



Friends of the
Rockefeller State Park
PRESERVE

The Preserve Observer

Friends of the Rockefeller State Park Preserve Magazine
Vol. XLVI Fall 2021

Photo: Heidi Fuhrman



Single Arch Bridge along the route

First-Ever Marathon at Rockefeller Preserve

By Heidi Fuhrman
Race Committee Member

It's time to register and start training for the Pocantico Hills Marathon on Saturday, November 13. This 26.2 mile race will be entirely on carriage roads within the Rockefeller State Park Preserve's 1700 acres. The time for this event is 8 am – 5 pm.

What makes it so special? No pavement, cars or buildings. Instead, sweeping vistas of the Hudson River and the Palisade Cliffs, on wide graded trails winding through forests and pastures, streams and lakes, historic bridges and magnificent trees.

continued on page 2

Overlook Trail Not Overlooked For Grant

By Herbert Hadad
*Preserve Observer Co-Editor and
Friends Board Member*

Friends of Rockefeller State Park Preserve received a grant from Parks & Trails New York. The grant was given to rehabilitate the historic Overlook Trail carriage road in the Swan Lake section of the Preserve. The Friends added \$10,000 to the grant to bring the total to \$75,000.

The Park and Trail Partnership Grants program is funded through the state Environmental Protection Fund. The grants support partner group efforts to raise private funds for capital projects, perform maintenance and beautification undertakings, provide educational programming, and promote public use of the parks through hosting of special events.

The Park and Trail Partnership Grants are administered by Parks & Trails New York, a statewide non-

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Photo: Jessika Creedon

Pocantico River Trail, near the Single Arch Bridge

Hurricane Ida Wreaks Havoc on Preserve

By Jessika Creedon,
Friends Administrative Director

The Preserve was not spared Hurricane Ida's wrath. While the tree damage was minimal, the heavy rain caused catastrophic damage to some carriage roads. Ruts, erosion and complete wash-outs in many areas have left the historic roads in dire need of repair. Nearly half of the Pocantico River Trail, by the Single Arch Bridge, was washed away and other areas saw erosion and ruts form that are almost a foot in depth. This severity of damage has not been seen since Hurricane Floyd in 1999.

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Rockwood Ramble, *continued from page 1*

This is also a special inaugural running event. It is the first time that the Preserve has permitted a marathon on its grounds. Last year in 2020, the Rockefeller Pocantico Hills Estate Historic District, which includes the Preserve, was added to the national register of historic places. The Preserve was disappointed to withdraw the idea of a marathon last year due to the pandemic, and is particularly excited to finally offer runners the opportunity this year.

And it's all for a good cause. As part of a mission to show the running community's commitment to support open space, land conservancy and the environment, the race organizers have agreed to a cap of 500 runners, to support the race with aid stations, food & perks, and to equally split all race proceeds between Friends of the Rockefeller State Park Preserve (FRSPP) and the NYNJ Trail Conference (NYNJTC, a nonprofit that works with parks and others to manage over 2100 miles of trails in NY and NJ). FRSPP will direct their share of proceeds to carriage road maintenance within the Preserve.

A number of key groups are working together to make this a reality -- NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (NYSOPRHP), FRSPP, NYNJTC, Run Wild, Inc. (a new nonprofit runner/environmental catalyst organization in the Hudson Valley), sponsors such as nearby Phelps Hospital, and local running clubs. Phelps will be providing parking at its large campus next to the starting point of the race, overlooking the Hudson River at Rockwood Hall.

George Gumina, President and founder of the Friends, said, "We are very proud to be co-hosting this exciting and historic first marathon, along with NYNJ Trail Conference. We wish all the runners good luck!"

Jessika Creedon, Administrative Director of the FRSPP, herself a runner, says the marathon promotes itself: "Everyone has wanted this to happen for a very long time." According to Creedon, the FRSPP has hosted 5k and 10k fundraisers in the Preserve for years, but this is the Preserve's first marathon.

Charlie Gadol, a physician who has championed the outdoors in part by organizing ultra-marathons and other races, was the catalyst for this race and volunteered to be Race Director. "During the past year of the pandemic," notes Gadol, "all the nonprofits suffered -- there were not a lot of donations or events. This marathon gives the running community an opportunity to have a great time plus support outdoor projects in the Hudson Valley."

