

The Ovenbird

Pfeiffer Nature Center and Foundation

Spring, 2009



April 22 EARTH DAY

April 24 ARBOR DAY

May AMERICAN
WETLANDS MONTH

May 9 INTERNATIONAL
MIGRATORY BIRD DAY

May 24-30 DARK-SKY
WEEK

June 6 NATIONAL
TRAILS DAY—WOODS
WALK & TRAIL RUN

June 14—NATIONAL
GET OUTDOORS DAY

New Trail at Eshelman!

Check out the cool rocks and new terrain on the latest trail at Eshelman, the County Line Trail. It connects the Cross Cut to the top of Hill Top.



Project BudBreak



Red Maple beginning to bud out.

was gone, the forest was bare, and there wasn't a hint of green anywhere. I was determined to find something to show him that would make it worth his time to come and explore.

I found and have since become fascinated with buds. I collected a few bare twigs and tried to identify what trees they came from. Looking for identification resources, I stumbled onto a website, Project BudBreak, <http://budbreak.tc.cornell.edu/> and a whole new world opened up for me.

I discovered there are many nature observers engaged in observing the phenophases of trees, shrubs, and wildflowers and these observations play an important role in understanding climate change.

Phenophases cover a plant's above-ground

reproductive life cycle, from emergence to leaf outs and flowering to fruiting to aging and leaf fall. I realized that I never took the time to observe what was happening between the dormant state and the first flush of luxuriously green foliage. And too my surprise there is a lot happening, worth observing and worth recording!

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I contact David Weinstein, Forest Ecologist and Senior Research Associate, at Cornell University. He is involved in Project BudBreak. The project records these phenophases of common trees, shrubs, and wildflowers in New York to help document the subtle changes that are occurring due to climate change.

His site is a great place to start exploring what you can observe and how you can help by recording your observations.

Dr. Weinstein explains how people can study the effects of global warming in their own backyard.

What is Project BudBreak? Project BudBreak uses the power of citizen scientists to gather wide-ranging data about the timing of flower, leaf and fruit development and leaf drop, among other measurements, in common native trees and herbaceous plants in New York.

What's New ~ Our Old-Growth Forest

If you have been to Lillibridge lately, you may have noticed many of the trees tied with colorful plastic ribbons. This is temporary. We are in the middle of three large projects in the vicinity of Griffin Way and Wendy's Trail.

The first project is the completion

of an accessible interpretative trail. Those little pink flags along the trail will guide the construction. Griffin's Way will be contoured and surfaced in April to make the trail accessible to people with mobility or sensory impairments. It will also make it easier for parents with young children to navigate through the

forest. Along the trail visitors will find benches for quiet contemplation, raised plantings, and interpretative signage to make it easy to learn about our old-growth forest.

The second project involves the Adopt A Tree forest.

Continued on page 4.

From the Director

Life is never all one thing or all another; it's a never-ending collage of good news and bad news, of opportunities and challenges, of some moments of bliss and others of misery. Instead of either dwelling on or blinding myself to down sides, I attempt to appreciate the beauty of the mosaic itself, the juxtapositions inherent in being alive. So in this issue I'm going to share some of both.

It's no secret, times are tough. Everywhere. Pfeiffer Nature Center is no exception. Now in our 11th year, we are struggling financially.

We are extremely grateful for the support we get from the businesses and individuals in our area; at least two-thirds of our annual budget is local dollars! People who live and work nearby write us checks with some regularity. Yet, because many of those very people are facing their own hard times, as they tighten their belts, their checks are often smaller, sometimes not being written at all.

As a small organization with a correspondingly small budget, every donation, every membership, every event sponsorship, every program fee makes a difference. If you think that your \$10 or

\$25 doesn't amount to enough to help, you're wrong. **Regardless of its size, your contribution makes a difference.** When we're trying to find \$5,000 by July 30, just 35 additional new or renewing family memberships will cover one-quarter of our deficit. Add to that a handful of new ads in the Woods Walk & Trail Run program booklet, a few new or renewing Adopt A Tree sponsors, a sprinkling of late-arriving donations to our annual campaign, a pavilion rental or two, and healthy attendance at our programs, and the deficit will be closed.

Why is Pfeiffer Nature Center important, why should you care about our financial health? Here are a few facts that may surprise you.

