



Image of a bobcat captured on a Preserve trail camera.

Bobcats!

By Ron Vogl

Bobcats have been confirmed in the preserve.

To wildlife aficionados, this will likely come as no surprise; experts have long believed them to be present in Westchester County, and the rocky, wooded ridges that run through the preserve make for great bobcat habitat. However, until Natural Resource Specialist Josh DiPaola joined the preserve staff in 2020, officials had heard occasional stories about bobcat sightings but had no further confirmation of the feline's presence. Likely this is due to the bobcat's elusive nature; they are borderline crepuscular, meaning they are mostly active at dawn and dusk (thanks to Josh for zoology

continued on page 2

The Power of the Preserve

By Susan Todd, a producer at Archipelago Films/Arise Media

Nature has been a driver of spirituality since the dawn of humanity. "There is nothing better for the human soul than to recognize that there is something bigger and mightier than us," says writer and theologian Dr. Belden Lane. But while people have long intuited that nature is good for us, only recently have scientists begun to demonstrate its health benefits empirically.

A landmark study showed that patients recovering from gallbladder surgery required less pain medication and were discharged earlier if their hospital room had a view of trees, compared to those whose rooms faced a brick wall. An examination of socio-economic data, health records, and tree cover in Toronto found that having 10 more trees on a city block improved health outcomes in residents comparable to a \$10,000 increase in annual salary, or an increase in lifespan of seven years. A review of prescription drug data in Scotland revealed that pharma-

continued on page 3



Rockefeller Hall, circa 1890s

Photo: Archives

Garden Party Luncheon Unites Two Families

By Evelyn Hadad

The Friends of the Rockefeller State Park Preserve is hosting a Garden Party Luncheon on Saturday, June 24 that will bring together two sides of the Rockefeller Family - the William Rockefeller's and the John D. Rockefeller, Sr.'s - who were brothers. Because the history of both brothers is intertwined with Rockwood Hall, the luncheon is being co-chaired by Kim Elliman, the great-great-grandson of William Rockefeller and Lucy Rockefeller Waletzky, MD, the great-granddaughter of John D. Rockefeller, Sr. The funds raised from the luncheon will go toward the future of

continued on page 2

Image: Detail from Coming into Bloom by Anne Bell

Garden Party, *continued from page 1*

Rockwood Hall. George Gumina, Friends President, said, "The Friends look forward to working, in partnership with the state, to make improvements in this beloved section of the Rockefeller State Park Preserve. Everyone is welcome to join in this historic occasion, enjoy excellent food, fine cocktails, and stimulating conversation while gazing at the beautiful countryside and the mighty Hudson River. Your support for the Preserve is always appreciated."

Rockwood Hall was originally purchased by William Rockefeller in 1886 for \$150,000 from General Lloyd Aspinwall, a New York lawyer who served in the 22nd New York State Militia in the Civil War. Mr. Rockefeller enlarged the house and expanded the property from 200 acres to 1,000. An article from the Tarrytown Press: Record in 1902 stated, "Rockwood Hall is one of the most magnificent estates in the whole world. About 1000 acres along the Hudson have been transformed into a veritable paradise. The cliffs and vales of rugged land have been beautified by the skill of a landscape gardener. On the estate are several miles of modern roads upon which Mr. Rockefeller loves to drive and frequently takes a spin in his automobile. The grounds are beautifully adorned with shrubbery and choice plants, and visitors often drive through to feast upon its beauty." These are the same carriage roads that visitors walk upon every day at the Preserve and they can still savor the beauty of the landscape. William Rockefeller lived at Rockwood Hall until his death from pneumonia on June 24, 1922, at age 81.

The heirs of William Rockefeller ultimately sold Rockwood Hall to a group of investors that converted the property

into an exclusive country club with an 18-hole golf course, swimming pool and other recreational facilities. Their venture failed. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. gained control of the property in bankruptcy court and leased the mansion to the short-lived Washington Irving Country Club. After that, some summer theatre productions were held in the late 1930s, but these ceased after 1939. In late 1941, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. had no real use for the property and he

had the buildings razed. Today you see the stone foundation and the gate house at Rockwood Hall, overlooking the vast Hudson River, as the only reminders of the once great mansion that existed here.

