



Friends of the
Rockefeller State Park
PRESERVE

The Preserve Observer

Friends of the Rockefeller State Park Preserve Magazine
Vol. XLVII Spring 2022

Photo: Heidi Fuhrman



Brian Gottlock

Marathon Tale

By Brian Gottlock

It's been a bleak couple of years.

In my case – working from home as an attorney while our four school-age kids ricocheted in and out of remote learning – a silver lining to the pandemic emerged: My savior throughout the insanity and anxiety became running outdoors, specifically in the Preserve.

I'm a life-long runner, from high school track through a NYC Marathon experience 13 years ago that was so perfect (weather, my time, thousands raised for charity) that I vowed to never run a marathon again. I do run the Sleepy Hollow Half every year and that has been my only recurring organized race.

Cut to COVID and "The Shining"-level need to get out of the house and

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14th Annual Peony Celebration

By Evelyn Hadad

On Thursday, May 11, from 6 to 9 p.m., one of the highlight events of the preserve spring season will be hosted by the Friends of the Rockefeller State Park Preserve. It is the Fourteenth Annual Peony Celebration – a fundraising event that will celebrate the blooming of the famous Japanese tree peonies at the entrance to the preserve.

This year, the art exhibit that accompanies the event, is entitled, "Profusion of Peonies and Posies." Its opening reception coincides with the Peony Celebration. In fact, some paintings were created specifically for the Rockefeller State Park Preserve show.

This celebration is a much anticipated one by members of the surrounding communities. It commemorates receiving the gift of 500 peonies from the town of Yatsuka Cho in Shimane Prefecture, Japan, in memory of the victims of September 11th. It was meant to express a gesture of healing and solidarity towards the United

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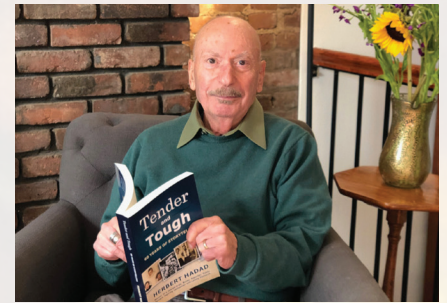


Photo: Adlin Hadad

Herbert Hadad

A Writer and a Boxer Until the End

By Edward, Charles and Sara Hadad (Le Brusq)

Herbert Hadad, a vital member of the Board of Directors of the Friends of Rockefeller State Park Preserve since its founding in 1996, passed away on November 6, 2021 at his home in Pocantico Hills. He was 85. He was an award-winning writer with a celebrated career as a reporter, essayist, public relations representative, speech writer, and press officer. He was also the co-creator of this publication, The Preserve Observer, which he produced for the past 25 years with his wife and fellow Board member Evelyn. George Gumina, founder and president of the Friends, said,

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Image: Detail from Sunflowers in Red by Roseanne Cerbo

Peony, *continued from page 1*

States. The peony is the signature flower from this area and is considered Japan's "most noble of flowers."



Radu Serban's Glorious Peony Blossom, part of the gallery exhibit "Profusion of Peonies and Posies"

Lisa and John Manuele, Co-Chairs of the Peony Celebration Committee, said, "Once again there will be a cocktail and light cuisine reception. And Terry Marchica, who solicits and organizes the floral displays, has assured us there will be beautiful arrangements donated by local garden clubs." Other members of the committee are: Rachel and George Gumina (Friends President), Clare Pierson and Peter Humphrey, and Kimberly and Stephen C. Rockefeller, Jr.

The reception will take place in the Visitor Center Courtyard under what is hoped will be clear blue skies and warm weather.

Preparation of the peonies began months before the event. One of the enthusiastic volunteer gardeners is Keith Austin, the former mayor of the Village of Briarcliff Manor and chairman of its planning board. "Right now, there are two master gardeners in the program," he said. "I'm only a master enthusiast." Austin's colleagues in this noble effort include Chris Davies and Joann Stern.

Please join us! Tickets can be purchased at our web site: www.friendsrock.org.



15th Autumn Hunter Pace

Friends and Eastern Hudson Valley Horse Council host Hunter Pace on Sunday, November 13, 2022, Beautiful vistas and a challenging course make for a really fun experience!

Rockwood Ramble 10k

Saturday, June 4, 2022

9:00 AM 11:00 AM

Rockwood Hall

Race Director Laureen Fitzgerald sees to every detail, ensuring a first rate experience for all participants. All proceeds benefit carriage road maintenance.



