

# Newsletter



**SPRING  
2022**

## Until Next Time

*by Mindy Quintero*

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Six and a half years sure have flown by! I arrived at Trailside Nature Museum excited and overwhelmed with the idea of managing the oldest and busiest county nature center. The museum is held to high standards and I wasn't sure how I was going to fill the shoes of past curators. Over time I found my place and realized that I had an amazing opportunity to put my own stamp in the history books. One of my main goals was to create a space where people wanted to spend their time (one can only spend so much time looking at taxidermy). Most of our exhibits were not interactive, which made visits to the museum short. As a mom, I knew exhibits needed to be kid height and hands-on. Adding more interactive, kid-friendly exhibits like the AR Sandbox, chalkboard, flip-up seasonal exhibit, black bear mural, microscope station and video clips from our trail cameras on the television increased the time spent inside the museum. Don't worry, more exhibits are on their way! Not only will we be adding inside exhibits in the near future, we have also been slowly adding outdoor exhibits. It started with the new wigwam in 2017 which has been a big hit with everyone who visits. We always



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## *Notes from the Friends of Trailside President*

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Dear Friends:

This is a time of transition for the Friends of the Trailside Museum. We are transitioning into spring with all the pleasure it brings (although the pollen has been especially tough this year.) It seems ages ago now, but we have left our maple sugaring behind following our March 12th cold and blustery sugaring off party. And with spring slowly coming on we enjoyed a recent Friends sponsored bird walk with Ed Kanze, a world renowned naturalist and birding expert and a former curator at the Trailside Museum. We will invite him back again next year, so keep your eye on the calendar for early May 2023.

But our biggest transition will be adjusting to our dear Museum Curator Mindy Quintero moving on to take on a new opportunity as curator at Muscoot Farm. This is a nice opportunity for Mindy and we are happy for her, but we will certainly miss her. We take comfort that she will not be far away and can visit her at Muscoot. We look forward to welcoming and working with her replacement, Danniela Ciatto, in the near future.

We continue to make investments in the Res. Most recently we have funded the purchase of a walk-behind commercial grade brush mower. A number of the fields have gotten increasingly overgrown with invasive shrubs that the tractor mowers cannot reach, to cut because over time the ground has gotten too wet for the heavy tractors. We hope this addition will allow the Res personnel to clear the invasive plants and recover these fields, perhaps with walking trails added to expand the scope of our open spaces.

Thank you for being members of the Friends and supporting these investments in the Res. The Board of the Friends and the County appreciates your support as it enables us to enhance the Res for your enjoyment.

Happy Trails,

Philip Petronis  
Board President

# Until Next Time

*(Continued from page 1)*

had a wigwam, but we moved the location so it was more easily accessible and noticed by the public. One of my favorite memories is from 2017 when we invited our Lenape friends from Ontario to visit and had a day filled with stories and music. We also added an insect hotel by the Meadow parking area. This spring, we are adding a Story Book Trail at the top of Pell Hill and informative signage at the end of Michigan Road. I always believed that every major parking area should have an exhibit for educational purposes, as well as to encourage the public to visit our museum.

In addition to exhibits, I've had such a great time creating educational programming. One of the first programs I started was our maple sugaring family tapping experience. From the start, family tapping was a huge hit and continues to be one of our most popular programs. With the pandemic environment, I was able to offer safe and fun family camp programming. When we found out school field trips were canceled we got creative and found a way to offer an outdoor early learning program. Again, as a parent, I saw a need. I had a four year old at home with nothing to do and wanted a safe space for him to learn, socialize and make friends. Our test run turned into a nine-month long adventure. The success of that program led us to offer additional preschool camps beginning last summer and that will continue this summer.

