



Support for Children's Environmental Education

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The mission of the Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park is to conserve ecological systems and natural settings, while providing opportunities for environmental education and recreational experiences.

The Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park's partners include The Nature Conservancy, Town of Wilton, Saratoga County, and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Visit the website for a full-color newsletter.

Individuals, businesses, foundations, and local government showed their support for the Preserve & Park's children's environmental education programming in 2009.

The Dorr Foundation, the Charles R. Wood Foundation, Stewart's Shops, and Wal-Mart awarded grants to continue the programming that has a positive and growing reputation across the region.

Numerous individuals and businesses contributed items to the 2009 Open House Silent Auction, which raised money for the program. They include: Ray O'Connor, Peg McCarty, Lynn Sickles, John Kribs, Eastern Mountain Sports, Wild Birds Unlimited, Six Flags Friends, Lake George Steamboat Company, Longfellow's, Olde Bryan Inn, the Albany River Rats, Saratoga Restaurant Equipment Sales, and the Saratoga Soaring Association.

The Town of Wilton, which has contributed to the effort for many years, continued its support.

In 2009, an estimated 1,400 children will benefit from this programming. Through engaging and hands-on indoor and outdoor programs, overseen by the Education and Conservation Intern (*see story on page 2*) and largely led by trained community volunteers, area children learn about the local environment, at-risk species and habitats, and effect positive change. The programs encourage the use of reasoning, math, art, writing and verbal skills, and connect children with local natural areas where they hike, experience nature, and participate in habitat restoration projects designed to recover the federally endangered Karner blue butterfly and a suite of imperiled species.



The WWPP raises money at its Open House in September.

It is the Preserve & Park's belief that exposing children to the beauty, value and importance of the ecologically significant places beyond their backdoors will give rise to well-rounded adults, caring citizens, environmental stewards, and physically active outdoor enthusiasts.

If you want to support children's environmental education programming, send a check, made out to the Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park, and write "Children's Env Ed" on the memo line. You can also make a donation by calling with credit card information.

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Our Wish List

Like every organization, the Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park has its wish list, items or services we'd love to have donated. Are you a genie looking to grant a wish? Here's what's on our list:

- LCD projector
- Digital recorder
- Gift cards for Staples, Home Depot, Target, A.C. Moore, Dick's, Border's, Barnes & Noble, Amazon
- Trail maintenance equipment (good quality hand saws, loppers, rakes, mattocks, fire rakes)
- Good computer (PC or laptop)
- Printing services
- Sponsors for programs and events



From the Executive Director

One of the greatest delights associated with this job is time outdoors with young children. While I don't spend as much time teaching as I once did, I get out there on occasion. Each such experience lightens my spirit and fills me with hope for the future.

The children's uninhibited joy of being outdoors, their exultation over every discovery, their limitless curiosity, and the unhinging at their physical freedom invigorate and rejuvenate me. I'm reminded of the years when I would fly out the back door, swoop down the back steps, and cruise to my destination, landing in the back yard, nearby woods, or friend's yard, with a speed, strength, and carefree nature that now fills me with wonder. Along the route, I took note of and interest in the smallest details – the location of the prickly sweetgum balls, bird nests, and ant hills.

Time with children reunites me with these practices, practices I can and should implement more often. Time outdoors is valuable for everyone and healthy on many levels. Get out there and be joyful, exult, exercise your curiosity, and unHINGE! You won't regret it. *Sarah A. Clarkin*

From Our Education & Conservation Intern

When I first came across the opening for the Education & Conservation Internship, I leapt for my phone, bolted outside of the library, and scrambled to contact the Student Conservation Association. It was exactly where I wanted to be and what I wanted to do. Luckily, I was selected and launched myself from Knoxville, Tennessee to Pennsylvania and continued the momentum until I reached Wilton. All of this took place in a two week time period. The pace has not yet slowed.

