

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Mark Scarlett, IRLC President



*A new family of loons on Grass Lake.  
photos by Mark Scarlett*

*With unrelenting news of environmental destruction elsewhere, we hope you can take comfort in the work that you have done, through your support of the Indian River Lakes Conservancy, to preserve and protect the beautiful landscape in your own back yard.*



Indeed, with your help and the tireless efforts of many dedicated volunteers, we can all take pride in how much our Conservancy has accomplished in recent years.

First and foremost, the Grand Lake Reserve, the legacy of Henry Carse's generosity and foresight, has become an increasingly valued resource for both recreation and environmental research. We are hearing from a growing number of people who are traveling the network of trails on the Reserve, enjoying the quiet woodlands, rocky vistas, and peaceful, undeveloped shorelines. At the same time, we are learning that the Indian River Lakes region- and the Grand Lake Reserve in particular- are becoming an increasing focus of serious environmental study, most notably because ecosystems found here host flora and fauna that are becoming more and more difficult to find elsewhere.

Last summer we dedicated the Marc A. F. Baker Island Preserve in Grass Lake as a beautiful new environmental feature of the Grand Lake Reserve. This year, with funding from the New York State Conservation Partnership

### IRLC CONTACTS

Mark Scarlett, *President*  
315-324-5240

Elliott Hillback, *Vice President*  
315-482-2446-summer  
781-449-8331-winter

[IRLC1998@aol.com](mailto:IRLC1998@aol.com)

### Board of Directors

Ed Robertson, *Secretary*  
Jeff Garvey, *Treasurer*

Dani Baker  
Shirley Carpenter  
Vici Diehl  
Rick Lopez  
Dave Martin  
Terry Panunzio  
Richard Sauer  
Bob Wakefield

*In June, Rose Pigionia orchids grow in wonderful profusion along the shores of the Marc AF Baker Island Preserve.*



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT (cont.)

Program administered by the DEC and the Land Trust Alliance, we are developing a conservation stewardship and management plan that includes the island and the adjacent 12.5 acre shoreline parcel in the expanded Grand Lake Reserve. A brochure and trail map are also being developed as part of that grant.

This spring, the Indian River Lakes were recognized as an important birding "clutch" along the Seaway Trail, as featured in the *Birding the Great Lakes* Seaway Trail guidebook, and described in the brochure enclosed with this newsletter.

Most recently, we have been buoyed by the award of over \$432,000 to protect more than 550 acres of high quality wet-lands. These Federal funds are being provided through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative as part of the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture, a regional conservation-coordinating body. Working in partnership with Ducks Unlimited, the grant that will allow IRLC to acquire key wetlands habitats important to native and migratory waterfowl.

The truth is that we do have something very special and unique here, and more and more people are beginning to discover what we have known all along. Still, despite what we have accomplished, we will continue to be challenged to find ways to protect those places that make the Indian River Lakes special, to make those places available for public recreation in ways that respect their environmental qualities, and to encourage research and educational efforts that enhance our understanding of those qualities.

We thank you for all you have done to bring us so far. We are grateful for your commitment to preserving and protecting this beautiful landscape and your continuing support for the Indian River Lakes Conservancy.



*The land trust community lost a stalwart champion last December when cancer took the life of Alex Velto, Executive Director of the Northern New York Community Foundation. To the end, he took every opportunity he could to enjoy the north country places that he loved, shown here in September on a Grass Lake trail overlook with Denise Robertson.*

*photos by Mark Scarlett*



*Glen Robinson, DEC Forester, walked the Marc AF Baker Island Preserve in February, as he prepared his recommendations for IRLC's conservation management plan for the island. He pointed out that the black spruces in the adjoining wetlands are likely among the oldest trees on the island, their growth being stunted by the severity of the environment.*

## Save the Dates

*Please mark your calendars to participate in these great IRLC activities this summer:*

**TILT Trek on Grass Lake** - Tuesday, July 6 at 6 PM, IRLC is partnering with the Thousand Islands Land Trust for a "TILT Trek" on Grass Lake to explore the Marc AF Baker Island Preserve, IRLC's newest addition to the Grand Lake Reserve. The trip will start at the NYS DEC boat launch on Grass Lake. Sign up in advance and secure your kayak rental if needed (\$15) by contacting the TILT office at 315-686-5345 or [events@tilandtrust.org](mailto:events@tilandtrust.org).