Thanks to all of the past and current museum staff our research projects have also increased. Although I cannot take direct responsibility for all of this amazing research, I have always tried to allow my staff to pursue their interests and take on projects they are interested in. We now have a multi-year wood turtle research project that started with wanting to know if any wood turtles called the reservation home to numerous wood turtles being tracked so we can use that information to create and adjust our land management plans. We have used active and passive bat monitoring equipment to discover we have eight species of NY bats including the Indiana Bat and the Northern Long-eared Bat, both listed as federally and state endangered. Trail cameras have been used to monitor wildlife in the park, including a bobcat survey to get an idea of population

size. We also have continued to monitor bluebird boxes with more effort put in this past winter/spring to fix, replace and remove boxes. Bluebird box maintenance will continue this fall once nesting has ended. One of the most interesting research projects we started a few years ago was sugaring related. We now have every sugar maple we tap numbered so that we can record data such as sap temperature, amount of sap produced and sugar content of the sap. With weather/climate changes, it will be interesting to look at trends once we have a few more years of data. We also will be able to tell more easily what trees may no longer be producing, so that we can retire that tree and only tap trees that produce sap. A huge thank you to our Friends' board and all who donate to the Friends for the support we have received to do this research!

One of the last projects I want to talk about is the Luquer-Marble Wildflower Garden. The wildflower garden has always been a meditative space for me, not only in the early spring when wildflowers are in bloom, but year round. After a few years of monitoring what wildflowers were present, I realized how much the diversity has declined since the garden was originally installed. I reached out to our county landscape architects with the intent of opening up the canopy and possibly planting more native plants. What happened next was nothing short of a miracle. Out of the blue, the president of the Bedford Garden Club, Elizabeth Sachs, called the museum to see if we could lead a program for their members. I talked to her about the garden and how we were hoping to revitalize it. That conversation turned into a much larger conversation with Taro Ietaka, Recreation Supervisor, and resulted in the Bedford Garden Club making a large donation of time and money to the project. In the near future and maybe before this newsletter goes out, a tree crew will be removing a large dead Ash tree among other smaller trees (funded by our Friends group); the old fence will be removed and a new fence installed. Once the new fence is installed, a large variety of native plants will be planted. Volunteer opportunities are available to help out with planting, invasive removal and continued maintenance of the garden. Give us a call at the museum if you're interested in helping out!

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# Sweetest Season's Summary

by Leah Cass

**A**s the snow fell and chilly winds blew from January-March, we were warm in the sugar house making winter's sweetest treat! It was another successful sugaring season here at Trailside, and all said and done, we produced eight gallons of syrup from about 600 gallons of sap. Of course, this was in part due to our wonderful maintenance crew, who kept our sugar house stocked with firewood, and everyone who attended our events to help us out!

This year, we hung 40 buckets on 38 trees with assistance from 18 families who attended our Family Tapping Experiences, 10 school groups, and one scout group. Our sugar house chats were well attended, bringing in over 200 participants altogether. And, though we had some snowy weather for our Sugaring Off Party, the day was full of sweet treats, music, and educational demonstrations.

Lucky for us, besides the snowstorm that disrupted Sugaring Off, the weather was fairly cooperative. For the sap to flow, temperature fluctuations are necessary. Ideally, the temperature should drop below freezing at night and come above freezing during the day. The temperature changes create a pressure difference within the tree that drives the sap up and down. Though there were both hot and cold stints in the season, we had six successful sap collection days, yielding an average of 100 gallons of sap each.

Our 600 gallons of sap may sound like a lot, but it takes 40-50 gallons of sap to produce a single gallon of syrup. This is because our sap averages about 2% sugar, while maple syrup is a whopping 66% sugar.

While out collecting, we also compile data on our sap production throughout the year. Statistics of interest included inches of sap fill per bucket and sugar content of each tree's sap. This allows us to plan which trees to tap next season because we can avoid trees that did not produce well. It also allows us to track our sap outputs over longer periods of time as climate change threatens maple syrup production – especially in this region where sugar maples are at the southern tip of their range.

In the future, this area could become too warm for sugar maples, and even if they stick around, the period of temperature fluctuation that supports sap flow is shortening. This provides an important reminder to appreciate our treats and traditions while we are still able to, and to do what we can to maintain our environment so these things last for future generations.



Photos by Mindy Quintero

# Legends and Lore of the Pink Lady Slipper

by Robyn Graygor

**F**inding a Pink Lady Slipper may spark a yearning for cozier shoes than your rigid hiking boots. It does, after all, resemble a tiny magenta moccasin. The Lady Slipper (*Cypripedium acaule*) is one of 58 wild orchids found in the northern hemisphere. Standing six to fifteen inches tall, it's hard to miss. Its distinguishable bulging flower pouch, perched on a leafless stem, ranges from intense magenta to whitish-pink coloring. The two leaves it does have, sprout at the bottom of the stalk in opposing directions.