On April 8, 1946, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. deeded the Rockwood Hall property to his son, Laurance S. Rockefeller. Lucy Rockefeller Waletzky is his daughter. Laurance first leased the property to New York State for a park and then gave the property in 1998.

He believed in the concept of preserving the family lands and sharing with the public. He also said, "I profoundly feel that the art of living is the art of giving. You're fulfilled in the moment of giving, of doing something beyond yourself."

The current project tentatively planned for Rockwood Hall would include a designated entry in keeping with the location's history, amenities for the public and landscaping that will have a positive environmental impact. Having the heirs to William Rockefeller and John D. Rockefeller, Sr. come together for this luncheon brings the history of Rockwood Hall full circle. If you would like to attend the luncheon, the details for tickets can be found at the Friends web site: www.friendsrock.org. We'd love to see you there!



Photo: Jessica Creedon

Spring blossoms at Rockwood Hall

Bobcats, *continued from page 1*

vocab lesson!), are sometimes nocturnal (active at night), and scrupulously avoid areas with human activity.

Part of DiPaola's job is to understand the preserve's animal ecology, so in the deepest days of the pandemic, while the park was hosting a surge of outdoor-seekers, he went about setting out some low-light camera traps, which are really just motion-activated cameras. He targeted locations in the preserve that he thought were likely to attract lots of rabbit and rodent activity, which in turn would attract bobcats, who like to hunt those critters. The size of those prey species fit the bobcat's size: slightly larger than a typical house cat, more or less the size of your average beagle.

It wasn't long before the first blurry evidence came in: a corner of a head with a pointy, white-highlighted ear, a bit of rump with a stubby tail. At first glance, it was hardly conclusive; some staff even speculated that the photo showed a pitbull. But DiPaola enlisted the advice of local experts at Pace University, who confirmed the photos' subject. That inspired Josh to expand his net of camera traps, and over the ensuing years he has collected many more and much clearer photos.

At this point, DiPaola is confident that the preserve in fact hosts multiple bobcats. One photo clearly shows two

continued on page 10

Power of the Preserve, *continued from page 1*

cies in “blue” communities (near rivers, lakes and coastal areas) dispensed fewer anti-depressants than those in non-blue communities. Subjects in a University of Utah study performed 50% better on standardized tests given after three days in the wilderness, than they did on campus before leaving. And researchers in Japan have demonstrated that a walk in the forest causes both a decrease in the stress hormone cortisol, and a boost to the body’s immune system, which is caused by chemicals called phytoncides that are released by the trees — and these benefits can last for weeks after the outing.

The Rockefeller Preserve is not just a place to walk, it’s a place for our community to stay healthy and heal from stress and a variety of illnesses. The carriage roads wind through forests and along brooks and Swan Lake is a large “blue space” that calls out to many people. The value of forested parks like Rockefeller is not only for protecting ecosystem services like air quality, biodiversity, and carbon sequestration, it actually serves an essential part of our daily mental and physical health requirements. You could witness during the height of the pandemic just how essential it was by the number of parked cars lined up on Rt. 117. And my guess is people came from all parts of Westchester and NYC to enjoy the peace and serenity of the Preserve.

To draw attention to the critical need for parks and green/blue spaces, we are producing a documentary film for television that follows people who found healing through time in nature. We hope to raise consciousness of the need to protect and create space in both suburbs and urban areas for people to relax and recharge. We will be traveling the globe to show just how much our humanity is “hardwired” for a connection to nature. From children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) who are prescribed “Vitamin N”, (time in nature), to stressed out office workers in Japan who are practicing “forest bathing” (*shinrin yoku*) in special forest preserves around Tokyo, the stories in our documentary will



Photo: Jessica Crendon

Along the carriage trails



Photo: Jessica Crendon

Swan Lake

inspire you to get outside and care for yourself and others.

