

Comments on Connetquot

Published by the Friends of Connetquot River State Park Preserve

VOLUME 31 NUMBER 3 Fall 2026



Hello Friends!

I look forward to fall for so many reasons. The migration of the Purple Martins, the Monarch butterflies and the egrets. Just as these beautiful creatures ready themselves for the upcoming seasonal weather change, so do we. We start preparing for the cooler weather, the turning of the leaves, the excitement in the trout eager to meet the fly. On October 3rd, we participated in the 1Day-3Parks event; a collaboration of Bayard Cutting Arboretum, Connetquot & Heckscher. 3 great local destinations each with a completely different 'vibe' in walking proximity to each other. I invite everyone to come sample everything that each of these NYS Parks has to offer.

The Educational Staff is creating a wonderful Halloween Haunted experience that just might be too scary for me! Our September Wellness Retreat was such a "treat", we are offering an afternoon of fall yoga to enjoy the sights, sounds and smells of fall. "Birdability", the birding is for every ability event is at the end of October. If you bird like I do, please join me and together we just may learn the difference between a Mallard and a Swan!

We are delighted to introduce the Park's wheelchair program. FOC is starting a hiking club! More about these new additions in this edition. And Friends of Connetquot are preparing to celebrate our 30th Anniversary! Please sign up to volunteer to make this the best and most memorable Gala ever! I look forward to what we might accomplish in the next 30 years!

See you out there!

Janet Marie

What's Happening Around the Preserve

By Frank Stark

Unfortunately, due to extensive storm damage, the slab bridge on the eastern side of the park is restricted to foot traffic only at this time. No equestrian or vehicular use is permitted over that bridge at this time.

Park operations staff recently completed construction of the new Pond #9 dam using 75% recycled wood material. Quickly after, the Trout Crew volunteer group lent a big helping hand and cut back a lot of overgrown vegetation in the area.

We are now accepting training requests for All-Terrain wheelchair rentals. Though the All-Terrain wheelchair program is not yet open to the public, we have begun scheduling training sessions to learn how to use them. We recommend all patrons that will be interested in renting an all-terrain wheelchair request a training session soon as you will not be able to reserve a wheelchair unless you are listed as a certified operator prior to the day you are looking to rent a wheelchair. For all that are interested, please call the Park Office at (631) 581-1005 and express your interest in becoming a certified all-terrain wheelchair operator.

Our fish are getting bigger! In order to make sure the trout are located in the best environment suited for their growth, we shuffled around some fish this week from smaller areas to larger ones. Some trout located in pond #5 were moved to Pond #7, and Trout in Pond #3 were moved into Pond #4 and #2. It is ideal to spread the fish out evenly so there is less competition during feeding, and the trout are then more likely to thrive.

It's almost fall, but we're already getting busy with events! This past weekend we hosted the Women's Fishing Expo on Saturday as well as the September Wellness Retreat on Sunday, both with great attendance numbers of passionate attendees. We are looking forward to the One Day 3 Parks event on 10/3 as well as our Haunted House event on 10/9 & 10/10.

The Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation LIONS Award Celebrating Long Island Originators, Narrators and Stewards

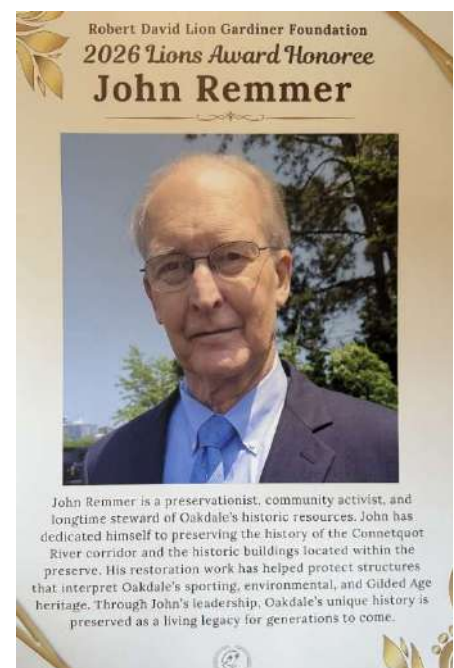


The Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation's inaugural Lions Award ceremony took place August 13, 2026, honoring eight community leaders for their extraordinary contributions to preserving Long Island's history.

Among the honorees was John Remmer for everything he has contributed to our local parks. Congratulations John!

The Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation, established in 1987, supports the study and preservation of Long Island history, particularly in Suffolk County, and encourages historical societies to maintain collections and facilities.

Friends of Connetquot wish to express our thanks to the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation for all of their support!



The Restoration of the Icehouse

By John Remmer

NYS Parks Engineering issued a Stop Work Order with the requirement that a full set of Architectural “As Is” plans be submitted and approved before work could resume. Once the plans were accepted, work began again.