- More than **4,000 people** attend one of our programs every year. While most live in Cattaraugus or Allegany County, we routinely have visitors from more than 50 miles away, and often see people from much farther. In fact, we already have someone from Georgia registered for our upcoming Woods Walk & Trail Run!
- An estimated **5,000 people** annually hike our trails independently. They live nearby and they live far away. They come

back regularly and they visit only once while on vacation. They spend hours hiking most of the trails on the property and they don't stray farther than 50 feet from their cars. They come because of our multi-stage geocache and our old-growth forest, because they saw the pavilion on their drive over the hill and because they heard it's a great birding area, because their 3rd grader told them how much she enjoyed her Adopt A Tree visit and because they're looking for a place to hold their family reunion this summer. People come for all kinds of reasons, from all distances, and stay for as long as they like. But come they do.

- The Nature Center has a staff of more than 75 people. Only two of us are paid, and we both work only part-time. Obviously the majority of our staff are volunteers, and they are responsible for the majority of our accomplishments. We work hard to develop and retain these volunteers who are our life blood and our sustenance, because without them we can't get much done. Because they are our emissaries into the community. Because they have personal histories with the land and understand it at a bone-deep level. Because they provide continuity and consistency, care and concern, persistence and perseverance. Because they love the place, what it stands for, what it is, and what it can be.

I could write at length about the uniqueness of our old-growth and mature second-growth forest, about the wide ranging habitats we support on our two properties, about the lessons inherent in our two different property management strategies, about our specific accomplishments of the past 10 years and our plans for the next 10 years. But ultimately, I want my message to be this: **we need your help.** Become a member or renew your membership. Send in a donation, however small. Attend our fee-based programs. Adopt a tree and continue to allow hundreds of school children to visit us annually. **Do it now.**

Preserving our heritage,
Margaret Cherre



Margaret Shulock lives in Friendship, NY. Her "Sticks" cartoons can be seen in the Olean Times Herald. Visit her website, www.thesixchix.com to see more of her work.

Don't Forget to Register for Woods Walk 2009!

Woods Walk & Trail Run is shaping up to be the premier springtime wellness event in the area. We offer something for every fitness level. We have three runs and three walks, ranging from a really rugged 10.5 mile run that will challenge all but those in tip-top condition, to a short, easy, guided nature hike. No matter which event you choose, you'll spend lots of time in the woods, and will hopefully be able to enjoy the sights and sounds of springtime as you travel your course.

After you've finished your event, the Finish Line Arena is the place to be! Start by chowing down on great turkey sandwiches, nutritious homemade pasta salads, a luscious assortment of homemade brownies, chips, and plenty of fluids. You can hash over the course with other folks who are done, cheer on the latest finishers, and listen to some live music. When you're done eating, visit the live bird display – see owls, falcons, and other birds of prey up close & personal.

Be sure to stick around long enough to watch the prizes being awarded! We've added several age categories for our runners this year, so there will be lots more winners announced. If you're not a runner, never fear, we'll have some door prizes that everyone who enters has a chance to win, regardless of what event they choose.

Another new addition this year: Woods Walk & Trail Run is part of the new partnership that formed the Eastern Grip Trail Running Series. We're one of seven regional races that have joined forces to offer runners the opportunity to earn



Walkers enjoying the cool of the forest.

points throughout the seasons, from April through September. Build up your points for greater glory in the end.

Registration is limited to the first 300 entries. Pre-registration is required; there is no on-site registration. So get your entry forms in! You can register online at www.woodswalk.net, or call the office (716.933.0187) to have an entry form mailed to you.

Many thanks to our early corporate sponsors:

Olean Medical Group

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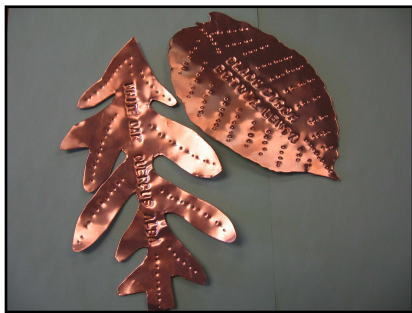
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Our Old-Growth Forest (continued...)



New Copper Leaf Tags for the Adopt A Tree Forest

The two acres that encompass fifty marked trees have been part of our Adopt A Tree forest since 2002. Every three years, local businesses and individuals pledge their support to the program by making a contribution that funds our nature-based education programs for local school children. The original signage was not user friendly, nor particularly attractive.

