Winter 1997

# FORGET-ME-NOT

## Myosotis Messenger

Edmund Niles Huyck Preserve
& Biological Research Station
P.O. Box 189, Rensselaerville, NY 12147

### Laura Stephenson Carter becomes President of the Huyck Preserve

Laura S. Carter, granddaughter of Katharine Huyck Elmore, became President of the Huyck Preserve during the June Annual Meeting of the Huyck Preserve membership. Laura replaces Mrs. Carol Ash-Friedman who had served for six years. The Board would like to thank Carol for her dedicated service and hard work in support of the Preserve.

Mrs. Carter has been active on the Preserve Board since the early eighties and has served on the Executive Committee as Treasurer, acting Secretary and Vice President. As a science writer, she has written for Natural History Magazine, written a children's book on recycling, edited and written other scientific educational materials, and served as editor of the Preserve's scientific newsletter. She currently works at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, New Hampshire. Mrs. Carter resides in Vermont and maintains a home in Rensselaerville. Laura and her husband, Geoff, have two teenage daughters, Sarah and Emily.

Laura has initiated a strategic planning exercise for the Preserve staff and Board members. The planning activities involve review of education, research, administration, fundraising and Preserve infrastructure development. We would like to welcome Laura as our new president and wish her good luck in her endeavors.

### Walk at Night in the Rain

*Richard L. Wyman*

Last fall when colleagues from Ohio State University were on the Preserve to gather soil samples as part of my USDA study of decomposition processes, we went for a nighttime hike in the rain into one of our beech forests. Being in the forest at night, even one you know well, can be a challenging experience. There were six of us but only three flashlights. The rain guaranteed that many unusual creatures would be out and about.

The canopy above reminds us of the ceiling in a green cathedral, there are no stars and when we shut off our lights it is black. Because we are all biologists, we are continually looking for living things. Tree trunks at night can be fascinating because they are used as roadways from the forest floor to the canopy. We first discover a giant slug making a meal of fungi and lichens about seven foot up on a foot wide beech tree. The slug is impervious to our presence. There are also large snails (1") moving about the tree trunks. At the base of a neighboring tree a red-backed salamander emerges from his underground hideaway. He pokes his head out and notices several human faces staring at him. He turned about and headed back underground.

Rob Parmelee (a worm specialist from OSU) notices that much of the forest floor is covered with small piles of sticks and partially decomposed leaves. He explains that these are earthworm middens, each about 5 to 8 inches in diameter and one to two inches high. These piles represent the remains of earthworm dinners, usually consisting of the petioles and veins of leaves. The worms forage by keeping their tail in their hole and stretching to pull leaves from the surrounding area to eat. When we remove one pile, there in the center is a pencil size hole in which the worm lives. Later we happen across an earthworm predator stalking around the forest floor. This was a large yellow spotted salamander who kept trudging along despite our feet and our lights. She appeared to have been having a successful hunt because her eight inch body was quite round.

By this time we had also found several red efts of the red-spotted newt walking around looking for dinner as well. Their bright orange warning coloration (they are poisonous) didn't seem to afford them much protection at night.

Along the path two people walking ahead without flashlights ask us to turn ours off. There along the edge is a pattern of phosphorescent lights forming a small city. Upon closer examination the city turns out to be fungal fruiting bodies busily decomposing an old hemlock stump. I don't know why they glow.

A little further along the path we spy more glowing lights but this time they are individual lights located in the short vegetation along the trail's edge. It takes a little doing but we finally catch one. They are juvenile lightening bugs. Juvenile lightening bugs (beetles really) are predators of other forest floor invertebrates. The rear underside of the abdomen glows a greenish blue - they don't flash as adults do. When their light is on they hold their abdomen up over their backs. All I can think of is that this might be a lure used to attract prey.

We decide that Jorge (a Spanish Post-doctoral student at OSU) wins the evening contest for best nighttime finder of life, he found the large snails, slug, and glowing fungi, even without a flashlight.