Their beauty has been appreciated for centuries among Native Americans in the North and Canada. One legend from the Ojibwe people discusses the origins of this elegant flower: a harsh winter caused uncontrollable illness throughout a tribe, forcing one woman to seek help for her people. She received medicine from the next village, and returned home in a storm. The legend goes that tiny slipper-like flowers grew in her footprints for her bravery and courage.

Despite their unique and desirable appearance, Lady Slippers should not be picked or uprooted. Not only are they native to New York State, but are a protected wildflower. In New England their populations are even considered threatened, and should not be disturbed.

Lady Slippers generally begin flowering between May and July after years of development. The long process of seed to mature flower begins with a fungus

called *Rhizoctonia mycorrhizae*. The seeds need threads of the fungus to help break them open and pass food and nutrients on to them in a form of symbiosis. Once it's a mature plant, the Lady Slipper's roots provide nutrients to the fungus, and can live up to 20 years.

So as summer approaches keep an eye out for these mesmerizing orchids in the park (specifically on the Blue Trail,) and maybe a string of Lady Slippers will even sprout in your footsteps on your way home!



*Pink Lady Slipper found on the Blue Trail*  
Photo credit: Robyn Graygor

## Calling all Volunteers!!

Work will begin this spring on our Wildflower Garden and we need your help! A revitalization project is underway that will remove invasives, open up the canopy and increase diversity in the garden. We need YOU to help with the initial work and we will be forming a group of Wildflower Garden Volunteers that will assist with ongoing efforts to maintain the garden.

If you're interested, please call the museum at (914) 864-7322 or email Danniela at [dac4@westchestergov.com](mailto:dac4@westchestergov.com).



# Animal Profile: Wood Turtle

by Patrick Harmon



Photo credit: American Turtle Observatory

**S**pring finally makes its debut with flowers blooming and trees growing their leaves, the landscape transforms into an emerald wonderland as plants come back to life. With the return of such greenery we also see the re-emergence of countless mammals, amphibians, insects, and reptiles. One of these reptiles is the incredibly rare wood turtle.

The scientific name of the wood turtle, *Glyptemys insculpta*, comes from the patterns of the scutes on its shell which appear similar to tree bark. Their carapaces are mostly dark gray-brown while their plastrons are yellowish with black splotches at the outer end of each scute. Their head and limbs are mostly gray with yellow or orange accents, making them quite colorful and similar to many other North American pond turtles. Wood turtles are a long-lived species capable of achieving a lifespan of over 50 years in the wild. This species is omnivorous meaning it eats both plant and animal matter and they are not very picky. They will eat things like fruit, algae, insects, tadpoles, moss, leaves, and even carrion.

During the spring these turtles favor slow-moving woodland streams with ample vegetation lining the banks. Although they are almost always within a few hundred meters of water, wood turtles can travel far distances in search of suitable habitat or mates. During the summer wood turtles may move to more open areas like forests, meadows, and bogs. If it gets too hot during the peak of summer, wood turtles can estivate.

This is when an animal enters a state similar to hibernation in order to escape hot or dry conditions in their environment. Once the heat of the summer dies down and fall begins, wood turtles will prepare to overwinter in the muddy banks of streams. This usually occurs from October until March. Once they reawaken, males will begin to seek out mates.

Males form a social hierarchy that is usually dependent on age, size, and their levels of aggression. The dominant males tend to be the largest, oldest, and most aggressive individuals and thus have the highest reproductive success. When a male has found a female, the two will enter a courtship “dance” followed by the male chasing and nipping at the female's limbs. After mating, the male will leave in search of more females.

