

The Overlook

Spring 2020

www.FINWR.org



Banner Photo (Wildlife-3rd Place) by Dianna Harris

Volunteer Reaches 35,000 Hours!



You read that correctly, THIRTY-FIVE THOUSAND hours! Carl Zenger, volunteer extraordinaire, was honored on February 1, 2020 with a plaque, pin, and chocolate cake (his favorite) for all his service to Iroquois NWR. Carl has been instrumental in so many projects on the refuge it's hard to count. Since he began working on the refuge in 1997, he's been active in the refuge's cavity bird nesting program, special events, youth education, interpretive programs, and habitat management. His contribution to the refuge is endless. Carl has dedicated so much to the well-being and success of the refuge; we are infinitely grateful!

Photo Caption: Volunteer Carl Zenger receives a commemorative plaque from Complex Manager Thomas Roster (Sasha Azeez, HAF Intern).

Got a couple of hours to spare each week?

The Flyway Nature Store is looking for additional volunteers to help staff the store.

Please contact Garner Light at redstart1@hotmail.com if interested.

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Mike Senske
Maintenance Worker
Kate Brenner
Wildlife Refuge Specialist
Eric Schaertl
Park Ranger

Refuge Contact Info

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Overlook Newsletter

is provided 4 times per year.
Article submissions for each newsletter are the second Friday of:
* *January (Winter)*
* *May (Spring)*
* *August (Summer)*
* *October (Fall)*

President's Message

Dear Friends of Iroquois Supporters,

I hope that you and your loved ones are healthy and safe during this unexpected pandemic brought on by the Covid-19 virus. All of us are facing unprecedented challenges and have had to put many plans on hold, while we stay at home to slow the spread, or serve on the front lines as an essential worker. All of us on the Friends Board send our well wishes to everyone impacted and our special thanks to those essential workers who face an increased risk as they do their jobs to help those in need.

With the stay at home orders in effect, there has been a great uptick in the number of people visting the trails and overlooks at the refuge. While we are very disappointed to have canceled our spring programs, we are encouraged by our **Guide By Cell** numbers, which show a **350% increase in April call ins to the Swallow Hollow Trail Guide By Cell** phone number. Certainly, coming to a natural area plays an important role during times of stress, by improving our physical and emotional health. The walking trails and overlooks at Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge are open to the public during daylight hours, even though the Visitor's Center is closed. **When visiting the refuge please do check the regulations and stay in designated areas. Come and visit this spring, but please do so safely, respecting social distancing, so that we all come out together on the other end of this pandemic.**

If you enjoy Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge and can afford to, please consider supporting the Friends of Iroquois [from our \(NEW\) website](#) with a membership or donation, so that we can continue to promote visitor programming, protect wildlife and enhance visitor experiences with signage like that you will see along Swallow Hollow Trail, Kanyoo Trail and (coming soon) along Feeder Road Trail.

There has never been a better time to continue to promote, protect and enhance Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge.

Sincerely yours,

Celeste Morien
FINWR President



While we know you will continue to remember us with your generous donations, we encourage you to to use **Amazon Smile**. The Amazon Smile website donates 0.5% of the price of your eligible purchases to the charitable organization of your choice when you shop securely at <https://smile.amazon.com/>. **Every 0.5% counts! That means we receive \$1 for every \$200 spent.**

Support the Friends of Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, Inc. in 2020 Membership Levels:

Family	\$25.00
Raccoon	\$50.00
Otter/Red Fox	\$75.00
Bluebird	\$100.00
Heron	\$200.00
Bald Eagle	\$500.00
Double Eagle	\$1,000.00

Please send contribution to:
Friends of Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, Inc.
1101 Casey Road
Basom, NY 14013

We can use your volunteer time also!!

Contributions are tax deductible

20th Anniversary Of Interpretive Programming

On February 1st, Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge and Friends of Iroquois NWR celebrated their 20th anniversary of Iroquois Observation programming, by hosting “IO Palooza”. One-hundred and twenty-five people attended this fun-filled day with back to back programming that started at 8 am with “Birding by Car”. Individuals and families also were able to enjoy a guided hike, coloring, creating pinecone bird feeders, creating seed balls for their gardens, story time, owl origami, eagle watch, track casting, a tree dormancy hike, and owl trivia. The day concluded with a pre-registered “Owl Prowl.”