Within the second week of my stay, I was presenting the Ballard Road fourth grade lesson at the Preserve. Learning and executing tasks quickly are just two small components of my position here. I also take part in all of the environmental education programs as well as train and work beside our amazing volunteers. Plus I design and lead public programs, which have and will continue to include games, goofy tasks, and as many incredible animal specialties that I can fit in an hour and a half. In the spring, I will get to partake in the conservation portion: habitat restoration, writing an educational public pamphlet on early successional habitat, and writing a play to portray the uniqueness of the habitat. Whew, it sounds like a lot when everything is written! Fortunately, each challenging portion is a gigantic amount of fun and a blessing to enjoy.



Amelia tends to the blue lupine seeds.

On to the background portion, surprisingly my degree is not in environmental education, it's actually, ta da, studio art. During my chaotic college years at Bloomsburg University, I photographed, created sculptures, and wrote about environmental issues. It was the subject of nearly everything I produced so I opted to leap the fence and start out with internships in the field. That decision has led me to beautiful locations such as California and Tennessee, allowed me to meet awesome individuals (they're everywhere!), and given me broad experiences in the field. Camp counseling, gardening, reducing solid waste in public schools, educating, you name it. They have all been wonderful in their own way.

Amelia Romaine Gelnett

Elementary School Outreach Program

Set aside the typical classroom lessons! It's time to tune into the natural world! Each year, elementary school students at both Ballard Road and Dorothy Nolan elementary schools enjoy a dual visit with the Preserve & Park staff and volunteers.

One part takes place in the schools' classrooms. The second segment of the science saturated programs gets students outdoors at the Preserve & Park. By engaging the students in multiple meetings during the year and over the years, we hope to create and/or strengthen a relationship with the surrounding environment. Through familiarizing youth with outdoor systems and species, we hope to plant roots of respect and connection to local lands.

First through third grade students from Dorothy Nolan and first through fourth grade students from Ballard Road take part in action-filled 90-minute programs that tap into their right and left brains.

First graders are taught the Karner blue butterfly's lifecycle in their classrooms during the winter months. They learn that life is a continually changing process with beautiful and varying results. When visiting the Preserve & Park, they may witness a stage of the butterfly's metamorphosis thereby reinforcing their knowledge of the butterfly and the amazing transformations that take place in this world!

A first hand experience with stages of development persists into second grade as the students grow blue lupine, the host plant for the Karner blue butterfly. The responsibility of caring for a plant and observing its many forms is capitalized by transplanting them in a habitat restoration area at the Preserve & Park.

In third grade, knowledge of connectivity broadens when students learn plant parts and functions and how native plants factor into species' survival. They witness growth and development by planting a variety of seeds. The children's blossoming mathematical skills are utilized by collecting data and comparing the plants' growth rates.

The fourth graders meet a local forest ranger, learn about the role of fire in some ecosystems and local species' adaptations to fire. They also step into the shoes of historical characters.

The cooperation between the schools and the Preserve & Park would not be sustainable without the wonderful and dedicated volunteers. Each lesson requires multiple leaders and our motivated volunteers lunge at the opportunity to educate youth! They are also experienced at the best methods to set up a room, portray a story, and other comforting tid bits! Their committed and giving attitudes are quintessential to the mission of our program.

Education Report

Learning is a life-long adventure. In its desire to fuel the adventure, the Preserve & Park offers educational programs for a variety of ages and interests.

Thirty-six programs were presented in 2009. Here is a sampling: an outdoor walk focused on plant and animal survival in winter, a discussion on global climate change, a bird walk, an interpretive hike about natural succession, and a wetland wander. Most of the programs were free.

The Preserve & Park sometimes partners with area businesses, organizations and clubs to host a program. Recent collaborations have been with Eastern Mountain Sports, Wild Birds Unlimited, and the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society.

To learn about upcoming education programs, check this newsletter's back page, visit the website, and sign up for e-mails.



Kawing Crow's Vince Walsh encourages the use of all the senses when tracking. The Southern Adirondack Audubon Society arranged for this program to take place at the Preserve & Park.