**IRLC Annual Meeting** - Saturday, July 10 at 1:30 PM. Meet at the IRLC Office at 43982 Stine Road in Redwood to carpool for a short drive to overlook one of the properties slated for protection through the latest round of Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding.

**Annual IRLC Celebration of the Lakes** – Saturday, August 21, 3-7 PM at Elliott and Margie Hillback's cottage on Butterfield Lake, featuring a Dinosaur BBQ dinner starting at 5 PM. Join us for a wonderful afternoon with family and friends in a delightful setting on beautiful Butterfield Lake, highlighted by dinner from one of the most celebrated BBQ eateries in the northeast. Tickets, at \$30 each or \$50 per family, will be limited to the first 100 to sign-up. So reserve your place by calling Elliott Hillback at 315-482-2446 or Shirley Carpenter at 315-482-5250.



# Cedar Waxwing

The Cedar Waxwing, much like the American Goldfinch, is a species whose breeding season more closely matches cottager schedules than many nesting birds of the Indian River Lakes region. These handsome songbirds are late migrants with our local breeders generally appearing in late May and early June; a time when the human snowbird migration to cottages is heavy. This is a nomadic species with its number varying greatly by season and year in any given location. In some years they are very common and in others very uncommon.

This species is one of three members of the family *Bombycillidae* found in the world. Waxwings are named for the wax like feather tips found on the secondary wing feathers in adult birds. These are generally red in the Cedar Waxwing. This species is widely distributed in North America, breeding across the continent from the northern edge of the Boreal Forest south to Virginia and Oregon. The winter range extends from southern Canada to northern Panama. Since this species is primarily a fruit eater abundant crops of sugary fruits in any given area greatly impact local number and distribution.

Winter numbers in northern New York vary with the year with this species being abundant in some winters and absent in others. In some years significant invasions by their northern relative the larger Bohemian Waxwing, result in Cedars being greatly outnumbered between November and March in our region. During such winters year round human residents of the lakes enjoy the treat of having the Bohemian Waxwing present in substantial numbers. Both waxwings rarely come to feeders, even in mid-winter, but observers willing to provide expensive fare such as soaked raisins may

bring more success. A better strategy to enjoy both species of waxwings is to plant copious amounts of native fruit bearing shrubs and trees in your yard. Species such as mountain ash will bring these visitors to an abundant food source where you can enjoy their presence.

Throughout the winter and early spring Cedar Waxwings are nomadic drifting through their wintering areas seeking pockets of abundant fruiting food sources. Usually it only takes a matter of days/weeks to empty the larder and drift on. The nomadic nature of this species makes it very difficult to assess the timing and nature of their migration. When does a given bird/flock stop wandering for food and begin purposeful migration to a breeding area? I suspect only the birds know for sure.

The evidence we do have from migration concentration areas, such as Onondaga Audubon's Derby Hill Bird Observatory at the southeastern corner of Lake Ontario, suggests spring migration occurs very late and is intense for about a month. Very few migrants pass Derby Hill prior to mid May and the majority of the migration occurs from Memorial Day to mid June with some migrants still northbound in late June-early July. It is likely that pairs breeding in the Indian River Lakes area are on their breeding grounds by 10 June.

Breeding birds may arrive paired or pairing occurs shortly thereafter. Often we humans first note their presence when we hear their high-pitched tseeeee call in our yards and gardens. Courtship is a low key affair from an observer's standpoint with feeding of the female by the male and two birds sitting on branch hopping toward each other as indicators of courting waxwings. The female selects the nest site in a small tree or shrub and primarily constructs the



nest. Once the open cup nest of various plant materials is finished she usually lays 4- 5 eggs. Clutches late in the season that usually result from renesting may involve fewer eggs. At our latitude it is likely that the Cedar Waxwing raises only one brood per year, however, since nesting continues to late August second broods are possible. If all goes well young begin to hatch about 12 days after the last egg is laid and young fledge about 16 days later. During incubation and brooding the female attends the nest and young, with the male providing food.