Rockefeller Playhouse



**Save the Date!
Friends Gala**



Honoring

**Dr. Lucy Rockefeller Waletzky, M.D.,
Chair of the New York State Office of Parks,
Recreation and Historic Preservation**

*The 2022 Gala, honoring Lucy Waletzky, M.D.,
is in support of the Rockwood Hall section of the
Rockefeller State Park Preserve.*

Saturday, June 11, 2022

Rockefeller Playhouse

6 PM

**Rockefeller State Park Preserve
Staff**

Operations

Peter Iskenderian, Preserve Manager
Laurence Gill, P&R Supervisor / Director of Operations
Jean Dolen, Office Manager
Linda Parker, Parking Lot & Patron Services

Conservation & Stewardship

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

Maintenance

Maso Robinson, Head of Buildings & Grounds
Jack Gandolfo, Buildings / Groundskeeper
James Paolicelli, Buildings / Groundskeeper
Stacy Robinson, Buildings / Groundskeeper

Art Gallery

Audrey Leeds, Gallery Curator

Hadad, *continued from page 1*

“Herb was not only a great friend, he was an excellent writer and an exceptional human being. He was loyal, smart, extremely hard-working and I will miss him forever.”

Born in 1936 in upper Manhattan to Syrian and Jewish parents, his family soon moved to Boston where he attended Roxbury Memorial High School and graduated from Northeastern University with a Bachelor of Science degree. He would tell you that the education that set the course of his life, however, took place in his early twenties working as a copy boy in the newsroom of *The Boston Globe* and in the ring moonlighting as a featherweight boxer in dusty gyms across Boston.

Intoxicated with the thrill of writing and covering the news,



Photo from family archives

A young Hadad family – Evelyn and Herb with children Charles, Sara and Edward

he would go on to work as a reporter for *The New York Times*, *New York Post*, *The Boston Globe*, and *The Keene Sentinel* of New Hampshire. He was the author of two books, *Finding Immortality: The Making of One American Family*, and *Tender and Tough: 60 Years of Storytelling*. His essays appeared in publications including *The New York Times*, *The International Herald Tribune*, *Parenting*, *Reader's Digest*, *Poets & Writers*, and several anthologies. He won writing awards from the New York Press Club, Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, *Folio* magazine and others.

Herb had countless fascinating personal and professional tales along the way, but his most coveted adventure started in 1972 when he met Evelyn in Manhattan. His true dream had always been to be a father and family man. They would marry and move to Tarrytown, have three children, and then settle in Pocantico Hills where he lived for the last 40 years.

Prior to the official founding of Rockefeller State Park Preserve in 1983, and long before the internet existed, or readily available public trail maps, or the convenient Preserve entrance of today, he followed a rudimentary trail outline a friend drew on a napkin and set out on a quest to find Swan Lake. At the time, the lake was more of a local legend few had seen, rather than an integral pillar of the community. Accompanied by his two toddler sons Edward and Charles, the expedition was long and hot, as the boys complained, pleaded, and doubted their father's

navigational skills. But just as they were about to relent and abandon the mission, they glimpsed the shimmering surface of the lake through some trees. The reward was well worth the journey. The scene was mesmerizing. They would return a couple of weeks later with Evelyn and daughter Sara, and ever since, the entire family has been captivated by the beauty of the lake and all its surroundings.

Many of Herb's stories explore the pleasures and pains of marriage and fatherhood with humor, insight, and uncompromising honesty. He had an observational gift for reflecting on the multitude of life's small wonders that take place every day, such as the uplifting conversation with a stranger in the park, the pleasure of waving to a passing train, or the investigation of his children's questions on life. Much of his writing also explored the juxtaposition of his Arab and Jewish heritage. The Preserve played a major role in his writing process, for many of his stories were written after a walk or a run on the carriage roads. It was invaluable for him to take time to get out into nature, to think, to clear his mind, and to find inspiration. The Preserve is also featured in much of his work. One of his favorite spots, mentioned in several of his stories, is an old oak near Buttermilk Hill, which he declared the Prayer Tree. He would often stand under its branches to reflect, head and palms turned upward, and have his communion with God.

He was a fisherman, a marathoner, a romantic, a flirt, a joke teller, and a fighter who was quick to let you know if he felt he, his family, or his friends were being mistreated. He described himself as a tiger of a father who would do anything for his children, and all three would readily attest to that fact. He adored Evelyn, who was the secret hero in most of his stories. He lionized his parents from whom he passed on many lessons. He loved his country, his city, and a good martini. In fact, he was a founding member of the local Monday Night Martini Club established in Pleasantville.



Herb Hadad congratulates wife Evelyn for 1st place finish in 2016 Rockwood Ramble 10k. Evelyn had an advantage - she was the only one in her age group!

He joined the 1972 presidential campaign of Senator Edmund Muskie of Maine as the deputy press secretary and spearheaded public relations for a fledgling educational children's television program called *Sesame Street*. A character based on him named Herbert Birdsfoot appeared in a number of seasons. He also taught writing at the Hudson

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Hadad, continued from page 3

Valley Writers Center in Sleepy Hollow where he served on the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee. He was a governor emeritus of the Silurians Press Club, a venerable journalism society in New York, and he started a cable television program called *On Writing* with his friend and fellow board member Benjamin Cheever. He was a fixture at Club Fit in Briarcliff, where later in life, as walking became more of a challenge, he converted much of his exercise routine to workouts in the pool. As a capstone to his career, he proudly served 18 years as a press officer for the U.S. Department of Justice for the Southern District of New York for six U.S. Attorneys including Mary Jo White, James Comey, and Preet Bharara, and received several distinctions for his work.

