



PRESIDENT'S REPORT Elliott Hillback, IRLC President

It has been another great Summer for the Indian River Lakes Conservancy: filing for National Accreditation from the Land Trust Alliance; dedicating and opening our beautiful new Trailside Classroom and the 7 Oaks Trail, adding another half mile of public access trails on the Redwood Hill Preserve; formally dedicating the Baker Woods Preserve, including an accessible trail to a deck overlooking the Indian River and three miles of new hiking and skiing trails; working tirelessly on water quality; and organizing paddles, hikes and lectures for the public. These and other topics are all discussed in more detail in the rest of this Newsletter. Enjoy reading the stories and please contact us if you have questions or comments.

I would like to share with each of you the following "State of the Conservancy" essay written this summer by Board Member Mark Scarlett:

"The Indian River and the 18 lakes in its watershed occupy an extraordinary landscape of rocky, wooded uplands and teeming wetlands, lakes, and waters. Sitting astride the rugged, geologic backbone of the Frontenac Arch connecting the Adirondacks to Algonquin Park in Canada, the Indian River Lakes and neighboring Thousand Islands share a vital confluence of pathways for migratory birds and one of the most diverse habitats for wildlife in the northeast. The Indian River Lakes Conservancy was created in 1998 to preserve, protect, and encourage the sustainable management of these uniquely valuable water, land and biological resources for the benefit and enrichment of future generations.

This remains its abiding purpose and commitment.

In the eighteen years since its founding, the Indian River Lakes Conservancy has been actively engaged in an array of important conservation initiatives. IRLC now stewards more than 2,270 acres of important wildlife habitat, crucial wetlands and pristine shoreline with more than 5 miles of woodland trails currently open to the public year-round. In late August we dedicated The Baker Woods Preserve on the headwaters of the Indian River near Natural Bridge where nearly four miles of hiking and cross country ski trails are nearing completion. Within the next year, IRLC also plans to construct over a mile of wheelchair accessible woodland trails on its Redwood Hill Preserve in the hamlet of Redwood.

At the same time, IRLC's Indian River & Lakes Water Project is continuing to reach out to residents, lake associations and other nonprofits to share information about water quality issues in the lakes and river and to find and implement ways to mitigate the damaging effects of inadequate septic systems to both the quality of the life on the lakes and to property values and the local tax base.

IRLC has also partnered with Audubon New York, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Clarkson University, the Thousand Islands Land Trust, and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation to restore endangered bird habitat on its Grand Lake Reserve.

The recent construction of a trailside classroom on the Redwood



The Indian River at Baker Woods Preserve

Hill Preserve will provide a beautiful setting for a variety of environmental education programs for the public of all ages plus youth organizations and local schools beginning in the Spring of 2017.

All of this activity has been undertaken by IRLC volunteers with the assistance of a single staff person. And it seems with each new initiative, the door opens on opportunities to do even more. Indeed, for all of our success in identifying and responding to the abundant conservation opportunities and challenges facing the Indian River Lakes, the most daunting challenge we face is finding the next generation of volunteer leaders to respond to these new opportunities and to carry these vitally important initiatives forward.

Equally important is the urgent need to raise the substantial financial resources needed to sustain these efforts. Over the last ten years IRLC has benefitted from more than a million dollars in State and Federal grants to support these activities, but grant funds alone cannot meet the challenges before us.

A commitment to the IRLC by volunteering your expertise, energy and time and/or by making a significant financial donation will help advance projects now underway and support future opportunities as they open to us.

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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

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The combination of your active participation and generous support will help preserve vital natural resources for the benefit of future generations, provide high quality educational and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike, and create lasting economic benefit to our local communities and the region.

We ask that each of you seize this unique opportunity to have a personal impact on the conservation and protection of the natural resources of the Indian River Lakes Region and on the future economic strength of the area through your active support."

Thank you for your advice, encouragement and support,

Elliott Hillback
President

Happy Birthday, IRLC !