Each tree will be identified by a handcrafted copper tag in the shape of that tree leaf or cone that is embossed with the common and scientific name of the tree. Volunteers have been busy constructing these beautiful tags and will be installing them on the trees in April giving the Adopt A Tree forest a new look.

In the meantime, the Adopt A Tree specimens are marked with pink and yellow ribbons confirming their number and species. The plastic tags will be removed when the copper tags are installed.

The third project is a citizen scientist effort to document the age of our old-growth trees. We have selected approximately one hundred trees to obtain basic growth measurements.

Volunteers met in March and learned how to calculate tree circumference, height, and canopy spread. Teams of four spread out and collected the measurements on several of the identified trees.

The next step is to validate the measurements, GPS the location of each tree, and confirm the tree species. Once this is done, the plastic tape will be

removed from the trees, as well.

Our plan is to submit those trees that qualify as ancient giants to the State and National Big Tree Registers, bringing recognition in the big tree community to Pfeiffer Nature Centers' hidden gems.

Old-growth forests are increasing rare in the United States. They are a wonderful place to see a forest as it would have appeared to man thousands of years ago.

The next time you walk our Lillibridge trails, take a moment to observe and enjoy these features that are characteristic of an old-growth forest.

Forest Trees of Great Age. For a forest to be old-growth, there should be a number of trees of great age. For instance, our "old granddad", the Black Tupelo off Thorton's Way, having been verified by experts, this is much older than 500 years. Tupelos average lifespan of 100 years. Age is not necessarily translated to size. Many of our trees have height rather than girth to indicate their age, a result of growing up in a forest and needing to reach for the light.

Trees of Commercial Value. If there are a large number of commercially valuable trees in the forest it is a good indication the area was not selectively cut. There are impressive stands of valuable Red and White Oak along Wendy's Trail and Sally's Alley.

Uneven-Aged Canopy Structure. Old-growth forests are characterized

by a mix of trees of various ages and sizes. You see this along the Tapline Trail where we have giant old White Pines and Cucumber Magnolias alongside younger Beech and Chestnut.

Downed Logs. If you look on the forest floor along The Loop and Kay's Cove you will see it littered with much fallen wood.

This coarse debris is typical of an old-growth forest. The downed logs are of multiple sizes and at varying states of decay. The downed wood provides nutrients to the forest, helps keep it moist, and provides important habitat for wildlife, particularly salamanders.

Standing Snags. The Adopt A Tree forest is full of standing dead trees called snags. We are often asked why they are not removed. Snags provide important



Standing Snag

vertical habitat for wildlife in the old-growth forest. Ours supports abundant Pileated Woodpeckers and Barred Owls, not to mention the oodles of insects and small mammals that call these "critter condos" home.

Treefall Gaps. Old-growth forests will have several windfall trees. The wind moves through the canopy and topples the tree, roots and all. You'll see many windfalls along Pinkster.

Pit and Mound

Topography. When the trees fall, the uplifted root structure create a pit in the forest floor. The downed tree decomposes and creates a mound on the forest floor.



Windfall Tree

All these features, along with undisturbed soil and little or no evidence of human activity, contribute to creating a stable ecosystem that supports a diversity of plants and animals.

We encourage you to think about these wonderful characteristics as you walk the Lillibridge property.

Thank You to Our Dedicated Volunteers

These past few months have been busy and we're very fortunate to have the help of many wonderful volunteers!

Many risked sharp edges and loud hammering as they cut, formed, and decorated the new copper leaves that will mark the Adopt A Tree forest. Thanks to Jay Beeman, Allison Duffy, Joyce Ermer, Alicia Grosso, Brian Grosso, Mike Grosso, Sue Grosso, Ann Latten, Nikki Nease, Joe Patterer, and Marilee Patterer.



Bona Students Make Copper Leaves

We'd like to thank Mary Haley, of Salamanca City Schools and Avon Crist, of Richburg Senior Citizens for providing us excellent opportunities at their events to share information about the Nature Center.

Wendy Brand,

Kathy Bess, Marcia Storch, and Peg Cherre spread the word about Pfeiffer Nature Center while reading to elementary school children during the national Read Across America event in Olean.

Ted Georgian walked Eshelman providing guidance on creek access for programming.

James Taylor and Barb Johnston provided valuable office help. Chet Moody has been working on tweaking our website in preparation for the new format. Check it out late April!

