

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Mark Scarlett, IRLC President



*Butterfield Lake American Bittersweet**

In the midst of this often hectic holiday season, I hope you find time to pause for a moment to recall the blessings of this place we call the Indian River Lakes, for the happy times you have shared here with family and friends and for the cherished places you may have found that give you the solitude and quiet to gather your thoughts and recharge your spirits. We have been especially buoyed by the number of people who tell us how grateful they are for the Grand Lake Reserve as a place they can go for recreation and solitude, and how eager they are to share their discovery with family and friends. Working to preserve and protect those special places is central to our mission and we hope you will think of the Indian River Lakes Conservancy when you consider where to put your charitable dollars to work in this season of giving.

* American Bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*) is on the decline in the northeast and should not be confused with Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*), an invasive species that has the ability to girdle and overtop adjacent vegetation. Although the two bittersweet species look similar, Oriental Bittersweet has fruit and flowers located in the leaf axils along the length of the stem, while American bittersweet only has fruit and flowers in terminal clusters. The color of the capsules surrounding the ripened fruit in the fall is also distinctive.; Oriental bittersweet has yellow capsules, while those of American bittersweet are orange.

Adapted from USGS Great Lakes Science Center Fact Sheet 2007-2.

The IRLC Board devoted much of its time this summer to an organizational assessment facilitated by a professional consultant funded by the Land Trust Alliance. Following the LTA Standards and Practices Guidelines, this self-assessment process has helped the Board better understand its organizational strengths and weaknesses and has led it to adopt a work plan for moving the IRLC forward.

In addition to identifying policies that need updating, our Board recognized the need to do a better job of engaging and mobilizing volunteers, not only to help with the increasing challenges of effective stewardship and management of our conservation properties, but also to give IRLC the human and financial resources to seize future opportunities that come its way. Accordingly, the Board has moved to reorganize its committee structure and expand the size of the Board. This has resulted in the addition of three new members, all of them talented and motivated individuals who have a demonstrated commitment to our area and its people.

Dani Baker joined the IRLC Board late this summer, just as the work plan was being drafted. The owner and operator with Dave Belding of Cross Island Farms on Wellesley Island (www.crossislandfarms.com), Dani has been a dedicated IRLC volunteer and a generous benefactor, most recently playing a major role in the purchase of the Marc A.F. Baker Island Preserve on Grass Lake. She has agreed to chair the new Development Committee charged with expanding our community outreach and fundraising efforts.

This fall, we also welcomed Terry Panunzio and Richard Sauer to the Board. Terry is an avid outdoorsman and lifetime resident of the Town of Alexandria. He has

*Sunset on Butterfield Lake,
from the shore of the Grand Lake Reserve.*



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

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



A hearty crew of IRLC friends gathered July 11 to dedicate the Marc A.F. Baker Island Preserve as the newest addition to the Grand Lake Reserve. The island and adjoining shoreline property on Grass Lake add more than 58 acres and nearly 3 miles of shoreline to the Reserve. Pictured at left are IRLC Board members Mark Scarlett, Elliott Hillback, Dani Baker, and Ed Robertson. At right are Elaine Garvey; Board members Robert Wakefield, Mark Scarlett and David Martin; Janet Wakefield, Gretchen Starks-Martin, Dave Ciechanowski, Louise Scarlett, and Jay Jupiter; Board Members Dani Baker and Elliott Hillback.

also been an active IRLC volunteer, most recently as manager of the Grand Lake Reserve hunting program. Holding a Masters Degree in Nuclear Chemistry, Terry's early career with Niagara-Mohawk included several years as a Reactor Operator at Nine Mile Point in Oswego. He now manages to work closer to his home on Butterfield Lake as a Hot Stick Lineman for National Grid. In addition to continuing to manage the hunting program, Terry will serve on the newly reorganized Stewardship Committee chaired by Board member Rick Lopez.

Rich Sauer is retired from a distinguished career as an educator, beginning as a Special Ed teacher and culminating with nine years as Superintendent of the LaFargeville Central School District. Now living in Johnstown, NY where he has been active with Habitat for Humanity, Rich and Sally have summered at a cottage on Sixberry Lake since 1992. Rich will be applying his experience and skills as a member of the Development Committee.

