

Newsletter



FALL
2020

Attack of the Lanternflies: Dogs to the Rescue

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by Taro Ietaka

For a human, finding a small object in a large area is dependent on luck and good eyesight. But for a dog, a sniff is enough to do it. The TSA and DEA have been using dogs to sniff for narcotics and explosives for years, and now land managers are getting in the game.

On a cold December day at Croton Point Nature Center, Parks staff were treated to a demonstration by Dia and Fagen, the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference's conservation dogs. This pair of highly-trained canines is being used to detect the next wave of invading insects and plants before they take over our parks. They can currently recognize and show their handlers three invasive spe-

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Notes from the Friends of Trailside President

Dear Friends and neighbors:

On all our behalf, I would like to give A GREAT BIG THANK YOU to the County for keeping open our Ward Pound Ridge Reservation during the first months of the Covid pandemic. In the face of so much uncertainty it made sense that the safest place to be would be in the great outdoors with plenty of sunlight and open spaces. Yet most of the area outdoor facilities were closed, including the JHS fields and track, various playgrounds and many local land trust parks, so access to the Res was of special importance.

This was a source of sanity for me each day, walking my dogs in the Res, as it was for many of the Board of the Friends of Trailside, as described further in the newsletter; and I'm sure it was a great resource for many of you as well.

During March, April and May the visitor volume in the Res increased dramatically as people came from all over to enjoy one of the few open spaces available. In fact the Res became so crowded on occasion that there was no parking available and it was temporarily closed to new entrants.

During this time the County waived the parking fee, which was a considerate decision in light of the Covid hardship. The parking fee has now been reinstated and I'm reminded of the benefits of a donation of \$100 or more to the Friends of Trailside, which contributes to enhancing the Museum programs and Res facilities as well as providing free parking for the year.

The bridges over the Cross River have now been completed and are beautiful improvements; the work on the shelters is nearly completed and along with some improved trails our wonderful park is better than ever.

Thank you for your support of the Friends of Trailside and hopefully the Museum will be open soon for you to come visit.

Happy Trails,
Philip Petronis, Board President
Friends of Trailside Nature Museum



Photos by Phil Petronis

Attack of the Lanternflies: Dogs to the Rescue

(Continued from page 1)

cies but will learn several more as they gain experience. The dogs can sniff out hidden insect eggs in a car's wheel well, a lone plant in a field of grass, and in the future may be able to recognize a fungal disease in affected trees. They also serve as ambassadors for Lower Hudson PRISM (Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management) and help to raise awareness of the economic and environmental damage that invasive species cause.

For example, Spotted Lanternfly is the most threatening of the species the dogs can detect. This sap-sucking insect has caused significant damage to vineyards, orchards, and hardwood forests in Pennsylvania since it was first detected there about five years ago. In some areas it has reached plague proportions and significantly impacted quality of life, rendering affected parks and wooded areas completely unappealing to visitors. When lanternflies feed, they secrete excess sugar and water called honeydew. When honeydew accumulates, it ferments and grows mold. So imagine a park that smells like garbage on a hot day, where the base of trees are covered in black fungus, and tree bark is covered with crawling brightly-colored insects. (See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5FqdEJoqew> to see what our neighbors in PA are dealing with.)

Dia and Fagen are doing their part to detect the eggs of lanternflies on trucks and cars coming from Pennsylvania into New York, but they are only two small dogs and can't be everywhere at once. This is where they need your help! Visitors should be on the lookout for these colorful bugs (see picture above) and should report any sightings to Mindy Quintero, mqs5@westchestergov.com along with photos and locations. Your help could help thwart the invasion on our doorstep!



