providing habitat for interesting lichens and mosses and scenic overlooks. These occur next to limey, rich rocky deciduous woods filled with luxuriant growths of lime loving ferns where diversity is enhanced by rocky slopes and outcrops, which support abundant mosses, lichens, and rock loving species.

Being especially interested in wetlands, and in particular wetlands that occur on peat, I first gravitated toward the fen (a bog-like plant community) in the southern portion of Grass Lake. I was excited to find poison sumac growing there, another species near its northern range limit. Also growing there were plants typical to bogs and poor fens such as cottongrasses, pitcher plant, leatherleaf, bog rosemary, sheep laurel, cranberries, various interesting sedges, black spruce, and larch. This type of wetland contrasts sharply with the more common mineral soil and deep water wetlands found in many of the bays and arms of the lakes, where large stands of buttonbush and waterwillow occur, both of which like their feet in deeper water. These patches are often fringed with arrow arum and pickerel weed closer to the water, and with willows and dogwoods closer to the upland edges.

The rich limey woods, such as those along the trail to Butterfield Lake, are full of spring ephemerals such as hepatica, trillium, lush sedges, spring beauty, and bloodroot. Ferns adapted to extremely rich woods occur here also (Goldie's and glade fern), and there are numerous fascinating sedges that require some lime to grow. The acidic rocky tops at the higher elevations and steep shoreline rocks provide habitat for some locally rare plants, such as bearberry, Venus's looking-glass (a truly strange plant, with a very unique flower), Carolina rose, and fragrant sumac. Where the rock faces contain some lime the

state-listed rare fern, smooth cliff-brake, may be found.

Many of these plant communities are high quality examples with no (or very little) exotic or invasive species, no (or minimal) disturbance of any kind, little to no deer browse, and no altered hydrology. The Indian River Lakes area is a fascinating mosaic of rock types and plant communities and was well worth the drive down from St. Lawrence County. The variety in the area is more than enough to keep a botanist happy for quite a while and I suspect there are a lot more to plants to be discovered than the 436 species I have recorded on my few visits so far. Knowing that the area is actively being preserved and that the land conservancy is growing every year is both heartening and reassuring.

*A Rose Pogonia (pogonia ophioglossides). The photograph was taken in the wetland adjacent to the Mark A.F. Baker Island Preserve.*



Scarlett photo

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*Anne Johnson is a consulting field botanist from Waddington, NY. Her knowledge of the diverse and varied flora in the region has added immensely to our appreciation of the very special character of this landscape.*

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P.O. Box 27  
Redwood, New York 13679

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## Pileated Woodpecker (continued from page 2)

Pileated Woodpecker family groups enjoy the good times of summer and early fall. At that time individuals and broods may appear in large trees near cottage colonies or along watercourses in our area. In addition to their staple insect prey this species consumes a variety of wild fruits and nuts that become available as summer merges into fall. Young birds begin to drift about seeking their own territories since Pileated Woodpeckers will attempt to breed in their first year. Whether the parents encourage this departure is not well documented but it is likely the request "to get a job" occurs by mid-late autumn in our region.

Between the dispersal of immature birds and adults locating and exploiting food sources, October and November are good times to find this woodpecker. Its black and white body, wings and red-crest contrast wonderfully with the autumn colors. The lack of leaves on trees permits the observer to determine age/gender by seeing a full red crest (adult male) or partial crest (female and immature). The crisp autumn nights warn of the coming winter spurring this species and all resident wildlife to prepare for the season of scarcity in any way they can. In fall and early winter Pileated Woodpeckers begin to exhibit occasional signs of territorial behavior as a portent of the future. We can rejoice that thanks to the conservation efforts (legal protection from shooting) of our forbearers this magnificent woodpecker haunts our 21st century forests. With good forest management practice and conservation land set aside, such as the Grand Lake Reserve, the great logcock of Native Americans will bring wonder to many future generations.



## IRLC Summer Calendar

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|----------------|---|
| <b>July 11</b> | <b>2009 Annual Meeting</b><br>12:30 pm<br><i>IRLC Offices</i><br>43982 Stine Rd Redwood |
| <b>July 11</b> | <b>Marc A.F. Baker Island<br/>Preserve Dedication</b><br>2:00 pm<br><i>Grass Lake</i>   |
| <b>Aug 22</b>  | <b>IRLC Barbecue<br/>Hillback's Camp</b><br><i>Butterfield Lake</i>                     |