Members and area residents gathered at the Redwood Hill Preserve to help IRLC celebrate its 18th birthday this year. Everyone learned how the organization has grown and changed over the years and about our exciting plans for the Baker Woods Preserve and the Redwood Hill Preserve. Presentations were followed by birthday cake and socializing, with many participants taking the opportunity to explore the new trail system.



Assemblywoman Addie Russell shows off one of the beautiful flower baskets that were given away as door prizes during the event.



Dick Edgar and Ron Tibbles worked tirelessly throughout the winter months to make the trailside classroom a reality. In recognition of their hard work and dedication, this plaque will hang permanently inside the building.

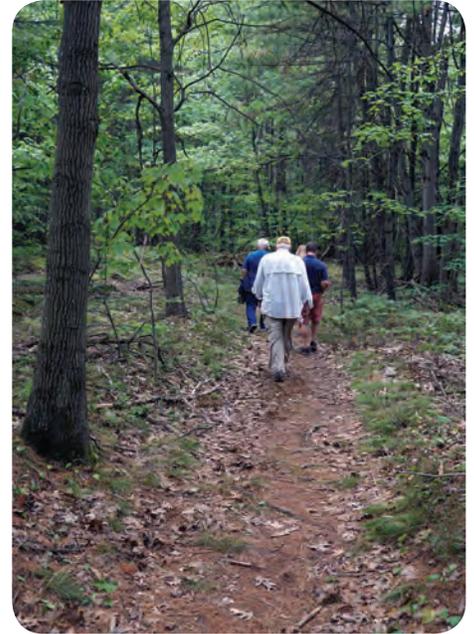
The mission of the Indian River Lakes Conservancy is to preserve the natural character of the area, with a focus on protecting clean water, fish and wildlife, and the scenic vistas along the shores of the lakes and the Indian River and to educate ourselves and the community about the natural habitat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

News from the Trails

Trails Open at Redwood Hill Preserve

Two trails are now open for hiking at the Redwood Hill Preserve. Enjoy scenic views of Butterfield Lake as you take a short stroll along the Beatrice Rosamond Overlook Trail. For a longer walk, try the Seven Oaks Trail that winds past ancient, majestic white oaks. Like grandparents of the forest, seven massive timeworn oaks,

including the one below, can be seen along the Seven Oaks Trail. Area families are already taking advantage of the new trail that was cleared this past summer. This trail expands the trail system to over a mile in length.



Plans are moving forward to begin next summer making all the trails on the Redwood Hill Preserve wheelchair accessible. Construction of an accessible deck overlooking Butterfield Lake is also part of the project.

Grand Opening of Baker Woods Preserve

The IRLC was honored to dedicate the 354 acre Baker Woods Preserve in Natural Bridge on Sunday, August 28. Over 40 guests attended the dedication and acknowledgement of Drs. Norman and Doris Baker's significant contribution to the health of the Indian River watershed. Doris, accompanied by her nieces, was on hand and accepted a river landscape painted by Ed Robertson, a framed trail map, and the heartfelt thanks of all present.



Hikers enjoy Baker Woods Preserve

While work is ongoing, several hundred volunteer hours and quality work by local contractors have prepared the preserve for hiking, skiing, canoeing and reflection. Approximately 3 miles of new trails will be open year round, dawn to dusk, and include a level gravel trail providing access to a canoe/kayak launch and scenic overlook on the Indian River. With no motorized vehicles, hunting or trapping, the Baker Woods Preserve provides a quiet respite for hikers looking to enjoy the peace of nature.



Matthew Carney & Doris Baker discuss plans for trails at Baker Woods Preserve.