We welcome Dani, Terry, and Rich to our Board and thank them and all our Board members for their commitment to helping preserve and protect the natural character of the Indian River Lakes region. To assist us toward that end, we are pleased to

report that the IRLC has been awarded a \$10,000 grant from the New York State environmental Protection Fund through the New York State Conservation Partnership Program under the auspices of the New York State DEC and the Land Trust Alliance. The grant will help fund the development of a stewardship and site conservation plan that will incorporate the properties on Grass Lake that were added to the Grand Lake Reserve within the last year. In addition to the conservation plan, this project will include a much needed, professionally designed brochure and trail map for the Grand Lake Reserve.

We are also happy to report that this summer's *Celebration of the Lakes* barbeque, hosted once again so marvelously by Elliott and Marjorie Hillback, was our most successful yet, generating nearly \$1,900 for IRLC. We thank all the volunteers who pitched in to make the afternoon by Butterfield Lake such a delight. We especially appreciate the donors to the Silent Auction that generated more than \$600 for the cause: Vicky Storey, Clayton Opera House, River Wellness Center, Thousand Islands Art Center, Vici Zarembo-Diehl, Winged Bull Studio, Beverly Cliffe, Ed and Denise Robertson, Dave and Gretchen Martin, Clayton Harbour, Dani Baker, and Lorene Porte.

Finally, you may be interested in knowing that the Indian River Lakes have made their way into cyberspace. A local resident has created a discussion board at <http://indianriverlakesny.activeboard.com> where people can share their interests in fishing, boating, wildlife, camp and cottage life, or other topics of interest or concern regarding the area. We encourage you to take a look.

We thank all our friends for everything they have done to make the Indian River Lakes Conservancy worthy of your support. On behalf of our Board of Directors we offer our best wishes for joy and happiness in this holiday season and for peace and good health in the year ahead.



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

American Goldfinch

We have covered a variety of birds in this series and they all have one thing in common; they were well along in their nesting season before many human summer residents return to the lakes. The American Goldfinch, on the other hand, nests on a cottager's schedule. The local breeding population of this common and attractive little finch often does not return to our area until the summer solstice is only a few weeks away and they may wait several weeks before nesting as a favored nesting material, the down of thistles, matures. The result is that the American Goldfinch is often our latest breeder with young still in the nest in September. As human children are headed off to school, young goldfinch are taking the first tentative flights into their new world.

This is a common and widespread bird throughout much of North America south of the tundra. It occurs year round over much of southern Canada and the United States. American Goldfinches are often a common sight at bird feeders during the winter months. As many feeder operators notice, their numbers vary greatly from year to year. In some years they are abundant at a given location while very scarce in others. This is a typical pattern for many seed eating finch species that are somewhat nomadic. Food resources are critical to winter survival of this flocking species so when they find a well-stocked bird feeder they descend en masse. For feeder operators that wish to attract this species and other small finches Niger seed feeders that supplement Black Oil Sunflower seed are a great, but admittedly costly addition.

We have learned a great deal about the movements of this and other species

attracted to feeders in recent years. Citizen Science projects such as Project Feederwatch and The Great Backyard Bird Count, conducted each February, provide reams of useful data on that year's distribution of American Goldfinch and other species. Participation in these projects is a great opportunity for watchers to gather data that gives something back to the birds i.e. future conservation.

Feeder watchers know that American Goldfinch males in the non-breeding season are a pale imitation of their future black-capped golden selves. All goldfinches during the non-breeding season have a variable but rather dull gray yellow plumage. By mid-March that begins to change as males in particular begin to exhibit patches of bright yellow. All adults molt toward their striking breeding plumage during March and April. Plumages in both males and females less than a year old tend to be less intense than colors of older individuals.

Depending on the latitude birds start to disperse and drift north in April. Along southeastern Lake Ontario northbound migration begins in earnest in early May. On days with strong southerly winds it is not unusual to have several thousand of this diurnal migrant pass in a morning. Most reach their local breeding grounds in May to early June but some have been noted moving along the south shore of Lake Ontario as late as the Fourth of July.

Once migrants arrive courtship occurs but nesting awaits thistle development. These plants are critical to this species both as providers of food resources and nesting material. During the nesting season, many songbird species that are primarily seed eaters add insects to their diet. This is not true for the American Goldfinch, which remains



a vegetarian. Thus the development and availability of seed sources are critical to the timing and success of nesting. In some areas early nesting may occur if seed sources are available. In these areas the species may produce two broods of young. In the Indian River Lakes area late-nesting and a single brood per season is the normal pattern.

Once the timing is right mating occurs with pairs generally appearing to be monogamous. The recent availability of DNA tracking technology, however, has indicated that extra pair copulations (fooling around?) appear to occur with some frequency among songbirds and have been noted in American Goldfinch. The female of the pair builds the nest alone with the male present to discourage any extra pair mating. The female usually lays 4-7 eggs but the number varies greatly. Eggs hatch in 12-14 days and two weeks later, if not disturbed, young leave the nest.