Herb lived a rich and fulfilling life. In addition to his loving wife Evelyn and three children, he had four adoring grandchildren, a wide circle of in-laws, cousins, nieces, nephews, friends, students, and colleagues he all loved dearly. He reveals in his first book *Finding Immortality*, in which a photograph of the Preserve in early autumn graces the cover that the title was chosen as a wish for his stories to live on after he was gone and, except for the names and places, for others to embrace the stories as their own. In the days preceding his passing, his family confirmed for him

that not only would he achieve immortality through his stories on the page but also through the vivid memories, lessons, and appreciation from all those who loved him.

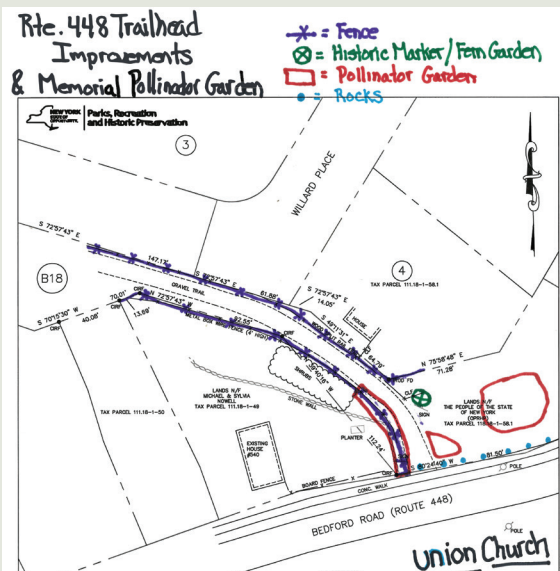


Photo from family archives

Hadad and LeBrusq Family with grandchildren at NYC marathon in Brooklyn

Herbert treasured the Rockefeller State Park Preserve and dedicated many years to support this special place. If you would like to honor his memory, please consider a donation to the Friends here: www.friendsrock.org.

448 Trail Head Project



“Many of you are aware that recently we lost our good friend Herbert Hadad, a friend to the Preserve for so many years we cannot count them,” said Peter Iskenderian, the Preserve Manger. He continued, “In Herb’s honor we are naming a trail and putting a memorial pollinator garden at the park entrance across from the Union Church and the fire house. Additionally, we will be making quite a few trail improvements in this area, including new fencing, 2 more pollinator gardens and a fern garden that will surround and highlight the historic marker for the Old Putnam Railroad line. All this work will be done by volunteers,



Photo: Angel Deliz

Edward and Adlin Hadad with their children Evan and Willow on the proposed newly-named trail

led primarily by the Pocantico Hills Homeowners Association and the Garden Club, in conjunction with the Friends. Expenses are to be covered by private donations, some of which have already been received. Aris Economides and Barbara Goodman generously pledged \$1000 each. And Garden Club members are donating the plantings from their own gardens!”

From the Friends President

By George Gumina

Dear Friends,

It has been a tough winter! Besides dealing with the Covid virus, we lost my dear friend and founding board member, Herbert Hadad. Words cannot describe my sadness at this personal and professional loss. I sincerely hope that Herb will continue to spread his goodness, feistiness, yet still kindness of spirit, over our beloved Preserve. A tribute article is written on page one by his sons, Edward and Charles, and daughter Sara. Please read it and if you are moved to contribute to the Friends in his memory, please go to our web site at www.friendsrock.org.

We are pleased to be holding in-person events again. On Thursday, May 12, we are hosting our 14th Annual Peony Celebration. The first in three years! There will be light refreshments, wine, flower displays by local garden clubs, and our beautiful peonies, of course. Audrey Leeds, curator for the Visitor Gallery, has planned a stunning floral design show to coincide with the celebration. Please plan to purchase a ticket and join us!

On Friday, May 13, we have a Volunteer Party in the Preserve Visitor Center courtyard. We appreciate all the work and effort given by our volunteers that help to make the Preserve run smoothly. You name an activity – cleaning up trails, gardening, serving refreshments at art receptions, office work, etc. – and we have a volunteer helping with it. We can't thank them enough!

Our annual 10K race is on Saturday, June. 4. The course is rugged but doable and you always get spectacular scenery.

This year we will have a Gala on Saturday, June 11 at the grand Rockefeller Playhouse. We will be honoring Dr. Lucy Rockefeller Waletzky, M.D., who has been Chair of the New York State Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation since March 2007. She has also been invaluable to the success of the Friends of the Rockefeller State Park Preserve since its inception in 1996.

The project to renovate Brothers Path is underway. Bids have been sent out and a contractor has been found. Work will be beginning and we are all excited!

Always check our web site to keep up on developing events and activities. And I look forward to seeing you out on the carriage roads!



From the cover: Sunflowers in Red by Roseanne Cerbo, part of the "Profusion of Peonies and Posies" exhibit at the Preserve's art gallery - see schedule on page 8 for details.