Sad News from Grand Lake Reserve

Unfortunately, IRLC experienced our first serious instance of vandalism at the Grand Lake Reserve this spring. All of the mature walking ferns (*Asplenium rhizophyllum*) were stolen from a section of the trail. Although found across most of the eastern U.S. and Canada, walking fern is rare throughout much of its range and is protected in New York state as an exploitably vulnerable species. Removing or collecting plants, specimens, rocks, or any other natural or cultural material is strictly prohibited on IRLC properties.



Bare spots where walking ferns were ripped from the rock face.

Volunteers Make a Difference



Gail Wright has been helping with a number of administrative tasks including assembling binders and preparing mailings. She also provided support at the Celebration of the Lakes by selling raffle tickets.

There are many opportunities to get involved with IRLC. A few people have already signed up to lead paddle trips, monitor trails and help out with stewardship work. But, there is still plenty to do! If you or someone you know is looking for a fun way to meet new people and give back to this beautiful natural community, visit the volunteer page on our website to learn more.



Kim Cullen talks about trees as she leads our annual Winter Wonderland Hike.



(left to right) Drew Walker, Matthew Carney, Liam Carney, Ed Robertson and Dick Edgar work to install a new trail kiosk at the Baker Woods Preserve.

Have you renewed your membership? Consider stepping up to the next level. Your support makes all of this possible!

A New Space for Programs & Meetings



The beautiful new trailside classroom on the Redwood Hill Preserve is already seeing use for various meetings and activities. We plan to use this charming facility for classes and programs beginning next spring.



Starting next summer, the building may also be reserved by lake associations and community organizations for meetings and small events. Contact us to find out more. Thanks to Dick Edgar and Ron Tibbles, and to all the volunteers who pitched in to support their efforts throughout last winter to complete the building for use this summer.



Events & Programs



Long-time hike guide Kim Cullen with a few of this year's Winter Wonderland hikers. In spite of the mild winter, we had just enough snow for snowshoeing and investigating the many ways nature's residents survive the winter cold.



IRLC welcomed our first organized school field trip to the Redwood Hill Preserve this spring. 8th grade students from Indian River Middle School visited several stations to learn how to identify animal signs, how trees function and the importance of vernal pools. Are you interested in helping with school programs or other guided activities at the Redwood Hill Preserve? Contact us to find out how!



Amid a host of spring wildflowers and awakening insects, 26 bird species were identified, including a male Golden-winged Warbler, on our annual Birds, Blooms & Bugs Hike! Many thanks to volunteer hike guides Linnea Rowse, Audubon NY, and Stephen & Vici Dhiel!



IRLC and Depauville Public Library continued our partnership to present a summer science lecture series covering topics such as weather and climate, St. Lawrence River fisheries research, biological connections between Algonquin Provincial Park and the Adirondacks, and forest farming techniques of native peoples. Make sure you don't miss out on these and other great programs by visiting our website and joining the email list.



About 40 kayakers joined IRLC and TILT on July 19th for a moonlight paddle on beautiful Millsite Lake. A few new volunteers have joined IRLC and will begin to lead guided paddling trips next summer. Contact us if you're interested in leading or assisting with paddle outings.

Photo courtesy of the Land Trust Alliance.



IRLC hosted the 2016 Adirondack All Taxa Biological Inventory for their 2016 BioBlitz. Some 50 biologists and naturalists visited IRLC preserves on June 18th to identify as many living organisms as possible. More than 600 different species were identified during the day Saturday and at a moth night event (photo above) on Friday.



Good Friends, Good Food & Good Music made this year's Celebration of the Lakes a memorable and successful event!

Cerulean Warbler - Lovliest bird you may never see

If you have property with mature deciduous forest in riparian areas of the Indian River Watershed, there is a fair chance this sky-blue sprite is singing high above your head in early May. On IRLC properties such as the Grand Lake Reserve, and parcels along the Indian River shore, one may hear the rising buzzy trill of the male floating down from the high canopy. Seeing the singer is much tougher. One must sit patiently following the songster as he moves into an opening, or else be very lucky. With the population declining nationally during my half century of birding, this species is now one of our rarer wood warblers. The good news for us is that some of the healthiest Cerulean Warbler populations are in our part of the species' range.