(continued on page 8)

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.

Damselfs and Dragons

A Review of the 2007-2009 Survey Seasons



Elfin Skimmer (Nannothemis bella) 7/8" in length.

The New York Natural Heritage Program Dragonfly and Damselfly Survey has resulted in many new records for counties throughout the state. More than 50 volunteers spent hundreds of hours, in and around all types of wetlands, searching for nymphs (larvae), skins (exuviae) and adults... dip netting, swinging nets, identifying, and record keeping. Preparation of site visit forms, specimen labels, and photo file management followed the fieldwork.

This ongoing effort has resulted in the discovery of a possible new species of dragonfly, a Snaketail (Ophiogomphus) on the Upper Hudson River. A species new to NYS, the Zigzag Darner (Aeshna sitchensis) was netted in the Glen Falls area in late September 2009. Jefferson County has yielded at least 5 species of dragonflies and damselflies with features different from known species, all located in the Indian River watershed.

Since the beginning of the 2007 season, 32 – 36 new species have been found in Jefferson County (new county

records), pending verification by DEC/NHP staff. The number of species identified in the county has almost doubled! The majority of the new county records are from the Indian River watershed/Indian River Lakes. Jeff Bolsinger, an ornithologist based at Fort Drum, added 3 - 4 species to the Jefferson County total in 2009. Our work at Fort Drum in 2007 and 2008 also added records for both Lewis and Jefferson counties.

On the Indian River, Antwerp, we found a county record in mid April 2008... a Taiga Bluet damselfly. A mile downstream where the Indian River flows along Coolidge Road, a Superb Jewelwing was added as a county record. Two other Jewelwing species known to the county were also at this location... an unusual sighting of 3 Jewelwing species sharing the same habitat.

Down river, near the village of Philadelphia, we found one of the most impressive sites during our 3 years of surveying. Identification of Odonate adults and exuviae has added 8 - 9

species to the county list including Rainbow Bluet, Rapids Clubtail (listed by NYS as a "special concern" species), and the Dragonhunter.



Springtime Darner (*Basiaeschna janata*)



Superb Jewelwing (*Calopteryx amata*)



Rainbow Bluet (*Enallagma antennatum*)



Cyrano Darner (*Nasiaeschna pentacantha*)

The diversity of species in and around the Indian River Lakes is astounding. A few hours on the IRLC Grass Lake Overlook Trail yielded 21 species. One August evening, while driving to Grass Lake, two darners were observed flying and it was realized they were part of a feeding swarm of thousands. We had our nets in hand before the car stopped. For the next half hour, until dark, nets were swung crazily in the middle of the road. The only thing that outnumbered the dragonflies was the mosquitoes they were feeding on. We never made it to Grass Lake.

IRLC's latest acquisition, the Marc A.F. Baker Island Preserve (part of the Grand Lake Reserve), played a critical role in two of our most exciting discoveries this past summer. The first followed the dedication of the island on July 11. Leaving Grass Lake a low, slow flyer caught our attention. One sweep and it was in the net. A Cyrano Darnier... another new county record, a species rarely encountered in NYS.

Then, in late July, accompanied by Erin White and Jeff Corser (DEC/NHP biologists), we visited the Baker Island Preserve again. Before beginning our paddle, a warm-up session netted 13 species in a scant half hour. During the canoe trip to the island, Odonates surrounded us, landing on thwarts, gunnels, seats, even the nets, and were

observed defending territories, mating, and ovipositing. Loons, black ducks and an osprey were an added bonus. The canoes were "secured" at the fen on Baker Island Preserve's north edge. The floating mat undulated with every step as we proceeded from hummock to hummock netting dragonflies and damselflies and relegating them to "bug jail" to be identified after lunch. Then it happened...not one, not two, but a mob of Elfyn Skimmers. Rarely found, this smallest dragonfly of North America (3/4" to 1") was yet another county record. After lunch on the island and a little more survey work, we called it a day... a good one at that.

It is comforting to know that habitats encompassed in the Grand Lake Reserve have been protected by the IRLC. But this is only a beginning. It is important to conserve additional lands in the Indian River watershed and Lakes in order to protect the diversity of species already identified and those yet to be discovered.

