

THE OVENBIRD

PFEIFFER NATURE CENTER & FOUNDATION

From the Director

No matter how cold we get, how salty our mudrooms are, or how much we have to shovel, there's no denying that this area is truly a winter wonderland. Postcard-perfect main streets, snow-covered forests, and frozen waterfalls and rivers make for some of the most tranquil and serene sights this side of the world has to offer. While this snow magic stimulates the skiing and hot cocoa industries, it also plays a pivotal role in our community strength and our environment.

Often called the "Snowbelt," Western New York holds our dear Nature Center in the heart of its Enchanted Mountains. Maintaining this frozen world may seem like a chore, but the thick layer of water crystals acts as nature's own insulator. The snow cover we moan and groan over acts as a protective blanket for our soil, shielding it from extreme temperature fluctuations and helps prevent erosion. In an area where agriculture has as vital of a role, this is paramount for protecting our fertile land. Additionally, the snowfall acts as a natural purifier, capturing particulate matter and pollutants from the atmosphere. This results in improved air quality, benefiting all those reading this as well as our environment.

Beyond protecting the ground beneath our feet and the air above our heads, the unique weather conditions winter provides us lend significant impact on our local ecosystems. Many of the plants and animals in our area are adapted to the cold and snow. One of nature's best defenses against damage to our crops and forests is the population control of certain insect species with these cold temperatures.

Winter is a time of dormancy and rest for many of our plant and animal species. This time is crucial to the preservation of biodiversity, allowing various organisms to conserve energy, hibernate, or prepare for the coming springtime. This period of dormancy and rest is essential for the survival and reproduction of so many of our countless ecosystems.

As the snow melts and gives way to the budding spring, the gradual contribution to our region's water sources is often a sight to behold. Waterways that flow but once a year come alive, starting a new chapter of life as rivers, streams, and groundwater reserves are replenished. Not only does this lead into the sustainability of our aquatic ecosystems, but it ensures we have a constant water supply for drinking, agriculture, and preventing droughts.

Next time you think of Jack Frost, try sending a quick "thanks for everything, Jack."



Since We Last Spoke!



Mushroom Walk 9/13



Witches Ball 10/28



Cider Tasting 11/5



Wreath Decorating 11/15-25

Our Environment at Risk

Everyone has heard about “endangered,” “at risk,” and “threatened” species, most often coupled with the Amazon Rain Forest, pollutants in the oceans, or the need for the Monarch Butterfly’s habitat to be restored to help save their species. What do we know about our less publicly noted neighbors? An endangered species right here in our backyard in Portville and Cattaraugus County is the Eastern Hellbender (*Cryptobranchus alleganiensis*).



This large aquatic salamander faces its threats in the forms of water pollution and habitat degradation.

The Eastern Hellbender is characterized by its dark markings, rudder-like tail, and intimidating appearance. While most juveniles lose their gills when transitioning into adulthood, some retain the slits even though they exchange oxygen in the water through capillaries in their skin. It is believed that when first described by English speakers that it came from hell and was bent on returning through the depths of riverbeds.

Hellbenders are extremely sensitive to water quality. Their presence (or absence) can serve as a valuable indicator of the overall health of aquatic ecosystems. If they’re thriving, their ecosystem likely is as well. Adult Hellbenders are apex predators in their habitat. They primarily feed on crayfish, which directly affects the population of aquatic insects, small fish, and other members of the food web; diets of mainly herbivores help keep an oxygen-rich environment! Their unique nesting behaviors often lead to refuge for other aquatic species as the Hellbenders dig and clean out burrows under large, flat rocks in their streams and rivers.

We can all contribute by supporting healthy waterways, being aware of our disruption and additions to streams and rivers, and participating in citizen science initiatives to monitor water health. By taking collective action, we can play a crucial role in the survival and recovery of the Eastern Hellbender and contribute to the preservation of local biodiversity. Should you have the time and ability, the Jamestown Audubon Society has a wonderful exhibit on this crucial component of aquatic health. Stop by and visit their Nature Center at 1600 Riverside Road Jamestown, NY 14701. Tell them that their neighbors at Pfeiffer Nature Center sent you!



Thank you to our Wreath Sponsors!

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Yes, I'd Like to Become a Member of Pfeiffer Nature Center!

Membership Level and Benefits

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

Student/Senior	\$12	
Individual	\$24	
Family	\$36	
Steward	\$50	
Conservator	\$100	Invitation to Wine & Cheese Reception
Patron	\$250	Invitation to Wine & Cheese Reception
Guardian	\$500	Same as Patron, 1 decorated holiday wreath
Benefactor	\$1,000	Same as Guardian, 1 Adopt-a-Tree Sponsorship
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?

