



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT Elliott Hillback, IRLC President

*This is the last section of our application to become a nationally accredited Land Trust. We would like to share it with all of you.*

“It all started in a very innocuous way in the summer of 1998. Henry Carse wanted to protect some land his family owned on Butterfield Lake, a beautiful five mile long lake that is one of the 18 Indian River Lakes in what is now our service area in Northern New York. He was frustrated that he couldn't find an organization that was interested in accepting his donation. The President of the Butterfield Lake Cottage Owners Association heard the story and began calling a few other couples around the lake she thought might be interested in creating a land trust.

Our first meeting, sitting around a dining room table, took place a few days later and all six couples present eventually said: “sure, let's go, how hard can this be, let's do it”. (Three current Board Members were sitting at that table.) A few months later, after the paperwork was completed, we excitedly received our first donated land – a tiny 26 acre wetland at the edge of the lake. It was not much, but it did have an active osprey nest on it and, most importantly, it was actually being conserved by the Indian River Lakes Conservancy! We put up signs, we protected that wetland like it was our first child. And, like parents of any newborn we also began to quickly figure out what we had gotten ourselves into! We suddenly had to start learning how to do the right thing, a process that has never stopped.

We must have done pretty well though, because four and a half years

later that same donor gave us 854 beautiful acres including 2.5 miles of shoreline that has become the centerpiece of our 1,085 acre Grand Lake Reserve. A combination of mostly rocky wooded uplands plus some important wetlands, the GLR now includes nearly 5 miles of shoreline that will remain undeveloped forever.

Fast forward to 2016. A lot has happened! The IRLC has employed a great full time staff person for almost two years. We own and protect 2,277 acres of land with 6 miles of marked and managed trails and an active Stewardship program. The Indian River Lakes and River Project, our comprehensive Water Stewardship program, is aggressively working to reverse the declining water quality in our area lakes and in the Indian River. In the easily accessible 51 acre Redwood Hill Preserve, our future environmental education center is beginning to take shape. The driveway and public parking lot are built. Construction of our one thousand square foot octagonal trailside classroom is nearing completion. This functional and beautiful building was built by a dedicated group of volunteers who worked through the winter to get it ready for use during our busy 2016 summer season. We are in the design stage of an ADA compliant all-access trail located near the classroom which is being funded by a Regional Economic Development Council Grant received last year. Outreach and education efforts are accelerating. (More information on these and other activities follow in this Newsletter)

Now we are “mature” teenagers, turning eighteen and yes, very proud of



our accomplishments. We have been quite good at getting a lot of stuff done, often with limited resources. But over the last few years we increasingly began to understand that the adult stage of our organization will be the most important, and potentially the most challenging of all. We now clearly understand that as we mature we have the responsibility to become a truly self-renewing organization, capable of continuing to conserve, to teach, to advise, to set a good example, and most importantly provide conservation leadership in the Indian River Watershed in perpetuity.

So, in 2011 we had our first day long “strategic offsite” (well, it was outside on the grass in front of our office) where, with help from a Land Trust Alliance grant funded consultant we began to lay the groundwork for our long term success. It became obvious it was time to make major improvements in how we planned and managed. We started spending substantially more time writing and implementing policies and procedures. We focused on being more organized, with well thought out structure, clearer job descriptions, more effective training and increased communication and accountability. We began to design and implement better  
*(continued on page 5)*

## About the IRLC

Formed in 1998 to conserve critical lands in the Indian River Lakes area of Northern New York, the IRLC is a non-profit land trust with 501(c) (3) tax exempt status operating in a manner consistent with the published standards of the Land Trust Alliance, a national organization

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## IRLC Receives Grant for Accessible Trail

by: Mark Scarlett

Last summer IRLC submitted a New York State Consolidated Funding Application to the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) to build an ADA accessible trail on the Redwood Hill Preserve adjacent to our office on Stine Road. Building an accessible trail has long been a dream project for IRLC, including our effort two years ago to secure funding for such a trail on Boyd Pond. With the gift of the Redwood Hill Preserve from Elliott and Margie Hillback, we now have an equally suitable landscape that is much closer to public access from Rt. 37 and adjacent to the resources available at the IRLC office. So, with great pride and excitement, we learned this winter that IRLC has been awarded a \$134,000 grant from the federally funded Recreational Trails Program, administered by OPRHP to help build a 2460 foot accessible trail on the Preserve.