Noted nature photographers Stephen and Vici Diehl volunteer with the New York Natural Heritage Program Dragonfly and Damselfly Survey and the Adirondack Taxa Biodiversity Inventory. Vici is a member of the IRLC Board of Directors and Stephen teaches photography at Rochester Institute of Technology. More of their work will be featured in the July/August issue of Adirondack Life.



Osprey Nest Relocated

For several years summering Osprey had built a nest in a white pine tree on Pine Island, Butterfield Lake. Two years ago the Osprey abandoned the tree nest and rebuilt on the roof of the Macur cottage on the island. IRLC was contacted by Alex Macur and asked to assist with the relocation of the nest to a nearby Grand Lake Reserve pine tree.

After visiting the site with Blanch Town, a DEC wildlife biologist, a plan was hatched to select a suitable tree on the Reserve, near the old nest location, for the installation of a nesting platform. DEC provided the platform. IRLC volunteers Rick Lopez and Ed Robertson assisted service contractor, John Rogers of Stine Road with the installation. IRLC is very grateful to John for his generosity in charging a bargain price for what was a very difficult job.

John climbed the tree, topped it and maneuvered the platform up through the branches. Then he completed the job, with a truly Herculean effort, wrestling the platform into place and bolting it to the topped tree trunk. After providing a start to the nest, by placing sticks on the platform, the hard work was done. For the final piece of the plan, Alex removed all traces of the nest from his roof and installed a rotating vent on the roof to deter the Osprey the following spring.

This spring and summer Osprey were present on the new nest. We do not know if it was the same pair from the old nest. We are hoping to see evidence of successful breeding there next year.



*Black-shouldered Spinyleg
(Dromogomphus spinosus)*

2009 MEMBERSHIP

The mission of IRLC could not be accomplished without the support of our members and donors. Contributions have been received this year from the following:

4-H Camp Wabasso-
Cornell Coop. Extension
Judy Adams
Bob & Alice Andrews
Paul & Lisa Ayen
Dani Baker
Karen Bald & Nadine Gardner
Bruce & Joyce Beebe
Fred & Rosemarie Belcher
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Robert Griffin
Phillip Hayduke Sr.

We value the contributions of all our donors and regret any errors or omissions. Please let us know so we can correct them promptly.

____ Renewal

INDIAN RIVER LAKES CONSERVANCY ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FORM - 2010