We have been talking to thought-leaders in the field who are helping us understand what’s happening inside our bodies when we spend time in nature and it’s fascinating. “We can actually see in real-time brain scans how the amygdala — the fight or flight part of the brain — fires constantly in urban environments and quiets down in nature,” explains environmental psychologist Dr. Matthew White. “That’s when our prefrontal cortex can get back to the business of deep thought, creativity, and running our bodies.” He and his colleagues use fMRI imaging to record the brain activity of subjects while they experience a variety of phenomenon in VR headsets. They have discovered that something they call “soft-fascination” is crucial to our brains’ ability to recover from stress. “Soft-fascination is caused by looking at things that create a sense of awe and wonder,” Matthew explains. “Clouds drifting by, light coming through the trees, the movement of water, a beautiful sunset — these things occur mostly in nature — not so much in man-made environments. It’s basically what recharges our brains.”

Over half of us now live in cities. By 2050, that number will be 70%. Studies show that this change is associated with increased levels of stress and mental illness — a 20% higher risk of anxiety disorders and a 40% higher risk of mood disorders, than those living in rural areas. Moreover, there’s been a 52% increase in adolescent depression coinciding with screen time, which has exploded since the mid-2000s. Parks and preserves like Rockefeller play a major role in improving lives and providing green and blue areas for families to recharge from our busy daily lives. Ultimately, by reestablishing our connection to the natural world we came from, we are more likely to take the steps needed to protect it.

To learn more about the work of Arise Media (a 501(c)(3) organization) and this documentary, please visit our website, www.arisemedia.org

Harrowing Hulda's Night

By Suzanne DeChillo

"Your guides will lead you into the dark woods of Sleepy Hollow," the Storyteller David Neilson warned us. "Fear not. I am sure you will be fine. You all seem to have a good head on your shoulders...for now."

Like a thief, darkness fell upon us. I felt disoriented. Yes, the path was lit with antique lanterns powered by LED lights. I could hear a river (the Pocantico? Gory Brook?) but I could not see it. Luckily Lesley Quimby, one of the volunteer guides, grabbed my arm when I strayed or stumbled.

A few nights before Halloween, a group of 20 hardy souls hiked into the deep forest of the Preserve. This was Hulda's Night 2022, where actors, along the path lit by lamps, brought to life local history, legends and tales from the Lenni Lenape tribe, Washington Irving and the research and imagination of Ranger Su, Susan M.H. Lewenz.

Our shepherd was Leslie Quimby and a group of volunteer guides.

According to legend, Hulda, an immigrant from Bavaria, lived in a cottage in these woods during the Revolutionary War, when Westchester was a Neutral Zone, fought over and pillaged by the Patriots from north of Peekskill and the British army from the south in the Bronx. Accused of being a witch, she denied it.



The Storyteller sets the scene.

The Storyteller at the first stop recounted the legends behind place names in the Preserve - Spook Rock, Raven's Rock and some of our local legends. At the second stop Patrick Moore, an actor playing Pastor Domine Ritzema who headed the Old Dutch Church in Tarrytown during the Revolution, and Will Royston, who played the part of The Heckler, recounted the history of Westchester as a

"Neutral Zone" fought over and plundered by the British, the Patriots and wandering opportunists. The Pastor riled against the woman named Hulda, calling her a witch.

The most magical and spellbinding part of the night came at the site of Hulda's hut. The forest sparkled with thousands of colored twinkling lights. The giant trees in Hulda's Glen were washed with a rainbow of colors. We entered a circle of lights, sat on tree stumps and listened to Tania Kass, an actress playing Hulda, tell her story. She was a lone woman and herbalist living by herself, shunned by the locals, and accused by the clergy of being a witch.



Hulda's hut



Hulda tells her story.

Photos: Suzanne DeChillo

She denied this. She told us how she grabbed her musket to help the local militia fight marauding British soldiers. She died a hero and was buried in an unmarked grave in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery. In 2019 Hulda finally got her gravestone, which reads: "Hulda of Bohemia. Died c.1777. Herbalist. Healer. Patriot. Felled by the British while protecting the Militia. Buried here in gratitude for her sacrifice."

Heading back to our cars, we stopped at the bridge. A dark horse and rider (Madonna Swanson and the horse Stetson), blocked our way. Another legend came to life! And we ended our evening with horror, laughter and applause!