Thanks to our leadership volunteers, Sue Stevens, Sarah Larson, and Wendy Brand

who are currently working on new board member recruitment. Also Marsha Storch & Carol Bradley, who are working tirelessly on securing sponsorships for Adopt A Tree and Woods Walk.

We had a few dedicated volunteers, Marcia Storch, Kathy Bess, Colleen Kent, and Steve Kellogg, give us an afternoon to train as facilitators for Project WET, an environmental education program



Volunteers Participate in Project WET

offered by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

Many hands certainly made the work light when volunteers cleared the newest trail additions at Eshelman. Thanks to Mike Patton, Judy Patton, Mike Canada, Diane Canada, Tonya Reisman, Jeff Reisman, Ed Reisman, Austin Reisman, Matt Resiman, Justin Reisman, Joe Schueckler, Ted Georgian, and Doug Price.



Citizen Scientists Learn to Take Tree Measurements

Despite less than spring-ish conditions, we had a marvelous turnout of volunteers to mark and measure the big trees in our old-growth forest. Thanks to Sue Stevens, Joyce Ermer, and Rick Tetlak for helping tag the trees.

A big thanks to the following volunteers who did the measurements: Chris Babcock, Jay Beeman, Kathy Bess, Will Caya, Justis Derx, Allison Duffy, Joyce Ermer, Tony Evans, Ted Georgian, Kathy Hardiman, Dan Hinz, Matt Hinz, Cole Holcomb, Tink Holcomb, Robin Lard, Rich "Turtle" Lockwood, Addison McCoy, Dave Michie, Joe Patterer, Marilee Patterer, Joe Peace, Megan Pelton, Trevor Putt, Terry Simkins, Sue Stevens, and Jon Titus. We really appreciate a spectacular turn out and support from the Olean Area Hiking Group and the Portville Boy Scouts.



Crew Blazes New Eshelman County Line Trail & Prepares for Woods Walk

Thank You To Our Financial Supporters

Thank You & Welcome to New & Renewing Members Dec 1, 2008—Feb 28, 2009

Ted & Darcy Branch
Mike & Diane Canada
Tom & Judith Chaffee
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In Memory Of

Roger C. "Bud" Drabant
by John A. Balacki



A Heartfelt Thanks to Our Generous Donors

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Tania Wadzinski
Janet Wheeler
Nick Vaczek

We are grateful for your generosity and support! Kind acts and thoughtful gifts such as these assist us in fulfilling our Mission. If we have inadvertently omitted your gift from these lists, please bring it to our attention and we will happily correct our oversight.

Create a Lasting Tribute

You can honor your family and friends in ways that will have lasting impacts on Pfeiffer Nature Center and therefore the local community. Gifts can be either memorials or tributes to the accomplishments of someone still with us, and all gifts will be acknowledged in this newsletter.

Gifts to the **Kay Pfeiffer Gerkin Endowment Fund** are maintained and managed separately from our operating funds. The principle in this fund is retained exclusively for investments and income generation, with only interest and dividends available to support our ongoing activities. Check with your financial or legal advisor to name Pfeiffer Nature Center in your estate planning.

Gifts may be made specifically to our sugar bush expansion project. We will plant sugar maples on our Eshelman property annually. While donors will not be able to identify "their" tree, they will have the benefit of knowing that their gifts provided a source of ongoing income. Maple seedlings are \$35 each.

Gifts of any size may be made to the Nature Center to honor or memorialize relatives, friends, or pets. With no minimum donation, this option provides giving opportunities for all.

Seasonal Stirrings

April ~ Sunlight reflects off the Earth and lights up the Moon; the effect is most intense just before and after the New Moons of March and April. ~ In order to overwhelm predators and ensure survival, many frogs and salamanders will lay eggs all at the same time. Look for these egg masses along vernal pools and other damp locations.

May ~ The spring night sky welcomes the constellations Bootes (the Spring Triangle) and Virgo, while the Milky Way slips to the horizon. ~ Damselflies begin to mate while in flight by connecting their tails. As they fly in this formation, they form a heart shape.

June ~ Synchronous molters, like Canadian Geese, change their feathers all at once in a period as short as two weeks. ~ Young beavers begin to leave their families to make room for the arrival of newborn beavers.