When it comes to nesting, female wood turtles are very particular about where they choose to lay their eggs. Factors like canopy cover, vegetation, and substrate type can all impact the chances of nesting success. When she chooses an appropriate area she will dig a shallow cavity around 2-5 inches deep and lay a clutch of 3 to 18 eggs. Unfortunately, hatchlings have a very low survival rate and most nesting attempts result in failure. Those that are lucky enough to survive the 47-69 day incubation period will hatch sometime between late August and September. Most of these surviving young often do not make it to adulthood however. Eggs and hatchlings are readily preyed upon by animals like raccoons, foxes, snakes, and birds. Even adults face many dangers, especially when traveling long distances. Wood turtles that have to cross roadways or farmlands can be injured or killed by vehicles and farming equipment. These turtles have also been taken from the wild by commercial poachers who wish to sell them illegally as pets or food. Their survival is also impeded by their life history, as wood turtles are not sexually mature until around 14-20 years of age. These factors put them at risk of extinction, making them among the rarest freshwater turtles in North America.

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# The Trailside Challenge

by Patrick Harmon

Back in our last newsletter, we included a lovable and hardy little duck known as the bufflehead. These ducks can be found throughout the winter in lakes, ponds, reservoirs, and along coastlines. The name “bufflehead” comes from the distinctive head feathers of the male when puffed out, giving it a very bulbous appearance. Males are famous for their striking black and white plumage while the females are a more muted shade of brown with lighter accents on their head, chest, and tail. Buffleheads are specialized cavity nesters that rely on abandoned northern flicker holes to raise their young.

Buffleheads are among the most “punctual” of birds when it comes to migration, they leave and return at almost the same time every year. However, they are also among the last to arrive when compared to our other migrating waterfowl. They leave for their nesting grounds in boreal Canada in early spring and will remain there until late summer or early autumn. By October, buffleheads return to their southern range here in the continental United States.

Unlike other ducks, they rarely travel in large flocks. Small groups may congregate with one bufflehead keeping an eye out for predators while the others dive underwater to feed. Buffleheads are also unique in that they are monogamous. Males will return to the same mate several years in a row; they are one of the few species of duck to exhibit this behavior.

Our next trailside challenge is a rare species of wildflower found here in the park, but watch out, it has a few lookalikes. Can you figure what it is?



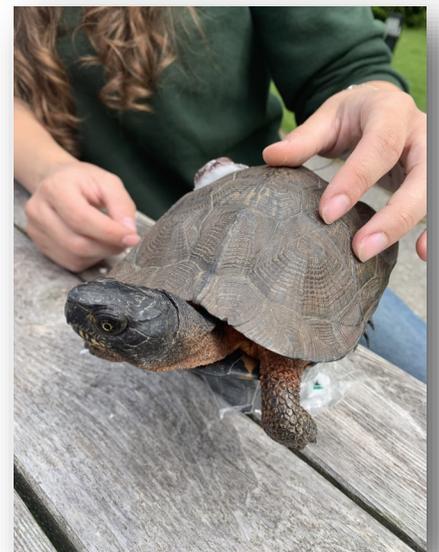
Photo credit: Ron Gemma, Westford Conservation Trust

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## Animal Profile: Wood Turtle

(Continued from page 6)

Here at the reservation, we use radio transmitters to track the movements of individual turtles throughout the park and monitor their health. You too can help turtles by watching out for them as they cross roads, picking up trash, and leaving them in their habitat. Just by following steps like these, we can all do our part to make sure that this incredible species of turtle has a fighting chance.



Photos by Mindy Quintero

# Until Next Time

*(Continued from page 3)*

My list of goals that I wanted to accomplish while curator is still long, but my completed list is longer. I could not have accomplished any of the above by myself. I am so thankful for the support of the Friends of Trailside board members, all the naturalists that have worked here at the museum, Dan Aitchison our wildlife manager, Jeff Main our park superintendent, the park office staff, the amazing undervalued park maintenance crew, my fellow conservation crew and all of our past volunteers. It is with mixed emotions that I am announcing my move to Muscoot Farm. Although I will miss driving into this beautiful park every day, I am excited for the opportunities at the farm. I hope that my presence here has had a positive impact on you or your visit here to the museum. If you visit the Farm, please make sure to say hi!