A perfect Halloween tale. A Goosebump story. A history lesson.

We walked home by starlight and flickering lanterns. You could see the planet Jupiter, too. On Hulda's Night, we journeyed through hundreds of years of local history and back to the warmth and safety of our own homes.

From the Friends President

By George Gumina

Dear Friends,

We've been lucky this past winter with the weather, not too much snow, until March! But it didn't last long and it didn't cause a lot of damage in the Preserve, which is a blessing.

Thursday, May 11, will be our annual celebration for the peonies. We hope the sky will be blue and the sun bright for our cocktail party and buffet dinner. This will be the 15th Anniversary of the peonies gracing our garden and we certainly hope you will join us.

June is an exciting month for us. There is the 10K Rockwood Ramble on Saturday, June 4, always a good way to wake up your body and enjoy the route through the Preserve. Science is proving getting out in nature is one of the best ways to improve your health. *(See article on page 1.)*

We also have a Garden Party Luncheon where both sides of the Rockefeller Family, brothers William Rockefeller's and John D. Rockefeller, Sr.'s , will be combining forces to help support improvements to Rockwood Hall. The families will be joined by friends and supporters of the Preserve on Saturday, June 24. *(See article on page 1.)* Please mark your calendars and plan to attend. We'd love to have you!

Our pollinator garden on the Route 448 Trailhead is being planted as we speak. It is in memory of our esteemed friend and founding board member Herbert Hadad, who passed away at the end of 2021 after 25 years of service to the Friends and the Rockefeller Preserve. The garden lines both sides of the trail named for Herb, called Hadad's Way.

In the fall, we have the exciting Hulda's Night *(see article on page 4)*, the Rocky's 5K Race on Saturday, October 14, the marathon and half marathon on Saturday, November 11, and we haven't determined the date yet for the Pace. These thrilling events are coming your way, please check our web site: www.friendsrock.org for more details as fall approaches.

The Friends are also supporting the rehabilitation of an area in Rockwood Hall at the foundation called the Grotto. It is a 36-stone staircase currently covered with graffiti and vines. This work will be done by the very accomplished Jolly Rovers, a non-profit organization whose corps of volunteers contribute value every year to public parks by helping create pathways to iconic places.

I hope to see you out on the carriage roads, beware of ticks and please see the article on pages 6-7 to better protect yourself against these nasty critters!



From the Cover: Coming into Bloom by Anne Bell

Board of Directors

Friends of the Rockefeller State Park Preserve

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Ticks!



By RangerSu
Design/Layout by Laurence Gill

Ticks suck. Literally and figuratively. Like most of the entire Northeast, the Preserve has them and a lot of them. Does this mean you have to stop going out into the woods? No. But like any other danger, wherever you are, you need to be educated and prepared.

For example, if we had lions in the Preserve, this article might be telling you how to safely enjoy the Preserve without getting mauled. But we don't have lions in Rockefeller. We do have ticks, and for some, they can be just as dangerous.

Several people I know personally have medically confirmed cases of **Alpha-gal syndrome (AGS)**, which they are fairly certain they contracted from tick bites while in the Preserve. To be clear, these people are still alive, healthy AND continue to visit the Preserve regularly. However, they also suffer from a very life-disrupting condition.

A neighbor of mine who has AGS cannot eat any red meats or dairy, or she risks anaphylaxis. So, burgers, steaks and cheese are all off her menu until (she hopes) the disease passes; but so much is unknown about AGS, it is unclear when and if this will happen. For now, she is obviously very cautious. So, it is because of her and others we decided to cover the AGS topic in this issue of the Observer. This is by no means an exhaustive review, it is more of an intro to ticks in the Preserve and the relatively new, lone star tick, which is believed to carry AGS.