The items to be addressed included modifying the visitor’s railing with an additional rail, finish installing the bolts for this railing, metal bracing for the Ice Loading Platform support post, completion of brick work around the Ice Loading platform beam pockets, and repair of the southeast wall brickwork. The most challenging task was finding a qualified mason for the brick wall.



Southeast wall crumbling



Working on the wall

Once the items identified on the engineering plans had been addressed, NYS Parks Engineering issued the Building Permit and allowed us to proceed. Repairs to the ceiling above the visitor’s gallery, work on the electrical system and work on the exhibits began. A sub-panel was installed beneath the Ice Loading Platform, and a switch was mounted next to the door to control the lights. Track lighting, which included fixtures to illuminate the platform floor and the exhibits along the walls and at the ends of the gallery was installed.

An icehouse begs to hold cakes of ice, or for this icehouse now, simulated cakes. First a three-level wooden platform was constructed, which was to be painted. Choosing the color proved a challenge, as looking at a number of photos on the Web of ice harvesting in New Hampshire and Maine showed a great variation in color. After selecting several examples and visiting the paint store with their prints, a choice was made. The “ice platform” was then topped with ¼ inch acrylic sheets and dusted with spray snow. Several “cakes” of ice, 24 x 32 x 8 inches, were constructed of 1 inch acrylic and their insides painted. These are illuminated on the inside by small LED “puck” lights in an attempt to make them sparkle.



Replica salt marsh grass was put around the edges to illustrate the insulation that would have been put in place. A ramp was constructed to demonstrate the means by which the cakes would have been moved from the loading platform down to the current stacking level.

Hay was used between the layers of ice cakes to keep them from sticking together. It was also used between the ice and the walls as insulation. At each end of the Ice Loading Platform there are cribs which held the hay that would be used.

Pin spots were installed under the gallery floor to illuminate three enlarged photographs of ice harvesting hung on the far wall. The center photo is what looks to be men loading ice blocks onto the back of a horse drawn wagon at the edge of the Main Pond.



The next activity will be the exhibits on the visitor gallery walls and at the ends of the platform. They will be designed to tell the story of local ice harvesting and will include tools such as ice plows and saws for cutting, ice forks for separating, pikes for moving the cakes as well as ice tongs. Pictures and descriptive text will be included.

Friends of Connetquot can not wait for the Opening of this important exhibition!

Friends of Connetquot Programs

Register at www.friendsofconnetquot.org

Come on a hike!

Starting on Sunday, October 11th at 7:30 am

Meet at the flagpole every 2nd Sunday morning at 7:30 am beginning October 11th. Let's explore the 3,473 acres together! No registration required. Wear appropriate footwear and bring a water bottle. This is a free event. Please register.

Yoga on the Deck with Beth Ann

Sunday, October 17 – 1:15 PM



Join Beth Ann on the porch on Sunday October 17th for an afternoon session of Yoga. Bring your mat and wear your favorite fall hat and scarf! Beth Ann will guide you through some afternoon stretches and breathwork gradually working into a flow. The Class will end with Sound Healing meditation followed with Hot Cider and teas. Bring your favorite hot tumbler! Registration is \$10 for members, \$20 for non-members.

Fall Fly Fishing Outing

Friday, October 23 - 7:30 AM

The Friends would like to invite all to enjoy a day of fly fishing and a tasty lunch with beverage from the Snapper Inn. Note: all park rules still apply. Admission is \$80 per person. We are sorry, but there will be no refunds for cancellations. The event is limited to twenty-five people, so please apply as soon as possible.



Birding is for everybody but it's not always easy

Birding truly is for everyone and every body, regardless of ability or other health concerns.



You don't need a lot to start birding—just a good pair of binoculars, a desire to be outdoors, and a destination; like Connetquot! The sixth annual Birdability Week will be held October 20-26, 2026 and we invite everyone to **join us at Connetquot at 9 am on Sunday October 25th** to do a little bit of bird watching! The hike will be on easy terrain, suitable for everyone and we would love to have you come out for a morning of beginning birding! Birdability is a free program, open to all. If you have questions or concerns in order to participate, please let us know on your registration or contact janetmariesole@gmail.com

Decorating the Clubhouse
Saturday, November 21st starting at 1 PM

Help us prepare for the holidays! Come decorate the building with thematic trees throughout the main floor of the Clubhouse. Community Service hours and refreshments will be available for this event. 😊



Claus at Connetquot
Saturday, December 12th 1:00 – 3:30 PM

Get ready for the Man in Red! He's coming back to visit Connetquot! Crafts, refreshments and time with Mr. and Mrs. Claus. A Wonderful time of the year! Register at Friends of Connetquot. \$5 fee per family for non-members