The accessible trail will follow an existing foot path that leads from the access road and parking area and past the trailside classroom, all of which were funded last year with grant support from the NYS Environmental Protection Fund Conservation Partnership Program administered by the DEC and the Land Trust Alliance. The trail will then loop through a beautiful mixed pine and hardwood forest to an accessible deck and benches with a panoramic view of Butterfield Lake. The project will provide the local community and the region with a universally accessible venue for outdoor recreation, environmental education, and guided trail walks for adults and children. We are now working on the preliminary steps needed to take the project to bid and hopefully to completion before the end of this year's building season.



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.

# New Property - Baker Woods Preserve

by: Matthew Carney

When Dr. Doris Nagel Baker (nee Blum) began to feel constrained by the Central Park location of her psychiatric office, she looked for a rural refuge beyond the storied Hudson Valley and Catskills. Since her quest occurred prior to the advent of internet searches, Doris fixed her attention on a tantalizing advertisement in the New York Times for a large tract of land and a country home in northern Lewis County.

Doris soon visited what would become her cherished home away from home, a classic decrepit 1890s farmhouse. The home was well situated on 222 pristine acres on the North side of the upper reaches of the Indian River.

Soon after acquiring the Natural Bridge property, Doris met the love of her life in now deceased Columbia University professor emeritus Norman



Baker. Norman shared her admiration for the North Country land, and the couple eventually purchased an additional 133 acres on the South side of the Indian River, laying the groundwork for what gradually and affectionately became known as the Baker Woods.

The pair vigorously rehabilitated and restored the homestead. Moreover, Doris and Norm ridded the land of the junk that typically accumulates on old farms and began to employ wise and restrained forestry practices to benefit the amazing woodland. A prominent feature of the land is a 70 acre red pine plantation planted in 1953. That forest tract has since been responsibly managed and has matured into a healthy forest, which is beginning to blend nicely with the mixed deciduous and conifer forest that surrounds it and the meandering tannin-hewed river that flows through it.

Doris resists calling her spot on the Indian River the “headwaters” as it actually originates many circuitous nautical miles up river near the hamlet of Indian River. However, she does not resist calling the Baker Woods Preserve beautiful and amazing. In high water, the river is navigable by canoe or kayak. Fauna abounds in, on, and around the river including brown trout, blue heron,



black bear and even the occasional passing moose. The forest boasts impressive specimens of hemlock, balsam fir, white pine, and cherry, to name a few.

Doris and Norm were stewards of the land, stewards of the community, and well-loved neighbors. It was welcome if unsurprising news that Doris decided to donate this pristine land to be preserved forever and responsibly shared by all.

Serendipity led Doris to the land. Her shared appreciation for the land with Norman led to her decision to donate the property to the Stewardship of the Indian River Lakes Conservancy. Tentative plans are underway to make the property accessible, safe, healthy, and enjoyable for future generations. It is a truly exciting time on the (almost) headwaters of the Indian River!

Thank you, Doris and Norman.

## Matthew Carney Joins IRLC Board

Matthew is a native of Northern New York and the Adirondack foothills who has long associations with both the Adirondacks and the Tug Hill. He met his wife Linda during a three year Peace Corps assignment in the Kingdom of Tonga and the two settled, in 1986, in Natural Bridge on 120 acres adjoining the newly designated Baker Woods Preserve. Their children, Siobhan, Liam, and Sinead, learned to love the land and the Indian River and have subsequently all become avid enthusiasts of the outdoors. Matthew recently retired after 36 years in public and private education. He is thrilled to be caring

for his menagerie of animals, skiing, snowshoeing, paddling, gardening and trekking...in the daylight. Before retirement, much of this was done by virtue of a headlamp.

“I strongly believe that the environment is the quintessential issue of our time. Many do nothing in the face of a problem that seems too big and intangible. Involvement in the IRLC allows me to engage in meaningful action to preserve a pristine water source, educate friends, family, and others and involve them in conservation efforts. I have been an informal caretaker of the Baker



*Matt with his daughter and granddaughter*

Woods for 30 years and enjoyed a wonderful and enduring friendship with Doris and Norman Baker, so I am especially gratified to become both an IRLC steward of that special land and a member of the IRLC Board of Directors.”

## Important Step for Water Quality

For the last several years there has been a noticeable degradation in the water quality of our river and many lakes, as evidenced by algae blooms and other measures. This also prompted a concern for the quality of the well water throughout the town.

About two years ago the town decided it was time to address this problem. The outline of a wide reaching solution was proposed and discussed at a town meeting in June of 2014. The sense of the town residents at the meeting was that the proposal was too broad and that the people's septic systems were likely the main source of the problem. With that guidance in hand, much research was done into the soil and rock conditions in town and the functioning of septic

systems. It is very clear that the direction the residents gave to the town in that meeting was correct.