Board of Directors

Friends of the Rockefeller State Park Preserve

George Gumina, *President*
 M. Evelyn Hadad, *Vice President*
 John Nonna, *Secretary*
 Carol M. Lyden, *Treasurer*

Benjamin H. Cheever
 Brian Geary
 Herbert Hadad
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Patricia Jones
 John N. Manuele, *Executive Board*
 Stella Medina

Clare M. Pierson, *Executive Board*
 Kimberly K. Rockefeller
 Donald W. Stever
 Ron Vogl

Administrative Director: Jessika Creedon



"Is there an App for that?"

By Ranger Su

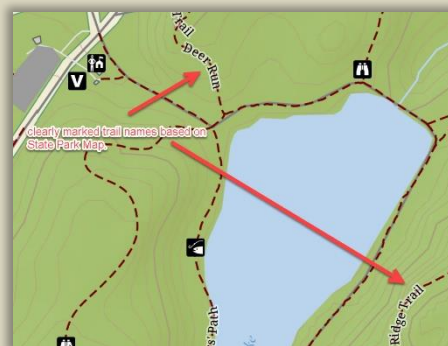
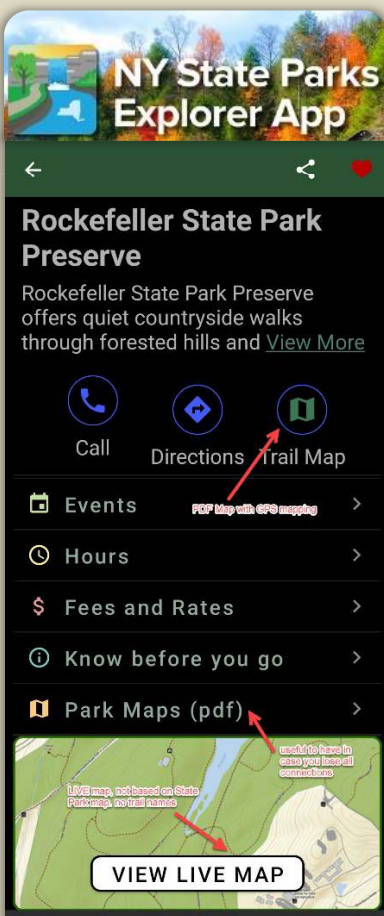
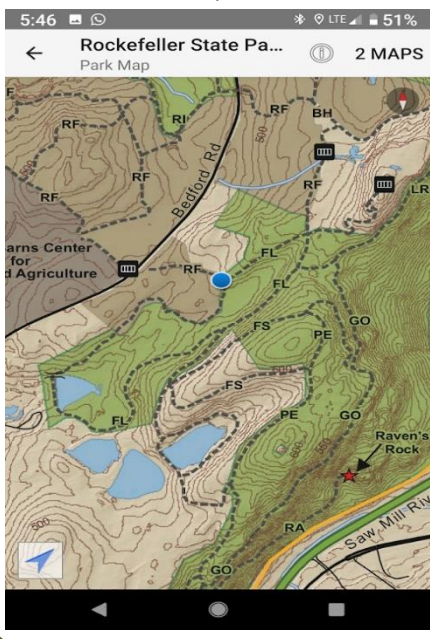
Design by Laurence Gill

While unplugging in nature is great, there are also a wide range of apps that can add, in their own way, to your outdoor experience. As with everything in life, the key is balance. That said, we are sharing some of our favorite outdoor apps in this issue. Please recognize there are thousands of apps, and we are not suggesting in anyway this to be comprehensive; only a list of some of our favorites. The best way to see if the app is right for you is to try it..... Enjoy!

MAPPING & COMPASS APPS



While there are many options, my personal favorite for hiking is **Avenza Maps**, which allows you to load a map of the park you are visiting (if included in their library) and then you can see your location in real time, as long as you have a signal. It has saved me from getting lost many times! Please note that while the app is free, many of the maps are not.



- Free, user-friendly app to help plan outdoor adventures while staying connected to long-time favorite parks and sites.
- Parks information including directions, hours, fees and rates, trail maps, and helpful know-before-you-go details. Also live Park Closures notifications.
- Visitors can also save their Empire Pass to a wallet feature for digital payment and entry into many park properties.
- GPS-enabled maps or pdfs of all New York State Parks

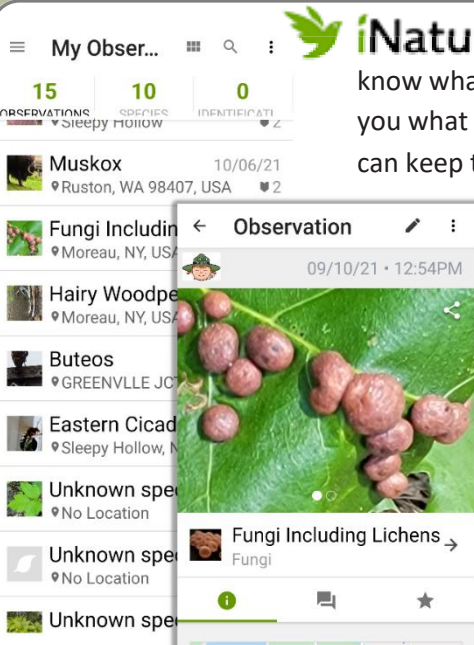
You can always find our pdf map at rockefellerstateparkpreserve.org Right side nav click "Maps"

COMPASS: Compass apps use your device's accelerometer to detect direction. They can be useful if GPS connectivity is weak. I use "Just a Compass" Free, no ads.



