

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Elliott Hillback, IRLC President

What a great Fall season in the Indian River Lakes Area – crisp fall weather, classic sunrises and sunsets, beautiful foliage, fog on the lakes and in the valleys, loons ganging up to sing together before they head south. I hope you have enjoyed it as much as we have. For me, Fall always provokes reflective moments to think about change. It becomes a time of optimism and expectation; a time to plan and build excitement for the future. This year's reflections often center around the fact that our cottage will celebrate 100 years in the family next year and that Margie and I have BIG birthdays next summer (first digit will be above 6). She has been coming here since she was a little girl, first arriving by train from NY/NJ to see her grandparents.

I started coming up here “only” 45 years ago. As a young married Vietnam Vet, just out of the Army and on the way to restart college at Cornell, we stopped for a day to visit her Mom. What wonderful and amazing things have happened for us, our family and our many visiting friends at “The Lake” since then! I am sure most of you feel similarly. But then, I also wonder what this place we all treasure will be like for our 3 kids, their spouses and their 7 children in the next 45, 70 or 100 years. Will there be woods to hike in? Clean water

to swim in? Fish to catch? Birds to watch and listen to? The somewhat uncomfortable answer is, at best “MAYBE”. The comforting thought that follows is that the Indian River Lakes Conservancy is made up of many people from our area who feel the same way I do. Guided by the phrase “If it is to be, it is up me” (or up to us) this expanding group of individuals is steadily building an organization with a simple goal to help make this region better for everything and everyone who lives or visits here now and in the future. Like any 15 year old we are by no means efficient or perfect, we have had some false starts and some of our efforts are still a bit bumpy, we certainly have a lot more we can learn and do, and we can always use more ideas and more support (mental, physical and financial). But we are steadily “growing up,” developing our skills, expanding our resources and becoming the kind of effective and sustainable organization we need to be.

Two major IRLC activities in 2014 have the potential to be transformative for our organization and our area. They will help us mature and will push us hard to broaden and develop our skills faster, to deploy our resources more effectively with less wasted time or energy. These two catalysts are very different – one is external and the other internal.



### IRLC Board of Directors

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315-482-2446-home  
617-230-1222-cell

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716-479-4525

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(315) 324-6714

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585-224-5581

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## President's letter (cont.)

First, the Boyd Pond Project continues to gather momentum. Remember that in late August 2012 we acquired this beautiful 25 acre pond and 29 adjoining acres of land. With support from a New York Conservation Partnership (NYSCPP) grant and some donated funds, the construction plans and documents for the 2 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant handicapped trails, a handicapped dock, picnic overlooks, parking lots, etc. are almost complete. The next step will be construction. This large, complex project is like nothing we have ever done before. It will be a great learning opportunity and a real test of our ability to complete a major task that will involve every part of our organization. With a contractor price tag of roughly \$250,000, we will need to learn how to innovate, how to break the overall project into doable subprojects. We will need to attract and mobilize volunteers and develop sources of donated materials, equipment and resources; and we must also increase our overall fundraising skills. We will need to build alliances with a wide range of organizations that represent all those who will benefit from the end result and with other organizations who share our vision.

When completed, these facilities will fill an important need for a variety of people in our service area, including our Wounded Warriors and their families. It will be a proud day when we cut the ribbon, partly because of what we will have built, and partly for what the IRLC will have learned and accomplished to build it. Mark Scarlett, a ten year Board member and past President, will lead this project. Please see his more detailed article on page 5.

The second transformative step for the IRLC will be building our organization's strength from the inside out. We plan to hire our first staff member, a full time Coordinator of Public Programs and Administration, as early in 2014 as possible. This person will have major responsibilities in areas such as community relations, membership, volunteer programs, communications and administration. He or she will be based in our Redwood office and be available to interact in person, by phone

or email with our members, volunteers, donors and the public. This person will work closely with both the Outreach Team and the Administration/Finance Team to design, build, enhance and implement standard procedures, to streamline activities in these areas and to improve communication and feedback. We have already received significant financial support for this position from a major donor and are in the process of applying for a large two-year Professional Development Grant from the New York State Conservation Partnership Program. We expect this staff person to play a major role in accelerating and expanding our programs and activities while supporting and enabling our amazing Board Members, Conservators, Conservation Science Advisors and volunteers. If you, or anyone you know, would be interested in applying for this position, please submit a resume (or send names of potential candidates) to IndianRiverLakes@gmail.com or P.O. Box 27 Redwood, NY.

