Summer 1999

Myosotis Messenger

FORGET-ME-NOT

Edmund Niles Huyck Preserve
& Biological Research Station
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Volume 23, Number 2

Upper Bridge on the Rensselaerville Falls

Some of you may already know that we have had to close the upper bridge on the Rensselaerville Falls. Three pillars of fieldstone support the bridge and the western most pillar has collapsed. The middle pillar also has a spilt and appears to be ready to collapse as well. This situation has prompted me to write to you about our trails and bridges and more generally about the maintenance of a 2000-acre preserve with a biological research station. I imagine that many of you have hiked our trails and crossed our bridges without much thought as to what we do each year to keep the trails and bridges useable. Now because of flooding and the age of the bridges we need to devote even greater resources to them.

The Huyck Preserve maintains about ten miles of trails for the use of its visitors and to allow access to research and educational areas. Until four years ago, there were eight bridges crossing the Ten-Mile Creek, the stream that runs down through the center of the preserve. Two of these were at the falls, four were around Lincoln Pond, and two others crossed the creek above Lake Myosotis. I have been told by long time residents that there were at least three other bridges that were gone when I came to the Preserve in 1986. Over the last four years we have had three major floods, during two of which the town road bridge on Pond Hill Road washed away. I say this to give you an idea of magnitude of these storm events. These floods washed away two of the Lincoln Pond bridges, one of the bridges above Lake Myosotis, and apparently damaged the upper bridge on the falls.

This week I met with representatives of the Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK), who are specialists in trail and bridge construction and maintenance, to look over our bridge and trails. They felt, generally speaking, our trails were in fairly good shape. There were a couple of spots around the falls and in wet areas elsewhere that needed some attention. However, the bridges were another story. Because we are a nature preserve and a research station, we have to take care not to damage the environment when we repair our bridges. This means that backhoes, bulldozers and the like can not always be used especially in remote areas. This can make repair of a bridge labor intensive and hence expensive. In addition at times the Ten-Mile Creek turns into Ten-Mile River and hence bridges must be substantial structures to withstand these flood events. This also makes them expensive. For instance the ADK specialists thought that the one bridge on Lincoln Pond that crosses Ten Mile Creek would cost around $5,000.

The ADK specialist also thought that the upper bridge on the Rensselaerville Falls posed significant problems even before the collapse of the stone pillar.

They felt that the bridge had been placed where it was to provide an overview of the falls, however that placement meant that hikers had to descend a steep muddy bank west of the bridge and this had resulted in significant erosion. Also the entryway leading from the east of the bridge allowed for hikers to venture down the face of the falls. We have discouraged active climbing on the falls because it is dangerous, because liability insurance to cover climbing would be very costly, and because there are rare plants and animals living and growing on the falls. The falls environment because it is cooler than surrounding areas is a microclimate representative of more northerly areas. Therefore the falls area represents a refuge for animals and plants adapted to be more northern climates. For one lichen species the falls is its southernmost location.

In any case, the ADK specialists thought that the bridge should be moved about 50 feet further upstream to reduce the above problems. They also appreciated the view provided by the present bridge and recommended that an overview platform could be safely constructed that would enhance the view, prevent bank erosion, and limit access to the top of the falls. They have not yet provided costs estimates but we know they will be several thousand dollars at the least.

Each year between 3000 and 4000 people hike the trails on the Huyck Preserve and this amount of foot traffic does create soil erosion that we must repair annually. In addition during winter many trees and limbs falls on or across the trails and these have to be removed. Also in many areas vegetation continually encroaches from trailsides and this has to be trimmed back throughout the growing season. This means that the Preserve has to hire maintenance personnel to keep up with the trails and bridges.

Volunteers are needed to help with trails on Saturday, June 5th.

See back page for details

Taken together, the aging and loss of bridges, the usage of trials and keeping up with Mother Nature is a costly operation. We need your support to help keep the trails and bridges vital and open to the public. Please consider a special donation at this time to the Huyck Preserve for the upkeep of its bridges and trails.

