

Indian River Lakes CONSERVANCY

Protect • Learn • Enjoy • Forever

Newsletter
Winter 2021





Your Support Makes A BIG Difference!

Did you know that IRLC's Project WHIRL Program for High School Students was recently recognized in the Izaak Walton League's "Outdoor America" national magazine?

Did you know that the Land Trust Alliance national magazine "Saving Lands" also recognized Project WHIRL as a leading program for engaging teenagers in environmental stewardship?

Did you know that all IRLC Children's Education programs, Kids' Nature Camps, Family Programs, and Adult Educational Programs are free-of-charge?

Please help us continue this tradition of excellence and accessibility for all by making a gift to the Indian River Lakes Conservancy's Capital Campaign.

Your gift will have a meaningful and direct impact on children by providing them with unforgettable experiences and teaching them to be lifelong environmental stewards of the Indian River Lakes and our local habitats and resources.

THANK YOU



Looking Forward to a Watershed Year

One day it is a winter day in February 2020, and the next thing you know it is a winter day in February 2021. As they say, “the days are long, but the years are short.”

Working towards goals can sometimes feel like that too. We work day-by-day building relationships with our community members and partners and making efforts to grow our rate and scale of conservation, protection, and stewardship of the lakes and lands we love. We sprinkle seeds, water them, and repeat.

We are driven by knowing we are going in the right direction, little by little, and then it happens... a watershed moment when everything comes together. I’m talking about the awaited confirmation that one’s effort has created enough momentum and vivacity to animate a vision and make it flow like a River in spring.

This year is becoming a Watershed Year for IRLC, and I want to share with you the evolution of how it is coming to be.

Last year we increased our communication with lake associations and determined Eurasian Watermilfoil was a significant threat to our lakes.

We spoke with as many Milfoil experts as we could find and we connected with Dr. Diana White, a Clarkson mathematical biologist who was completing a DEC research grant on modeling sustainable ways to Milfoil, including the use of weevils.

Diana agreed to present our first presentation in the *Together at Home* series about her research and what she had learned about sustainable methods of milfoil control.

In late December 2020, we received the exciting news that the long-anticipated NY State funding for the Land Trust Alliance Conservation Partnership Program Grant had been released.

This grant coupled with a few impactful donations as matching funds, highlighted to our grant committee that we, as an organization, were ready to take the next step in hiring Jacob Ball as our Watershed Coordinator.

In Jake’s first week in his new role, his research discovered some lake associations in the upper Midwest who had initiated weevil rearing programs. He recommended that this would be a fantastic opportunity to learn how to harvest and raise our own weevils using sustainable practices.

When Diana White learned of our interest in rearing weevils, she and her Clarkson colleague, Dr. Michael Twiss recommended that we collaborate to submit a Great Lakes Research Consortium Grant to fund IRLC’s high school program, Project WHIRL (Protectors of Water and Habitat on the Indian River Lakes) as a vehicle to continue Diana’s research and predictive modeling while introducing high school students to the concepts of watershed management, employing bio control, and using mathematical modeling to predict outcomes.

The program will involve college interns from Clarkson leading high-school students under the guidance of their professors.

They will make lake and shoreline assessments to determine which lakes are the best candidates to initiate sustainable weevil-rearing programs to control milfoil.

Then, teens and mentors from the SUNY Environmental School of Science and Forestry in Syracuse will collect and learn to raise milfoil weevils and research habitat protection and water quality on IRLC’s Boyd Pond.

The Milfoil research that will be gathered from this summer’s Project WHIRL has the potential to impact sustainable treatment methods throughout the U.S. and Canada.

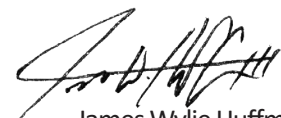
We are applying for grants that could scale up our efforts to connect our local students with professional researchers for the long-term.

As if all of this wasn’t enough, we have had a major website developer, “Fresh Since 2015, Inc.” offer to design a new website for IRLC for free as a donation to the IRLC.

New and wonderful volunteers have been popping up to help with programs. You may have met Dick Campany at our Winter Wonderland Hike or you might have seen Judy Keeler snowshoeing at Redwood Hill posting clues for our Snowy Sleuthing program.

Land Protection continues to expand. Several acquisition projects are under development, and we’re hoping to give you the details in the spring newsletter.

We all know that all good things come in all good time, but there’s definitely something about the rush of a watershed moment that exhilarates the soul. Thanks for being part of our current!



James Wylie Huffman III
Executive Director

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Keying in to Water Quality Factors by Jake Ball

"Water is a finite resource, and what we do now will define the health of our lakes later."

In the last year, most of us have relied more than ever before on the health of our natural resources to provide us an escape from our tumultuous world. When it came to recreation on the water, droves of cottage owners, fishermen, paddlers, boaters, and swimmers found their special places to relax on our lakes and rivers.

It is our mission to protect these special places so that our children, and grandchildren can enjoy these special places in the same way that we have enjoyed them.

In order to keep our lakes as our sanctuary, we must be conscious of water quality and what we can do to protect it. Harmful algal blooms (HABs) are becoming more and more common across the northeast. This can be attributed to a number of factors.

One major reason we are seeing more HABs is because of climate change. As our lakes gradually warm and we experience hotter than average and longer summers, we have a higher likelihood of experiencing more HABs. This makes controlling our nutrient inputs into our lakes more important than ever.