____ New Member

Name: _____ E-Mail _____

Permanent Mailing Address: _____ Phone: _____

Seasonal Mailing Address: _____ Phone: _____

Total Check

Membership - \$20.00

Supporter - \$35.00

Conservator - \$50.00

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

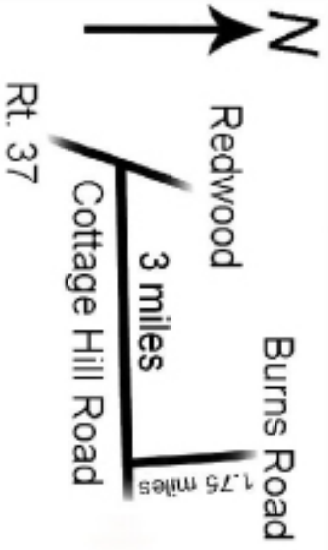
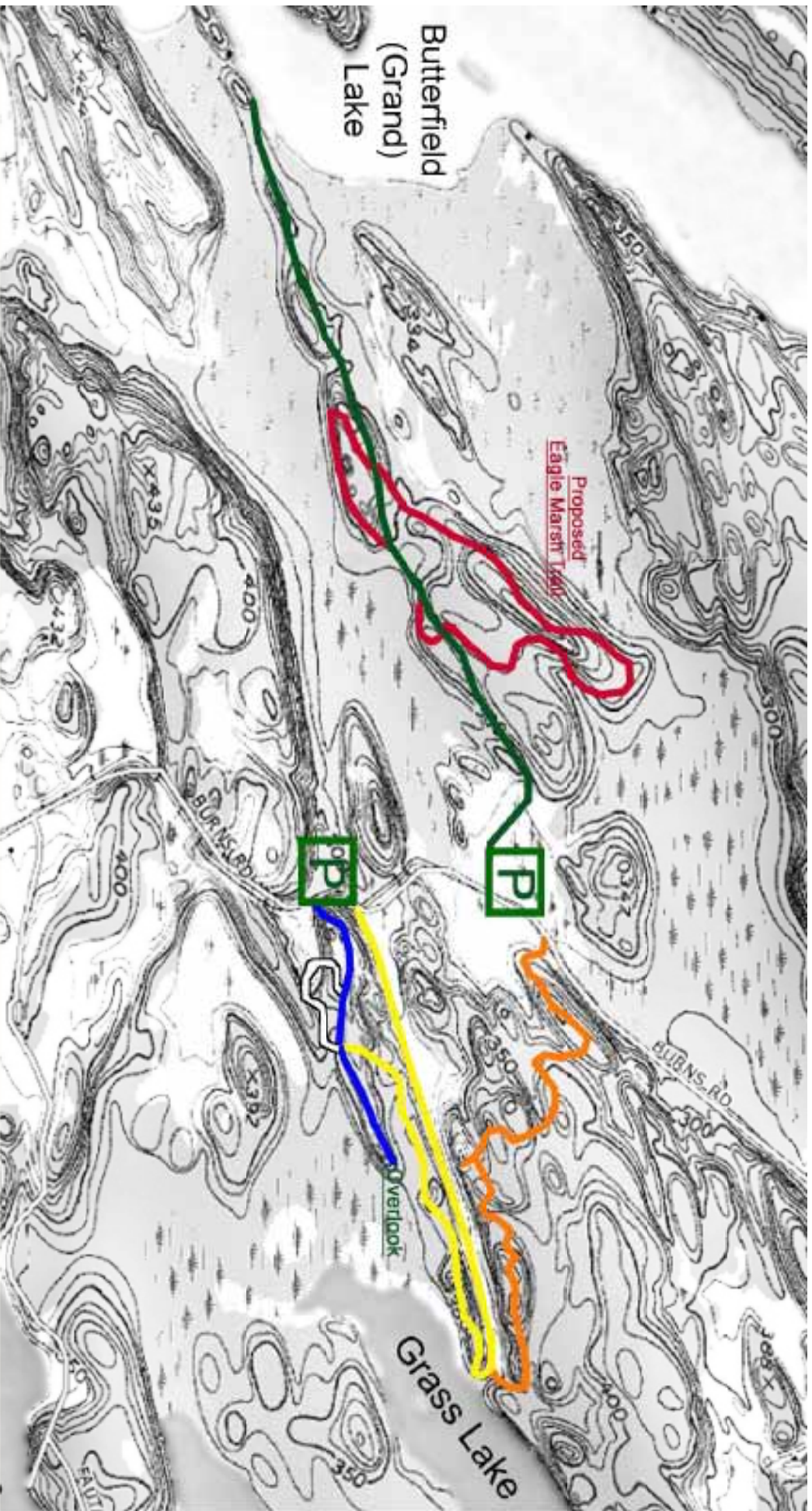
This is a pledge, please bill me in equal installments Annually Quarterly over the next _____ years.

\$ _____ 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



Indian River Lakes Conservancy - Grand Lake Reserve Trails

Butterfield Lake Trails

- Butterfield Lake Landing - 1.63 mi. - Green
- Proposed Eagle Marsh Trail - Red

Grass Lake Trails

- Grass Lake Landing - 1.1 mi. - Yellow
- Grass Lake Overlook - .5 mi. - Blue
- North Ridge Trail - 1.5 mi. - Orange
- Sugarhouse Trail - .5 mi. - White

Current Resident or

American Goldfinch (continued from page 2)

The young appear to remain dependent on their parents for 3 to 4 weeks after fledging. At that time they frequent any available bird feeder and provide great entertainment. The young are very noisy, filling the air with food begging calls and constantly harassing the adults while scrapping with each other over food. As with many other finch species, American Goldfinch family groups are easy to locate as a result of near constant calling. When family groups begin to form flocks the din is impressive.

The timing of fall migration varies depending on location but large pre-migratory flocks are forming in our area by mid-October. Current evidence suggests that some individuals from a given area may migrate while others do not. This species is a wonderful example of how little we know about the ecology of even very common species of wildlife. Migration appears to extend to mid-December when most migrants have reached the areas where

they will attempt to winter. It is likely that food supply will determine exact locations where birds will spend their non-breeding seasons. Some studies of American Goldfinch suggest differential migration by age and sex classes but these data are limited. As with other finch species the extent and nature of migration and associated population patterns vary greatly on an annual basis.

Winter is a wonderful time to watch the complex and interesting behaviors of this species. From their undulating flight behavior and constant chatter as they move about to the skulking dead silence of a flock frozen in place by a hawk's appearance, there is always something to observe. The American Goldfinch has adapted very well to the often-harsh hand of humankind upon the land of North America. Such adaptation assures that its journey on this planet is likely to be a long one. May this marvelous little bird brighten your holiday season.



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.