As the young grow the female makes forays for food and once fledging occurs the parents feed and provide care for young for a couple of weeks. This is the best opportunity to attract family groups to feeders by putting out moistened or fresh small fruits. At that point the young are on their own before joining flocks that may or may not include their parents.

*(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.*

# Ode Notes

by Vici and Steve Diehl

As we pulled into a small clearing at Millsite Lake towards the middle of the day, it was getting warm... a little above average for mid-May. The plan was to help Denise and Ed with repairs to a friend's cottage. A plan quickly stalled as we noticed dragonflies busy hunting black flies in the highly contrasting lighting. While Ed and Denise patiently watched, we netted Odes and temporarily placed them into portable "bug jails". As the prisoners were trying to post bail, we worked on the cottage exterior.

Work completed, the dragonflies were identified and released... a delicate American Emerald (*Cordulia shurtleffi*), fast-flying Beaverpond Baskettails (*Epithica canis*) and a newly emerged Four-spotted Skimmer (*Libellula quadrimaculata*).

One of the most beautiful Odonates, the Four-spotted Skimmer averages 1 ¾" in body length and is among the earliest dragonflies to be seen in the spring. Identification in the field is easy: wings with amber leading edges, black spots at the nodus (mid-point of the wing's leading edge) and a back basal patch on the hind wings. After emerging from a slow-moving river or stream, marshy-edged lake or pond, you can find them flying from early May through mid-August. Adults may wander from these preferred aquatic nurseries to forage in fields and along the wooded edges of clearings. In addition to being slow fliers, they spend a lot of time perching on low vegetation, rocks, or even the ground. Upon returning to water and mating, females oviposit while flying tapping the water surface and releasing eggs. Males sometimes hover nearby.

An astonishing fact is that this species is circumpolar, being found across North America, Europe, to

Japan. However, prior to the NY Natural Heritage Program Dragonfly and Damselfly Survey, 2005 – 2009, this species had not been found in Jefferson County.

We first photographed this skimmer 35 years ago at Mendon Ponds Park outside of Rochester. Last June we encountered another along the Indian

River. The Four-spotted Skimmer has continued to interrupt our plans. We were trying to garden in our back yard a week after visiting Millsite Lake. One flew overhead... the hoe and rake were dropped and off we went with sweep nets in hand. We feel privileged to have Four-spotted Skimmers in our Indian River watershed.

*4-Spotted Skimmer (Libellula quadrimaculata)*

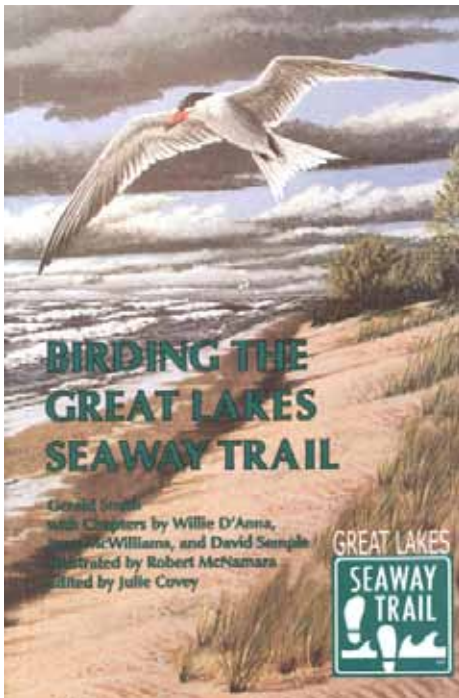


*The Diehls are well-known local conservationists and nature photographers. Their article on Damselflies and Dragonflies of the Adirondack Region will be featured in the July/August issue of Adirondack Life.*



# Book Review

by Shirley Carpenter



*Written by Gerry Smith, with chapters by Willie D'Anna, Jerry McWilliams and David Semple, Birding the Great Lakes Seaway Trail is a 195 page, full-color guide to birding hot spots along the Seaway Trail. Illustrations by Robert McNamara. Edited by Julie Covey.*

Birding the Great Lakes Seaway Trail is a user friendly guide to all the hot spots for bird watching along the seaway trail. This handy publication is a full color field guide, geographically organized from west to east along the trail. The guide provides pertinent birding information for all parts of the trail from the Pennsylvania borderlands to Lake St. Lawrence and all notable birding areas in between.