Saratoga Stryders Donate Proceeds to Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park

Every year for the past eight years, the Saratoga Stryders have held 5k fun runs and an 8k snowshoe race at the Preserve & Park's Camp Saratoga. Open to all, these recreation events are rooted in friendly fun, as competitive as each participant makes them. Whether racing to break a record or jogging to calm the mind, the Stryders welcome all who try.

The summer runs, held every other Monday for a total of five events, attract those who stare adversity in the face and laugh. Whether it's the heat, humidity, mosquitoes, black flies, hills, puddles, or any

combination of the above, the course is deceptively challenging. At the finish, watermelon and quirky raffle prizes enhance the runs' strong sense of community. In 2009, the number of runners at each race ranged from 62 to 78.

The snowshoe race is a qualifier for the United States National Snowshoe Championship and pulls in people from across the northeast. At the finish, participants share their stories of victory and defeat while eating bowls of winning chili. The 2009 race boasted 108 runners

Donors

Thank you to all who made financial contributions to the Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park in 2009. The following list identifies those who have granted permission for their names to be printed. We apologize for any errors and ask that they be brought to our attention.

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Anonymous (23) | M. Goldfeder & J. Caiello | Richard & Andrea Pollock |
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Membership & Gift Form

The Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park is a non-profit membership organization conserving ecological systems and natural settings while providing opportunities for environmental education and recreational experiences.

Contact Information

Name _____ Phone Number: _____

Mailing Address: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Contribution Levels and Details

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1,000 Other \$ _____

My gift is via: Check Visa Mastercard Discover Card

Name on Card _____ Account Number _____

Security Code _____ Expiration Date _____ Signature _____

Street Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Please make checks payable to the Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park.
The mailing address is 80 Scout Road, Gansevoort, NY 12831.
Your employer's matching gift doubles your contribution.

In order to acknowledge our supporters, we may publish the names of contributors.
 Please check the box to the left if you do not want to be listed.

Expressions of Appreciation

All donors receive a WWPP static sticker and the WWPP annual newsletter.

| | |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| \$25-\$99 | 8x10 color photo of the Karner blue butterfly and 50% off on WWPP snowshoe rentals and program registration fees |
| \$100-\$499 | WWPP t-shirt. Specify size _____ and 50% off on WWPP snowshoe rentals and program registration fees |
| \$500-\$999 | Free use of WWPP snowshoes and exempt from all program registration fees |
| \$1,000 or more | Private tour of occupied Karner blue butterfly habitat |

A copy of the organization's latest annual report may be obtained, upon request, from the Office of the Attorney General, Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, New York 10271 or the Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park.

Shannon Rose Awards Passion Project to WWPP

Shannon Rose Design of Saratoga Springs awarded the Preserve & Park one of its Passion Project awards. The firm is working pro bono with the Preserve & Park to create a new and improved website that will offer a new look, up-to-date information, and interactive opportunities. The new website will launch this spring.

Program Catalog of Children's/ Youth Programs Available

Given the success of our children's and youth environmental education programs, we are broadening our curriculum and availability to reach more clubs and groups. We've prepared a catalog of program offerings that lists available lessons and provides basic but important information about each one. If you are interested in receiving a catalog via e-mail or U.S. mail, please contact Amelia at 518-450-0321 extension 92.

Through this effort we aim to enhance awareness of this area's unique habitat and diverse species.

State Undertakes Planning Effort

The Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park (WWPP) is comprised of approximately 2,300 acres of protected land owned by New York State, Saratoga County, the Town of Wilton, and The Nature Conservancy.

The State lands are under the control and management of the New York State Department of (cont'd on next page)

The Big Events

Each year, the Preserve & Park holds two family-friendly free events designed to introduce and better acquaint people with the many attractions and opportunities available at the Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park, and to share information about the non-profit organization.