Heidi Fuhrman, also on the race committee, has juggled her work as a litigator, writer and photographer with a love of long-distance running. With intimate knowledge of the Preserve's many miles of trails after running them for two decades, she and others helped map the course. She notes,

"We designed a course that is destined to be one of the most coveted and bucolic marathons in the nation. The Preserve is one of the few sites in the country, certainly so close to NYC, with an internal network of wide graded carriage-trails to accommodate an entire marathon without crossing a single paved street."



Runners getting a workout

Photo: Heidi Fuhrman

Preserve Manager *Peter Iskenderian* and Preserve Director of Operations *Laurence Gill* have worked enthusiastically to support the race permitting process, recognizing the marathon's contribution to the Preserve's national reputation. They are working closely with the race organizers to edit and oversee the course route to provide for safety and avoid undue burden on other Preserve visitors on the race day.

Preserve Manager Iskenderian says he is thrilled, "There is no better stage for a marathon than the Rockefeller State Park Preserve with its incredible system of historic carriage roads that meander through the fields and forests of the Preserve. The participants are going to have a running experience like they've never had before."

Sponsors include: NYNJ Trail Conference, Tail Wind Nutrition, Phelps Hospital Northwell Health, North Face, Sassquad Trail Runners, Croton Running Company, Westchester Road Runner, and Wired Runner.

Race organizers are getting the word out to local running clubs, and encouraging runners in NYC and the Hudson Valley to register early, before the limited spaces fill up.

For race information, a race map, images of the Preserve, see PocanticoHillsMarathon.com. You can register at the race website, or at ultrasignup.com. All runners must be pre-registered, no race day registration. For details on the race please visit friendsrock.org.

Rocky's 5K Race

Saturday, October 16, 2021

Join the fun!



Grant, *continued from page 1*

profit organization, in partnership with the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. The grant is one of 30 awards totaling \$900,000 for organizations across New York State, dedicated to the stewardship of the state's parks and historic sites. Recipients must raise outside funding of at least 10 percent of the grant amount received.

"New York's beautiful state parks, trails, public lands and historic sites offer world-class outdoor recreational opportunities that continue to support tourism and grow local economies," Governor Cuomo said. He added that the organizations that receive grants continue to strengthen the state park system.



Photo: Thomas Straudler

(l to r) Preserve Manager Peter Iskendarian, State Senator Pete Harckham, Friends V-P Evelyn Hadad and Friends President George Gumina at recent visit by the Senator to show support for the grant.

The check was presented at a ceremony that took place in the Preserve courtyard on Tuesday, October 5, 2021.

George Gumina, president and founder of the Friends, said, "We are very grateful to the Parks & Trails New York for awarding us this grant. It will help continue our stewardship of the Preserve and its historic carriage roads so that our children and grandchildren can enjoy this park for generations to come."



Photo: Herbert Hadad

When peonies cease blooming, asters appear in the fall.

Ida Damage, *continued from page 1*

The safety of Preserve visitors is first and foremost in the minds of the Preserve staff and the Friends. The maintenance team was out the morning after, clearing trees and assessing damage. When possible, repairs were made immediately. However, an estimated 15 miles of carriage roads were impacted by the hurricane and the extensive damage goes beyond what can be done in-house. The estimated cost to repair the carriage roads is 3.3 million dollars.

The Friends acted swiftly, authorizing \$75,000 to be put towards carriage road repair of the hardest hit areas. A private donation, by Dr. Lucy Waletzky, has contributed an additional \$20,000. We would like to reach \$100,000, and hope we have your help in reaching that goal. Every dollar makes a difference. The Preserve Manager, Peter Iskenderian, will use additional funds to purchase necessary equipment, allowing the maintenance team to expand their scope of repairs. While these efforts will not fix everything, it is a big step in the right direction. We cannot allow conditions to deteriorate even further.

Our community depends on the Preserve. Many people cannot navigate over exposed rocks or across large swathes of erosion. The carriage roads provide a unique setting that is accessible to all abilities and the current damage limits what can be explored and enjoyed.

If you would like to support our efforts in repairing the damage caused by Ida, you can donate online at www.friendsrock.org, or mail a check to PO Box 8444, Sleepy Hollow NY 10591. Please note Ida on your donation. 100% of all Ida donations will go towards carriage road repair.