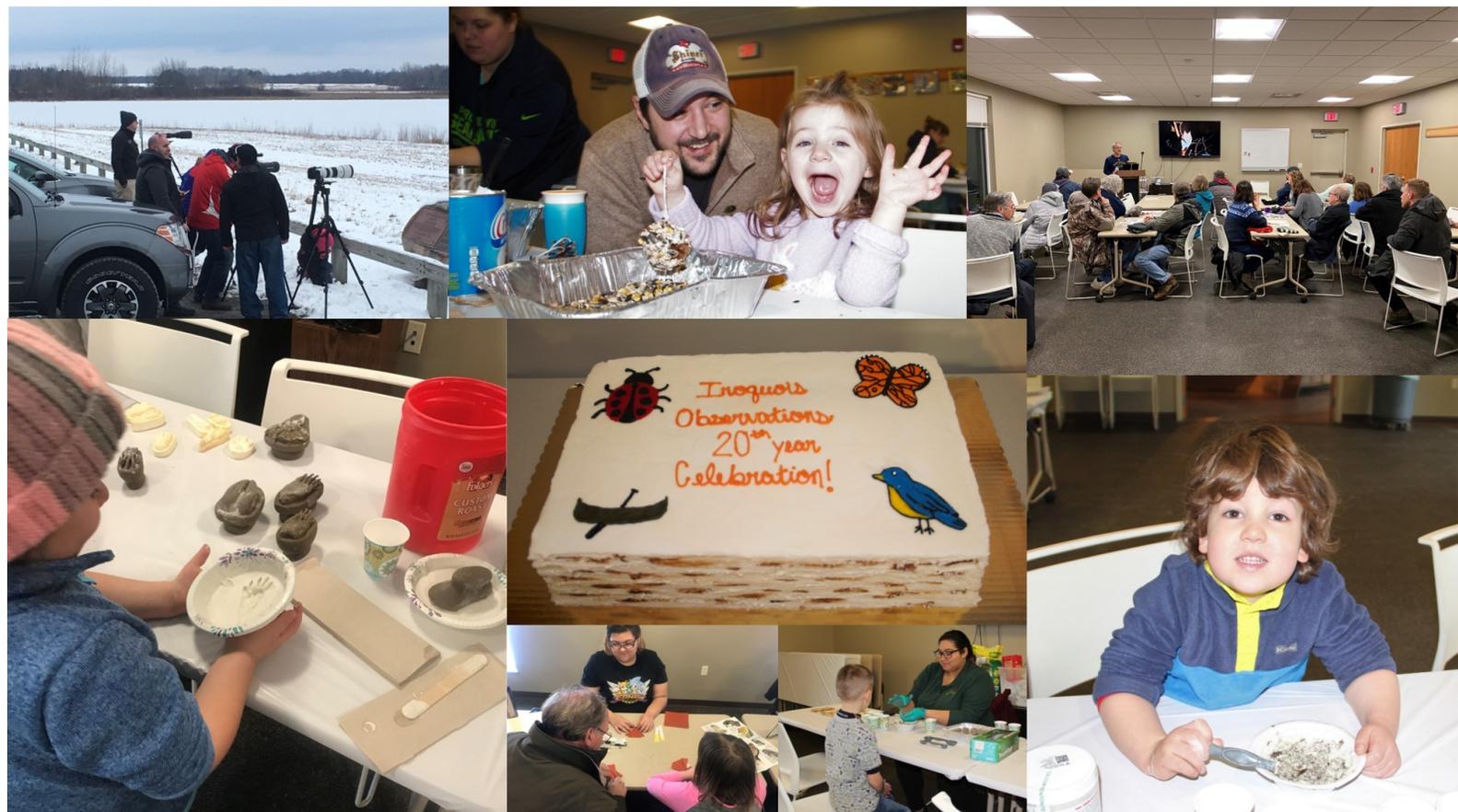


Photo Caption (Top left to bottom right): Eagle watch at Cayuga Overlook, Jane ecstatic to finish her pinecone bird feeder, Volunteer Chuck Rosenburg gives an owl overview prior to the “prowl”, a visitor creates a raccoon track, IO celebratory cake, Volunteer Justice Buzzard helps visitors create an origami owl, Sasha Azeez finalizes a seed ball for a visitor, and Jackson mixing clay for his seed ball (Kate Brenner, USFWS).