The Indian River Lakes section provides information for the area extending from Redwood northeast to the Black Lake region. The guide also supplies the user with a colorful calendar which includes lists of birds which may be seen each month of the year.

For instance, during the month of June, birders in our viewing area should be on the look out for the common loon, the whip-poor-will, and breeding neotropical songbirds. We are told that

this region is best birded during any season by covering the many back roads through the area to look and listen for birds from roadsides.

Gerry Smith and his helpers are to be commended. They have compiled a bird guide book for our area which is truly helpful whether the user is a novice birder or a seasoned veteran of the woods. This publication is available at the Great Lakes Seaway Trail Discovery Center, Ray and West Main Streets, Sackets Harbor, NY 13685 at the very reasonable price of \$19.95.

As an incentive for IRLC members to renew at higher levels, members at the Protector (\$100), Benefactor (\$250), or Eagle (\$1,000+) levels will receive a complimentary copy of this book upon renewal.



## 2010 Conservancy Scholarship Winners

The Indian River Lakes Conservancy continues to award scholarships to deserving students in our area who plan to further their educations in the field of environmental science. This year the recipients are Jennifer R. Breen from Indian River High School and Michael J. Demarco from Jefferson Community College.

While in high school, Jennifer was a member of the band and the chorus. She was also active on the soccer team, the Latin club, the varsity bowling team, the Indian River Green Warriors Recycling Team and the National Honor Society. In the fall she plans to attend Paul Smith's College near Tupper Lake, where she will be majoring in environmental science.

Michael graduated from Jefferson Community College in May 2010 with an A.S. degree in mathematics and science. While a student, Michael was named to both the dean's list and the president's list. He is a member of "Tree Watertown," a street-tree advisory board, and he has been active in the planting of trees throughout the city. His future plans include studying at SUNY ESF at Wanakena campus during the summer of 2010 and then attending SUNY ESF/Syracuse for the fall semester. He has been accepted into the Natural Resources Management program with a minor in Urban Environmental Science.

Funding for the scholarships is provided by conservancy memberships, special donations from individuals, and contributions from lake associations belonging to the conservancy. Anyone wishing to help with the scholarship program may contact the Indian River Lakes Conservancy, P.O. Box 27, Redwood, NY 13679.

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.

### How YOU can help:

*Member support is vitally important to the work of the Indian River Lakes Conservancy. Please include us when you consider the organizations worthy of your year-end charitable gifts. Use the enclosed envelope to make your contribution today. You can also help us reach others who cherish this place and benefit from the work we do by letting us know of those we should add to our mailing list.*

Current Resident or

## Cedar Waxwing (continued from page 3)

As with many songbird species successful reproduction is affected by many factors including predation, weather and brood parasitism by the Brown-headed Cowbird. Such parasitism affects many of our eastern woodland and shrub land birds very adversely. The larger fast growing young of the cowbird often survive at the expense of the legitimate offspring of their smaller hosts. Cedar Waxwings "get even" however as young cowbirds do not do well on the high fruit content diet of their hosts and most fail to survive.

By mid-September in our region flocks of adults and young of the year Cedar Waxwings are forming feeding flocks that may remain together to the following spring. These groups begin to drift about in search of food with something that may be called migration usually beginning in our area by October. Fall migration is even harder to study than spring migration as

flocks may remain for several weeks near abundant food sources before moving on. While numbers may vary greatly from year to year in any given region there appears to be no substantial reason for conservation concern for this species in the near term. The Cedar Waxwing is an adaptable little bird that does well in human modified landscapes and appears to have increased in the last century and the current one. Thus these handsome little birds should entertain future generations of human residents far into the future.

*If you enjoy Gerry Smith's birding articles, you'll be interested in his recent book, Birding The Great Lakes Seaway Trail. See the review on page 5.*



### 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



Printed on paper certified by  
the Forest Stewardship Council