Photo: Jessica Creighton

Goat Trail, in the Buttermilk section of RSPP

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Check our website for details on upcoming events and for sponsorship opportunities:

www.friendsrock.org

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A Peony Celebration First

By Evelyn Hadad

Photo: Carol Lyden



Former Ambassador Sakurai said that the exchange of culture played a crucial role in bringing people together and strengthening the ties of friendship.

The exciting fund raising occasion celebrating the blooming of the peonies, which was the first time the Friends held a virtual event, took place on May 20, 2021 and was enjoyed by all! It raised money for maintenance of the carriage roads and we sincerely appreciated all the people who contributed their time and expertise.

The participants were:

- George Gumina, Friends of the Rockefeller State Park Preserve Founder and President

- M. Evelyn Hadad, Friends of the Rockefeller State Park Preserve Vice President
 - Peter Iskenderian, Rockefeller State Park Preserve Manager
 - Motoatsu Sakurai, President Emeritus, Japan Society Former Ambassador Consul General of Japan in New York
- Producer and Videographer: Andres Farfan, Five Film Media
John Heany, Media Stream (supplemental video footage)

Music Performed by Out of Isolation:

- Joseph Connelly, mandolin
- Tracy Kingsley, flute
- Lori Adams, fiddle
- Maureen Carson, fiddle
- Patricia McCue, fiddle
- Danny Fanelli, guitar

Laurence Gill, Rockefeller State Park Preserve P&R Supervisor

Keith Austin, Chris Davies, JoAnn Stern - Master Gardener
The RSPP Garden Volunteers



Photo: Herbert Hadad

Musicians rehearsing for Peony Celebration zoom event.

Rocky's Ride and Raffle

The carriage roads of Rockefeller State Park Preserve were designed for horses and preserving that tradition was the inspiration for our annual ride. Riders could visit on the day of their choice, anytime from September 1 through September 30 and go at their own pace, enjoying the sights and sounds of the Preserve. Carriage drivers were also welcomed! And the raffle prizes were especially exciting!

Gold Prize was:

- Dinner for two at RiverMarket
- Two night hotel stay at the Sheraton Tarrytown
- Two night boarding for two horses at Beech Hill

Silver Prize was:

- Dinner for two at RiverMarket
- One night hotel stay at the Westchester Marriot
- One night boarding for two horses at Beech Hill

The best part was all proceeds went to carriage road maintenance!



Save the Date!
Friends Gala



Saturday, June 6, 2022
Rockefeller Playhouse
6 PM

From the Friends President

By George Gumina

Dear Friends,

I thought by this issue we could be back to normalcy with Covid 19 but alas it was not meant to be. However, the Preserve is still thriving and offering comfort to visitors and our Friends organization is still forging ahead with activities and accomplishments.

We ducked Hurricane Henri with only one tree downed and then got slammed with Hurricane Ida. You can read the details of the devastation in the article on page 1. We are collecting contributions and would appreciate your support. The Friends donated \$75,000 and Dr. Lucy Waletsky donated \$20,000 but your help would also be welcome!

We are really pleased to have been awarded the grant from Parks & Trails New York to renovate Overlook Trail. With the Friends contribution, the amount is \$75,000! Please see article on page 1.

The bids have gone out for the project to restore Brothers Path that encircles Swan Lake, so we are that much closer to starting!

We are pleased to be hosting our first marathon at the Preserver! It will be on Saturday, November 13, 2021. Please see the story on page 1.

Our first zoom fundraising event was a success! We celebrated the Peony Festival on Thursday, May 21 and had such luminaries as the former Ambassador from Japan to New York, Mr. Motoatsu Sakurai. His remarks were heartfelt and much appreciated.

The annual Rockwood Ramble 10K went off without a hitch on Saturday, June 5 and was sold out. We have the upcoming Rocky's 5K race on Saturday, October 16, 2021.

We always like to have an equestrian event since horses and horseback riding and carriage riding are such an integral part of life at the Preserve. The story on page 4 gives you the flavor of what this Rocky's Ride and Raffle experience was like.

The Friends are also looking forward to hosting a Gala next year on Saturday, June 6, 2022 at the Rockefeller Playhouse. Please try to attend. It will be very enjoyable and funds will help restore the carriage roads.

As you can see, dynamic events are still being organized by the Friends organization and we are pleased to be raising money and giving it back into our beloved Preserve.

Hopefully, you are out walking or hiking or birding here on the carriage roads and enjoying the still warm weather. Look forward to seeing you there!



