



Indian River Lakes CONSERVANCY

Protect • Learn • Enjoy • Forever

Newsletter
Fall/Winter 2018



A Flock of Firsts for Year 20

The IRLC has had a very exciting and productive year as we turned 20 years old. It has been fun celebrating with all of you who in one way or another have helped us reach this milestone. We hope you had an enriching year in this Indian River Lakes area that we all Love. ***You should be as proud as we are for all we have accomplished together.*** Thank you for your ideas and candor, your volunteer time, your financial support, and your energetic involvement in so many ways during the past 20 years. You helped make our twentieth year an outstanding way to cap two decades of ***Protecting, Learning and Enjoying*** the Indian River Lakes Area! It is amazing to think that in 20 years our protected land has grown from a single 16-acre wetland to almost 3,000 acres. In parallel, we continued to dramatically broaden our watershed improvement activities, and we expanded our educational programs for adults and kids. Wow!

It is great to look back and feel proud of our amazing first 20 years, but what really excites me is the number of game-changing FIRSTS that the IRLC has had in 2018. These significant FIRSTS have put us in the position to strengthen our human and financial resources and have a real positive impact on this special Place We Love!

Elliott Hillback, IRLC Board Chair



- Early in the year, we hired our FIRST full-time professional Executive Director. Wylie Huffman is an avid outdoorsman with over twenty years of leadership experience as a U.S. Army officer. More recently, we added Heidi Sourwine as Program Coordinator. She is our FIRST staff member born (Redwood) and educated (St. Lawrence University) in the North Country.

- Our Education Committee members organized our FIRST annual day “Kids Camp” with 54 attendees outdoors in nature exploring Redwood Hill Preserve for three days. The team is already planning to significantly expand the event in 2019.

- We strengthened the Water Committee, by adding new members with expertise in diverse

areas, and the group organized its FIRST annual day long Water Quality Conference. New water quality initiatives are already being implemented.

- We had our FIRST summer intern, a junior from South Jefferson High School. Hannah wants to continue in the environmental field focusing on developing climate change solutions.

- Our Moonlight Paddle, co-hosted with TILT on Butterfield Lake this year, had more than 100 kayaks participating.

- Our FIRST pollinator gardens were planted at both Redwood Hill Preserve and Baker Woods Preserve, and four additional miles of trail opened on our 231 acre addition to Baker Woods Preserve increasing our trail network to over 20 miles of maintained trails!

- We finalized the design of our FIRST All Access trail which is now being built in the woods of the Redwood Hill Preserve. Construction of the half mile loop trail and overlook should be complete in June. It is a beautiful place. See you there!

- Our FIRST grant from the Northern New York Community Foundation is helping us add public amenities to the all-access trail. Thanks, NNYCF!

- Our FIRST comprehensive Strategic Plan is in late stages of development based on significant public input from a widely disseminated on-line survey and through 30 to 40 face to face interviews. Thanks for your valuable input.

Thanks for helping us Protect –
Learn – Enjoy this Place We Love!

Forever!



REDWOOD HILL PRESERVE SUMMER CAMP

What are your earliest memories of experiencing nature?

Cannon-balls from lake-docks, fishing with dad, watching birds, collecting acorns, or maybe even summer camp with friends?

The IRLC's new Summer Kids' Camp is opening doors for kids to experience similar moments of connection with nature that will stay with them long after the three days are over.

During the camp, kids explored the outdoors on nature hikes, constructed habitats, studied dragonflies, imitated owls, and peanut-buttered pine-cones for the birds.

Fifty-four students from five local school districts attended. For many, it was their first time visiting our trailside learning center and Redwood Hill trails.



"We want the kids to walk away with an appreciation for the beauty that exists in their own backyard and a love for all the living things- large and small- that inhabit it," noted Heidi Sourwine, program coordinator.

Camp director Pam Nelson added, "Giving kids the tools to feel confident exploring and learning about the natural world creates a lasting sense of responsibility and efficacy in their blooming relationship with nature."



Photos by Kim Sell and Elizabeth May



Focus on Water Quality

IRLC held its first annual **Indian River Watershed Water Quality Conference** in June with over 60 people in attendance. The group included Indian River residents and Lake Association leaders, elected officials and members of town planning boards and soil and water conservation districts, members of several other area conservation organizations, and university faculty.

The presentations and dialogue offered attendees an opportunity to improve their knowledge and understanding of our watershed and methods of watershed management. The conference was the IRLC's initial **water education and outreach event**, as we move toward the goal of developing and implementing a comprehensive Indian River Watershed Management Plan.