Winter Bald Eagle Surveys At Iroquois NWR

On January 10th, Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge conducted their annual winter bald eagle survey. Refuge Biologist Paul Hess led the survey, as well as instructed Wildlife Specialist Kate Brenner and interns Sasha Azeez and Brain Capron on how and where to look for bald eagles along their route. **At the completion of the survey, there were a total of six adult and one juvenile bald eagles identified.**

Sharing Ideas At Environmental Educator Activity Exchange

On January 28th, [Hispanic Access Foundation](#) Intern Sasha Azeez and Visitor Services Specialist Eric Schaertl traveled to the Buffalo Zoo in Buffalo, NY to attend the 2020 Environmental Educator Activity Exchange, organized by New York State Outdoor Education Association. Various educators presented their environmental activities through interactive presentations. Some organizations in attendance were the Reinstein Woods Nature Preserve, Tiffit Nature Preserve, and Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper. Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge presented an educational game, written by Sasha Azeez called “Pollination Trivia”. By the end of the day the 30 people in attendance were given the opportunity to share and learn from different organizations.

NWRS Birthday Birding Bash!



On the **117th NWRS Birthday**, six birdwatchers took to the overlooks to search for migratory waterfowl. They were fortunate to hear a northern shrike at Cayuga Overlook. Shrikes imitate songbird calls and songs to draw their prey close enough to catch. Two new arrivals were a pied-billed grebe and an American coot. A varied number of duck species in their brightest plumages were seen and identified for those newer to that category. Two lingering tundra swans were spotted at Kumpf Marsh. While visiting Ringneck, School House, and Center Marsh Overlooks, courting eastern bluebirds and four northern flickers in a territorial dispute Entertained.

Photo Caption: Visitors enjoyed migratory birds at overlooks around Iroquois NWR during the NWRS's birthday

(Photo Credit: Celeste Morien, Volunteer).

Haxton Memorial Library Program Is A Hit

On March 12th, Visitor Service Specialist Eric Schaertl and HAF Intern Sasha Azeez met with Kim Gibson of the [Haxton Memorial Library](#) to put on a program about snowy owls for a group of elementary aged children and their parents.

The event was a hit! Kids asked a lot of questions and were very engaged when staff asked theirs, connecting the dots between concepts talked about earlier. Twenty-four kids, five parents, and two library staff were present for the whole event for a total turnout of 31 people!

Photo Caption: Refuge staff showing participants what a snowy owl looks like at Haxton Memorial Library (Photo Credit: Kim Gibson, Library Program Organizer)



The Transition To Telework

To ensure the safety of everyone, staff at Iroquois and Erie NWRs transitioned to working from home in mid-March, and we are getting things done. Staff are busy conducting data entry and analysis, planning for future surveys and habitat work, completing or starting backlogged projects, paying bills, and ramping up our virtual contact with visitors. All our meetings have shifted to calls and video chats. We have taken this all in stride and enjoy the company of our coworkers when we have the opportunity to hear their voices or see their faces.



Photo Caption: Iroquois NWR and Erie NWR staff conduct a call through the Teams video function (Kate Brenner, USFWS)

Iroquois NWR Welcomes Administrative Support Specialist

Jessika Bulera is a military veteran who served in the Air National Guard, from 2003-2011. During her time in the military, she was a medical administrative assistant, and then cross trained into Personnel. In 2011, after her enlistment ended, she became an insurance agent at GEICO. She most recently was a rural mail carrier for our area prior to joining our office. She will be providing support for Iroquois and Erie National Wildlife Refuges. We are grateful and excited to have her on our team.