In January the town formed a Water Quality Committee to take what had been learned and come up with a zoning law to address the pollution problem. The Indian River Lakes Conservancy donated money so that the town could hire engineering and legal help in the formation of the law. We think that we have received excellent advice and that we have come up with a very good and workable law. Briefly, the law will require that an inspection of a septic system take place when a property is to be sold. If the septic system does not meet the standard, an agreement must be made to bring the septic system to standard for the new

by Kevin McCarthy, Town of Theresa  
Water Quality Compliance Committee

owner to occupy the dwelling. Permits that expand the size of a dwelling or its use will also trigger an inspection. New construction will be permitted when soil conditions and lot size allow a system that meets the standard.

This approach will improve conditions only very gradually, but it is an important step. A draft of the law will be available on the town's website after April 25th. We encourage you to look at it, make a copy of it and give feedback. We also hope that you find this law valuable and that you share this sentiment with your friends and neighbors in the town. A town meeting is scheduled for Friday, June 3rd, 7:00 pm at the fire hall to present the law to the residents.

## BioBlitz Comes to the Indian River Lakes

By: April Frederick

Indian River Lakes Conservancy is proud to host the Adirondack All-Taxa Biodiversity Inventory's 2016 BioBlitz, which will be held this year in the Indian River Lakes region on Saturday, June 18th. Naturalists will convene to

as we kick off the event with a moth survey on the Redwood Hill Preserve. Other public programs are being planned throughout the day on Saturday and anyone interested in learning more or meeting the scientists is welcome to stop by anytime on the 18th.

A BioBlitz is a concentrated period of biological surveying that attempts to record all the living species within a designated area. Scientists, naturalists and volunteers are organized by taxa in groups called TWIGS to conduct an intensive field study over a continuous period of time, usually 24 hours. The Adirondack All-Taxa Biodiversity Inventory has selected the Indian River Lakes region for the 2016 event in order to highlight the important connection the area provides between the Adirondack Park and Algonquin Provincial Park.

The short time frame and public involvement in a BioBlitz give these events the atmosphere of a festival. A BioBlitz offers opportunities and benefits that traditional scientific field studies do not. For example, a BioBlitz helps to personalize the concept of biodiversity for community residents

who often associate the term with distant and exotic locales. These events encourage people to meet working scientists and ask questions about local ecosystems. Rare species and uncommon or special habitats are often discovered because a large number of scientists and volunteers are working together and sharing information.

We encourage everyone to stop by the Redwood Hill Preserve on June 18th to get involved with the excitement. As plans solidify for public programs throughout the event, we will update our website. For more information about the Adirondack All-Taxa Biodiversity Inventory, visit their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/AdirondackATBI/>.



*A naturalist identifies an insect during a BioBlitz.*

spend a full day hiking IRLC preserves and boating the lakes and river to observe butterflies, dragonflies, plants, fungi, mammals, amphibians, and other organisms small and large. Families are welcome to join us Friday, June 17th



*TWIG leaders identify areas to inventory during a past BioBlitz.*

## President's Letter

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that are the crucial fuel for not for profit organizations: donations of time, ideas, energy and financial support.

We made a commitment to ourselves several years ago when we were still an all volunteer organization to push toward accreditation. That decision was a commitment to grow up, to become a mature responsible adult, to plan and build for the IRLC's future and for the future of the Indian River Lakes Watershed.

We are proud of what we have accomplished but we will be even prouder when we can say that we have set this organization securely on a path that will enable it to effectively serve the Indian River Lakes and the Indian River Watershed in perpetuity. Thank you for providing us with a framework and a process to help us achieve that common goal that drives us all.

The Board and Staff of the Indian River Lakes Conservancy thank you for your help.

Thank you also from every one of the eighteen lakes, from each of the 1,222 miles of rivers and streams, from all 361,000 acres in our service area and thank you from everyone and everything that lives in this beautiful place."

Please read and enjoy the articles in this newsletter describing our accelerating progress and the broad array of important and impactful activities where you could make a major difference with your time, your ideas, your energy and your financial support. Help us Celebrate, but more importantly please join us, find your own way to get personally involved in Protecting our beautiful Indian River Watershed - Forever!

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

## IRLC Applies for Accreditation

IRLC submitted its application for accreditation to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission on April 18th. This is an important step for our growing organization and we have spent quite a lot of time and energy preparing for this process over the past two years. We have worked hard to review our practices and policies in order to ensure that everything we do meets the high standards set forth in the nationally-recognized Land Trust Standards and Practices.

