



## PRESIDENT'S Thank You

Elliott Hillback, IRLC President

Dear Indian River Lakes Conservancy Volunteers, Supporters, Members, Friends, Donors, Partners, Conservators, Funders, Board Members, Idea Sources, Collaborators, Helpers, Friend Generators, or whatever other title you would like to use -- thank you for everything you do to help this "Place To Love"- our Indian River Lakes area. We thank each of you in this newsletter because every one of you helps us in one or more ways to accomplish the Indian River Lake Conservancy's Mission: Protect + Learn + Enjoy + Forever. While the IRLC now has an excellent Staff person, we are and will always continue to be a volunteer driven organization --powered by the ideas, actions, energy, time and resources that we all "donate". Your gift, in whatever form it takes, to the IRLC and the achievement of its mission is invaluable and we appreciate your involvement and support.

I often talk about the Indian River Lakes area as being "A Place to Love". We need to be sure that, by working together, we can create a legacy so that our grandchildren and their grandchildren will still be able to feel the same love for this area. I would challenge each of you to think about ways we can act and things we can do to make certain this special Indian River Lakes area also "Loves Us in Return". In what ways

can we improve our two way relationship with the place we love? As you can see in the updates from Ed Robertson on the rapidly expanding Indian River and Lakes Water Project (IRLWP), and Mark Scarlett on our recent acquisitions plus plans for an education center on the new Redwood Hill Preserve, we are making exciting progress. We would love to hear what you are passionate about and what ideas you have about how we could work together to make a meaningful impact.

Years ago I learned a short sentence made up of ten two letter words that defines a powerful way to live and act. "If it is to be, it is up to me". This simple little sentence suggests that just watching or waiting is not acceptable. It demands active involvement in some way: providing advice, ideas, resources, or active participation, etc. Over the years I realized that replacing one of the two letter words with another created an even more powerful way to act: "If it is to be, it is up to us" because "us" is much smarter, more experienced, better able than "me". Thank you for being part of us, for helping us take action and make a positive impact on our "Place To Love". Thank you for being a crucial part of the Indian River Lakes Conservancy. A heartfelt thank you to us.

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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.

## Member Spotlight: Meet Karen Bald & Nadine Gardner

Nadine Gardner and Karen Bald have been coming to Butterfield Lake for 30 years. It all started when, after hearing a coworker talk about how much she and her family enjoyed their annual month in the Indian River Lakes area, Nadine suggested they try renting a cottage for a week. Right away they felt drawn to the peace and quiet of the lake. That first summer, Nadine enjoyed fishing while Karen was content to sit on the porch with a glass of wine and a good book. One day they were out on the lake soaking in a warm peaceful afternoon. "I asked her to hold on to my pole for just a minute," Nadine explained, "then she caught a fish and I couldn't get my pole back!" From that point forward, the lake just "caught hold" of them.

Each summer for the next eight years, they rented a cottage near the boat launch in Redwood. In 1992, they found a place to call their own. The camp, originally built in 1927, sits



on a high bluff overlooking the lake, surrounded by forest with plenty of wildlife marching through. "That's what drew us to this place," Karen said, "the wilderness, the sound of the loons." When family comes to visit they spend their time outside where young nieces and nephews quickly learn to respect this wild place. "We've always felt the importance of impressing upon each generation the importance of caring for this place." Each day is an adventure punctuated by wildlife. Deer wandering through the yard, a flock of turkeys roosting on the roof, mink scampering

on the rocks at the water's edge, and loons nesting on the lake all provide opportunities to learn and to appreciate the gift of this place. One year a ruffed grouse showed up and adopted the kids, following them everywhere. When the kids weren't around, she hopped down the cliff to keep Nadine company as she fileted fish. "Our friends and family used to say 'I can't believe you bought a place so far away from where you live!'" Nadine said. "But once you get here it is like a different world!"

Karen, a speech pathologist in the public schools, retired last June. She delighted in her first full summer on the lake. Nadine, who works for a music publishing company in western New York, will retire in April of this year. The two are looking forward to spending their summers on Butterfield. This year they plan to undertake some major repairs and a modest expansion of their 90 year old camp. The camp has remained much the same through the years, though with a few modern conveniences like electricity and running water. "They used to have a hand pump set on a four by four platform out over the edge of the cliff." Nadine explained that the granddaughters of the camp's original owner have visited a few times. "It meant the world to them to see the place that their grandfather built and reminisce about their summers on the lake." Part of the renovations will include an indoor bathroom with a composting toilet like the one they



currently have in the bath house. The two are committed to minimizing their impact on the environment and have given their contractor strict instructions about keeping debris away from the bluff and out of the water.