Protect Yourself Against Ticks

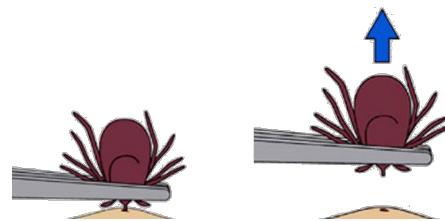
*In the Preserve your best protection is to **stay on the 16-foot-wide carriage roads at all times.** Keep out of the fields and any tall grasses. Keep your dogs leashed and also on the carriage roads. Also, you should:*



- Wear light-colored clothing with a tight weave to spot ticks easily.
- Wear enclosed shoes, long pants, and a long-sleeved shirt. Tuck pant legs into socks or boots, and shirt into pants.
- Check clothes and any exposed skin frequently for ticks while outdoors.
- Consider using insect repellent on your clothing.
- When possible, **walk in the center of trails.**
- Keep long hair tied back.
- Bathe or shower as soon as possible after going indoors (*preferably within two hours*) to wash off and more easily find ticks.
- Do a final, full-body tick check at the end of the day (*also check children and pets*) and remove ticks promptly.
- Follow your vet's suggestion for regular flea and tick prevention treatment.

Source: <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/lyme/>

How to Remove A Tick



- Use clean, fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible.
 - Pull upward with steady, even pressure. Don't twist or jerk the tick; this can cause the mouthparts to break off and remain in the skin. If this happens, remove the mouthparts with tweezers. If you cannot remove the mouth easily with tweezers, leave it alone and let the skin heal.
 - After removing the tick, thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol or soap and water. Make a note of date and time. If you develop a rash or fever within several weeks of removing a tick, see your doctor.
- Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/removal/index.html>
RangerSu Tip: Before removal, it might be a good idea to take a picture of the tick if you can do so safely. Also, if symptoms arise, some doctors may wish to test the tick if you have saved it.

TYPES OF TICKS FOUND IN THE ROCKEFELLER PRESERVE



American Dog Tick

Potential Associated Diseases

Tularemia, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Tick paralysis



Lone Star Tick

Potential Associated Diseases

Ehrlichiosis, Southern Tick Associated Rash Illness, Tick Bite-Induced Allergy (alpha-gal allergy), Canine ehrlichiosis, Tularemia, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever

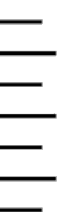


Deer Tick (black-legged)

Potential Associated Diseases

Lyme disease, Anaplasmosis, Babesiosis, Powassan virus, Borrelia miyamotoi, Ehrlichiosis

0.0 in



0.5 in



Alpha-gal syndrome (AGS)

Alpha-gal syndrome (AGS) (also called alpha-gal allergy, red meat allergy, or tick bite meat allergy) is a serious, potentially life-threatening allergic reaction. AGS is not caused by an infection. AGS symptoms occur after people eat red meat or are exposed to other products containing alpha-gal.

- Alpha-gal (galactose- α -1,3-galactose) is a sugar molecule found in most mammals.
- Alpha-gal is not found in fish, reptiles, birds, or people.
- Alpha-gal can be found in meat (pork, beef, rabbit, lamb, venison, etc.) and products made from mammals (including gelatin, cow's milk, and milk products).
- Symptoms commonly appear 2-6 hours after eating meat or dairy products, or after exposure to products containing Alpha-gal (for example, gelatin-coated medications).
- AGS reactions can be different from person-to-person. They can range from mild to severe or even life-threatening. Anaphylaxis (a potentially life-threatening reaction involving multiple organ systems) may need urgent medical care.
- People may not have an allergic reaction after every alpha-gal exposure.

Source: Center for Disease Control; www.cdc.gov/ticks/alpha-gal/index.html



According to NIH, magnesium stearate and gelatin are found in formulations of acetaminophen, naproxen, lisinopril, clonidine, and hydrocodone, and allergic reactions to these medications have been potentially linked to alpha-gal.

Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7282276>



Some gummy products may contain mammal byproducts

From the Preserve Manager

By Peter Iskendarian

This winter hasn't been like any winter we've had in the past few years at the Rockefeller Preserve. With the fluctuating temperature and the absence of snow, we were able to advance some projects that we have been planning for months and even years. These projects were prioritized to not only help improve safety and the visitors experience but to also make the lives of the staff easier when they come to work and to improve the environment for our native inhabitants. We ran into challenges along the way, but we persevered and have come out a better functioning team because of it.