Across the country, land trusts like the Indian River Lakes Conservancy safeguard more than 40 million acres. Land trusts pledge to protect in perpetuity these forests, farms, parks and natural areas that are so critical to healthy human and wild communities. The accreditation process advances excellence among land trusts, and provides the public, landowners and donors with the confidence that these important places will be protected forever.

Voluntary accreditation provides independent verification that land trusts meet the high standards for land conservation, stewardship and nonprofit

management in the nationally-recognized Land Trust Standards and Practices. Accredited land trusts now conserve more than 75% of all land under conservation easement or owned in fee by land trusts, ensuring the promise of perpetuity.

The Commission awards accreditation to land trusts that meet national standards for excellence, uphold the public trust and ensure that conservation efforts are permanent. Accreditation is not a one-time action; it fosters continuous improvement as land trusts maintain their accredited status by applying for renewal every five years.

Museums, libraries, zoos, universities and many other organizations serving the public interest are able to gain professional recognition for their work through accreditation programs. Land trusts can join these ranks and participate in a voluntary accreditation program designed for and by land trusts and operated by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance.

*excerpted from [www.landtrustaccreditation.org](http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org)*

## School Spends Earth Day with IRLC

Students from Indian River Middle School celebrated Earth Day with IRLC. Approximately 250 8th grade students visited the Redwood Hill Preserve in two shifts where they visited one of three stations to learn about mammals, vernal pools and trees.

Students who participated in the mammal stations played games to learn about habitat, and arrying capacity and took a hike to identify animal signs like tracks and scats. Those who visited the vernal pool learned about the importance of water quality to macroinvertebrates, food web connections and life cycles while the tree activities emphasized the effected of competition and basic tree identification.

One teacher commented, "This is a unique opportunity. Many of these kids never have a chance to walk in the woods in their daily lives."

The completion of the trailside classroom early this summer along with the construction of an accessible trail on the Redwood Hill Preserve will enable IRLC to offer a variety of school and family programs.



## Common Redpoll - Sprite of the North

The Common Redpoll is a small Arctic finch that nests in the Boreal Forest and Tundra Regions of both the old and new world. Along with its close cousin, the Hoary Redpoll, these birds form a taxonomic complex currently driving serious birders and academic ornithologists to distraction. Recent DNA analysis suggests that what we now think of as two species may comprise as many as five or six. Since redpolls have highly variable plumage by age, sex and gender, sorting them out is already a daunting task. For those observers wishing not to risk precious sanity, it is probably best to consider all redpolls in flocks as Common's. We can enjoy these entertaining little finches when they descend on our feeders and not be at all concerned with their family trees.

Common Redpolls are true northerners with their breeding range in North America extending



*The female has a white chest, streaked sides and a red cap.*

across the top of the continent from Newfoundland and the Canadian Arctic to Alaska. In the old world the range extends from Greenland and Norway to Siberia. Thus this range circles the pole (Circumpolar). During some years when their primary food of small seeds is abundant, they may remain all year within the primary breeding range. In other years, usually every second or third year, food supplies fail and this species irrupts south, often in great numbers. During such irruptions, when and where flocks appear is highly variable and nomadic in nature. Driven by food availability and abundance,

flocks may appear in their southern range as early as mid-November or as late as February. The usual southern extent of these flights in North America ranges from Massachusetts to Idaho, primarily east of the Rockies. As with the southbound trip, the northbound return varies usually from mid-February to mid-April. This species migrates in numbers during daylight hours unlike many small birds. At the Derby Hill Bird Observatory of the Onondaga Audubon Society, near the southeastern corner of Lake Ontario, large spring flights of up to five thousand have been observed.

Once these flocks appear they are hard to miss as they whirl through weedy old fields dining on seeds or over running bird feeders. If one feeds Niger seed, big redpoll invasions may require taking out a second mortgage to keep your guests well fed. Such invasions are wonderful opportunities to enjoy these sprites of the North close up and personal at your feeder.

Before irruptions into our area are possible, the population levels must exceed available food resources and successful breeding plays an important part in the process. Breeding occurs in open forested areas with birds avoiding dense closed forest. The female does most of the chores of raising young from nest building to nest sanitation and feeding the brood. Usually four to six eggs are laid and hatch in about eleven days. The young are ready to leave the nest after another eleven days and are soon on their own. Unlike young hawks and fish-eating species, these young usually have readily available food sources and catching seeds is not that hard. Usually only one brood is raised per year but in good years successful parents may try a second nesting. The short summer at high latitudes, weather, predation and food resources are primary constraints on nesting success. The usual vegetarian diet of this species is supplemented



*Common Redpoll males have a pale red vest on the chest.*

with small arthropods and insects particularly while feeding nestlings.