From the cover: Mardi Gras, Dorothy Gillespie, on display soon at the Preserve's art gallery

Board of Directors

Friends of the Rockefeller State Park Preserve

George Gumina, *President*

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Herbert Hadad

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Donald W. Stever

Ron Vogl

Administrative Director: Jessika Creedon



By Ranger Su

As we head into the Fall, I thought now would be a great time to write about the “Legends of the Rockefeller State Park Preserve”. Most people do not realize that many of the legends Washington Irving writes about, including his most famous “Legend of Sleep Hollow,” very likely took place, at least in part, on the lands that are now part of the Rockefeller Preserve. When Irving wrote his most famous work, in 1819, it was based on legends told for generations in our region. But the Headless Horseman was not the only story that Irving heard told, there were many others, and he refers to these as well. And there are those legends that came after Irving, like the story of Old Leatherman. This October, the Preserve and our Friends will host our third annual “Hulda’s Night”. What started as a fun seasonal event, has awoken us to the rich history and amazing legends of this very special place. www.rockefellerstateparkpreserve.org/events

Hulda of Bohemia

Hulda of Bohemia is a known personage who lived during the time of the American revolution. If you have hiked the “Witch’s Spring Trail” in the Preserve, then you passed the very ground Hulda may have called home. Legend tells us that Hulda was a skilled healer cast out “as a witch” by the Church leadership of the day. And that Hulda was a hero of the American revolution, taking up her musket and fighting alongside American patriots before falling to a red coat’s bullet.

After her death, legend tells us that the residents of Sleepy Hollow “found a bible in her hut and a store of gold that she desired to have distributed among the widows.” On this basis they decided she deserved a Christian burial in the Sleepy Hollow cemetery and convinced the Church Reverend to do so. There she lay in a pauper’s unmarked group grave for nearly 250 years.



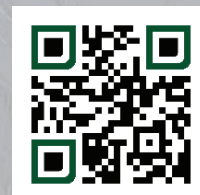
The Clintons enjoy an evening in the Preserve for “Hulda’s Night” 2020.



In 2019, a tombstone was erected to Hulda in the Old Dutch Cemetery.

Hulda was very much a real person and, we believe, likely lived very near where we have erected our “Hulda’s Night” outdoor theater setting. The story we crafted for Hulda was based on the legends as well as the known history of life for many in the 18th century, especially women like Hulda.

At all times we have remained respectful of the existing stories, with the humble hope of bringing this important early American and local legend to life again. We at the Preserve hope that the annual telling of Hulda’s story will help establish Hulda to her own position alongside the Horseman and other tales in Sleepy Hollow lore.



Scan for more info

The Old Leatherman

This year we add another legend to our Hulda's Night event. This is the story of the Old Leatherman. Living 100 years after Hulda, the Leatherman lived through the time of the American Civil War. A tramp, the Leatherman lived on the road for nearly 30 years, travelling a known circuit of some 365 miles over 34 days covering Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York. Dressed in handmade leather clothing, sewn from boot leathers, his odd appearance is described over and over in the local newspapers who regularly reported on the comings and goings of the living legend already in the 1880s.

What drove this French-speaking vagrant to walk such a vast territory, over and over and in such a timely way? Some said you could set your watch to the "Leatherman's arrivals." Others are said to have welcomed him cycle after cycle, always having a meal ready for him. But he would never spend the night. Leatherman preferred caves and the woods to human dwellings.

What is it about this odd character that keeps his legend alive today, over 130 years after his death? Author/historian Dan W. Deluca devoted an entire book to him. The band Pearl Jam wrote a song to him and the village of Pound Ridge has an annual run in his name.



Other Tales told by "The Storyteller"

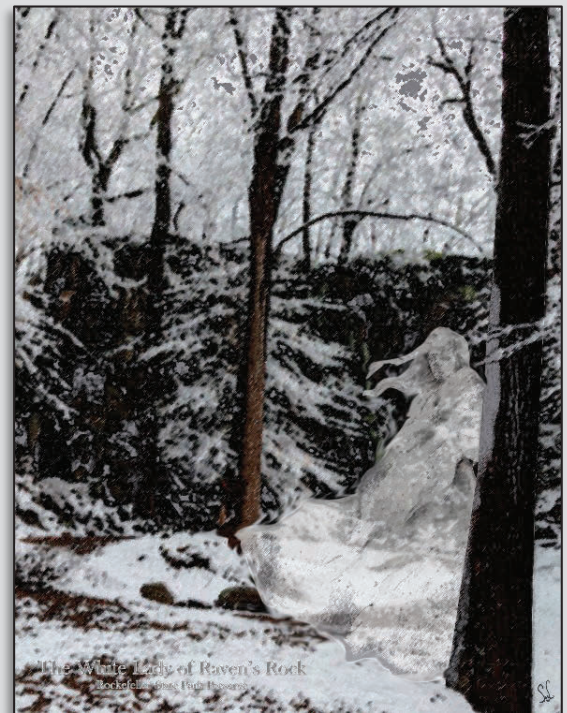
Raven's Rock and the White Lady:

"A ghostly woman in white is said to haunt a large rock in Pocantico Hills," says Irving. This was a girl who got lost in a snowstorm and sought shelter from the fierce wind in a ravine by the rock. The snow continued and she perished during the night. It is believed that the spirit of the lady meets the wanderer with cries that resemble the howling of the wind, and gestures that remind one of drifting snow, warning all to stay away from the fatal spot.

Spook Rock:

Many tales are told about this famous Rockefeller Preserve location. The most famous is that of the young Indian brave who, returning late from a hunt, spied a group of magical maidens dancing above the rock. "Their voices were as sweet as their bodies were beautiful and graceful, and no one could have mistaken them for anything less than celestial."

Smitten, this brave contrives of a way to capture one of the maidens, making her his wife and the mother of his child. Though she comes to love the brave, she misses her family and sneaks off to pay them a visit. But celestial and human time do not run on the same clock and tragedy follows. You can still hear her cries sometimes (traffic on 117 permitting).



From the Preserve Manager

By Peter Iskendarian

This summer at the Rockefeller State Park Preserve has been an interesting change from what we have been experiencing this past year. COVID-19 disrupted everyone's lives in a way no one could have ever imagined, and as we pull ourselves out of this hole and try to get our daily lives back to this new normal, the Preserve has gotten back to its new normal, or so we thought!

With all the challenges the staff has faced in the past year we didn't realize Mother Nature was about to throw us a new challenge. A challenge we thought we were prepared for, a challenge we thought would end and give us a little relief. But that relief hasn't come. The challenge we faced was the heat and the rain and all the maintenance challenges that come along with this. The combination of these two factors caused so many issues for the staff and guests, it kept us on our toes all summer. With all that mother nature threw at us this summer, there were some great moments that really stand out to me.

We were very excited to be picked to host the Friends of Access Israel (FAISR) Universal Expedition in August. Access Israel, established in Israel in 1999, is the first non-profit organization in Israel whose main mission is to

promote accessibility and inclusion to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities and the elderly. The leadership of FAISR is so dedicated to their mission and the hard work it takes to organize expeditions to places like



FAISR guests on the Pocantico River bridge

Rockefeller Preserve to get people outdoors.

FAISR also brought along with them the very talented people from the company Paratek, who developed the Paratek mobility device that enables people with mobility issues the opportunity to experience the outdoors in ways they never imagined. Paratek offers

tailor-made trips with suitable support to provide this opportunity to people with disabilities. For each expedition they created a mixed group of people with and without disabilities. They get to know the dreams, abilities, and disabilities of each individual and offer the right trail for each one of them, as well as a suitable assistive device that will answer their needs. FAISR also teamed up with the dedicated group from Chapel Haven to join them

continued next page

Rockefeller State Park Preserve Staff

Operations

Peter Iskenderian, Preserve Manager
 Laurence Gill, P&R Supervisor / Director of Operations
 Jean Dolen, Office Manager

Conservation & Stewardship

Joshua DiPaola, Natural Resource Specialist
 Devyani Mishra, Stewardship Crew Leader
 Kim Fendrich, Environmental Educator
 Susan Lewenz, "Ranger Su", Conservation Coordinator

Maintenance

Dmitri Benzinger, Park Supervisor / Safety & Facility Compliance Mgr.
 Maso Robinson, Head of Buildings & Grounds
 Jack Gandolfo, Buildings / Groundskeeper
 James Paolicelli, Buildings / Groundskeeper

Art Gallery

Audrey Leeds, Gallery Curator

on the Universal Expedition. Chapel Haven is an organization, which provides lifelong individualized services for people with developmental and social disabilities, empowering them to live independent and self-determined lives. They brought 60 people from their beautiful Chapel Haven campus in New Haven CT over 3 days to enjoy the Preserve.