Iroquois NWR Sees Large Increases In Visitation

The USFWS and Iroquois NWR are dedicated to keeping refuge lands open for visitors, and we are grateful they are. This has created a massive upswing in visitation on the refuge. On average our trails and overlooks have seen an increase of 224% in March and 244% in April. We saw 500 visitors to Cayuga Overlook and 494 to Swallow Hollow Trail on April 25th. We are happy people are enjoying the refuge, and most are doing it responsibly. We welcome new and returning visitors to the refuge daily, and hopefully soon we can do that in person!

Bloodroot

Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) is a beautiful spring ephemeral found throughout our area growing in moist woodlands and along streams. The genus name –sanguinarius- is Latin for “bleeding” and refers to the blood-red juice present in the roots and orange-red in the stems.

Historically, the root has been used as an appetite stimulant, arterial sedative, insect repellent, and an emetic, in treating rheumatism, asthma, bronchitis, lung ailments, as an ingredient in cough medicines, toothpaste, and mouthwash, applied to warts and fungal growths, used as a skin dye and to dye baskets and clothing, AND even as a love potion...whew!

Despite the plants properties as anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antiseptic, anesthetic, anti-plaque and anti-cancer, it is NO LONGER RECCOMENDED for any medicinal use. There is evidence that bloodroot produces precancerous oral lesions when used in toothpaste and mouthwash. It also produces a positive opiate test in urinalysis since it is a member of the poppy family. Besides the danger of ingesting or using topically, blood root is protected from harvesting in NY and in many other states.



The bright white fragile flowers produce pollen, but no nectar. Pollinators are specific to those insects not seeking nectar.

More amazing bloodroot lore is that its seeds are spread by ants. This mutualistic behavior is called myrmecochory. The majority of myrmecochory plants are spring ephemerals in the northeast. The seeds produce a fleshy appendage, called an elaiosome, which is rich in fats and proteins. The ants eat the elaiosomes and then discard the seeds in the nest debris, which are like little underground compost heaps. The seeds can then germinate in these protected enriched soils.

We appreciate getting out in nature more than ever, and the more we learn, the more amazing we find nature to be. On your next hike keep a lookout for bloodroot and all our other beautiful spring plants.

Virtual Education, Interpretation, And Outreach

Iroquois NWR has shifted to communicating with the public virtually. Staff have been working on ways to convert existing refuge programs into online friendly formats. The team has created

- #MyActivityMonday,
- #AwarenessWednesday,
- #FloraAndFaunaFriday, and
- #StaffSaturday

on Facebook and new activities are being added weekly to our webpage. Our aim is to connect with families at home, new visitors, existing visitors, and both urban and rural communities. We are working to engage, inform, and help people visit the refuge when many cannot. Check out the Meet the Staff videos on Facebook each Saturday. #refugefromhome

Photo Caption: A favorite #AwarenessWednesday Facebook post has made a few laugh, some cringe, and most importantly, informed the public of the threats of poison ivy. Be on the lookout! (Created by Eric Schaertl, Visitor Services Specialist)



Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge
Visitor Services Division

*******BOLO*******

Date: 4/14/20

Bolo Number 5445

Incident: Extreme Itching Behavior

Location: Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge

Summary: The Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge Division of Visitor Services (INWR DVS) is reporting incidences of extreme itching from *Toxicodendron Radicans*. INWR DVS has had reports of *T. Radicans* coming into contact with many people and leaving them with itchy bubbly skin rashes that leave the victim miserable, itchy, a pariah to those around them, and in extreme cases require leaving the victim hospitalized. Perpetrator has been seen along the trails disguising himself as Virginia Creeper vines or as a hairy growth on tree trunks. Also known to disguise as a harmless sapling growing from the forest floor. While *T. Radicans* is active and at large all year, the majority of contact incidences are reported during the spring and summer.



Name: *Toxicodendron Radicans*

Known Alias's: Poison Ivy, *T. Radicans*

Age: unknown

Height: 1" to scores of feet

Appearance: Grayish-brown hairy vine

Alternate Appearance: Green three leaved sapling or small shrub

If you see *T. Radicans* just back away. Do not try make contact, under any circumstances.