But that's not all that's new:

- *We have had some changes in our Board makeup with Vici Diehl and Dave Martin stepping down after many years of great service. Dave assisted with numerous special events and his writing skills were an invaluable communications tool. Vici shared her expansive knowledge of science by making contributions to this newsletter, and leading seasonal hikes. Vici's tireless efforts made our early events successful. We thank them both for their contributions. We have added four new Board Members: Tammy Lueck, Walter Dutcher, Jerry Cole and Denise Robertson. Each of them brings relevant experience, important points of view and high energy levels. Please welcome these great additions to our board and feel free to contact any of them. They are interested in learning your thoughts and ideas about the IRLC and its activities.*
- *We have created the new title "IRL Conservator" to recognize an important and growing group of individuals who have taken on specific and significant roles in our organization. We could not succeed in achieving our mission without strong, committed people like these. We currently have eight Conservators, they are listed on page six of this newsletter.*
- *We are expanding our ever-popular Outreach events with a number of hikes,*

*paddles, lectures and other special events already scheduled.*

- *We are stepping up our Stewardship activities with more efforts focused on finding and controlling invasive species, documenting and potentially managing important special or threatened habitats and identifying unique flora and fauna. Many of these new efforts will be led by new Board Member Jerry Cole.*
- *Water and watershed related topics are always front and center for an organization with River and Lakes in its name. We are splitting off a Water Team from the Stewardship Team to increase our focus on this critical area, and it will be led by Board Member Rick Lopez, with assistance from new Board Member Walter Dutcher.*
- *We are implementing a new membership program that features membership premiums, including our first-ever IRLC hat. See the membership sidebar for details on how you can get yours.*

I'll close with a wonderful example of personal generosity. As you probably know the IRLC's first-ever major fund raising campaign in 2012 brought in over \$54,000 from local donors to help acquire Boyd Pond. To close the purchase on time we had to borrow \$26,000 from a Friend of the IRLC. In the last 12 months we successfully raised another \$20,000 or so and were hoping to pay off the loan by year end. Then two weeks ago the lender offered to forgive the entire debt! The result, thanks to this person's absolutely amazing generosity, is that we now own the "Boyd Pond parcel" debt free and we have put about \$21,000 into the IRLC's Stewardship Fund to support future stewardship activities.

How about you? Please think about this area you love and ask yourself "How could I (or we) help a bit more?" It could be renewing at a higher membership level, making a year-end gift, giving (or giving more) volunteer hours - or find your own unique way to help. We all need to remember that even after we hire our first staff person we will still be a member/volunteer/donor based organization. **If it is to be, it is up to you too!**

As always, I look forward to hearing your thoughts and ideas.

Thank you! **Elliot**

by Rick Lopez

# Water Quality

Many of us have been coming to the Indian River Lakes region for years. But, whether you've enjoyed the lakes for many generations or just a few, we must all acknowledge the changes in the water quality of our lakes and rivers. Unknown to us years ago, we now have Eurasian Water Milfoil (an aquatic invasive plant) in varying concentrations throughout the Indian River Lakes. This past summer, we had Blue Green Algae blooms on Butterfield Lake and Grass Lake. And, other threats may be on the horizon. Hydrilla is present in waters near Syracuse and Didymo (also known as "Rock Snot") is found within a three hour drive from this area.

Recognizing the issues related to water quality in our service area, the IRLC has initiated a water quality team. This team will be expanding an existing water testing program known as CSLAP (Citizen Statewide Lake Assessment Program) within the Indian River Lakes. The team also encourages waterfront property owners to obtain the book *"Diet for a Small Lake"* written by the NYS DEC and NYSFOLA (New York State Federation of Lakes Association) to understand the natural processes of their lake. A second book *"Lakescaping for Wildlife and Water Quality"* by the Minnesota DEC is encouraged reading and is the "best practices manual" for living near water. Both books are available through Amazon.