Photo: Peter Iskendarlian

FAISR participants head over to explore the Buttermilk Hill part of the Preserve

With the team from FAISR in place and the team at Rockefeller Preserve on Board as their partner, the expedition was ready to set off. We organized 8 full days of tours of the Preserve with people of all ages and abilities. The routes were carefully selected to make sure there were challenges for the groups to navigate and no routes were duplicated. There were no obstacles eliminated from any of the hikes, which made it a truly universal expedition. The Paratrek mobility device made every obstacle passable no



Photo: Peter Iskendarlian

Jamie Lassner, FAISR Executive Director, Colton Robinson, FAISR Team Leader, and Ranger Su at the Glacial Erratic

matter the ability level of the user. The whole expedition was based on teamwork, friendship, and trust.

What we all experienced in those two weeks was truly inspiring. We saw a boy, with no use of his limbs and who never did much outdoor activity, get taken via the Paratrek into the Pocantico River and get to experience playing in a stream for the first time. I saw people who were so excited to be in nature and learn about the history of the Preserve, that the smile never left their faces the entire day. I witnessed countless people with limited mobility, scale boulders in the Paratrek, like it was not even there.

The whole experience was just amazing to be a part of. It has enabled the staff to look within ourselves to see how we do our jobs and how we can make improvements by having shared experiences like this. This experience has also showed us ways in which we can make the Preserve accessible to everyone, no matter your ability. Most importantly, we have made wonderful friendships, spanning the globe, that will last for the rest of our lives.



Photo: Peter Iskendarlian

The "Paratrek Trekker" technology enabled some of the participants to see the Preserve in ways impossible in the past.





Reaching the Friends

Friends of the
Rockefeller State Park Preserve
P.O. Box 8444 • Sleepy Hollow, NY 10591
(914) 762-0209

The Preserve Observer

E-mail: Friends@friendsrock.org
 Website: www.friendsrock.org
facebook.com/rockyspark
instagram.com/friendsofrpspp

Editors: Evelyn Hadad, Herbert Hadad
 Letters and submissions are invited.
 Please contact us c/o the Friends.

❖ Gallery Schedule at a Glance ❖

“LAND-ESCAPES”

September 19 – November 7, 2021

Opening Reception: Sunday, October 3, 2021 1pm – 3pm



Joseph Keiffer

These renowned artists, Joseph Keiffer and Janet Lippman, will be presented at the Rockefeller Preserve Art Gallery. Their “Expressionism Art” is thematic in a captivating exhibition of classic paintings and pastels

Joseph Keiffer's studies of drawing, modernism, abstraction, expressionism and impression of The Wallace Collection enthralled him with a desire to create landscapes that include rare and evanescent light effects, long views, sunrise- sundown effects, glittering waterways, a new color comprehension of subjects, from sketch to painterly renditions on canvas. Joseph’s subjects are inspirational, transporting one from Coast to Coast views of nature idealized.

Janet Lippmann, painter, teacher, Gallerist, curator, author – a life in the world of art who has since 1991 established her own art studio at The National Arts Club in New York City. Beautiful colors and changing shapes, patterns and formations have inspired her. She finds joy and contentment in revealing the beauty of natural landscapes that need no improvement, and wishes to share her experience with the viewer. Janet’s subjects are gardens, landscapes, and flowers produced in oil and pastels.



Janet Lippman

“JOY TO THE WORLD”

December 1 – January 31, 2022



Joyful Noise

Dorothy Gillespie, a pioneer for women in the arts, had a career spanning over 70 years as an activist, lecturer and mentor to creative women throughout the world. Working in such diverse mediums as metal, canvas and paper she has distinguished herself as one of the preeminent artists of our time. Her work has been exhibited in prestigious museums such as the Guggenheim, as well as innovative private galleries and collected by art lovers throughout the world.

Sometimes referred to as the “Wizard of Art,” her spectacular, colorful work conjures up images of rainbows, yellow brick roads and childhood pastimes. While living in Lima Peru and Exeter England, she explored an interest in archeology that had a profound impact on her sculpture creations. Long before “The Gates” Ms. Gillespie created a wonderland of “walk through triangles” in Central Park in the 1970s.