NATURE MATTERS

by Chris Kieber

Shrews are common and ubiquitous rodents that occupy a wide range of habitats but are seldom seen. There are 385 species worldwide with 7 occurring in NYS. Although these animals are small, nocturnal and secretive, they do display some quite extraordinary adaptations. They are all known for their high metabolism and ravenous appetites. They are capable of consuming their own body weight or more each day and their heart rate is about 800-1000 beats /minute, more even than a hummingbird. Since shrews store very little fat, they will starve within a few hours if they do not eat constantly. Shrewdly, shrews have been provided with a variety of built-in adaptations.

Some shrews have red teeth. This coloration is an iron coating on the enamel that helps strengthen them as they crunch on their mostly invertebrate diet. Many sources mention that shrews possess a form of echolocation, but that unusual ability remains anecdotal. Water shrews (*Sorex palustris*) have stiff hairs on their feet that allow them to walk across water.

Eurasian shrews (*Sorex araneus*) have a remarkable ability to shrink their skull and brain mass as winter approaches by about 20%. It is thought that this modification helps them to save energy during winter since shrews neither hibernate nor migrate. Tissue is absorbed between the joints of the skull. As spring approaches, the bone and brain tissue regenerates. That is a different way to think about spring a-head!

Northern short-tailed shrews (*Blarina brevicauda*) are notable for being the only venomous mammal in North America. The venom is secreted from sub-maxillary glands through a duct which opens at the base of the lower incisors. The venom mixes with the saliva and is injected into the prey as it is bitten. Short-tailed shrews are capable of storing enough venom to kill 200 mice and are able to subdue animals much larger than themselves. The neurotoxic venom may also just paralyze prey while keeping it alive. This “live hoarding” helps to keep food fresh and available during times when hunting is poor. In one study meal worms were kept alive but paralyzed for 15 days.

Shrews, though tiny and secretive, have a big impact on the environment. They eat large numbers of invertebrates which may be pests as well as mice that destroy crops. Shrews are an important prey species for owls, although many other predators tend to avoid them due to the strong musk-scented glands that make them smell and taste bad.

Finally, shrews are fast, aggressive, ravenous, highly territorial, and will not back down if cornered. Despite what we may have learned from literature, there is no “taming of the shrew”.

New York State Breeding Bird Atlas 3

by Gerry Rising

For many birdwatchers this avocation is simply a kind of sport: a challenge to add to the number of species they have identified and to see the most species in a given year or at a given location. There are, of course, opportunities to go beyond this aspect: participating in birding organizations like the Buffalo Ornithological Society or Buffalo Audubon Society, joining others on regional surveys like the annual Christmas Counts or reporting the birds you see on Cornell’s eBird for data accumulation. The most challenging of these activities is contributing to a New York State Ornithological Association Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA).

These Atlas surveys involve the careful recording of bird nesting in specific locations throughout the state, a major undertaking demanding, each time it is repeated, five years of concentrated effort. The first of these atlases covered the period from 1980-84, the second from 2000-2004, and this year begins the third of these periods. BBA1 and BBA2 have resulted in published books as will this one. Those books provide for each species a detailed map with New York is divided into equal-sized blocks, 3 mile by 3 mile squares. The task for birdwatchers is to develop lists of the birds that breed in each of those 5710 blocks.

This is a very different activity from simple bird identification. Because many bird species pass through this region to breed farther to our north, you need to go beyond listing to find evidence of breeding such as nest building, courting behavior or the appearance of young birds. And birds nest at different times of the year. Great horned owls began back in January but cedar waxwings delay nesting until August or even September. What I find most attractive about atlasing is that it continues through the summer when seeing new species is of lesser interest.

You can participate, whether you simply report the birds nesting in your yard, take responsibility to lead the survey in an entire block or do so at some intermediate level. To find more about this important Citizen Science activity, visit ebird.org/atlasny/about/, explore the various topics and download the state block map to determine where you can report birds.

THE OVERLOOK NEWSLETTER
Friends of Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge
1101 Casey Road
Basom, NY 14013



FRIEND'S NAME
STREET ADDRESS
CITY, STATE 00000

Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge and the
Friends of Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge
announce their **Tenth Annual Amateur**



PHOTO CONTEST

This year's photo contest is dedicated in memory of Kathy Owen.