The 2009 Moonlight Ski & Snowshoe was one for the record books. Aided by high temperatures and great conditions, the event drew an estimated **500 people!** The line to rent snowshoes was more than forty strong long before the 7pm start time. Once the event began, parking areas filled quickly. Luminaries lit three miles of trails; and, two woodland bonfires and hot chocolate warmed the merry crowd. The event's success is due to the many volunteers who groom the trails, make and distribute the luminaries, direct parking, monitor trails, rent snowshoes, tend the fires, and serve hot chocolate. Thanks to the sponsors, Allerdice and Dunkin' Donuts.

Gray skies and occasional rain did not deter the approximately 300 people who attended the 2009 Annual Open House at the Preserve & Park's Camp Saratoga. Thanks to Ballston Spa National Bank's sponsorship, the always-popular Beth Bidwell from the Wildlife Institute of Eastern New York shared her enthusiasm for and knowledge of the local environment while talking about and showing a peregrine falcon, red-tailed hawk, barred owl, kestrel, black rat snake, and snapping turtle to attentive crowds. Kathy O'Brien, a wildlife biologist with the Department of Environmental Conservation, braved the rain and explored pond life with dozens of tireless children whose nets raised mysterious creatures of the deep. Preserve & Park volunteers led adventurous youngsters on hour-long woodland hikes highlighting sensory observation. Still other volunteers did wildlife crafts with children, making t-shirts and Karner blue butterfly magnets.

A wide variety of exhibitors representing area agencies, organizations, clubs, businesses and friends staffed informative information tables. Naturalist Kenneth Barnett talked with people about the eastern hognose snake, a local reptile with fascinating ways who plays an important role in the area's oak-pine savanna habitat. The intrepid Scout Troop 24 kept everyone happy with their barbecue, chips, and desserts.

This year's event also included a silent auction to raise money for WWPP's education and conservation intern position.



Clockwise from top left: Beth Bidwell talks about the barred owl; Kathy O'Brien shares her knowledge about pond life; Children exercise their creativity making wild-life t-shirts; A young naturalist holds an eastern hognose snake.

Conservation Report

Karner Blue Butterfly: The work is worth it. The number of Karner blue butterflies seems to be holding steady (if not increasing) with the Wilton/Northumberland area having the highest numbers in New York State! New population monitoring techniques, implemented in 2009, may provide more accurate population estimates than previous methods. If true, progress towards state and federal recovery goals will be more measurable.

Ecological Restoration and Management: Restoration of all-too-rare early successional habitat continued in 2009. This habitat supports the endangered Karner blue butterfly and a host of state-threatened and other imperiled species. Last year, 7.4 acres of land were planted and another 12 acres were prepared for planting.

The Nature Conservancy planted a newly thinned 7.4 acre site on the west side of Ruggles Road opposite the Preserve subdivision. Care was taken to maintain pitch pines and oaks, indicative of the desired oak-pine savanna habitat, and protect the small wetlands. The site was planted with Glacial lake Albany seed mix, which contains little bluestem, a native grass; blue lupine, the Karner blue butterfly's host plant; and a number of nectar species including butterfly milkweed, dotted horsemint, New Jersey tea, and round-headed bush clover.



The Old Gick Farm where trees were removed to make way blue lupine and other wildflowers

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation oversaw the preparation of 12 acres of land for restoration on the state-owned Old Gick Farm parcel off Route 50. White pine trees and stumps were removed to expose soils, and ultimately Glacial Lake Albany seed mix, to much-needed sun. Planting began in 2009 and will be completed in 2010.

Across the Preserve & Park and the greater Saratoga Sandplains, 30 acres of existing habitat was maintained via mowing and selective spot treatments. Without management, woody vegetation like white pines and aspens will encroach and shade out the plants on which the Karner blue and other wildlife species depend.

All of the seed planted as part of the habitat restoration efforts is collected by staff and volunteers. In the summer, they collected 26 pounds of lupine seed. With between $\frac{3}{4}$ pound and one pound of lupine seed needed for every new acre restored, and additional seed needed to supplement lupine in existing areas, this seed is worth its weight in gold! Thanks to volunteers, especially Peg McCanty and Cathy Hall, the record for butterfly weed seed was broken. The beautiful orange butterfly weed flower provides high quality nectar to many winged insects.