Richard L. Wyman, Ph.D., Exec. Director

The Edmund Niles Huyck Preserve and its Biological Research Station work to protect the natural beauty of the Rensselaerville Falls and surrounding lands, to conduct long-term research on natural systems as part of a global effort to understand and preserve the Earth's biodiversity, and to increase appreciation of this effort through innovative, field-based educational programs.

COM.EN.ART Returns to Huyck Preserve

The COM.EN.ART Natural History Artist-in-Residency Program is entering its fourth year at the Preserve with six artists again participating. The program allows artists to work closely with scientists at the biological field station as well as enrich their skills and talents by working in nature. Visiting artists will be leading community programs including workshops and demonstrations during their two-week stay with us that look at the natural world through an artist's eyes. We are delighted to welcome Katherine Shelbourne (July 7-21), Merri Nelson (July 9-23), Camille Doucet (July 23-August 6), Linda Beckwith McCloskey (August 2-16), Margy O'Brien (August 30-September 13), and Timothy C. Angell (October 11-25) to this years program. Look for posters and notices in the Rensselaerville Town Newsletter for community workshop dates and time.

Sites Along the Way

Barbara Bolster-Barrett

Anyone who has walked the trails between Lake Myosotis and Lincoln Pond is sure to have noticed structures of various shapes and sizes just off the path. Many hikers must wonder: What are these intriguing things used for? Which researchers use them? How do they work?

Most of the structures erected by Huyck Preserve researchers are simple in design, and do one task very well, such as collect specimens or measure data. Here is a run down on the most common structures day hikers are likely to see:

Pit-fall Traps are by far the largest structure just off trail. They are giant X's constructed of long strips of sheet metal, the last few inches of which are anchored in the ground. Scientists use these structures to collect amphibian specimens. Frogs or salamanders bump into the obstruction, cannot run or jump over this huge metal fence, and so follow the strip until they fall into collection cans buried at each end and at each center terminus. Researchers check each of the twelve collection cans daily for amphibians and other small animals. Any animals collected are counted and/or identified, then released.

Flying insect Traps work on a simple principle. These traps consist of a tent-like structure ending at the top with a glass Mason-type jar and a light source. Many flying insects are attracted to the light, fly into the jar, where they are captured. It goes against instinct to fly back into the dark space to escape.

Litter collectors are simply meter square wooden frames with mesh screen bottoms. They collect leaf litter and other falling debris as it accumulates on the forest floor. Obviously, some areas of the forest generate more "fall-out" than other areas, and this varies according to season, as well. Scientists measure the mass (weight) of this fallen debris at set intervals, get mean figures (averages), and can thus compare different spots within the forest.

In four separate forests of the Preserve, (mixed deciduous, beech, hemlock and red pine), **Continuous Forest Inventory** is taking place. Each site is ~~100~~ 625 meters square, and each tree 10cm in diameter or larger within that area is tagged with a small aluminum marker bearing an ID number. These look much like dog tags.

Every few years, researchers take a new diameter measurement at breast height (approximately 4' up) for each tree. In this manner, foresters can determine the growth rate for each individual tree, and a mean growth rate for each species within the study plot.

One plot (the mixed deciduous) is just off the section of trail between Lake Myosotis and Lincoln Pond. Another, (the hemlock plot), is just off the Lincoln Pond perimeter trail.

Wren nest boxes are a familiar sight around the Huyck Preserve. Some grace selected private property, as well. These small structures are erected in meadow or thicket habitats, (where there is both enough food and enough cover for their tiny denizens).

Inside these nest boxes, male wrens build impressive throne-like nests, using hundreds of twigs. Researchers are trying to find out whether there is a correlation between nest building activity and mate selection. Are the wrens who construct the biggest "thrones" the most desirable mates?

Birders may want to check out the Falls Interpretive trail and the Lake perimeter trail. Wrens generally return North in early May.

Colorful **marker flags** are sprinkled throughout the Huyck Preserve. These delineate **open study plots**. Different color flags denote different projects or different sites within a project.

Open plots are ideal for studying environmental factors, such as, air temperature, soil pH and precipitation levels. Many plots contain rain collectors and special thermometers that record minimum and maximum air temperatures for the elapsed time period. These abiotic, or non-living, factors help to give scientists an idea of subtle variations in climate between the different "homes."