Karen and Nadine both remarked that there is more to this place than its natural beauty. "If you have a problem, the neighbors at the lake will be there in a moment. We're proud to be members of this community." A second generation of family kids is coming to spend time at their camp, now. New faces will accompany Nadine and Karen into town for ice cream, fresh eyes will get to watch deer in the yard, younger hands will learn to row a boat all by themselves and another set of hearts will learn to love this place.

### Save the Dates

### Don't miss these 2015 Events!

*Be sure to check our website for more fun hikes & programs throughout the year!*

- February 21.....Winter Family Outing  
*Bring your sense of adventure for a snow shoe hike on Redwood Hill Preserve*
- March 21.....Stewardship Trail Building Day  
*Help clear new hiking trails at our Boyd Pond property*
- April 4.....Sugar Shack Hike  
*Join us for an early spring hike to learn all about maple sugaring*
- April 11.....Stewardship GWW Habitat Improvement Day  
*Come lend a hand as we work to improve habitat for Golden-winged Warblers*
- May 9.....Birds & Blooms Hike  
*Welcome in spring as we look for signs of warmer weather*
- June 27.....IRLC Annual Meeting  
*Join us in Redwood to learn about new education and water quality initiatives*
- August 4.....Hyde Lake Geology Paddle  
*Bring your kayak or canoe and paddle scenic Hyde Lake.*
- August 8.....Celebration of the Lakes  
*Join us for our annual celebration of the beautiful Indian River Lakes.*

## Water Project Accelerating

By: Ed Robertson



*Algae blooms like this one on Butterfield Lake, summer 2014, are becoming an all too frequent occurrence on the Indian River Lakes. These blooms result from excess nutrients entering the lake water and can often contain species of algae that are toxic to humans, pets and wildlife. Photo by Elliott Hillback.*

The Indian River and Lakes Water Project has generated a lot of interest as we build a wide ranging program of activities to overcome the challenges presented by the water quality crisis that is degrading the way of life on the Indian River and Indian River Lakes we all love. As we talk with and listen to more and more of you who live in, and love, this area it has become clear that the community understands there is a water crisis. A significant number of individuals are clearly ready to begin taking action to restore clean water to our lakes and river.

IRLC is seeking cottagers and homeowners willing to be lake's Water Project representatives for your lake. As such you will help address questions from your neighbors and present the latest findings and recommendations on how to do things like switch from water based toilets, install effective nutrient capturing grey water absorption systems or create waterfront runoff buffer zones. Please volunteer to help your lake by helping spread the word.

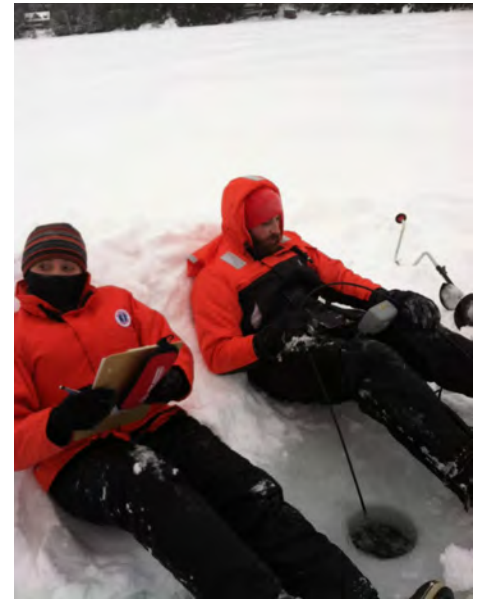
Please consider volunteering your cottage or home as a demonstration site for an alternative toilet, grey water or buffer project. This can be an impactful way for neighbors to observe firsthand how well these systems work. Help

inspire others to take action by showing them how straight forward and cost effective they can be. So little cost for so much benefit! Take action at your cottage this spring and begin to reduce the nutrient concentrations in your lake's water. We are seeking at least two cottage or home owners from each lake as demo sites this summer.

The IRLC Water Project is also evaluating what will be required to produce a comprehensive Indian River Watershed Management Plan. This plan will help residents strengthen the quality of life in their community while restoring the sustainable ecological function of our lakes and river. We will need volunteers to conduct tests, monitor streams and lakes, evaluate data and work with scientists to increase our knowledge.