To reduce the impact of nutrient loading in our lakes, watershed residents should be regularly checking septic systems to make sure they are functioning properly. Lakeshore property owners should also refrain from using lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus. In fact, maintaining natural shorelines eliminates the need for maintaining lawns, and is the best way to eliminate nutrients before they run into the water. Natural shorelines also provide great winter habitat for native

insects that help control Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM). Another challenge to our water quality is the increasing nuisance of invasive plants. The most prevalent aquatic invasive plant in our lakes today is Eurasian watermilfoil, which can outcompete native plants, depriving native fish of nesting habitat. Once EWM gets out of control it has the potential to mat on the water's surface, making swimming, boating, and fishing impossible.

Lake residents can help control Eurasian watermilfoil by not mowing or raking our shorelines between Labor Day and Memorial Day. This will protect the wintering habitat for the native milfoil weevil, a natural predator of Eurasian watermilfoil. We can also stop the spread of Eurasian watermilfoil and other invasive species by cleaning, draining, and drying our boats and trailers after each use, and disposing of plant materials away from the water's edge.

Taking good care of our lakes by implementing small measures like these, we can help offset the effects of our warming climate and keep our lakes clean, healthy and beautiful for years to come. So one day our grandchildren can enjoy them just as much as we do.

The IRLC will be hosting our 4th annual Water Quality Conference on August 27th. The conference will feature water quality experts from around the region who will present on various water quality topics relevant to our lakes and watershed. We encourage all lake residents and community members to attend and learn more about ways we can protect and improve our water quality.



Partner Spotlight: The Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation

This summer the Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation (ACLC) is looking forward to expanding its education and outreach programs in partnership with IRLC, launching its new “Loon-Friendly” Lake Certification Program throughout the Indian River Lakes region to inform participants about loon natural history and ecology and inspire active involvement in environmental conservation.

The Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation is dedicated to promoting and inspiring passion for the conservation of Common Loons (*Gavia immer*) in and beyond New York’s six-million-acre Adirondack Park.



With the loon as its centerpiece, the work of the Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation encompasses scientific research; educational outreach; and conservation and management to help protect and support healthy populations of Common Loons in New York State and throughout North America. The ACLC’s Adirondack Loon Center, located in Saranac Lake, NY provides an engaging experience for people of all ages to learn about the Park’s wildlife and environmental concerns through the lives of Common Loons.

The ACLC conducts a variety of research on the Adirondack loon population, from nesting success to the impacts of environmental mercury pollution to loons. *Photo by Nina Schoch, Ph.D.*

Future Old-Growth at Grand Lake Reserve

Today, most of Grand Lake Reserve’s trees, as well as other forests throughout the North Country are all classified as young to middle-aged. We have come to accept these immature forests as impressive – and yes, they are impressive, but they are nowhere near as awe-inspiring as the old growth forests that grew throughout the Northeast before deforestation of the 19th and 20th centuries.

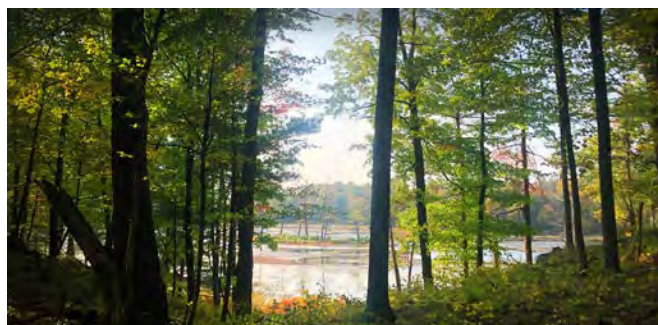
What would the Grand Lake Reserve experience be today if the trails that we love to hike wound and climbed through an old growth forest that had never been disturbed? What would the habitat look like if the old growth forest were only influenced by natural disturbances such as windstorms, ice storms, and forest fires?

Thanks to IRLC’s increasing expertise and dedication to forever-wild land management, our great-grandchildren, and all their descendants will get to experience what happens when the ecosystem is left to flourish at will. They will be able to do something that we could never do- play under Grand Lake Reserve’s future old-growth canopy. Just imagine your great-great grandchildren running, laughing, giggling, darting, and hiding behind massive tree trunks and climbing aboard ginormous deadfalls that are several times wider than the kids are tall.

This future experience is our collective gift to them.

To enable this gift, we are excited to announce our new partnership with the Northeast Wilderness Trust, a wilderness-based land trust that is leading the re-wilding of the Northeast on a large scale by teaming up with smaller land trusts and protecting their forests through forever-wild conservation easements. The smaller land trusts in turn, receive funding to support the staffing and stewardship of these easements forever.

Through this partnership, IRLC is proud to be the leader in establishing forever-wild forests in our region. We could not have done this without IRLC members’ collective generosity and support. For that, both we and our forests will be forever grateful.





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Front Cover: Uriel Peguerra catches a Northern Pike at WHIRL Ice-fishing Event
Back Cover: © Mark Scarlett

IRLC Newsletter : Winter 2021



Join us for an upcoming event...

Honoring the Military Child <i>Educational Exhibit at the Learning Center</i>	Month of April
Together at Home with Ken Knapp <i>Virtual Presentation</i>	April 17 ^h
Spring Stewardship Day	April 24 th
All About Earthworms for Kids <i>a Program Honoring Liz Duvall</i>	May 1 st
Birds, Blossoms, and Bugs Hike <i>at Grand Lake Reserve</i>	May 15 th
Vernal Pool Hike <i>Frogs, Salamanders, and more!</i>	May 22 nd
Celebration of Lakes <i>at the Bella Brooke Winery</i>	July 24 th
Water Quality Conference <i>(Please note the Date Change)</i>	August 27 th

For a full listing of events & event details, visit indianriverlakes.org.