Plots are often used as scientific controls. Animals are free to come and go, and no obstructions exist to keep rain, leaf-litter, fallen debris or pollen out. Thus, scientists have an unadulterated area to collect base data, and compare with any experimental data.

In order to protect this vital research, (and for your own safety), hikers are reminded to stay on the trails. Structures along the trail remind the casual hiker of the E.N. Huyck Preserve's equally important Missions to foster research and education. If any of our ongoing research projects are of interest, more information can be obtained at the Huyck Preserve's Research Library, housed at the Eldridge Research Center.

Swimming Lessons and Nature Study

The Preserve will again be offering Red Cross affiliated swimming lessons at Lake Myosotis this year. Classes will meet Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from July 7 – August 13 and will be taught by Barbara Bolster Barrett.

Nature Study for grades K-2 will be meeting on Tuesdays from July 6 – August 10, grades 3-6 will meet on Thursdays (July 8 - August 12). Both classes will meet at the Jessie Huyck Center on Lake Myosotis from 10:00 AM to noon. Registration will be held on the first day of class. Students may be pre-registered by contacting the Preserve Office (797-3440). Both programs are offered free to family level members.

1999 Annual Meeting to Feature Michael Gaylo and His Birds of Prey

Our 1999 Annual Membership Meeting will be held at the Eldridge Research Center on Pond Hill Road on Saturday, June 19th at 4:30 PM. This year preceding our formal business meeting, Michael Gaylo, biologist and director of Hawks, Owls and Wildlife will present a program on live birds of prey native to northeastern states. A wide range of topics will be covered including ecology, the difference between hawks and owls, historical relationships between hawks and man, and conservation.

During the annual business meeting, members will have the chance to vote for this year class of directors for our Board. Following the Annual Meeting we will have a reception with wine and cheese available. This would be a good year to bring along a friend to our annual meeting so that they may have the opportunity to learn about the Huyck Preserve and perhaps become a member too.

The E.N. Huyck Preserve
presents

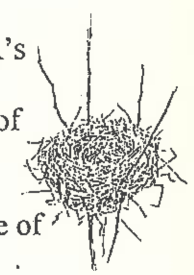
On the Wing!

Come celebrate birds and birding

May 23, 1999
12:00 – 5:00 PM*

Eldridge Lab, Pond Hill Road, Rensselaerville, NY

***7:00 AM Bird Walk with Ted Watt**
Palmer House Cafe is featuring an Early Bird Brunch
RSVP 797-3449



Featuring:
- Bird banding demonstration by Rich Guthrie, host of NPR's *Catbird Seat*
- Book signing by local wildlife artist Jim Coe – Illustrator of *Eastern US Bird Identification Book* (Golden Press)
  Mill Cottage will be showing his work
- Binocular adjustments & demonstration on the proper care of binoculars with Dan Rubino of *Mirakel Optical*

Displays from:
Project Feeder Watch * Partners in Flight * Regional Audubon Societies
Schoharie County Blue Bird Society * Art Shows * 4-H Program

Activities for all ages:
Birding Identification Sessions * Presentations about Birds
Birdhouse Building * Craft Projects * Storytelling
Food Available

RAFFLE: $25 Gift Certificate donated by *Hilltown Agway* for Educational Activities

For information call 797-3440

Science Symposium to be held in mid-July

The Preserve will be holding its Annual Science Symposium on Saturday July 17th from 10:30 – 2:00 PM at the Eldridge Research Center on Lincoln Pond, Pond Hill Road. Huyck Grant recipients and other researchers will be speaking on topics including ants, fireflies, sunfish, house wrens, beech trees, and the detritus food web.