Conservation of the natural beauty and environmental integrity of our land and water will, in the long term, be mutually beneficial for all seasonal and year-around residents and for our wildlife inhabitants too. Please contact us to participate in this work. We need your help and ideas, we need involvement and input from all stakeholder groups to return the Indian River and Lakes Watershed to a healthy and sustainable condition. Thank you.

## Students Brave the Elements



*Photo by Ann Halback*

While many of us were sitting beside a cozy fire during that icy weekend in early February, Kathleen Marean and Luke Gervase were out on Millsite Lake taking water samples. The SUNY Oneonta Masters in Lake Management Program students braved the cold temperatures and soaking, freezing rain to begin the work that will eventually lead to a comprehensive lake management plan for both Millsite Lake and Sixberry Lake. By providing a better understanding of a lake's complex ecosystem, a lake management plan is an important tool to help lake groups work to achieve long-term lake goals such as improved water quality.



*Photo by Kathleen Marean*

# Projects UPDATE

By: Mark Scarlett

## New Opportunities for IRLC in the coming year

This winter we heard the unfortunate news that our Boyd Pond Accessible Trails project was not funded under the latest round of State Regional Economic Development grants. We appreciate the wide-ranging support that we have received for the project and our grant proposal. In lieu of that funding we still plan to move forward this spring with clearing a hiking trail to our Boyd Pond overlook site. We have also included Boyd Pond in our clean water initiative as a model site to test options for managing blue green algae, which have proved surprisingly persistent in this relatively shallow, 28 acre pond.

As a counter to our disappointment with the loss of Boyd Pond project funding, IRLC has been mobilizing resources around the exciting possibilities created this December by the generous gift from Elliott and Margie Hillback of a 51 acre parcel of woodland overlooking Butterfield Lake. Conveniently located adjacent to the IRLC office on Stine Road in the hamlet of Redwood, Redwood Hill Preserve, as the parcel is being called, offers a unique opportunity to combine all the key elements in IRLC's vision: Learn – Protect – Enjoy – Forever. With generous gifts from IRLC Directors and friends, and with support applied for from a NY State Conservation Partnership Program

grant, planning has begun for the development of the Hillback Family Environmental Education Center on the site, combined with accessible trails to the Butterfield Lake overlook. At this early planning stage, we encourage any of our members with landscape architecture experience to contact Dani Baker should they be willing to help in designing the features around the education center. There will be a wide variety of interesting volunteer opportunities as we move forward with this exciting project.

Finally, we are also pleased to report that IRLC has closed on the acquisition of 184 acres of prime wooded wetland along the Indian River that also includes wetland frontage on Red Lake. The parcel is contiguous with the NYS DEC Indian River Wildlife Management Area and contributes to the further conservation of this prime wildlife and water quality preserving river bottomland. The purchase was made possible with North American Wetland Conservation Act funding secured through a grant awarded last year in partnership with the Thousand Islands Land Trust. The IRLC now conserves over 1,900 acres and there are many rewarding opportunities to enjoy the outdoors while helping steward and manage this beautiful and important land.

## We Need You!

Are you looking for something fun and meaningful to do this summer? Would you like to be more involved with IRLC? One of these volunteer opportunities might be for you!

### Education or Outreach

If you like introducing people to the wonders of nature, volunteering for our Education or Outreach teams could be just what you're looking for! Environmental Education Program Volunteers provide education programs for kids, scouts and families. Outdoor Event Volunteers will lead or assist with guided hikes & paddles. Community Outreach Volunteers help staff IRLC tables at community events and fairs. Special Event Assistants help with preparations for fundraisers and other IRLC special events.

### Stewardship

If you like being outdoors and working with your hands, then assisting with stewardship is the thing for you! Trail Stewards commit to taking care of a specific trail for at least a season, checking kiosks, picking up litter, and monitoring trail conditions. Stewardship work crew members sign up to help with specific projects such as invasive species removal, shoreline clean-up, habitat restoration, major trail maintenance and trail building.

### Water Project

There many are special opportunities to help improve water quality by volunteering for the Indian River & Lakes Water Project.

### Administration

If you'd rather be indoors, then we still have opportunities for you to help out! Administration Volunteers can help with a wide variety of clerical tasks such as mailings, data entry, photocopying and scanning records, filing and other office tasks. Administration volunteers may also assist with special skills such as information technology and website design and maintenance.

*Contact April Frederick today to learn more about these fun new opportunities to get involved with IRLC! (315) 482-4757 or [april@indianriverlakes.org](mailto:april@indianriverlakes.org).*



Rock ledge on the new Redwood Hill Preserve. Photo by Mark Scarlett