The biggest challenge we encountered was losing all access to the internet, Wi-Fi, and basic computer services during the peak fall season. The park staff was basically dead in the water and found us having to work remotely from home or other State Parks to get our daily office work done. Obviously, some of us can't do our work remotely, we had to keep the Preserve maintained and safe for the public, so we made the best of it and in January the State was able to come up with a temporary solution and we were able to get back to semi-normal operations. In November 2024, through funding from the State and the Natural Heritage Trust, we are scheduled to have a fiber optic line installed that will completely change the way the staff functions. This project will see the closure of the Old Sleepy Hollow Road Trail while the fiber is installed in conduit below the trail.

To take advantage of this closure, at the same time this is happening, a new water line is being installed in the same trench being dug below the trail surface. This project has been in the planning stages for years and it will see the Preserve taken off its well and hook us into the town water system. Our well water is delicious, but it needs to be done for the purposes of providing us with a stable water supply that we can count on year-round and a source of water for fire protection. For reference the Preserve does not use much water, about 5 gallons a day in peak season. But we have to be careful because if we exceed that amount by cleaning a piece of equipment or it's a busy day for visitors, we run the risk of running out of water until the well fills up again. The new water line is a huge step forward in helping the Preserve reach its goals of stability and security of our water supply.

Sticking with the water theme our next project, which will have already started when this issue comes out, is the rehabilitation of the Swan Lake Dam. This historic dam built by John D. Rockefeller Jr. is the original dam that was

designed to impound and create Swan Lake. Although not a big lake, and not in immediate danger of failure, the water of Swan Lake would certainly cause damage downstream if the dam were to fail, thus creating the need for rehabilitation. The downslope of the dam will see a major redesign with the removal of trees and the reshaping of the downslope. The new design will create a new meadow, which will produce new habitat for pollinators and field nesting birds. The controls in the weir structure will be replaced with modern technology and the spillway and pipes that control the flow of water will be dredged and repaired. The main historic features of the dam, like the stepping stones and the trail surface, will not see any change. This project is expected to start in March 2023 and run through the summer.

Many of you who visit Rockwood Hall have seen the new changes we've done, including the new pavers that were installed to eliminate the tripping hazards on the foundation loop, but we have much more in store for the rehabilitation of Rockwood Hall. For those that like to explore Rockwood Hall, we are creating a new destination in an often-mistreated area of the Preserve we like to call the Grotto. Below the garden terrace on the Hudson River side of the foundation is a secret staircase we call the grotto. The grotto consists of a 36-stone staircase, and runs through a natural rock cut that takes you from the foundation loop to the lower trail. In past years this secret place was only known to local graffiti painters and wrongdoers. Our plan is to remove the graffiti, clean up the broken glass, reset the stones in the staircase and turn it into a destination.



Ed Impara, Shayla Schott, Peter Iskendarian, and Ranger Su planting garden in memory of Friends board member Herbert Hadad.

Photo: Suzanne DeChillo

We were lucky enough to secure the services of the talented historic stone restoration group know as the Jolly Rovers. We went through a very extensive interview process with the Jolly Rovers as their talents are in high demand, but when they saw the location and the project, they were very excited to accept the project. They recently finished work on a historic staircase at Minnewaska State Park Preserve and

continued on next page

Preserve Manager, *continued from page 8*

after our project is complete, they are headed to John Boyd Thatcher State Park to work on the historic Indian Ladder Trail, so we were lucky with our timing to get them here. The donation for the work to get done is being provided by Lucy Rockefeller Waletzky, MD and the Friends of the Rockefeller State Park Preserve.

A final project I want to highlight (picture on opposite page) is the pollinator garden located at the Rte. 448 Trailhead across from the Union Church. The garden location has been a blemish in the Pocantico Hills community for a number of years and has been waiting for the right time for someone to step in and take the project on. With the help of the Preserve staff and the Pocantico Hills Residents, money has been raised to make trailhead improvements, install new fencing, highlight the historic marker at this location and install a brand-new pollinator garden dedicated to longtime Friends' member and community supporter, Herbert Hadad. We have been getting lots of support from the Friends of the Rockefeller Preserve, neighborhood gardeners from Pleasantville, Pocantico Hills and local nurseries.