In the coming months, we will be engaging lake associations and waterfront property owners in the IRLC service area to discuss water quality. We will be looking to encourage measures to protect our waters. After all, the reason we love this place centers around our water.



## Get INVOLVED!

Do you enjoy the outdoors? Do you enjoy hiking, or kayaking? If you are interested in volunteering with IRLC, we are interested in you! We can benefit from your talents! From office work, leading a hike, planning or helping with a kid's event, giving a lecture or workshop, helping with events such as paddle trips or clearing trails, we have a spot for you! Have you thought about "adopting" your favorite trail or preserve area by becoming a Trail or Land Steward? Please contact [tamales@me.com](mailto:tamales@me.com) or [IndianRiverLakes@gmail.com](mailto:IndianRiverLakes@gmail.com) for more information.



## A New Island for the IRLC!

The Indian River Lakes Conservancy has gratefully accepted the generous gift of a .1 acre island on Moon Lake from Warren R. Bonney, Watertown. Mr. Bonney is an avid skier and runner who at 89 years of age completed his 25<sup>th</sup> circuit of the 2.2 mile Shamrock Run in Watertown in March this year. He owned and operated Bonney Realty from 1959 to 2010 with his late wife Margaret McArthur Bonney. As Mr. Bonney has requested, the IRLC Board is pleased to name the property Margaret Bonney Island in her memory.



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

## Black-capped Chickadee

The Black-capped Chickadee is well known to most Indian River Lakes area residents and finds favor as an interesting denizen of our region. From forests to fields and lake shores to bird feeders, this species is a common year-round regional resident. Often overlooked, this common and interesting little bird is little studied even by those of us keenly aware of any creature with feathers. Almost ubiquitous throughout any habitat the Black-capped Chickadee is one of our most adaptable, available and fun species to watch. Time spent observing this bird will provide insights into their complex social order and many behaviors that are worth observing.

In our area most chickadees are seen in small groups, but during some years the region may be over washed by periodic invasions of birds from farther north. For the most part our birds have limited home ranges in which they survive the winters. Birds that find adequate life sustaining food and shelter while managing to avoid predators begin to “think spring” by early to mid-February. On warming days, particularly in sheltered locations, the whistled spring territorial *fee-be-o* song may begin to be heard. During the previous months only the social *chick a dee dee dee* song and other calls have been heard. The appearance of the whistled song marks the onset of territory establishment and is one of the first signs of spring in our northern woodlands.

Other signs of the coming mating season, such as enhanced aggression and chasing, accompany the increase in territorial song. The intensifying sunlight and longer days result in increased hormonal flow that puts social stress on the flocks. Flocks begin to break down beginning in late-March and birds are seen in pairs at bird feeders and elsewhere in their home range. At this time there are many displays and pecking matches as pairs are formed and territories established. The socially

dominant individuals from the winter flocks are most likely to obtain prime breeding habitat with lower ranking birds attempting to use areas of lower quality. Some pairing has occurred during fall and winter and may give an advantage over the competition.

Pairs begin seeking nesting sites in mid-late April and feeder watchers may notice a rapid decline in visits during this time period. Nests are always in cavities in a variety of tree types and are excavated by both parents. The female adds small amounts of lining such as rodent fur to mix with the wood chips. She lays 4-7 eggs on average; however, larger numbers occur occasionally. Eggs are incubated for 10-12 days with hatching occurring thereafter. Young are ready to fledge from the nest in 12 days if disturbed, but usually remain 16 days. Once fledged they stay with the parents for up to four weeks before becoming independent. At more southerly latitudes two broods in a season are not unusual. At our more northerly location double brooding is less frequent but does occur. With the trend toward earlier and warmer springs it is likely raising two broods a season may become more frequent locally.