Photo by Lance Cheung - 20180830-APHIS-LSC-0705, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=72417849>

Lanternfly photo By U.S. Department of Agriculture
Lance Cheung/Multimedia PhotoJournalist/USDA

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www.friendsoftrailside.org

Using iNaturalist to Learn About Our Favorite Park: WPRR Biodiversity Club

by Sarah Walkley

Trailside Nature Museum staff have been cataloging the biodiversity of Ward Pound Ridge Reservation's 4,300 acres for decades. More recently, we have begun doing so through an online project on the electronic platform iNaturalist to allow county staff as well as visitors to easily and accurately document plants and animals in the park and surrounding land. The shared project, called the Ward Pound Ridge Reservation Biodiversity Club, can be accessed via the iNaturalist website or the free phone app.

iNaturalist is a platform that allows anyone to learn about and record plants and animals they observe by posting an observation. Observations are the basic unit of iNaturalist, and typically include a picture, location, and date/time. Using just a photo, the app will suggest the genus and species of the organism. I am almost always surprised how accurate the algorithm is. One of my favorite iNaturalist activities is opening up the app anywhere I am in the world, and clicking "explore". Nearby observations will appear. Seeing the many observations, I feel more connected to both the local community and to the wildlife there. These observations are also important as they can help steer research projects and land management practices. If you choose to post one of your observations, other naturalists will have the opportunity to help you identify the species, and can agree or disagree with the original ID. Before an agreement is reached, observations are labeled casual. After at least two of three identifiers agree, observations then become research grade. While not a perfect method, this distinction allows users to quickly have a high level of confidence in an observation.

To date, the Ward Pound Ridge Reservation Biodiversity Club has 935 casual observations across 595 species! Of the nearly 600 species observed, 384 fall under the research grade category. The 384 research grade species in the Ward Pound Ridge Reservation Biodiversity Club consist of 177 insects, 126 plants, 30 fungi, 13 birds, 12 arachnids, 10 mammals, 6 reptiles, and 6 amphibians. Taking a closer look, the most common observations in each of these categories respectively are the monarch, mile-a-minute vine, turkey tail & violet toothed polypore fungi, northern cardinal, yellow garden spider & brilliant jumping spider, white-tailed deer, northern water snake & eastern copperhead, and American toad. Surprisingly, no fish observations have been observed.

If you are one of the contributors, thank you! Your observations are seen and appreciated by park visitors and Trailside staff. If you haven't contributed yet, consider making an account at www.iNaturalist.com or on the iNaturalist App. The park has had a tremendous increase in visitors over the last two months - we encourage you all to take a few photographs of our park's plants and animals for current and future generations to explore!



Join the
WPRR Biodiversity Club
and help us catalog the species living
in Ward Pound Ridge Reservation



1. Download iNaturalist on your phone or visit www.iNaturalist.org.
2. Create a username.
3. Join the group: WPRR Biodiversity Club.
4. Share your observations in the park.
5. Stop by Trailside Nature Museum to talk about what you found!

Animal Profile: Great Blue Heron

by Luca Trotta



The Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) is the largest species of heron found in North America. It can be identified by its white head and neck, black stripe over the eye, and blue-gray body/wings, although what will likely catch your eye is the sheer size of the bird- potentially standing over 4 ft in height with a 5-6 ft wingspan! Great Blues can be found year-round throughout the majority of the United States, but can be also be found as far south as South America and as far north as coastal Alaska. Great Blue Herons belong to the family *Ardeidae*, the taxon consisting of herons, egrets, and bitterns. These birds are defined by their long legs/necks and pointed bills, which accommodate their feeding habits associated with both inland and coastal wetlands. Great Blue Herons are carnivorous birds, using their long, harpoon-like bills to strike at fish, amphibians, reptiles, small mammals, large insects, and even other birds. This tall bird moves slowly or even remains still, stalking its prey, and ultimately striking with blinding speed. In

flight, the bird will tuck its neck into an "S" shape and will trail its legs behind its body.

Great Blue Herons will breed with multiple mates throughout its life, but will remain with one bird as a pair throughout a breeding season. Like most other members of the *Ardeidae* family, the Great Blues will nest in colonies of up to hundreds of other birds. It tends to build stick nests in trees or bushes, but will also build them right on the ground depending on the surrounding area.

Clutch sizes of the bird typically range from 2-6 eggs per brood. The chicks are semi-altricial, meaning they hatch with their eyes open, but are dependent on their parents for feeding and other care until they grow large enough to care for themselves. The Great Blue Heron is listed by the IUCN Red List as a species of least concern. Humans have a limited impact on the bird and increasing temperatures are expanding the bird's northern range within Canada.