As you can see, we have some very important projects coming up that will bring the Preserve into the 21st century, create a safer working environment for the staff and our guests and help unite the community with projects that create destinations for our guests to explore and enjoy. We look forward to completing these projects, checking them off our list and starting the planning process for the next list of projects.

Rockefeller State Park Preserve Staff

Operations

- Peter Iskenderian, Preserve Manager
- Laurence Gill, P&R Supervisor / Director of Operations
- 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
- Stacy Robinson, Buildings / Groundskeeper

Art Gallery

- Audrey Leeds, Gallery Curator

Bobcat, *continued from page 3*

different specimens together, and several others show one that, because of its unusually large size (for a bobcat), is distinct from the pair in the two-shot. With the locations of the various cameras and the timings of the various bobcat images that they've captured, a population of just three would have had a hard time getting around to all those shots, and Josh DiPaola suspects the preserve's bobcat population is likely to be around five and could be even more numerous.

That is good news for the preserve's animal ecology. As a mesopredator, the bobcat is a keystone species, playing an important role in controlling the populations of those rabbits and rodents. Bobcats also sometimes prey on juvenile deer, a species whose burgeoning population has stressed the juvenile trees in the preserve and thus the sustainability of its tree populations. In a pinch, larger bobcats have even successfully taken down adult deer, as evidenced in some spectacular videos you can find on Youtube.

Despite all that, stories of bobcats attacking pets are exceedingly rare and those of bobcats attacking humans even rarer. Bobcats steer as clear as they can from signs of human activity, minimizing contact. For that reason, Josh discourages parkgoers from traipsing off-trail to try to find one; such attempts are very unlikely to result in a successful sighting and are much more likely to drive the bobcats to furtively depart the area.



Bobcat image captured on one of the Preserve's trail cameras

While even DiPaola's high-end estimate of five or six cats may not seem like a lot, the park would make crowded quarters for that bunch. A typical bobcat's range is 4-60 square miles, and the park has just 3 of those. While bobcat experts have theorized that dense environments like the suburbs that surround the park force bobcats into smaller ranges, the preserve is quite small for a population of that size. In the preserve, bobcats compete with coyotes for similar prey, and in that species-to-species matchup, the coyotes are often more well-adapted. All this is to say that the preserve's bobcat population is unlikely to grow, and its small absolute number makes it fragile and thus worthy of our care.

This year, DiPaola has embarked on a project to more definitively enumerate the preserve's populations of less numerous animals, like the bobcat. He's collecting samples of animal scat for DNA metabar analysis. That testing is expensive and is most cost-efficiently done simultaneously on large numbers of samples from multiple species. He's hoping soon to illuminate not just the bobcat population but also that of coyotes and even a wandering bear or two!

❖ Gallery Schedule at a Glance ❖

BULBS TO BLOOMING GARDENS AMIDST ELEGANT SCULPTURES

March 19 – June 4, 2023

Featuring Artist Anne Bell and Sculptor Edward Heim

Anne Bell has stated, “I am interested in painting as a visual language. Abstraction allows an artist to bypass the literal meaning of an image and try to reach the viewer in unexpected ways. Color is my voice and line is my beat.”

She continued, “Throughout my career, I have been exploring ways of using color, line, form, space and rhythm to express what it is to be alive. My most recent work is totally abstract, but it retains a lot of the energy gleaned while observing living plants and flowers. I am painting their movement. That is what interests me most, the way they present themselves, their powerful energy, and their gallant enthusiasm for life. I think of them as a metaphor for the human spirit.”

Edward Heim was born in Madrid, Spain in 1961 and educated in Europe and the United States. He currently produces work at his home studio located in Kinnelon, New Jersey. He is completely self-taught and to his credit or discredit has never attended an art class in his life.

His sculptural works in stone stem from his love of historic gothic architectural preservation. Heim started and ran his own company for 20 years and has successfully restored the stone masonry at some of the most significant structures in the western hemisphere, including Saint Patrick’s Cathedral and The Basilica of The Sacred Heart in Newark, New Jersey. Heim is considered an historic masonry subject matter expert and has been called upon by the Department of the Interior for his technical advice. His love of stone carving for these building projects was an easy transition to his creation of freestanding forms.