As a result of IRLC's continued outreach and networking, IRLC is now partnering with the **St. Lawrence River Watershed Project (SLRWP)** which is being spearheaded by the Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District. This project is focused on developing a St. Lawrence River Watershed Revitalization Plan which encompasses eight counties, 11,371 miles of lakes and streams, and over 1,100 lakes and ponds.

The IRLC will participate directly in this project by providing input regarding our **local concerns** that threaten water quality within the Indian River Watershed. This will help enable the development of a focused Indian River Watershed Management Plan.

Management plans will incorporate the years of **Citizen Science Lake Assessment Program (CSLAP)** data collected by volunteers on our lakes.

Planners will also consider data obtained through IRLC's new partnership with the Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries and Clarkson University. Beacon Institute scientists began installing ten **Real Time Hydrologic Monitoring Stations (RTHMS)** in our Indian River Lakes in October. The RTHMS will monitor water temperature, meteorological data, turbidity, salinity, and other aspects of water quality, and then upload the research data to a website for use by the IRLC and universities. In the near future, the RTHMS will be upgraded to also monitor **nitrogen levels**.

Data and observations generated through our decade-long collaboration with the unique **Oneonta State**

University Master's in Lake Management Program led by Prof. Bill Harmon will also inform the plans. Each student in this program studies one lake intensively for two years and then develops and presents a unique Lake Management Plan for that lake. Five of our area lakes have been studied thus far.

The IRLC is dedicated to working to achieve a high standard of water quality in the Indian River and our lakes, and to **protecting public health and recreation, and ensuring a vibrant ecosystem for diverse life.**

The IRLC will continue to lead collaborative efforts and to commission robust scientific research. The second annual Water Quality Conference will take place on **June 7th, 2019.**



Redwood Hill ADA Trail Design Completed

The Redwood Hill Preserve's All Access Trail design is complete and the construction bidding process began in November.

Portions of the trail will be elevated via boardwalk to protect exposed tree roots. Other areas will be graded and compacted to allow wheelchairs to easily traverse the path. A **viewing deck** will overlook Butterfield Lake.

The trail will also have a Clivus Multrum all-access **composting toilet system** thanks to a Northern New York Community Foundation grant.

"We are excited to offer the gift of nature to those that may have a harder time on most regular hiking trails," said Wylie Huffman, IRLC executive director.

Most of the construction work will not impede hiking on the trail. The trail design and construction is funded by a New York State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation grant. This project was also made possible by Dani Baker in honor of her late mother Beatrice Rosamond.

About the Indian River Lakes Conservancy

The Indian River Lakes Conservancy (IRLC) is a land trust that was established in 1998 to protect the water quality, wildlife, and beauty of the Indian River Lakes area, and to preserve its natural character.

The Indian River Lakes system, located on the St. Lawrence River plain in Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties, includes 18 natural lakes. The region takes its name from the Indian River, a picturesque mostly slow-moving river that begins as a small stream at Indian River Village and flows almost 100 miles to Black Lake, where it joins the Oswegatchie River which flows into the St. Lawrence River.

Currently the IRLC protects 2,500 acres of land within this area and maintains more than 20 miles of public trails.

Through community building and educational programming, the IRLC seeks to cultivate an enduring recognition of our interconnectedness and of our responsibility to walk softly upon the earth so that future generations can enjoy the lakes as we do now.

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Heidi Sourwine

Program Coordinator

Front Cover: © Penny A. Kring of Heath Photography. The photo depicts the Sugar Shack of Liz Scarlett and her late husband John in Hammond, NY.

IRLC Newsletter : Fall/Winter 2018

Join us at an upcoming event...

Winter Science Series JANUARY 26TH 12PM

Maggie Rourke-Bay, "The Nature of Akwesasne Culture"

*Winter Science Series Events are held at the Depauville Library and followed by a homemade soup lunch.

Winter Wonderland Walk and Bonfire FEBRUARY 2ND 1PM

Come out to Baker Woods Preserve to enjoy the sights and sounds of the winter season. Snowshoes required and IRLC will provide you with a pair if needed. Please register ahead by calling (315) 482-4757.

Winter Science Series FEBRUARY 23RD 12PM (Topic TBD)

Winter Science Series MARCH 30TH 12PM

Dr Sara Ashpole, "Recovering a Species at Risk: Turtles"

Winter Science Series APRIL 27TH 12PM

Jennifer Lauzon, "Reducing and Reusing to Curb our Take and Trash Economy"

Birds and Blossoms Hike at Grand Lake Reserve MAY 11TH 10AM

Save-the-Date...

Water Quality Conference FRIDAY, JUNE 7

Annual Members' Gathering MONDAY JULY 1ST 5PM

Redwood Hill Summer Kids' Camp July 16TH, 17TH, AND 18TH

21ST Annual Celebration of Lakes SATURDAY, JULY 27TH 5PM