# And the Next Curator is...

*by Mindy Quintero*

You may be wondering by now who the next curator of Trailside Nature Museum will be. It is my pleasure to introduce Danniela Ciatto as your next curator. Danniela is coming to us from Cranberry Lake Preserve and has been with the county since 2002. I've known Danniela since 2006 and I'm happy that I'll be turning the museum over to her. Danniela is no stranger to Trailside as she has helped out with programs here over the years. I hope she puts her own stamp in the Trailside Nature Museum history books! Next time you're in the reservation, please stop by to say hi and give Danniela a warm welcome. Danniela will officially be here at the museum on May 16.

Welcome Danniela!



# Trailside Nature Museum Calendar of Events • May-June

## MAY

### **Sunday 1<sup>st</sup>, 1 PM: MAY DAY CELEBRATION**

Celebrate the coming of spring with us! We will have kid's activities, crafts and songs.

### **Saturday 7<sup>th</sup>, 8 AM: FIRST SATURDAY BIRD WALK**

Join our naturalist on the first Saturday of each month for a leisurely birding walk around the reservation. Bring binoculars if you have them. Geared towards all ages.

### **Sunday 8<sup>th</sup>, 10 AM: FISHING FOR BEGINNERS**

Bring your fishing rod and learn the fundamentals of fishing at Kimberly Bridge in Ward Pound Ridge. Fishing rods may be available for those without one (TBA). Pre-register. For ages 8 and up.

### **Saturday 14<sup>th</sup>, 1 PM: BE A SCIENTIST**

Our be a scientist series continues! We will take ingredients, develop a hypothesis, perform an experiment and then draw conclusions. Program could involve the use of "messy" materials. Scientists of all ages welcome! Pre-registration required by 5/13/22.

### **Sunday 15<sup>th</sup>, 1PM: CELEBRATING THE SUN**

Learn about photosynthesis and find materials to make your own suncatcher.

### **Saturday 21<sup>st</sup>, 1PM: BEAUTIFUL BUGS & SLIPPERY SLUGS**

Join our naturalist on a forest discovery walk as we take a closer look under rocks and logs to discover our not so creepy friends.

### **Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1 PM: WORLD TURTLE DAY**

Learn all about turtles and how we use telemetry equipment to find and track these special creatures.

### **Saturday 28<sup>th</sup>, 1 PM: HUMMINGBIRD HANGOUT**

Join our naturalist and discover how to attract hummingbirds and other fruit-eating feathered friends to home-made feeders.

### **Sunday 29<sup>th</sup>, 1 PM: DIY BUG HOTEL**

Learn about our local solitary insects and build your own hotel to hang in your own backyard.

## JUNE

### **Saturday 4<sup>th</sup>, 1 PM: MEADOW MARVELS**

The meadow is starting to come alive! Join our naturalist to discover all the marvelous creatures that call our meadows home.

### **Sunday 5<sup>th</sup>, 1 PM: NATIVE GARDENING**

Learn about the benefits of planting native plants and why they are so important to our local ecosystem.

### **Saturday 11<sup>th</sup>, 1 PM: INVESTIGATE INVASIVES**

Broaden your awareness of invasive species that are already here and what to keep an eye out for in the near future.

### **Sunday 12<sup>th</sup>, 1 PM: STREAM STUDY**

Wear water shoes and bring your curiosity as we use dip nets to explore all of the amazing creatures hiding in our streams. Meet at Kimberly Bridge parking area.

2022 Memberships

Available Now!

Daily parking fees go  
into effect Memorial  
Day Weekend!

Visit our website for details!

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

# More Sugaring Pics



Photos by Mindy Quintero



## Trailside Staff

Curator—Mindy Quintero  
 Naturalist—Patrick Harmon  
 Naturalist—Leah Cass  
 Naturalist—Robyn Graygor

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

## Newsletter Staff

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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)

### Membership Categories

- Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Mountain Lion \$1000
- Black Bear \$500
- Bluebird \$250
- Wood Turtle \$100
- Dragonfly \$50
- Salamander \$25

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Note: Membership at the Wood**

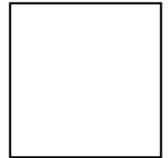
**Turtle level or above includes a parking pass allowing free access to the Reservation throughout the year.**



cut along dotted line and return with payment

Trailside Nature Museum  
Ward Pound Ridge Reservation  
PO Box 236  
Cross River, NY 10518  
USA

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



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



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