## Update from the Lab

*Kelly MacWatters*

Well, we survived the third and final "pick" of 1996, and are looking forward to snowshoes and winter research. A pick is the term we use to describe the systematic searching of leaf litter for forest floor invertebrates. It is an important event because it is how we quantify the effect of salamander predation on the invertebrate community. The salamander crew would like to thank everyone who helped us out during the pick, including Nancy Elliott who sat in at the picking table over the summer and fall, Barbara Barrett of Rensselaerville who was a great help, as well as a few SUNY Albany students (Kyle Kitchen, Jennifer Lukas, Nancy Meehan, and Linda Yoder), and of course the always dedicated Huyck Preserve staff (Tom, Rick, Marilyn, Ted, Laurie, Jennifer, and Carolyn). We are especially grateful to Conrad Vispo, who is at the Huyck Preserve working on IOBFS, and his wife Claudia and Travis Myhre, maintenance. They have all been a big help to the Salamander Project.

We have been very busy working on what we call the 'winter shutdown" activities. This involves a great deal of field work. We are currently working on 48 salamander houses which are divided into three beech forests. At the onset of every winter these houses must be searched, and the residents taken inside until spring. The houses are completely enclosed and escape proof. Salamanders survive the winter by moving down below the frost line of the soil, therefore we must remove them from the enclosures before the soil freezes.

Another part of our winter shutdown involves retrieving a percentage of samples previously placed in the forest and bringing them back to the lab to be analyzed. Basically this consists of a lot of leaves. At the same time we are putting more in the forests to be collected next year. This is how we can determine leaf litter decomposition rates, leaf moisture, and their relationship to the presence of salamanders. Many samples are sent to Ohio State University where they are analyzing soil and leaf samples to determine whether experimental treatments (salamanders, moisture, acidity) affect the cycling of nitrogen and carbon. Soil samples are also taken monthly to determine pH and moisture. $CO_2$ is measured in the enclosures monthly as well to determine the respiration rate from the soil. The construction on the lab addition has made our job a little more chaotic and we are anxiously awaiting its completion.

Otherwise things are relatively quiet. Most of the winter you'll find Laura Wyman and myself in the lab identifying invertebrates and making sense of all the data we've collected throughout the year. Have a great winter and we'll see you in the woods in the spring!

## The Lab Addition

We are pleased and excited to tell you that the construction of an addition to the Eldridge Research Center (our lab) is underway. During October the old lab building was moved about 30 feet so a new basement could be excavated and foundations poured. The foundation for both the old and new lab sections has been completed and the old building is back on the foundation. Thanks go to Schmidts Concrete and Pearson Excavations for getting us this far.

Next the new lab addition will be framed out, followed by much interior work. Hopefully everything will be ready for our spring and summer seasons.

We still need to raise funds to match the National Science Foundation grant. This year we need about $5,000.00 from our membership and previous researchers. If you can, won't you please send a donation to help pay for this important addition to the Huyck Preserve. Donors of $100.00 or more will have their names engraved on a plaque to recognize their help.



*Linda Witt Fries*

## COMENART Update

The COMENART Artist-in-Residency Program, which brought six natural history illustrators to the Preserve, has completed a very productive and successful first year. Participating artists Paula Bensadoun, Linda Witt Fries, Donna Mariano, Sandra Orris, Manibu Saito, and Andrea Sulzer spent two weeks at the Preserve practicing their skills in the field through direct observation. Each Artist gave a workshop or demonstration during their stay and donated an original piece of artwork for the Preserve's use. All of the work received, without exception, is beautiful and we hope to have it on display for the general public in the near future. We are now receiving applications for a second year with the program and are looking forward to welcoming more artists to the Preserve this summer.

The Preserve would like to thank Mr. and Mrs. George Dudley, Mr. William P. Carey, and Dr. Roswell Eldridge for opening their homes to the artists participating in this year's program.