Unless otherwise noted, all apps reviewed here are available in both the IOS and Android app stores. Author uses Android. The opinions are those of the author only and are not intended as product endorsements.

PLANTS, ANIMALS AND FUNGI



iNaturalist gets high marks from nearly everyone in the Preserve office. You want to know what that plant is? You take a picture with the app and most of the time the app tells you what you are seeing. iNaturalist include plants, animals and fungi. I really like that you can keep track of all your findings over time and that you help crowd source important information with the community. At this time, I think it's your best bet for frogs, turtles, and other amphibians. While Josh, our Animal Steward, concurs he also pointed me to virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com, which is an excellent resource. In general, I think apps are great, but you will always have your go-to websites for more information when you have a good connection, that is!



seek is the sister app to iNaturalist and I tend to prefer it for plants. I find it a bit simpler. But that may be because it was designed for kids. As such, it does not log your location. That has pluses and minuses of course. I think it is pretty accurate and I love being able to immediately know what plant I am looking at. It gets a nod of approval from Devyani, our Flora Steward, too!

iNaturalist lets you keep a journal of all your observations. And your findings can be shared to help crowd source information, which is really helpful, especially in areas of invasives or endangered species tracking.

I keep hoping for a really good fungi ID app but have yet to find anything better than iNaturalist. Generally, I use iNaturalist for a quick ID of the mushrooms and then go to Facebook group "New York Mushroom Hunters" to confirm. A great resource app is Book of Mushrooms.

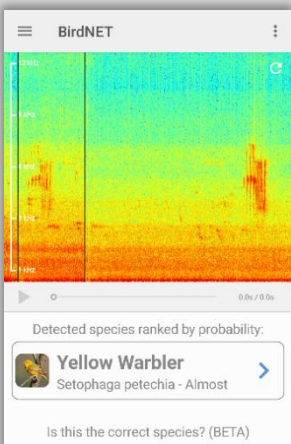


BIRDING

There are a lot of bird app offerings, so I invited Anne Swaim of Saw Mill River Audubon to share her thoughts. *(That way you can blame Anne, too, if you disagree with my selections!)*

BirdNET is at the top of my (RangerSu) birding apps. I love it. Quite literally, this app listens to the bird call, and, if you have a good enough recording, identifies or gives its best guess at the bird. This one is really good if you are trying to learn bird songs.

Anne's opinion on BirdNET: *"It depends on the app being set to know where you are. It is a constant amazement to us how some birds imitate other bird sounds -- not just mockingbirds -- and even the bird sound ID apps do sometimes mix up species."* Bottom line, you can only be certain when you've seen the bird.



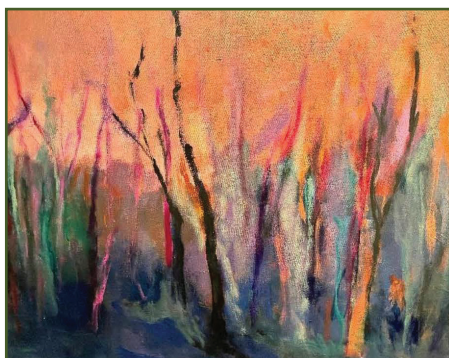
From Anne: *"Number 1 bird app to recommend is always Merlin Bird ID. It can suggest IDs from a photo you submit or listen as suggest bird ID from sound. (Important to note that Merlin suggests IDs but does not confirm them.) Key thing is to download area pack to make sure Merlin is doing ID for the birds where you are. All free and from Cornell Lab of Ornithology. If people want to go deeper and get a paid app, iBird is best."*

❖ Gallery Schedule at a Glance ❖

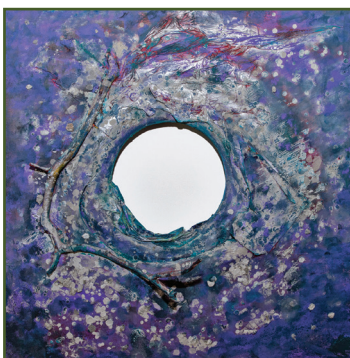
“SYMBOLIC IMAGES OF NATURE”

March 20 – May 1, 2022

The artists (**Mimi Kim Gutschmit, Michael Garber, Elaine Dalto, Alain Diot and Dorothy Gillespie**) have introduced new expressions with natural elements, producing paintings incorporating unique collages, sculpture, and constructions: applying luscious colors, thus transfixing the viewer’s contemplation while renewing their spirits and hopes.