Pfeiffer Nature Center Mission

- To preserve the integrity of the old-growth forest
- To provide an area for scientific research
- To promote community-based nature study programs for grade school, high school, college and adult students
- To further natural resource stewardship

YES, I'D LIKE TO BECOME A MEMBER OF PFEIFFER NATURE CENTER!

Membership Levels and Benefits

All members receive a subscription to *The Ovenbird*, our quarterly newsletter, delivered to your home.

Student/senior	\$10	1 \$5 off program admission coupons
Individual	\$25	1 \$5 off program admission coupons
Family	\$35	3 \$5 off program admission coupons
Conservator	\$100	4 free family program admissions
Patron	\$250	Same as Conservator, invitation to wine & cheese reception, 1 tree planted
Guardian	\$500	Same as Patron, plus 1 decorated fir holiday wreath
Benefactor	\$1,000	Same as Guardian, plus unlimited free program admissions
Additional Donation \$ _____		

All members also receive discounted admissions and gift shop purchases at many other nature centers.

Your contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowable by NYS Tax Law.

NAME: _____

STREET ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____ E-MAIL: _____

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL: _____ Is this a _____ new or _____ renewing membership? (Check one)

May we contact you about volunteering? _____ Yes _____ No, thank you.

Send your completed form to: Pfeiffer Nature Center, PO Box 802 Portville, NY 14770

Project BudBreak (continued...)

Continued on page 7.

How did Project BudBreak come about? It started in 2007. We were worried about our local plants and how they are affected by increasing temperatures.

I started Project BudBreak for two reasons. I thought people thought global climate change wasn't really affecting their world, and by alerting them and encouraging them to go out and record when plants start to flower they would start to think about what is happening. My second reason is, in order to really detect on a large scale what is happening to native species we would need a large number of observations so we need help from a lot of people to get these observations.

What is involved in Project BudBreak? Volunteer citizen scientists register on the website <http://budbreak.tc.cornell.edu/>. You go through a series of questions about your location. After that you identify which plants you are going to monitor. From there you collect the data, and enter it on your computer. I wanted to make it easy and quick.

How do I know what to observe? The site provides

instructional tutorials to help people get started easily. There are 9 common species of wildflowers and 9 common species of trees & shrubs. People can submit their observations on other plants as well.

Why is it important to monitor these plant lifecycles? One phenomena that may be occurring is the timing of related natural events are out of synchrony. For example, in a plant that needs to be pollinated, the flowering may be occurring before the insects are available to pollinate it. There are indications from Europe for one particular set of plants and insects that have become asynchronous. The leafing occurred before the insects emerged. The leaf material is then not tender enough for the emerging insects to eat. The insects are affected as well as the birds that eat the insects. Things are interconnected. Project BudBreak gives people a window to understanding that.

A whole separate issue is getting people involved as citizen scientists. We have a disconnect between scientist and the regular public who have lost what science means in their everyday life. We're all scientists making observations. This re-engages people in the process.

The whole movement of citizen science shows people are fully capable of adding to our knowledge base just like scientists. Science becomes more powerful in their everyday life.

Pfeiffer Nature Center and
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**Pfeiffer Nature Center—
where science, art, and
nature come together!**

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Hours of Operation

Office, 14 S. Main St. Portville:

Generally Tues-Thurs, 8am to 4pm; other times by chance or appointment

Lillibridge Road Property:

Trails open to non-motorized usage dawn to dusk, 7 days a week, year round.

Yubadam Road Property:

Trails open to non-motorized usage dawn to dusk, 7 days a week, year round EXCEPT during hunting season Oct —Dec , when all trails are closed.

Staff is available for questions, tours, and programs as scheduled or by prior arrangement.

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Check our website or call for the most up-to-date information and upcoming programs:

**[www.pfeiffernaturecenter.org](http://www.pfeiffernaturecenter.org)**

**Plan Your Next Event at Pfeiffer!**



**A beautiful open setting that  
accommodates groups up to one  
hundred.**

Sitting high atop Lillibridge Road offering breathtaking views, enjoy our unique timber-framed pavilion, available for small gatherings, reunions, office parties, receptions at a nominal fee.

Contact Pfeiffer  
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**A view that creates a  
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Be sure you don't miss out on any of our exciting programs! Simply write [programs@pfeiffernaturecenter.org](mailto:programs@pfeiffernaturecenter.org) with the subject line **Count Me In** and we'll add you to our e-mail distribution list.