When irruptions occur they include a large percentage of female-like plumaged birds, presumably including many birds of the year. The salmon pink breasted adult males often make up 10-15 % or less of a given flock and in some years can be quite uncommon. Flocks have a distinct pecking order when observed at feeders and based on my observations, adult males are often at the top of that order. Irruptions provide an opportunity to enjoy this northern visitor so when one occurs, stock up the Niger seed. The Indian River Lakes region is a good place for all irruptive finches during "on" years. Based on information coming from birders in Quebec and northeastern Ontario it appears that a Common Redpoll irruption is coming our way in the winter of 2015-2016. If so now is the time to process the bank loan for adequate Niger seed and feeders. Also be sure to get lots of Black Oil Sunflower seed, as while redpolls prefer Niger, they will eat small Black Oil seeds. If the invasion materializes it will be a fun winter of watching.

Fortunately this abundant little finch is not currently of conservation concern. It is likely these spirited sprites will continue to entertain future generations for some time to come. Lurking in the background, however, is the Specter of climate change that could devastate many northern species. For the moment enjoy, try to reduce your carbon footprint, and stay tuned.

## Trailside Classroom Takes Shape



The Trailside Classroom now under construction alongside the future ADA accessible trail on the Redwood Hill Preserve. With heartfelt thanks and appreciation to volunteer builder and designer Dick Edgar and his construction partner Ron Tibbles who have worked throughout this winter and spring to complete the building for the summer hiking season.

## Did You Know - Fireflies

Summer is just around the corner and, for many of us, that means a backyard full of dancing yellow lights. Fireflies, or Lightning Bugs, can be found in a variety of habitats. However, all species have a few things in common. Fireflies prefer warm, humid environments and long grass. At night, fireflies crawl to the tops of long grass blades to signal for mates.

The light emitted from a firefly's abdomen, called bioluminescence, is produced by a chemical reaction. Fireflies use this light emitting capability to attract mates and to warn others of danger. In some species, both the male and female flash lights while in other species only the male lights up the night. Each species of firefly produces

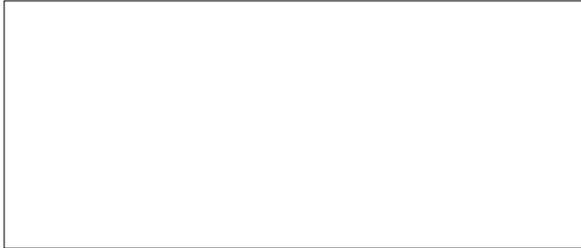
a unique light pattern. Patterns may consist of the number of flashes, the timing of and between flashes, the flight pattern while flashing and even the time of night they are actively blinking. In some species, even the eggs have been observed flashing in response to stimulus such as tapping or vibrations.

Scientists have really just begun to study fireflies, so there are many unanswered questions about their behavior, diet and habitat needs. However, there are some ways that you can help fireflies thrive in your area such as eliminate pesticide use around your home, add a water feature to increase your local humidity, or simply let a small section of your lawn grow tall and natural.



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NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Watertown, NY 13601  
Permit #50



or CURRENT RESIDENT

## Save the Dates

### June 17-18 BioBlitz Times to be announced

*Join us Friday evening for moth sampling. Other public programs will be offered throughout the day on Saturday.*

### June 25 Annual Meeting 10:00am

*Grand opening for our new trillside classroom*

### Jul 19 Moonlight Paddle 8:00pm

*Join us under the stars for a moonlight paddle on Millsite Lake.*

### Aug 13 Celebration of the Lakes 5:00pm

*IRLC's annual picnic is sure to be a hit this year! Bring your friends and family to Bella Brooke Vineyard for an evening of great food, wine, music and fun!*

### Oct 15 Falling Leaves Hike 1:00pm

*Enjoy the crisp fall weather on this annual IRLC outing*

New events may be added as opportunities arise. Don't miss a single IRLC event - make sure you're on our email list by sending a note to [IndianRiverLakes@gmail.com](mailto:IndianRiverLakes@gmail.com) with the words Join List in the subject line.



Join the conversation on Facebook

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

[www.IndianRiverLakes.org](http://www.IndianRiverLakes.org)  
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