These birds can be found in the Reservation by



*Great Blue Heron Rookery off of route 121.
Nests found in Pitch Swamp*

Pandemic Reflections

No matter how our world changes, especially as it has during these months of pandemic quarantine, we look for constants, we search for something to give us comfort, and for many, it is connecting with nature and spending quiet time in natural surroundings alone, or with family or with a friend. Members of the Board of Trustees of Trailside Museum and Ward Pound Ridge Reservation would like to share how the Res offered an opportunity to escape from the days and weeks of separation from loved ones and normal life routines. We are sure the thoughts of how the Res provided a sense of tranquility and purpose for us struck similar feelings with others. And so we begin....

The silver lining for me and my family during this Covid era has been the refuge provided by Ward Pound Ridge Reservation. We experienced the trails and beauty from late winter in March to early fall in September. Our eyes were focused on the trees as they morphed from bare ...to budding bright green leaves.... to full and lush with abundant foliage.... and now the greenery is turning to the beauty of fall with oranges, reds and yellows. The last six months of Covid in Ward Pound Ridge Reservation has been a gift from Mother Nature during a very trying time. She knows how to calm us and care for us with her best medicine--her beauty... J.

During the earliest days of the pandemic, the only social contact I had outside my immediate family bubble was socially-distant running with a local friend. We would typically start in the meadow parking lot and run the north side of the Res (Brown, DH trails). As we ran more we got more ambitious and added south side trails as we crossed over to Blue at Kimberly Bridge and integrated the Fire Tower, RT, Red or other trails. We integrated the relatively newly marked CB trail that winds by a stream from Michigan back to the Meadow parking lot. It was a great way to finish what (at least for one run) was a 13.1 mile half marathon... Brian.

While the Pandemic has been tragic on so many levels, it brought families from all over the area outdoors to soak in the fresh air and relax surrounded by nature. My family was no different. My daughter, along with her young family, moved back to my home where we could hike daily in "the Res" or Mountain Lakes. My 4-year-old grandson became adept at reading the trail markers and leading the way across the bridges and along the rivers and streams. At the same time, my hiking buddies and I though forced to forego our annual summer hikes in the Adirondacks and the White Mountains, found we could connect trails around the perimeter of the Res, and take 12-mile hikes with significant elevation gains along the way. Thanks to all the staff who work so hard to keep this treasure open for us to enjoy... Susan.

During the peak of the pandemic shut down, when most every public venue was closed, access to the Reservation was a comfort zone. No matter the time of day, or how often I visited the trails or walked the blacktop roads - alone or safely distanced with a friend - the experience was uplifting, calming, restorative and pure joy... Linda P-W

Walking the Great Meadow almost daily this spring and summer gave my husband and me time and space to reconnect with the earth, the birds, the seasons and with each other. The wide, open expanse allowed my mind to cool down from all my fevered thoughts so it could wander in the clouds and sun. The meadow gentle, uphill inclines helped both of us stay strong as we challenged ourselves to run or quickly walk up them. The widely mown paths left occasional passers-by plenty of room to stay safely distanced while we enjoyed the chance to smile and wave at one another. How lucky we are to live in the midst of such riches... Margie.

We were in Vermont during the early days of the COVID shutdown, so when we came down to South Salem in early May and went to the Res for a Sunday morning hike, I was stunned by the number of people in the park - on the roads, in the woods, on the trails, along the rivers - everywhere one could gain access. I felt like I was on a movie

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Pandemic Reflections

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set, the landscape peopled with extras for an upcoming scene. I was so happy to see this level of activity; it was heartening to experience a positive unexpected consequence of this very grim time... Pat.

An oasis of tranquility in a time of crisis.

A place for relaxation, reflection, and a good breath of clean air,

A resource for us all, that changes with the seasons,

A place that demonstrates resilience in face of the exigencies that anthropogenically accelerated climate change bring... Linda B.

Pandemic Interlude

Following the sun

Stopping by the Fallen Oak in the Meadow

The Res offers Peace... Maureen.

The Trailside Challenge

by Kristina Hayek

Last issue's challenge was a Leopard Slug (*Limax maximus*), aptly named for its variable pattern of stripes and spots. Originally found in Southern and Western Europe, this species has been introduced throughout Europe, Australia, and the Americas through food transports. Leopard slugs are typically active at night but can be found during wet, warm, and overcast weather searching for dead plants, fungi, and even other slugs and their eggs to eat. Commonly found in lawns, gardens, and other damp areas, the Leopard Slug is no stranger to the Reservation and is quite a species to see.