Females are bluish-green above, white washed with yellow below with dusky streaks on the sides.

This species is a long distance migrant wintering in the high mountains of South America, well up into the Andes. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the center of its breeding range was in Appalachia. It was considered a common breeder in deciduous forests with mature trees, particularly those along watercourses. Cutting of these forests and changing forestry practices have adversely impacted this beautiful little warbler in North America. Similar deforestation on its wintering grounds and migration staging areas is making survival tough and substantial population declines have been documented in the core of the species' range. At the same time, some expansion seems to have occurred

in Northern parts of the Cerulean Warbler's range including our region. The species' northern breeding range limit extends from Wisconsin through parts of extreme southern Canada to Northern New York.

The Cerulean Warbler, like so many insect eating species that migrant to the tropics, only sojourns with us for a brief period. After spending about two months in spring migration males arrive in mid-May, a few days before females. Almost all individuals of this species fly across the Gulf of Mexico on both semi-annual migrations. Upon arrival, the male sings his rising buzzy trill both to defend his castle grounds and to attract a mate. This is the time when the species is best detected high at the penthouse level in mature deciduous forests. This species is "area sensitive," meaning that extensive forest cover with enough big trees is needed. Small forest fragments will not do.

Assuming our tree baron finds a friend, nesting starts immediately as there is little time to lose when fall migration may take up to four months. The female builds the nest high in the canopy possibly near a natural gap. She lays four or five eggs and if all goes well incubation and fledging take only three to four weeks to complete. The parents most likely divide the brood while foraging to reduce the probability that any predation incident will cause the loss of the entire brood. Only one brood is raised in any given year, but if nest or egg loss occurs early in the season the adults may re-nest. The schedule is tight. Young must become independent adults, complete their annual feather molt, and everyone must put on fat reserves for the long arduous journey ahead.

The fall migration of this species starts just when many local cottagers are thinking summer has barely begun. At our latitude some individuals, mostly unsuccessful adults, are headed south by the third week of July. It appears



*Cerulean Warbler
www.audubon.org*

Males are sky-blue above with white throat and underparts, blue streaking on sides and a dark band across the throat.

most have left by early September with very few records extending into early October. Away from breeding areas, Cerulean Warbler is an uncommon fall migrant in New York. This suggests that once fall movements begin these birds make big jumps to exit the more northern sections of the breeding range. Once again most of the population migrates over the Gulf of Mexico on their southbound journey to Central and South America.

Among birders and ornithologists there is grave concern as to the future of this species in the 21st century. Facing deforestation and poor forestry practice throughout its life cycle, the Cerulean Warbler has high potential for joining the Federal Endangered Species list. The overall decline noted in the last half century seems to be accelerating. This species is a poster child for the difficulty of conserving long-distance migrants in forested habitats. It is very difficult to control forestry practice and agricultural conversion over the scale of two continents. Many agencies and organizations are hard at work on these problems that affect both resident and migrant wildlife.

Faced with such problems of scale, one is tempted to think there is little we can do to assure this species will continue to sing from the treetops into the 22nd Century. But two very simple things will help:

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2016 Scholarship Recipients

Each year IRLC awards scholarships to a local high school senior and a student from Jefferson Community College. These scholarships are awarded to students who plan to obtain a degree in the environmental sciences and who demonstrate academic excellence.

This year Dr. Richard Sauer, chair of the scholarship committee, presented awards to Indian River High School student Logan Drake and JCC student Bailey Muntz.



Bailey hopes to work with NYSDEC as a biologist working on wildlife conservation issues.