1999 Huyck Grant Recipients

Gregory Bole (SUNY - Stony Brook): Speciation and sexual selection in fireflies

Dr. John Confer (Ithaca College): Shrubland birds of the Blenheim-Gilboa right-of-way: Density, nesting success, and impact on adjacent birds of the forest

Jennifer Frank (University at Albany): Effects of earthworms and predators on the structure and function of the detrital community in northeastern mixed deciduous forests

Drs. Susanne Foitzik and **Christopher DeHeer** (Colorado State University): Co-evolutionaryu armsrace between a socially parasitic ant and its host

Geoffrey Gardner (University at Albany): Beech scale (*Cryptococcus fagisuga*) dynamics in an aftermath forest

John Maerz (Binghamton University): Variation in salamander foraging patterns and potential consequences for forest invertebrate communities

Oscar Rios-Cardenas (SUNY – Buffalo): Patterns of paternal effort and paternity in the pumpkinseed sunfish (*Lepomis gibbosus*)

Dr. George Robinson (University at Albany): Forest succession and landscape change in the Huyck Preserve

Isabella Scheiber (University at Albany): Mate choice in the house wren (*Troglodytes aedon*), a monomorphic passerine

Geologist to Lead Hike at the Preserve

Dr. Robert Titus, a geologist on the faculty of Hartwick College, will lead a hike on the geology of the Huyck Preserve on August 28 from 1:00 to 3:00 PM. Dr. Titus is a well-known author of newspaper articles and books on Catskill geology. Meet at the Eldridge Lab for a look at the Pleistocene.

Environmental Camp: An Awareness of Nature

August 16-20, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM	*Members*	$110.00
Grades 6-8	*Non-members*	$135.00

This weeklong experience for middle school youth will explore different ways we learn about nature. Topics include seeing nature through photography, nature and writing, exploring using science eyes, and much more. Guest speakers will contribute their expertise. Materials are included.

Internationally Famous Puppeteer to Perform at Preserve

Bernd Ogrodnik, Alchemilla Puppetworks Solo Puppeteer of international fame, will offer a free, open to the public performance at the E.N. Huyck Preserve Friday, July 9 at 4:00 PM.

This special event is sponsored by the Town of Rensselaerville Library and its 1999 Summer Reading Program – "Celebrate! Read!" Ogrodnik's stage performance will take place at the Eldridge Research Center by Lincoln Pond, Pond Hill Road, Rensselaerville. Everyone in the town is invited to this free event.

Ogrodnik performs an enchanting series of short stories that gently and humorously celebrate life, nature, wildlife, butterflies, folklore and humanity. His cast consists of intricate marionettes and unforgettable characters brought to life simply by hands, wooden spheres and silk scarves.

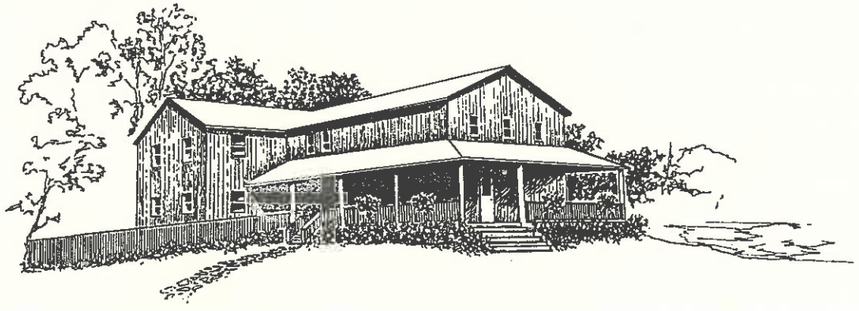
This mesmerizing program has been presented at national and international festivals in theatres and schools from New York City to San Diego to Hawaii, Canada and Europe.

Mark your calendars today and be sure to join us for this very special performance, which is made possible through a grant from the Community Arts Connection of the Albany Schenectady League of Arts and the Upper Hudson Library System.