Elaine Dalto: Splendor



*Mimi Kim Gutschmit:
Lavender Reflections*



Michael Garber: Eastern Screech Owl

“A PROFUSION OF PEONIES AND POSIES”

May 12 – July 31, 2022

Reception: Thursday Evening, May 12 – 6PM

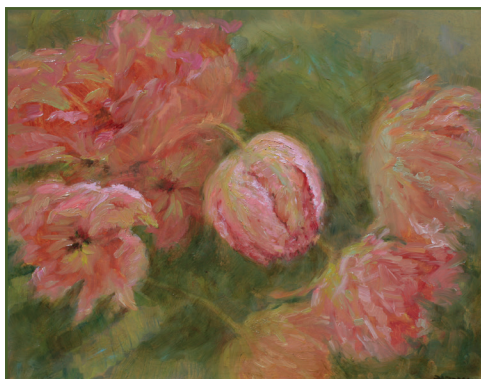
(in conjunction with the 14th Annual Peony Celebration)

As the peonies blossom in the courtyard, so shall the gallery blossom with the opening of the exhibition, “A Profusion of Peonies and Posies” featuring art by Rosanne Cerbo, Sue Barrasi, Anne Bell, Bonnie Sakoff, and Radu Serban. The exhibit is curated by Audrey Leeds and will be on display from May 12th to July 31st. Its opening corresponds with the Peony Celebration hosted by the Friends of the Rockefeller State Park Preserve.

The gallery is open from 9 am to 4:30 pm daily, free of charge.



Radu Serban: Purple Irises



Sue Barrasi: Parrot Tulips



Bonnie Sakoff: Lily Splendor

From the Preserve Manager

By Peter Iskendarian

We are going into Spring with a full plate of projects and programs. So much to look forward to and the staff has been eagerly planning and preparing all winter for the new year's maintenance and stewardship objectives. We are finally able to get out there and start working towards achieving these goals.

Glacial Erratic and Nature's Way Trail

Many of you know that Nature's Way Trail has been our roughest trail in the Preserve. While we are not looking to completely tame the trail (i.e. turn it into a carriage road), plans are underway to resurface Nature's Way trail and install water bars to prevent the erosion, which has been a common problem. The trail will be leveled and covered with natural materials in keeping with the current feel of trail. We are refinishing the beautiful black walnut benches, which will be returned to their place at the base of the Erratic. And finally, we will be installing a new information panel to complete the project.

Brothers Path and Overlook Project

Starting this summer, you will see some exciting work taking place at the gateway to the Preserve. Through a generous grant obtained and matched by the Friends of the Rockefeller Preserve, the carriage road around Swan Lake, known as Brothers Path, will be completely rehabilitated, and transformed back into the bucolic, country path that it once was. At the same time Overlook Trail that looks out over the lake will get the same treatment. The carriage road surface material will be taken down to the base and built back up to the original design. Drainage and lake access will be improved and the whole feel of Preserve will change for the better.

Main Courtyard

This winter with its deep cold spells followed by sudden, but short-lived, unusual warming was a challenge to our flagstone in the courtyard. Basically, ice lifts the stones and then the sudden rise in temperature can result in cracking. Our maintenance crew has done a great job resetting the flagstone and everything should be in good shape in time for this year's Peony Celebration.

I Love My Park Day

Held the first Saturday in May, I Love My Park Day attracts thousands of volunteers from across the state to participate in cleanup, improvement, and beautification events at New York State parks and historic sites. This year, on Saturday May 7th, I Love My Park Day sponsored by the Friends of the Rockefeller Preserve and Riverkeeper volunteers will meet at

Rockwood Hall and help to spruce up the Lower Trail (along the river). (More at friendsrock.org)

Memorial Tree Honoring Dr. Richard Nelson

Dr. Nelson was well known here at the Preserve for nearly 30 years. With a PhD in Ornithology, and a true natural appreciation for the importance of "Coexistence", Dr. Nelson led the way in establishing programs and methodology (still used today) designed to maintain and promote natural bird environments in the Preserve. Through his dedication and leadership, we are proud of our designation by the Audubon Society as an Important Bird Area (IBA).

This year, we will be planting a memorial Sugar Maple in the courtyard in Dr. Nelson's memory. Fittingly, this new tree will be replacing one that died recently but which for many years had played an important role sheltering the fern garden. Just as Dr. Nelson taught, balance must carry on. This new tree will restore the balance and provide the fern garden again with its welcome shade in the hot summers. The tree is being donated by the Chappaqua Rotary. Planting service provided by Davey Tree Service.

Deer Exclosure

The Deer Exclosure is a 1-acre plot of land that was designated to study the effect of deer population on our land. The intent of the exclosure is to keep deer out and monitor the impact on native plants. The exclosure has been in need of repair for some time and this year, it got it. The expectation is that the native plants should revive in a measurable way. First, though, we need to clear the area of all the invasives and for this we will be calling on the expertise of Stone Barn's goats. So watch for this interesting project just off of Brothers' Path.