The striking behavioral differences between the “normal” noisy Black – capped Chickadees of July on into May each year contrasts vividly with the nesting period. During May and June this species is hard to find and seems to vanish from the woodlands. They become quiet and secretive alter egos of their former selves until fledging occurs. Once that is done, however, little family groups of noisy inquisitive Black-capped Chickadees return to brighten the landscape. One of the pleasures of summer bird feeding is the arrival of adults with their often disheveled looking broods. The young seem not to have mastered either the arts of flying or feeding. After a couple of weeks, progress in both these areas is noticeable and we humans actually think their survival is possible.



By late July family groups may join and form larger flocks drifting through what will become their home range for the winter. At this time a distinct social order is formed that will last throughout the year. Dominant and subordinate status is defined. Dominant birds will generally be more likely to survive the winter as a result of better access to critical resources (food, roost site, position in flock etc.) Dominance is a definite advantage for a chickadee and will contribute to a higher probability of survival. If they survive their first winter, an average life span in this species is 3-5 years. Any individual making it for a decade in the wild is indeed a wise old survivor.

By September local residents have formed the flocks they will winter in and are largely settled on range. In some years there may be massive irruptions of northern birds as a result of enhanced food supplies and increased reproductive success. These waves of migrants are tough to detect in the Indian River Lakes but very noticeable along large water bodies such as Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. How these invaders interact and compete with local birds is unclear. Local birds would presumably have a competitive advantage that migrants would not, such as knowing where your bird feeder is. Even during major irruptions spring northbound flights are generally smaller than the massive fall movements suggesting significant overwinter mortality. Local birds certainly experience losses to predators, disease, starvation, and other factors but there are definite benefits to being a local.