## COMENART Artist holds Workshop for Animal Ecology Class

*Tom Alworth*

The Animal Ecology class at Greenville high school is now in its fifth successful year. The reasons for its success vary from the hands-on scientific investigation, to improving necessary study skills for college bound students. A less obvious reason for its success is the dynamic nature of the curriculum. Sandy Orris (who co-teaches the class) and I discover new and better ways to present material each year. Since we do not have to teach to a specific curriculum in preparation for a standardized exam, we have the flexibility to adapt the class to the needs of our students and unique resources at hand. For example, this was the first year the Huyck Preserve hosted the COMENART program. You may recall that this program, partially funded by the Albany/Schenectady League of Arts, invited six natural history artists to the Huyck Preserve affording them the opportunity to immerse themselves in both nature and their work. COMENART in turn provided us with a unique opportunity to expose our students to professional artists who, like scientists, study and interpret the natural world. Visiting artist Paula Bensadoun held a three hour workshop at the Preserve specifically designed for the students of Animal Ecology. Since Paula's background is in both art and zoology, she was adept at making clear the relationship between art and science and how they compliment each other in so many ways. She discussed the differences between textbook illustration designed specifically for educational use and illustration for scientific journals or medicine. She compared art and photography and pointed out some of the limitations of the camera under certain circumstances. Paula also stressed the importance of art in many science lab classes such as entomology where drawing is a tool to facilitate learning. All of the students expressed their appreciation for such a unique one on one interaction with a professional artist. The COMENART program and the Animal Ecology class together serve to illustrate the importance of interdisciplinary education and research as well as the uniqueness of the Huyck Preserve in its ability to support both.

## Groundhog Day Celebration

*Sunday, February 2*
*1:00 - 5:00 pm*

Set aside Sunday, February 2nd for the Huyck Preserve's annual Groundhog Day Celebration. This year, in addition to skating on Lincoln Pond, there will be a Snow Sculpture contest in the backyard of the Library Annex and indoors, in the Community Room , view **Backyard Birdwatching** while you warm up with a cup of hot chocolate. Both activities will begin at 1:00 pm and continue until around 3:00 pm. Then join us at 4:00 pm in the Community Room of the Library Annex for a slide show featuring the beauty of the Preserve. This is a must see - the slides, taken by Dr. Robert Parmelee of Ohio State University, are exquisite! It promises to be great fun for everyone. All are welcome. Refreshments will be available at both sites.

## Searching for Salamanders

Celebrate the coming of spring on the first rainy, 40 degree night by getting on your rain gear and coming out to help us look for mole salamanders. The animals will be making their annual journeys to temporary spring breeding pools to mate and lay eggs. It can be a thrilling sight, as you stand there in the rain, the cold, and the dark, to see these unique animals appearing at the edge of a road as they head toward the pools. The animals are particularly vulnerable to automobile traffic at this time and we'll help protect them by carrying them across the road.

Call the office at 797-3440 and we'll put you on the list to be called when the conditions are right! It could be any evening from late March to mid April. We'll call late afternoon and let you know where to meet. Bring a clean bucket and a flashlight.

## The "Best 24 Hour Large Mammal Sightings" Contest

*Richard L. Wyman*

Amongst the joys of living on the Huyck Preserve is the opportunity to see wildlife not generally observed elsewhere. This last fall in one 24 hour period I was fortunate to come across three mammals that won me the "best 24 hour large mammal sighting contest". (The contest was invented just after that 24 hour period.)

The first was a coyote that Marilyn and I saw along a road leading to the Preserve. Coyotes are fairly common around here but you hear them much more frequently than you see them.

The second was a large porcupine that was ambling across Pond Hill Road heading toward Ten Mile Creek. Porcupines move slowly and sort of wobble back and forth. They don't have many predators so speed is not usually a necessity.

Lastly, on George Robinson's Huyck Hike about eight of us were entering one of our beech forest study sites, when suddenly George stops. He quietly points ahead to the forest understory and says "bear". Sure enough there was a black bear about 20 yards ahead of us nosing around a rotting log. He must have sensed us because he stood up behind the log and gave us a look. Then with surprising speed he turned and dashed away from us through the woods.

The lab crew decided I had strong medicine that day. We would like to hear your stories of the best 24 hour large mammal sightings.

## IOBFS Update

*Conrad Vispo*

In 1989, after a meeting of the OBFS (the Organization of Biological Field Stations, a mainly US organization), the Huyck Preserve, in collaboration with several other US biological stations, undertook to form the International Organization of Biological Field Stations (IOBFS). The OBFS has served as a forum at which member stations can share solutions to common problems or formulate coordinated efforts. The idea was to extend this means of interaction to a global scale. Locating the many biological field stations that exist and gathering information about them is not a quick task. To date, almost 100 station descriptions have been received, not only from Europe, Canada and Australia but also from Latin America, Africa and Asia (although these areas are still under represented). The first newsletter of IOBFS was published in summer of 1995.