Events and Programming

The Preserve has established a solid series of educational programs and events. Our unique hikes, including monthly Full moon and Sunset Hikes are very popular as is our newly established Rockwood History Hike, led by volunteer docent David Tische. Unique additions to our Events and Education programming include Geology of the Preserve, Stargazing Program (together with the Rockland Astronomy Club) and, of course, our famous Monarch program.

Part of the Preserve's mission is to provide education programming that will help the public to understand what a Park Preserve is and what we are established to do. Mainly, this means, protecting the residents of the Preserve, including its animals, plants, insects, trees, rocks, etc. Everything that makes Rockefeller so unique and so special, must be protected. And that is what we do. Every day.

Conservation in Action: Protecting the Rich Diversity of Plants in the RSP

By Patricia Butter and Devyani Mishra

(This is Part II of a two-part series. Part I appeared in our Fall 2021 issue.)



Specimen of climbing false buckwheat collected in Rockefeller with a label describing where it was collected and an envelope of fruits.

Preserve is as diverse as it is ever-changing. Conservation of the plant species within the park requires similarly adaptive approaches. Rockefeller Stewardship implements a balance of science, education, and applied methods by working with partners and volunteers who bring a breadth of perspectives. Projects ranging from Department of Environmental Conservation monitoring of Beech Leaf Disease, sustainable grazing plans by Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture, and deer population studies by White Buffalo enable us to preserve existing ecosystems and ease transitions into new conditions. Rockefeller's new Flora Project, spearheaded by citizen scientists including 337 park visitors who have utilized the iNaturalist app to document 2,866 observations to date, illuminates the oft-overlooked but critical step of documenting observations in nature.

The Flora Project is a landmark undertaking with the goal of identifying, documenting, and describing every plant species in the Rockefeller State Park Preserve. This study provides us with precise data on the current plant communities in the Preserve, and helps us to identify priority species and communities for conservation; such as the endangered globe flat sedge or the threatened spring ephemeral wildflower community. The project started in 2017 when staff, Stone Barns, and citizen scientists began compiling a flora utilizing the iNaturalist platform and a spreadsheet. The list of every plant species observed in the Preserve has since grown to 580 different records. In 2021, volunteer botanists Patricia Butter and Devon Cummings and flora steward

In part I of this article, we shared some of the spectacular highlights of the biodiversity of plants growing within the Rockefeller State Park Preserve – from the towering state champion trees to the seven documented rare plant species growing within the Preserve. Our discussion will now turn to the work before us to document, protect and preserve this rich biological heritage.

The landscape of Rockefeller State Park

Devyani Mishra began collecting and pressing specimens of each plant on our list. With each specimen, data is recorded with information about its location, appearance, health, population size and the surrounding plant community. These specimens will be mounted and stored at the William and Lynda Steere Herbarium at the New York Botanical Garden in perpetuity, where they will form a time capsule for future conservationists and scientists to understand what Rockefeller's plant communities looked like at this critical turning point in environmental history.

Recent threats to plant diversity are cause for concern in the Preserve, as ever-increasing pressure from invasive species,

disease and severe weather have accelerated. Beech Leaf Disease was first detected in Ohio in 2012, and now threatens to kill hundreds of the infected American Beech trees in the Preserve within ten years. Each major weather event not only causes millions of dollars of damage to carriage roads, but also claims mature trees in the Preserve. The loss of these trees creates gaps in the canopy that are often rapidly occupied by fast growing invasive species. It is no secret that our environment is under threat, and Preserve visitors and supporters are not only keen observers of the effects of these threats, but agents of action. We who enjoy the Preserve are compelled to come to connect with nature, to learn, to work, to heal; humans from all walks of life come together to care for the Preserve. Just as we so badly need the Preserve in these difficult times, it also needs us now more than ever!



Photo: Devon Cummings

From left to right: Flora Steward Devyani Mishra and citizen scientists Patricia Butter and Devon Cummings collecting specimens in plant presses.



Specimen of common yellow wood-sorrel collected in the park, with a label in the lower left. This specimen will be submitted to the William and Lynda Steere Herbarium.

Marathon, *continued from page 1*

my casual runs in and around our beloved Sleepy Hollow, where we've lived for nearly a decade, got progressively longer and more frequent. Thanks to a babysitter, a forgiving Pacific time zone-centric job, and an understanding husband (a physician and administrator at Phelps Memorial who was on-site every day), my face-masked self and I started exploring every nook and cranny of the Preserve, mercifully accessible by foot from our neighborhood, and soaking in its serenity in a decidedly non-serene era. I learned the trails, recognized – and in my head, befriended – some wildlife and livestock, and challenged myself to go farther and farther.