*(continued on page 8)*

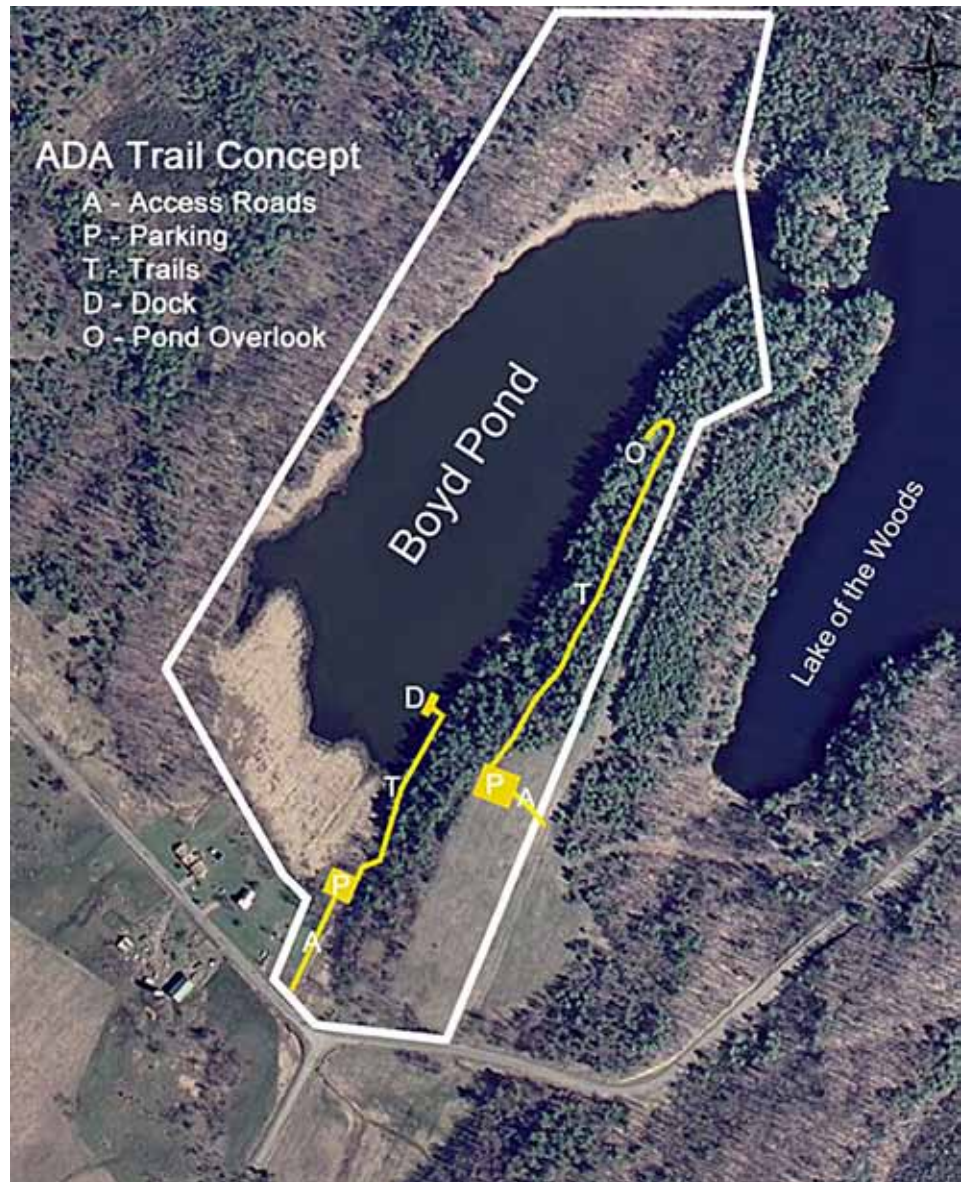
by Mark Scarlett

# Boyd Pond UPDATE

Throughout IRLC's relatively short history, its volunteers and donors have worked hard to preserve and protect important features of our Indian River Lakes landscape. They have also sought to develop pathways for the public to enjoy and appreciate the value of that landscape, including over six miles of trails in the Grand Lake Reserve that provide multiple opportunities for both recreation and learning.

Still, the landscape of the Grand Lake Reserve is rugged and none of the trails developed so far has offered an opportunity for handicapped access. However, we were happy to discover that the topography of the Boyd Pond property, which IRLC purchased in August last year, might offer the first good opportunity to develop Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant pathways, so that disabled persons might also enjoy and appreciate firsthand the diversity of this beautiful place. Moreover, given the proximity of Boyd Pond to Fort Drum, an ADA compliant trail system might also provide disabled soldiers and veterans with rewarding recreational opportunities relatively close to home.

Accordingly, the IRLC applied for and in April 2013 was awarded a \$30,000 grant to fund the design of two ADA compliant trails on Boyd Pond. The 25 acre pond is an important water source for the adjacent Lake of the Woods and is surrounded by an additional 29 acres that include a beautiful hemlock and white pine forest above a prominent sandstone ledge overlooking the pond. The aerial photo indicates the planned locations for the parking areas, trails, dock, and viewing decks for the planned project.



*An aerial photo of the Boyd Pond area showing the property boundaries, the planned access roads and parking and handicapped accessible trails, overlooks and dock.*

Following the grant award IRLC hired GYMO, a Watertown architecture and engineering firm, to develop the project design. Subsequently, GYMO staff have completed the required topographic surveys of the site to assure the design complies with ADA grades; archeological, wetland and endangered species investigations (for US Army Corps of Engineers and DEC permits); and preliminary construction drawings and cost estimates.

The project has now received DEC approval and awaits Army Corp of Engineers review. Although the recent government shutdown has created a backlog of work at the Army Corp of Engineers, we are hopeful the

project can receive their endorsement early enough this winter so that final construction drawings, renderings, and cost estimates can be completed and we can begin the Town of Theresa review of the project in time to begin work in the next building season.

With a preliminary cost estimate of \$250,000, the project poses a formidable challenge for our small land trust. However, we are confident that with sufficient funding and community support, the project is achievable and well worth the effort. We are now beginning the search for grant funding and, as the project takes its final shape, we hope we can count on your support to help turn this visionary project into reality.