1999 Huyck Hike
& Summer/Autumn Activities Schedule

Huyck Hikes* meet at Lincoln Pond at 2:00 PM

	May	
23	On the Wing: Bird Festival	7:00 AM Bird Walk with Ted Watt 12:00-5:00 PM Activities at Eldridge Lab
	*Isabella Scheiber	Mate choice in the house wren
30	*John Confer	Shrubland birds: density, nesting success, & impact on adjacent birds of the forest
	June	
5	Trail Day	Meet at 10:00 AM at the Mill House Lunch at 1:00 PM
6	*Gregory Bole	Sexual selection in Fireflies
19	Annual Membership Meeting	3:00 PM Raptor Presentation 4:00 Meeting at Eldridge Lab 5:00 Wine & Cheese Reception
20	Lake Myosotis opens	
	*Susanne Foitzik & Christopher DeHeer	Co-evolutionary arms race between a socially parasitic ant and its host
27	*George Robinson	Forest succession and landscape change
	July	
4	*Jennifer Frank	Effects of earthworms and predators on the structure and function of the detrital community in mixed deciduous forests
9	Bernd Ogrodnik, Puppet Show	4:00 PM at Eldridge Research Center
10	*Oscar Rios-Cardenas	Patterns of paternal effort and paternity in the pumpkinseed sunfish
17	Science Symposium	10:30 AM – 2:00 PM, Eldridge Lab
	August	
1	*Geoffrey Gardner	Beech scale dynamics in an aftermath forest
8	*John Maerz	Variation in salamander foraging patterns and potential consequences for forest invertebrate communities
28	Bob Titus, Geologist	1:00-3:00 PM
	September	
4	**Benefit Dance Concert**	**Save the date!**
6	Lake Myosotis closes	



Benefits of Membership

- ✓ *A reduced rate on nature study programs during the summer*
- ✓ *Free swimming lessons*
- ✓ *Helping to insure that the trails to the falls and around Lake Myosotis are open and properly maintained*
- ✓ *Helping support scientific research on the natural world: ecosystems, biodiversity, the carbon cycle and global warming, natural habitats*
- ✓ *Helping to support an array of educational programs on natural systems for students from grade school through adults*
- ✓ *Helping to support the interface between art and science*
- ✓ *Helping to provide volunteer opportunities for educational and scientific work, and to introduce young people to scientific research*
- ✓ *Helping to protect the Rensselaerville water supply, its watershed, and the hamlet of Rensselaerville*

The Huyck Preserve would like to take this opportunity to thank our membership for their very generous support in 1999!

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Yes I (We) would like to support the Edmund Niles Huyck Preserve and Biological Research Station by becoming a member. My (Our) gift of $_____ is a: *(Please check the appropriate box.)*

- ☐ One time gift paid in full with this payment.
- ☐ Quarterly pledge. My (our) first payment is enclosed.
- ☐ Gift of appreciated stock, real estate or other assets. Please contact me directly for details of transfer.
- ☐ I am interested in discussing a bequest to the Edmund Niles Huyck Preserve and Biological Research Station.
- ☐ My company sponsors a Matching Gifts Program.

Membership Levels	
Student	*$ 10.*
Individual	*$ 30.*
Family	*$ 40.*
Contributing	*$ 100.*
Sustaining	*$ 250.*
Patron	*$ 500.*
Benefactor	*$1000.*

Every gift counts, every gift is appreciated.

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This gift is given in honor of/in memory of_____
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All gifts to the Edmund Niles Huyck Preserve and Biological Research Station are fully tax deductible according to the laws governing 501(c)3 charitable organizations in New York State. As a donor, you will be acknowledged in our next newsletter FORGET-ME-NOT and receive a donor receipt sent directly to you for tax purposes.

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

Revitalizing a Rensselaerville Tradition for National Trail Day on June 5

June 5th is National Trails Day and the Preserve will be participating. Perhaps we will be able to construct a temporary crossing to replace the bridge until a well-planned permanent replacement can be constructed. Volunteers are needed to help with trails on the 5th. If you would like to help clean up trails or do some bridge work, just show up at the Mill House in Rensselaerville at 10:00 AM on Saturday morning. There, group leaders will instruct volunteers to project sights and get them started on their task. Volunteers are asked to wear proper clothing for working outdoors. (Boots, raingear and bug spray should all be considered.) Those who wish to do trail clearing are asked to bring a pair of clippers and gloves. People who wish to construct a bog bridge should bring a hammer and be ready to get a little muddy. We plan to work until 1:00 PM when we will provide hotdogs and soda to the volunteers.