Anne Bell: *Little Tree I*



Edward Heim: *Vivid Venture*

A Celebration for “Coach”

By Estella Medina

November 19th, 2022 was a beautiful, sunny day at the Rockefeller State Park Preserve. A perfect day to surprise Coach Mike Barnow of the Westchester Track Club (WTC) with a bench dedicated in his honor.

Located at the popular junction where Canter Alley meets the stone bridge overpass at Old Sleepy Hollow Road, the bench was a long overdue gesture of gratitude, honor and appreciation for a lifetime of service by Coach Mike to runners from all over the world.

Visitors to this area of the Preserve may have noticed Coach Mike gather his runners on Saturday mornings or seen him with his youth and master’s groups mid-week in the mornings and evenings. Frequently, a few world-class runners will blend into the group for a workout, that is, until they disappear in a streak of speed down Canter Alley. An avid bird watcher, Coach Mike sneaks a peek at the birds as his athletes disappear down Canter Alley on a “lollipop loop” (1 mile round-trip). Coach, as he is affectionally called, prescribes Rockefeller’s roads as the perfect training ground—the surface soft compared to pavement, and the hills challenging. But he will tell you that just as important to this prescription of running drills is the natural beauty of the place that envelops you, giving your labor a needed perspective. He frequently expresses his gratitude for the Preserve as he converses with his runners—once they’ve managed to catch their breath.

Coach Mike is legendary for his success in coaching athletes of the highest caliber—Olympians and world champions. As such, Coach has the attributes of a world-class coach: passion, patience, experience, and a reservoir of knowledge so deep it doesn’t seem possible for one human being to possess. But Coach is distinguished by the love and care he has for each of his runners, from Olympian to new runner. While producing champions, Mike has been a father figure to many athletes struggling with living situations, helping them acclimate to a new country from far-flung places like Uganda, Somalia, Kenya and other countries.

Over the summer, WTC members Maureen Carson, Dan Fanelli, Rob Fursich, George Gerbacia, Chris Gullotta, Conor O’Driscoll, Charlotte Rizzo, and this author, hatched a plan to install a bench honoring Coach Mike at his favorite training spot. The challenge was to keep it a surprise until the day of the ceremony. No easy feat

considering the number of donors from around the world. But somehow the secret mission stayed secret, and the surprise that day overwhelmed a grateful Coach Mike.

Along with the bench dedication, a gift of \$2500 to the Preserve for trail maintenance was made by WTC in his honor. A gift of \$1500 was also made to Sleepy Hollow High School.

It is impossible to capture Coach Mike’s legacy and impact in just a few words. Dick Vincent, a runner and longtime friend of Mike’s, wrote an article about Coach for the Hudson Mohawk Runner’s Club. The following excerpt resonates: *“Mike’s knowledge of exercise physiology is immense, but I think of him more as an artist than a scientist. He observes someone running and just seems to know what they need to do to improve. He doesn’t seem to be breaking down the data and calculating all the formulas to prescribe workouts. He just knows how fast and how often an athlete should do specific workouts. Intuition and years of experience give him Yoda-like insight into a runner’s strengths, his/her weaknesses, and his/her needs.”*

We wish Coach Mike all the best as he continues to coach at the base of Canter Alley, and leave you with the words inscribed on the bench’s plaque: “In honor of Coach Mike Barnow of the Westchester Track Club, a mentor, gentleman and friend for all the years he has trained runners near and far.”

For more detail on Coach Mike’s background, you can link to Dick Vincent’s article here: <https://hmrrc.com/members/pacesetter/2020/august/profile-coach-mike-barnow>



Supporters surround “Coach” and his wife Adrienne on the bench with donation check for the Preserve.

Photo: Estella Medina



Reaching the Friends

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Please contact us c/o the Friends.



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**Visit the Preserve
for these upcoming events!**



Photo: Herbert Hadad

15th Annual Peony Celebration
Thursday, May 11, 2023
6 PM – 9 PM



Photo: Jessica Credon

10K Rockwood Ramble
Saturday, June 4, 2023
9 AM