## Meet Our New Board Members

### Denise Robertson

*I have been coming to Butterfield Lake since 1966 when my family purchased a summer camp. My husband, Ed, and I purchased our own family camp in 1981, and spent nearly every weekend and vacation there with our two children as they were growing up. Since our retirement in 2002, we have spent our summers enjoying the fresh air, wildlife and scenic beauty that originally attracted us here.*

*I became involved with IRLC at the first meeting when a group of lake and local people gathered around a kitchen table to discuss the opportunity of beginning a Land Trust.*

*From nearly the beginning and for most of the 15+ years that the Conservancy has existed, I have been the administrator of office processes and procedures. This was a natural step for me as I approached retirement from Chief Financial Officer of a specialized interior construction company in Rochester, NY. My experience with the daily operations of a closely held company was excellent preparation for the volunteer position I have undertaken with IRLC.*

*We now call the North Country home year round and I look forward to having an active role in the future of the Indian River Lakes Conservancy as a member of the Board of Directors and Co-Leader of the Administration/Finance Team.*

### Walter Dutcher

*I was introduced to the lakes in the Indian River region by a friend in the 1980s. I purchased a lakeside camp in the 1990s and became active with the cottage owners association. Water quality and education are a major interest and have led me to get involved with these issues at the state level. The IRLC*

*has a unique opportunity to help preserve the watershed here through monitoring, education, and management. I look forward with great enthusiasm to work with the rest of the IRLC Board and with all our members, volunteers and the public to promote conservation of our wonderful water resources*

### Jerry Cole

*When Kathleen and I were first married we lived in a log home on an Adirondack lake built by William West Durant in 1898. As we went through life, it was our dream to retire to a log home on a lake. In 1991 we "discovered" the Indian River Lakes. We purchased 16 acres on Grass Lake and built our log home. It has been our good fortune to have retired in this beautiful and diverse area.*

*I come from a long line of farmers and gardeners and perhaps this heritage led me to an association with the Good Earth. I believe my scouting years helped direct me to pursue a career in natural resources.*

*I attended Paul Smiths College School of Forestry and Stephen Austin State University, graduating with a B.S. in Forestry. Late in life I took graduate credits in Natural Resource Management at Antioch College in New Hampshire.*

*I have been involved with the Grass Lake Association since its inception in 2003. I am currently President of the Association. I look forward to serving on the Board of IRLC to pursue their goals and to increase my own knowledge of this unique area.*

### Tammy Lueck

*My first visit to the Indian River Lakes area was to my husband's family camp on Millsite Lake in February 1997! My husband's parents honeymooned on Butterfield Lake in 1934 and my husband has been going to Millsite Lake since 1948. We now have had four generations that enjoy this area. I have had a lifelong interest in nature, especially birding, thanks to my parents who were avid birders! I also enjoy hiking, kayaking and gardening. We now spend our summers on Millsite Lake, just down the road from my husband's family camp. Professionally, I am a Registered Nurse, and spent quite a few years in management. I now work a flexible schedule at two different hospitals when we return to Florida for the winter. I have been volunteering for IRLC for a few years. I enjoy the outdoors, and appreciate the efforts of land trusts. It is very rewarding being with like-minded people.*

## THANKS!

### 2013 CONSERVATORS

IRLC Senior Volunteers who serve in significant specific roles:

**Kim Cullen**, *Clear Lake - Outreach*  
**Vici Zaremba Diehl**, *Indian River - Science Advisory*

**Dick Edgar**, *Redwood - Stewardship*  
**Elaine Garvey**, *Grass Lake - Outreach*

**Alan Hicks**, *Millsite Lake - Outreach*  
**John O'Driscoll**, *Lake of the Woods - Administration/Finance*

**Louise Scarlett**, *Rossie - Outreach*  
**Shari Scott**, *Clayton - Outreach*

### 2013 Event Leaders

**Kim Cullen**  
**Steve & Vici Diehl**  
**Ken Schwarz**  
**Marybeth Warburton**

### 2013 Event Supporters

**Bella's**  
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**Corbin's River Heritage**  
**Cross Island Farms**  
**Curtis Furniture**  
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**Freighter's**  
**Garden Angels Bed & Breakfast**  
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**Hicks Ice Company**  
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**Panera Bread • Price Chopper**  
**River Day Spa and Salon**  
**Route 37 Building Supply**  
**St. Lawrence Pottery**  
**St Lawrence River Galleries**  
**Save The River**  
**Staples • Stewart's Shops**  
**Victoria Storey**  
**Target • White's Lumber**