Royal Ballet

Conservation in Action: Protecting the Rich Diversity of Plants in the Rockefeller State Park Preserve

By Patricia Butter

Photo: Erik Danielsen



Erik Danielsen measured this black oak near the fields at Stone Barns, which qualifies to be the New York State Champion of this species in overall size.

“Let us live in a way that Earth will be grateful for us.”
– Robin Wall Kimmerer

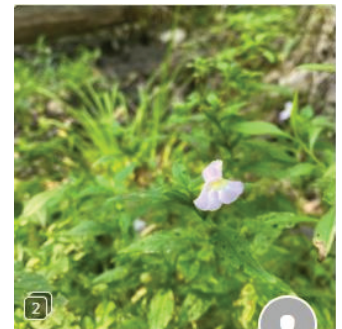
(This is Part I of a two-part series. Part II will appear in our next issue.)

If you stand in any one place in the Rockefeller State Park Preserve, you will find that you are surrounded by an extraordinary tapestry of the colors and textures of plants numbering in the hundreds and thousands. While we marvel at the beauty and graceful contours of the historic landscape of the preserve, we can also enjoy the details of the many plants with their fascinating leaves, flowers and fruits that inhabit its gently sloping pastures and majestic woods. The plant communities of the preserve provide ecological services not only in the form of nourishment for a multitude of insects, birds and animals, but also clean water, air and salve for the spirits of us humans. The preserve is a unique treasure of historic landscapes and conserved lands, and through our studies gradually we are beginning to understand that the plant communities in the preserve are just as remarkable and precious. Equally unique are the humans who have been dedicated stewards and have forged intrinsic bonds with these lands.

The next time you marvel at one of the preserve’s towering 150 foot tall Tulip poplar trees, know that part of the miracle of that tree is that it exists at all. The Oak-Tulip tree forest community that inhabits much of the preserve’s woodlands is listed as imperiled/vulnerable by the New York Natural

Heritage Program due to development pressure in our area. At 132.3 feet as measured using the Rucker Height Index, the woodlands of The Rockefeller State Park Preserve are also remarkable as one of the tallest woodlands in the state of New York. A pending state champion black oak in overall size, calls the preserve home, and four of the tallest representatives of their species in the state of black oak, scarlet oak, mockernut hickory and European black alder inhabit the woodlands along the Witches Spring and Pocantico River trails. Our woodlands are tended by a knowledgeable and dedicated team of stewards: Joshua DiPaola and Devyani Mishra who study and work to improve and protect the ecological health of the preserve thanks to the generous support of the Friends of the Rockefeller State Park.

The first step in conservation is to know what needs to be prioritized for conservation. In 2017, the team at the preserve set out to create a plant list documenting the diversity of our unique flora. The efforts of the preserve’s dedicated stewards, the team at Stone Barns, and volunteers produced a list that includes 580 species of plants. Preserve visitors have also played an essential role in this list, as 297 citizen scientists have documented 1,972 observations of plants using the iNaturalist smart phone app. These observations provide important data



Sharpwing Monkeyflower

(*Mimulus alatus*)

Research Grade 2 4 1y

This iNaturalist observation by preserve visitor and former staff member Steven Difalco identified a NY state listed rare species: Mimulus alatus, winged monkey flower

Photo: Steven Difalco

on distribution and phenology (flowering time) used not only for the preserve’s own data set, but as data that can be accessed by scientists around the world. This collaborative data sharing has helped us to identify seven state listed threatened and endangered plant species in the preserve: *Paspalum laeve*, field bead grass, *Carex bushii*, Bush’s sedge, *Carex amphibola*, ambiguous sedge, *Mimulus alatus*, winged monkey flower, *Cyperus echinatus*, globe flat sedge, *Lespedeza frutescens*, bushy bush clover, and *Lespedeza stuevei*, Stuve’s bush clover.



The Preserve Observer

Friends of the Rockefeller State Park Preserve
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HERE TO ENJOY...OURS TO PRESERVE

Girl Scouts Love State Parks



Every year, Girl Scouts explore the natural wonders found across our country during the Girl Scouts Love State Parks weekend. On September 11 and 12, Girl Scouts nationwide, and here at the Rockefeller State Park Preserve, along with their troops, friends, and family, celebrated our shared love of the outdoors.

Pictured below (from left to right) are Rockefeller Preserve staff members Josh teaching Reptiles and Amphibians, Devyani presenting a lesson on trees and leaves, and Kim teaching Geology.



Photos: Peter Iskendarian