Would you like to become a volunteer? Yes ___ No ___

Send your completed form to:

**Pfeiffer Nature Center
PO Box 802
Portville, NY 14770**

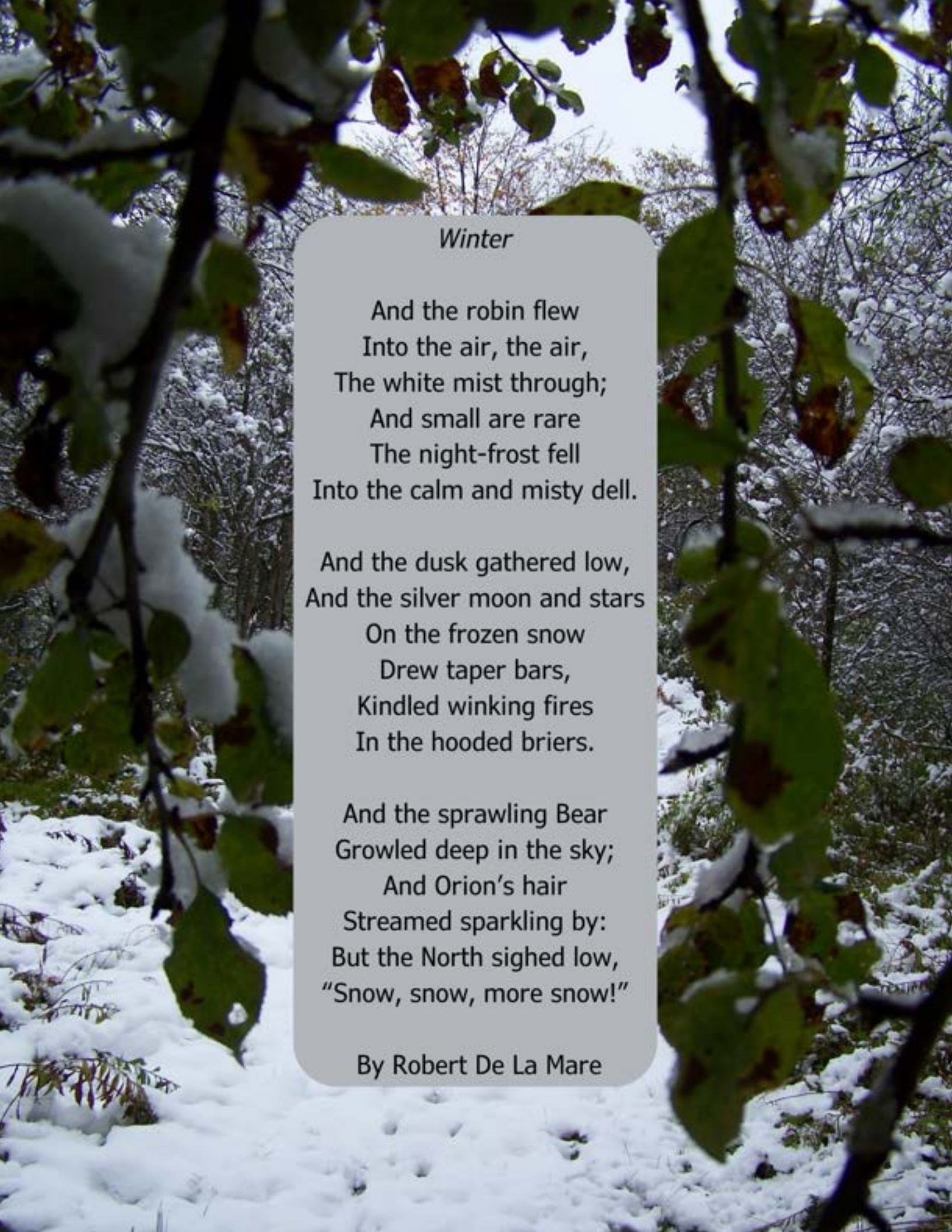
OR

**Sign up/renew online at
www.pfeiffernaturecenter.org**



Pfeiffer Nature Center and Foundation

Where science, art, and nature come together



Winter

And the robin flew
Into the air, the air,
The white mist through;
And small are rare
The night-frost fell
Into the calm and misty dell.

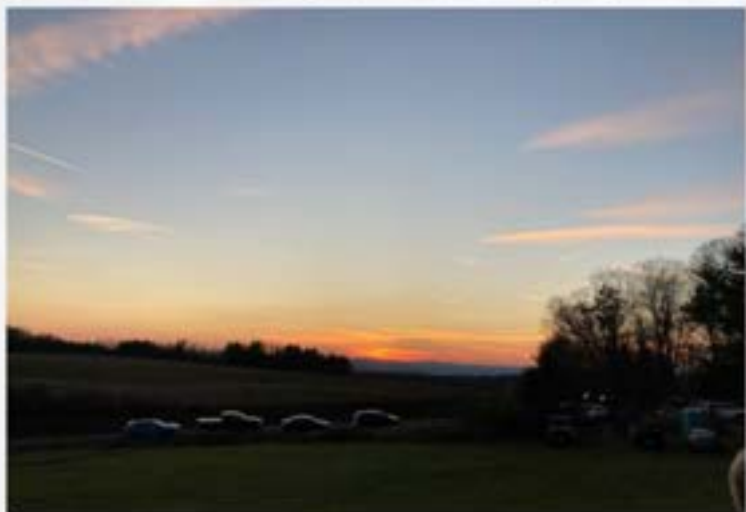
And the dusk gathered low,
And the silver moon and stars
On the frozen snow
Drew taper bars,
Kindled winking fires
In the hooded briers.