Blanding's Turtle Monitoring. The multi-faceted benefits of the habitat restoration work were made evident again in 2009 when the state-threatened Blanding's turtle was recorded nesting in restored habitat. The turtle seeks exposed sandy soils for digging its nest; these areas offer the perfect environment.

Graduate student Andrea Chaloux reached out to the Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park for assistance monitoring one Blanding's turtle nest late last summer. Leadership Volunteers Dale Cocca, Cyndi Lehan, Dana McClure, and Wendy Whittemore visited the nest regularly hoping to be the first to catch site of the hatchlings. Finally, in mid-September, the seven newborns appeared! After being measured and weighed, they were released into a nearby wetland.

State Planning Effort (cont'd.)

Environmental Conservation (DEC) and total 570 acres. These lands comprise the Saratoga Sand Plains Wildlife Management Area (WMA). According to DEC's website, WMA "... lands have been acquired primarily for the production and use of wildlife...."

For each of its land areas, DEC must prepare a Unit Management Plan (UMP). A UMP inventories and analyzes the area's physical and natural resources, determines their ability to accommodate public uses, and identifies goals and objectives for their future management and use.

DEC held a public input meeting in Wilton on February 10, 2010. At the meeting, DEC staff and others explained the UMP planning process and provided an overview of the WWPP.

Documents pertaining to the WMA and UMP are available at the DEC Warrensburg Office at 232 Golf Course Road or the WWPP Office.

In a January 8, 2010 press release about the WMA, DEC Region 5 Director Betsy Lowe said, "... a comprehensive plan will ensure that we protect the unique habitat and wildlife found in the sand plains while providing a variety of recreational opportunities for the public.... DEC encourages and appreciates the involvement of the public...."

If you have input, please contact Wildlife Biologist Melissa Neely by mail at NYSDEC, PO Box 220, Warrensburg, New York 12885; by phone at 518-623-1240; by fax at 518-623-3603; or by the preferred method, e-mail, at r5info@gw.dec.state.ny.us

Upcoming Programs

Volunteering at the Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park; Monday, March 15; Saratoga Springs Public Library – Susman Room; 2pm-3pm or 7pm-8pm; Free. Do you like the natural world and want to help conserve it through hands-on outdoor work or teaching tomorrow's decision makers? Volunteering at the Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park may be your ticket to fulfillment. This 30-45 minute presentation will provide an overview of the Preserve & Park and ways volunteers make a difference. No prior experience is necessary. There will be time for questions.

Make the Most Out of Your Garbage ... Compost!; Saturday, March 20; WWPP Office, 80 Scout Road, Wilton; 1pm-2:30pm; Free. Tired of taking out the trash? Learn how to reduce your waste stream through composting. We'll cover the many ways to compost and find the perfect method for you! Become familiar with creatures that devour waste; then, explore a trail to see nature's compost.

National Environmental Education Week Program Series for Children – Be Water and Energy Wise; Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, April 6, 7, and 8; 1pm-3pm; \$2.00/child/program. Water and energy are topics of every day discussion and their importance will only increase in coming years. Geared to children aged 8 through 12, these programs will discuss the importance of reusing and recycling resources and the many benefits associated with these practices. Sign up for one, two, or all three! *Class sizes are limited! Pre-registration required, call 518-450-0321 ext. 92*

Snowshoe Rentals. Children's and adults' snowshoes are available for rent. They can be rented for half day use at a cost of \$4 or full day use at a cost of \$10. A \$25 WWPP membership entitles the member and one other person to a 50% discount, good for the rest of the season. A \$500 WWPP membership entitles the member and one other person to free rentals, good for the rest of the season. WWPP volunteers will be in the building adjacent to the Camp Saratoga parking lot on the following days and times.

Saturday, March 6, from 9:30am to 4pm
Saturday, March 13 from 9:30am to 4pm

Sunday, March 7, from 12noon to 4pm
Sunday, March 14, from 12noon to 4pm

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