This issue's challenge is a two-for-one, with these common species growing on the same log. Good Luck!

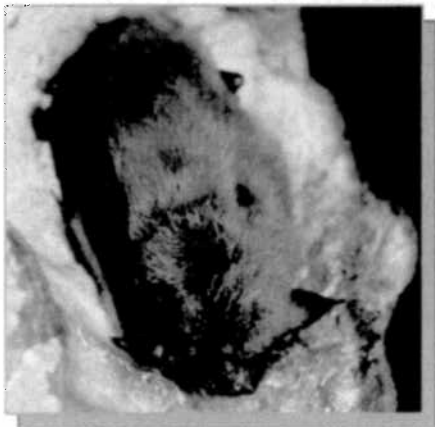


New Friends Supported Research!

by Nick Comparato

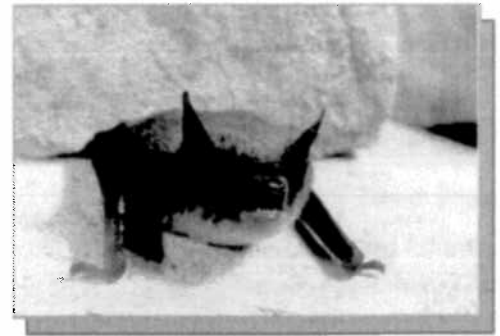
This summer marked the first season of bat monitoring at parks across Westchester county. Though delayed by the onset of COVID, our monitoring efforts successfully collected data about the bat residents of Cranberry Lake Preserve, Lenoir Preserve, and two locations in Ward Pound Ridge Reservation. This was done with a specialized ultrasonic recording device that listened for the sounds of bats' echolocation from 8:00 pm to 6:00 am. Using a computer program (SonoBat), we are actually able to identify the species of bat from the sounds captured in these recordings. The results of this summer revealed that Westchester plays host to a diverse and interesting group of bats.

Our most common bat, the big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*), was present at all four locations surveyed. This was also the case for another species, the little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*), that was once common, but has seen a drop in population numbers in recent years. Cranberry Lake was found to have a small population of the increasingly uncommon tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*). A thriving population of another rare species, the eastern small-footed bat (*Myotis leibii*), was discovered at Ward Pound Ridge. This species, which nests in crevices along rocky slopes, is federally endangered, however New York's population has been stable. Ward Pound Ridge also holds the most promise for a population of Indiana

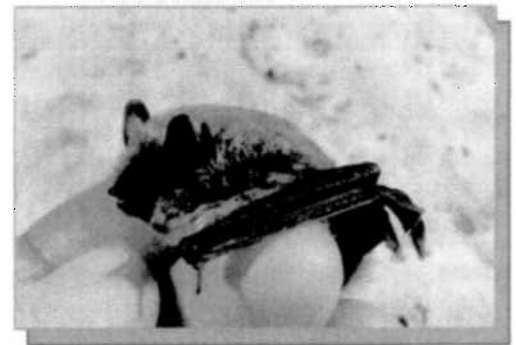


Big brown bat

Photo credit: USFWS/Ann Froschauer



Top: Little brown bat



Bottom: Eastern small-footed bat

Photo credit: John MacGregor

Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources

bat (*Myotis sodalis*), a highly endangered species, however we are still working to confirm this.

Bats are not animals that humans encounter very often, however they are a very interesting part of our environment. Using echolocation, bats hunt and consume large amounts of mosquitoes and other flying insects, keeping the local population in check. At only 1.5" - 3" in body size, our local bats may also be a bit smaller than you expected. They are actually known as microbats, though their wings can span up to 13". Despite this small size, the average bat lives 30-40 years, making them one of the longest lived mammals relative to body size.