And the sprawling Bear
Growled deep in the sky;
And Orion's hair
Streamed sparkling by:
But the North sighed low,
"Snow, snow, more snow!"

By Robert De La Mare

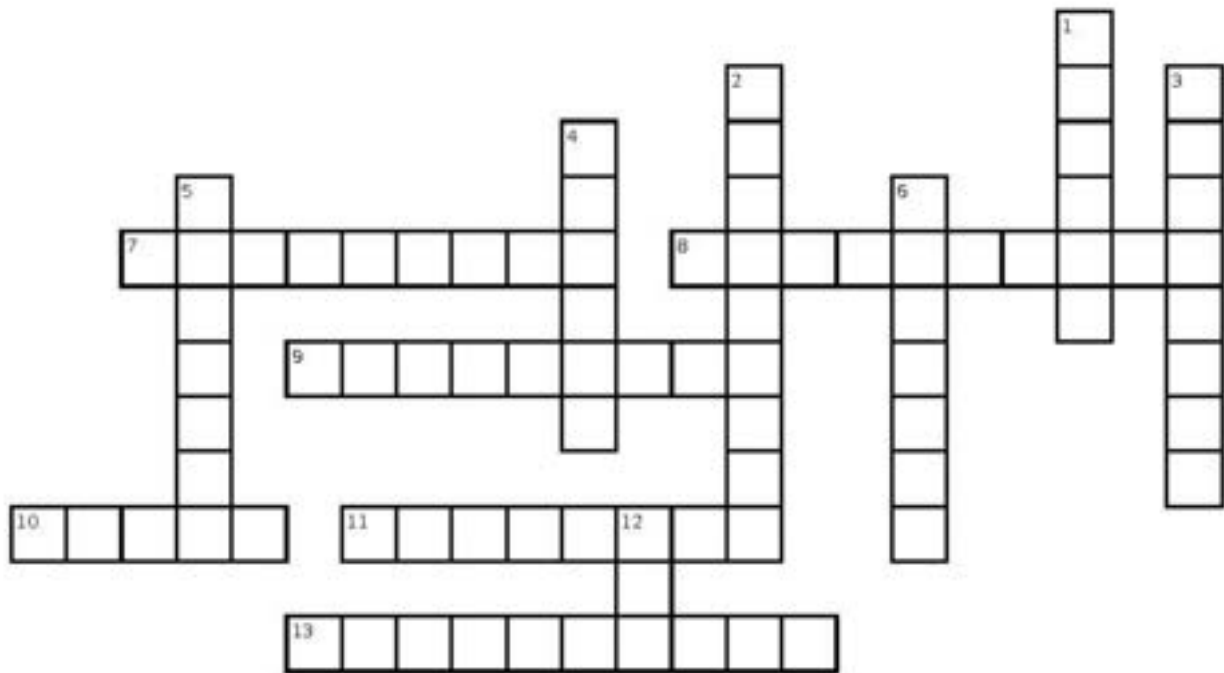
Winter Story

PHOTOS BY BETH BERGREEN-FROST



Winter Words

Kids Corner



Down:

1. "where science, art, and _____ come together"
2. many animals _____ in the Winter to conserve energy for Springtime
3. the cabin on Lillibridge is made from the American _____ Tree
4. a circular holiday decoration... made by Pfeiffer!
5. Colonel Eshelman's first name
6. wear these on your hands in the cold
12. frozen water; slippery

Across:

7. hot _____ is a great winter beverage
8. make up the majority of the Eastern Hellbender's diet
9. adding harmful waste into the environment is a form of _____
10. last name of our Winter friend Jack
11. the point of the year where the Sun is furthest or closest to the Earth; Winter _____ 2023
13. an _____ species is at risk of extinction



Solstice Snack

Cranberry Salsa

Ingredients:

- 12 ounces of fresh cranberries
- 1/4 cup white sugar
- 1 small red onion, diced
- 1 medium jalapeño pepper, diced
- Juice of 1 small lime
- Salt to taste
- (Optional) 1 bunch cilantro, chopped
- Tortilla chips, cream cheese and crackers of choice, or other favorite dippers

Directions:

Combine all ingredients into a food processor (a blender works too!) and blend to a medium/desired consistency. Enjoy fresh with your dippers or let rest overnight for flavors to combine. Feel free to add this to your holiday table to have with your favorite meats too!

Why Pfeiffer loves this recipe:

Cranberries house a large amount of Vitamin C, an essential piece of keeping your immune system in fighting shape! Another big boost is found in jalapeños. While some find these spicy guys a little scary, the sweet and tangy of the sugar and cranberries here really lets their Vitamin C, along with other vitamins and minerals, do the job of keeping you healthy!