### IRLC 2014 Highlights

<b>Feb 9</b>	<b>Winter Wonderland Hike (1-3:00 p.m.)</b>
<b>May 10</b>	<b>Birds &amp; Blooms Hike (10:00 a.m. - noon)</b>
<b>May 25</b>	<b>Dedication of the Baker Island Dock and Grass Lake paddle (2:00 p.m.)</b>
<b>June 28</b>	<b>IRLC Annual Meeting Boyd Pond 10:00 a.m.</b>
<b>Aug 2</b>	<b>Annual "Celebration of the Lakes" Coyote Moon Vineyards, Clayton</b>

# MEMBERS & DONORS

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

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 Brian & Nan Backus  
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 Jeff Stelljes  
 John Sundbeck  
 Wayne Slate  
 Alex Velto  
 Don Wingerath

Contributions were made  
 In Honor of:

Elliott & Margie Hillback  
 Mark & Louise Scarlett

*This list reflects contributions made before November 1, 2013. We value the contributions of all our donors and regret any errors or omissions. Please let us know so we can correct them promptly.*

**Renew your membership. New Benefits make Membership even more attractive!**



**Renew or Join at the Loon Level by June 30th and receive an IRLC hat!**

*We've enclosed a Membership envelope for your convenience.*

Individual - \$35.00  
*Individual access to public & member only events. IRLC window decal*

Heron - \$250.00  
*IRLC hat plus all benefits above*

Family - \$50.00  
*Family access to public & member only events. 2 IRLC window decals*

Osprey - \$500.00  
*Invitation to President's End-of-Summer Thank You Party plus all benefits above*

Loon - \$100.00  
*Priority access to public & member only events - plus all benefits above*

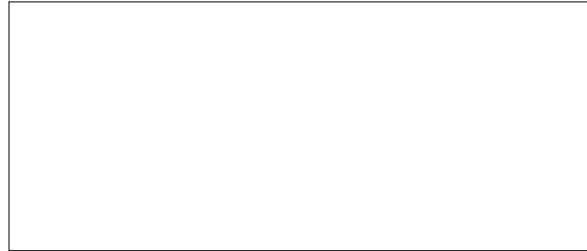
Eagle - \$1,000.00 & above  
*Invitation to special small group events, unique eagle pin plus all benefits*

**Special Membership Offer:** We've created a great looking, first ever IRLC Hat. Normally a free hat would go to donors at the Heron Level (\$250) and above, but from now until June 30, 2014 we'll give a hat to anyone who renews or joins at the Loon level (\$100). You can also get a free hat by completing 15 volunteer hours by June 30th. Two hats if you do both!

Membership is the base of any organization like ours. If you are not a Member please join us. If you are already a Member please consider upgrading your membership level.

Indian River Lakes Conservancy  
P.O. Box 27  
Redwood, New York 13679

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Permit #50



or CURRENT RESIDENT

During the late fall and winter months flocks of chickadees enliven the winter scene in so many ways. The patient person can actually tame individual birds to eat from your hand with time and patient effort. Certainly the winter woods would be a duller place without these entertaining creatures. From a conservation standpoint there seems little short-term worry for the future of this widespread, adaptable species. That said, on our fast changing planet there are few guarantees. Some populations of this species have been hard hit by West Nile Virus and experienced sharp but apparently temporary declines. And climate change can be a threat even to widespread and adaptable critters. For now, however, this species can just be enjoyed for all its qualities we humans find so endearing

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*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.*

## Our Popular Seasonal Hikes Continue



*Twenty-nine hikers enjoyed the striking scenery and learned about the geological history of this region from geologist Ken Schwarz on our "Falling Leaves" hike along the North Ridge trail at the Grand Lake Reserve near Redwood. The next IRLC-sponsored hike titled "Winter Wonderland" is slated for February 9, 2014.*

**Don't miss out!** We have more hikes and special events planned this summer. If you want to make certain that you get notifications and reminders about our activities, make sure you are on our email list. If you haven't been getting hike reminders, please send us your email address: indianriverlakes@gmail.com.