Many species of bats have suffered serious population declines in recent years due to white-nose syndrome. This is a fungal infection that causes a white fuzz to grow on bats' nose and wings during hibernation. The continued presence of white-nose syndrome in New York is why it is so important to monitor our local bats. With continued seasons of

Confronting 2020 Challenges

by Mindy Quintero

With the nature center closed since mid-March, we were challenged with coming up with creative ways to offer safe programming to the public. For over thirty years, our summers have been filled with staff and kids for our nature camp. Although it was sad to cancel, it was also refreshing to try out something new. Over a seven week period we offered a family nature camp which consisted of pre-made activity boxes with enough activities for one week. As part of the program, we also offered a one-on-one educational piece to each family every day of the weekly session. It was a blast and we even had one family attend five out of the seven weeks. All families had positive feedback and were so happy to have fun activities ready for them each day with no planning on their part.

Our fall has also looked a little different this year. Instead of daily school groups learning about the Eastern Woodland Indians, we now have a small group of 3.5 to 5 year olds learning through outdoor play. Over the past six weeks we have enjoyed learning about nature together while building skills needed for kindergarten. For most kids it's been the first time they have had the opportunity to play with other kids their age since March so it's been exciting for everyone. Below are a few pictures from our first six weeks. Enjoy and stay tuned for more creative programming!



View from the Porch: The Pandemic and the Park



by Jeff Main

We got through the worst of it back in April and May, when the Reservation was one of the very few places that were available for people to get out of their houses and enjoy the fresh air. We were literally at the end of a bottleneck with people arriving from as far away as Brooklyn, Staten Island and New Jersey, not to mention our neighbors from Connecticut. And while gradually other opportunities arose in the weeks to follow, newcomers had discovered for the first time the amazing destination that the Reservation has been to many of us for years. And rightly so, with its landscape of meadows and forests, viewpoints supreme and a river that runs through it; why wouldn't you come back to such a bucolic and pacifying respite?

"Oh....you can camp here?" Another great discovery for new visitors was that we allow camping, albeit limited. An excellent way to extend your time in nature to bond with your family, coupled with the occasional opportunity to engage with Westchester Amateur Astronomers members on a clear night to gaze the heavens. That and a hearty meal cooked over a fire in our newly installed fire rings and you have been transported to a different time and space. It's a chance to slow down and embrace the planet we live on and keeps us alive.

We hope to capitalize on this opportunity to educate the public in an effort to raise environmental literacy. There are a number of strategies in development. One is the collaborative exhibit, "A River Runs Thru It", in the WPA Gallery at the park entrance. We have partnered with Trout in the Classroom, and a talented young fish artist from NH, to highlight the Cross River and the fish that depend on it. We will also emphasize how this very watershed contributes to the greater NYC/Westchester drinking water system and the protection offered by the natural ecosystem that surrounds it vs. the impacts from human cultural activity. After all, we do all live in a watershed.

So, though we are more frequented than in past years, the intensity of the spring has relaxed a bit. The Reservation is still the place to find that peace and solace or inspire your curiosity as it always has. With that....

See you on the trails!

Jeff

Friends Annual Meeting

Saturday, December 5, 2020

10:00 AM

ZOOM Meeting

Email us at friendsoftheres@gmail.com to RSVP and we will send you a meeting link prior to the event.

Hope to see you there!

Trailside Staff

Curator – Mindy Quintero
Naturalist – Sarah Walkley
Naturalist - Kristina Hayek

Conservation Division of the Westchester County
Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation

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Alison Koppelman
Sarah Walkley

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Friends of the Trailside Nature Museum and Ward Pound Ridge Reservation is a private, not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting a better appreciation and understanding of the natural world and the relationship between people and the land. Through its support of the Trailside Nature Museum, operated by the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Conservation of the County of Westchester, the Friends provides financial and volunteer aid for exhibits, school, and educational programs.

Become a Member Today!

Friends of the Trailside Nature Museum

P.O. Box 236, Cross River, NY 10518

☐ I would like to join / renew (Please circle one)

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- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| <input type="radio"/> Other | \$ _____ |
| <input type="radio"/> Mountain Lion | \$1000 |
| <input type="radio"/> Black Bear | \$500 |
| <input type="radio"/> Bluebird | \$250 |
| <input type="radio"/> Wood Turtle | \$100 |
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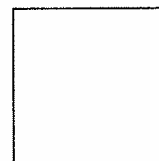
Note: Membership at the Wood Turtle level or above includes a parking pass allowing free access to the Reservation throughout the year.



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