Before each run in the Preserve, I'd mentally map out where I wanted to go based on mileage and mood. I became familiar with the bucolic Stone Barns paths. I discovered the stunning Ravens Rock. The pleasant Swan Lake became a second home. More than ever, I devoured the history and folklore of the area and paid my respects to sites like Hulda's hut, Spook Rock, and neighboring Sleepy Hollow Cemetery. I'd get emotionally deflated when trails were impassable with snow or sheets of ice. Every venture out was unique and I got to experience the seasons in huge tracts of natural woods with their bursts of leaf colors, babbling brooks, and shifting terrain that may be packed and dry one day, muddy and gnarled another.

It was during this running spree that I was tipped off to the inaugural Pocantico Hills Marathon. I immediately recalled my swearing-off of 26.2 miles after NYC. Especially in those hilly trails! I was, however, tempted and ultimately relented after a little friendly arm-twisting. To stay inspired and accountable in equal measure, I set up a runner nickname, Ichabod's Trails, and solicited donations for a few charities, including some local causes in Tarrytown and Sleepy Hollow.

I continued to do my usual runs and knew that, as of September, I needed to shift my running mindset to training

mode a few weeks out, tapering from 20ish miles as per a typical marathon program. That being said, I was not at all confident in the days leading up to that brisk but lovely and clear November morning: "It's one thing to leisurely jog around the Preserve but...this?! What did I sign up for?!"

The expertly organized race was a seamless experience from start to finish. Runners were kind and supportive of each other, and it was common to cheer for each other when passing on two-way paths. Pockets of volunteers, oases of comfort stations, my and others' friends and family – and the occasional hikers or dog-walkers who became unwitting but mostly game spectators – made challenging sections of the race, of which there were many, more tolerable and acted as a catalyst to push on.

As is typical when I run, I had AirPods in to listen to my GPS app. I also had a whole marathon music playlist ready for rough patches. But I was pleasantly surprised afterwards to realize I didn't even listen to one song the entire time. I was swept up in the beauty and nearly Zen-like effect of running in the Preserve, mental and physical obstacles and all. The course itself wound through the characteristically stunning pastures, woods, and hills, across historic bridges and carriage roads, offering reprieves of groomed flat trails amid punishing inclines. I tried to appreciate hearing my breath and the crunching of my feet on the trails. I inhaled the crisp fresh air permeating the Preserve and was familiar enough with the trails to know and look forward to ridges that rewarded runners with jaw-dropping views, times to throttle back and reserve energy or expend it at key points. Despite the majesty, I admit I will not soon forget the agony at certain points of quiet forest dotted with directional arrows. The last few miles in the Rockwood Hall area, with its envious expanse of Hudson River views, were a sight for sore eyes. Finishing was a delicious accomplishment in its own right.

To say the marathon was a 2021 highlight is an understatement, to be sure. It was something to look forward to, a sliver of normality just as we all collectively crawled out from our bubbles to celebrate and commune with one of the most beautiful places around. And a momentous chance to, against that scenic smorgasbord of a backdrop, do what we all love to do: run.

Needless to say, I'm already looking forward to the second Pocantico Hills Marathon later in 2022. See you on the trails!

**Reaching the Friends**

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

The Preserve Observer

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

Pocantico Hills Marathon and Half Marathon

Saturday, November 12, 2022

8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Rockwood Hall

1 Rockwood Road • Sleepy Hollow, NY, 10591



The Preserve Observer

Friends of the Rockefeller State Park Preserve
P.O. Box 8444
Sleepy Hollow, New York 10591
www.friendsrock.org

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HERE TO ENJOY...OURS TO PRESERVE

Arbor Day, April 29, 2022

This year, the Preserve's "Big Tree Trail" is being inducted into the Old Growth Forest Network, a national network dedicated to securing protections against deforestation. (<https://www.oldgrowthforest.net>).

Preserve Manager Peter Iskenderian said, "We are very excited by this award because it recognizes the role Rockefeller plays and has played for nearly 140 years in protecting the trees of this remarkable landscape. Through the foresight of John D. Rockefeller, Sr. and Jr., some of the trees on Big Tree Trail are nearly 200 years old. In fact, four trees in the Preserve have been recognized by the State as the tallest of their species in New York State. These include Black Oak, White Oak, Mockernut Hickory and Scarlet Oak. If you want to learn more, sign up for one of our monthly "Tree Identification Hikes" at rockefellerstateparkpreserve.org/events.

Steven C. Rockefeller, Jr., an avid photographer, artist and a significant supporter of the Preserve, is preparing a special collection of images and Rockefeller sayings to be given away at the event.

At this year's Arbor Day, a tree will be planted to replace a large red oak that fell during Hurricane Ida, by the stone bridge. Also a plaque will be placed at the start of the Big Tree Trail and we plan to add an information panel there as well. But then, the planting of native trees here and the caring for trees and other vegetation is what we do every day. So really, every day is Arbor Day in the Preserve!



Photo: Shayla Scott



Big Tree Trail



Photo: "Ranger Sue" Levenz

Steven C. Rockefeller, Jr.
with Preserve Manager Peter
Iskenderian at the Preserve
Visitor Center