We have just completed a directory of IOBFS member stations and our present goal is a second edition of the newsletter. While certainly incomplete, the directory (and accompanying newsletter) will be broadly distributed, and we hope will serve to interest additional stations in the IOBFS. We will also be floating the idea of 'sister-stations' partnerships between stations in various parts of the world. This is modeled on the often-successful sister-cities program which has promoted the interaction between two geographic regions that may normally have relatively little contact. Finally, during the autumn, we will be exploring the possibility of future membership of the NASA space station in IOBFS. The space station could provide global environmental information of interest to Earth-bound field stations. Lack of response has, however, so far stymied our attempts to form I-GOBFS (the Inter-Galactic Organization of Biological Field Stations).

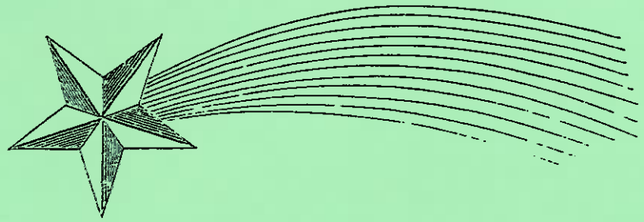
## View Comet Hale-Bopp

Friday, May 2, 8:00pm

*Raindate: Saturday, May 3*

So you missed Kohoutek...and Halley...and even Hyakutake! This spring another comet of historic proportions should come into view and, this time, provide a brilliant show. Keep your fingers crossed! Discovered on July 23, 1995 by Dr. Alan Hale of New Mexico and Thomas Bopp of Arizona, comet Hale-Bopp has characteristics of a giant. First seen at an unusually long distance, beyond the orbit of Jupiter, Hale-Bopp was already bright enough to be faintly visible in small amateur telescopes. This great comet will be at maximum visibility in the beginning of May. Join us at the Jessie Huyck Center.





## E.N. Huyck Preserve Upcoming Events

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| February 2 | **Groundhog Day Celebration with the Preserve**<br>*All are welcome!*<br>*Refreshments available* | 1:00 - 3:00<br><br><br><br>4:00 -5:00 | Ice skating on Lincoln Pond<br>Snow Sculpture Contest in Library Backyard<br>Backyard Birdwatching Video in Library Community Room<br>Preserve Slide Show in Library Community Room |
| March 22 | **Celebrate Spring: Readings on the History and Culture of the Spring Equinox** | | Library Annex |
| Late March-Mid April | **Searching for Salamanders** | Time and date to be determined | |
| April 12 | **Workshop on Salamander Identification and Natural History** | Time and place to be determined | |
| May 2 | **View Comet Hale-Bopp** | 8:00 pm | Jessie Huyck Center |

## Katharine Huyck Elmore

The Preserve was saddened by the death of Katharine Huyck Elmore, Chairman of our Board of Directors, who passed away this summer on July 15th, at the age of 92. A signer of the original charter establishing the Preserve in 1931, Katharine was a dedicated and active member of the Board for 65 years and a guiding force for much of that time. Because Katharine sat on the Board from the beginning, she was invaluable in making sure that the original intent and purpose of the Preserve was carried out. Her quiet, gentle nature, forward looking perspective and accumulated wisdom will surely be missed by many.

An endowment fund has been established in Katharine's name. Please consider donating to the E.N. Huyck Preserve in Katharine's memory. She was excited that the Preserve had accomplished so much in her lifetime, and that so many had the opportunity to share in its accomplishments. By donating you will not only celebrate the memory of a remarkable lady but you will also be helping the Preserve continue its important work preserving the land and wildlife, educating students of all ages, and investigating nature to help unlock mysteries that will help us to protect the planet.

*Katharine Huyck Elmore with Ray Zelin of Chemical Bank at the last Huyck Preserve Meeting she attended*

## 1997 Membership Form

Name_____

Address_____

_____

_____ New Membership

_____ Renewal

Membership Level (Circle One)

Student $10 Individual $30 Family $40

Senior Individual $20 Senior Family $30

Contributing $100 Sustaining $250 Patron $500 Benefactor $1000

Katharine Huyck Elmore Fund (Endowment Fund) $_____

Please make your tax deductible contribution payable to the EN Huyck Preserve and mail to PO Box 189, Rensselaerville, NY 12147. Thank You.




EN Huyck Preserve
PO Box 189
Rensselaerville, NY 12147