Bailey completed an Associate of Science degree at JCC and is now enrolled in the Fisheries and Wildlife Science program at Paul Smith's College. Bailey plans to pursue a master's degree after she graduates from Paul Smith's with the ultimate goal of working as a wildlife biologist here in New York. Logan is enrolled in a BA/MST program at SUNY Potsdam where he majors in Biology and Secondary Science Education as well as running on the Cross Country team. As a future science teacher, Logan hopes to get his students out of the classroom and engaged in learning from the environment.

The IRLC scholarship program is supported by the Butterfield Lake Cottage Owners Association and other private donors. If you would like to help IRLC encourage and support local students who pursue environmental science degrees, consider adding a little extra to your next membership donation. Be sure to note that the extra amount is to be used for the scholarship fund.



Did You Know?

Why do leaves change colors?

The changing leaves and crisp temperatures make fall a beautiful time of year in the North Country. But what exactly causes those vivid hues?

Everyone knows that leaf cells contain chlorophyll, the green chemical that uses energy from the sun to transform carbon dioxide and water into sugar. Each year as the days grow shorter plants begin to prepare for winter by halting chlorophyll production and by slowly closing off the veins that carry sugar away from the leaves. As the chlorophyll that remains begins to break down, it reveals the orange and yellow colors of chemicals that are already present in the cells – carotenes and xanthophyll.

The closing of the veins traps sugar in the leaves which, when exposed to sunlight, spurs the production of anthocyanin, creating brilliant reds and rich purples.

Because carotenes and xanthophyll are already present in leaf cells, yellows and golds can be seen most years. However, weather conditions during the fall can impact anthocyanin production. A succession of long, warm days will increase sugar production, and if the nights are cool (though not freezing) the constriction of veins will trap more of that sugar in the leaves. These conditions will lead to increased production of anthocyanin creating dazzling red, crimson and purple leaves.



Dr. Sauer presents Logan Drake with his scholarship award.

Cerulean Warbler

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First, if you are a coffee drinker BUY SHADE GROWN COFFEE. Many North American migrant birds, including Cerulean Warbler, find these plantations adequate substitutes for natural habitat that has been lost on the wintering grounds. Second, support IRLC so that when a pair arrives on the breeding grounds the welcome mat is out. Hopefully these local efforts, combined with those at the continental scale, will assure this beautiful little creature will continue to delight those in future generations who seek to find it.

May all find peace and joy in our natural world.

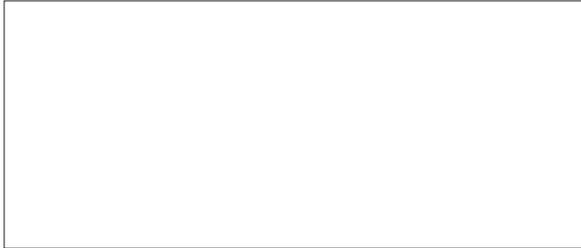
Gerry Smith is a senior Northern New York ornithologist and consulting ecologist. Gerry is a devoted friend and advocate for grass roots land trusts and the dedicated volunteers who share his love of nature. You can read other Charismatic Birds of the Indian River Lakes Region articles in the newsletter section of our website at www.IndianRiverLakes.org.



Robert Royce

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Save the Dates

- Oct 11 Forest Farming 6:00pm Depauville Library**
Join us at the Depauville Library to learn how native peoples farmed the forests.
- Oct 15 Fall Hike 10:00 am**
Enjoy the crisp fall air on this annual outing at the Grand Lake Reserve
- Jan 21 Winter Wonderland Hike 1:00pm**
Join us to enjoy the beauty of winter on this annual snow shoe hike.



Join the conversation on Facebook
Type "Indian River Lakes Conservancy" in the Facebook search box, or follow the link on our website.

Have you Renewed?

If you haven't renewed your membership yet, please consider stepping up a level. Have you renewed already? Then think about how much an extra gift would help out!

Not a member yet? Every donation helps us protect lands and provide programs. Please return the enclosed membership envelope with your donation today!



The holiday season will be here before we know it.
An IRLC membership makes a great gift for your lake loving family and friends!

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