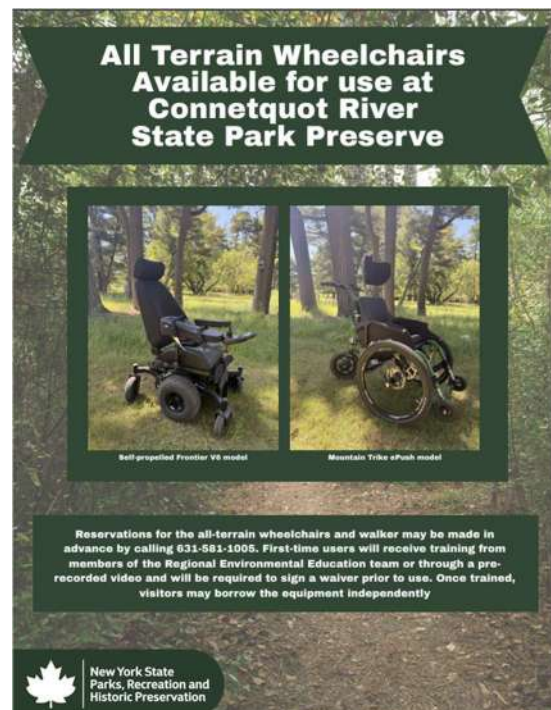
Help us make our 30th Anniversary Gala
the best ever!

Assistance is needed for fundraising, acquiring sponsors, advertisements, decorating and evening logistics. Can you run a live auction? We need you!



Register at www.friendsofconnetquot.org

Most of our Programs are free to members, \$5 for non-members. Seasonal Parking Rate Applies



Great State Park Programs!

Reservations are required and are taken beginning 2 weeks prior to each program.

To make a reservation, visit [Eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com) and search #NatureAdventure (Notice that's "Ed" not "Ad").

Fees: \$4.00 per adult, \$4.00 per child and children under 3 are free.

Seasonal Parking Fees are required.

Outdoor programs are rain or shine, so please dress appropriately.

Tiny Tots: "Nature Discoveries"

Explore the natural world around us. These programs will connect children and their parents with nature through short walks, story time, animal visitors, and crafts. For children ages 3-5.

Held on Wednesdays

10:30-11:30am

Let's Go Camping	October 14 th	Thanksgiving Tales and Traditions	November 25 th
The Great Pumpkin	October 21 st	Who's Awake? Who's Asleep?	December 9 th
Animal Adaptations	November 18 th	Little Nature Detectives: Winter	December 23 rd

Clubhouse Tours: Family Program

Held on the 1st Sunday

10:00am ~ 12:00pm and 1:00pm - 3:00pm

A docent will discuss the history of the tavern and the high society Club which shaped Connetquot River State Park Preserve into what it is today. Tours of the historic Nicoll Grist Mill are included and will be offered after your house tour. Recommended for children 8+. There will be a short talk outside before viewing the inside.

Haunted House and Grounds: (Free Family Program, ages 10+ recommended)

Friday & Saturday

October 9th & 10th

7:00pm – 10:00pm

Encounter the ghosts and monsters from Long Island's local myths and legends! Walk the halls of the Historic Clubhouse and find your way along the trails of the Preserve as spirits and monsters come back to life. Free event. Ages 10 and up strongly recommended!

Crab Craft Time: Living Fossils: (Family Program, ages 10+)

Saturday

October 17th

10:30am – 12:00pm

It's spooky season! What better way to spend an October day leading up to Halloween than by learning about an animal many find to be scary! No need to fear! Join us to learn all about the living fossils of the ocean: The Horseshoe Crab! We'll be dot painting Horseshoe Crab molts after a short presentation. For ages 10 and up.

Hike to Hatchery: (Family Program)

Sunday

October 18th

10:30am ~ 12:30pm

See the Historic Trout Hatchery at the Preserve! Learn the history of how it came to be and learn what it takes to raise our trout. We'll walk 1 mile to the Hatchery and tour the raceways, hatch house, and surrounding features related to the long history of NY State Park's only operational fish hatchery!

Spooky Skeletons: (Children's Program)

Friday

October 23rd

6:30pm – 8:00pm

Join us for Spooky Skeletons as we explore the fascinating bones and skulls found throughout the natural world. Discover how animal skeletons help them move, eat, protect themselves, and survive in their environments!

Great State Park Programs!

Mystical Creatures: (Children's Program)

Thursday

October 29th

6:00pm – 7:30pm

Just before Halloween when the sun goes down, all of Connetquot's mystical creatures come out to play. Woodland pixies, unicorns, bigfoot, and much more roam around the Preserve for a night of spooky fun. Come learn about these mystical creatures on this unique night hike! We'll be looking for traces of them with a fun scavenger hunt for all to enjoy! Bring a flashlight and your imagination! This is a guided scavenger hunt hike at night.

Nature Knowledge Night: Nature's Not-so-Spooky Creatures: (Children's Program)

Friday

October 30th

6:30pm – 8:00pm

Join our monthly after-school club and get to know Nature's Not-So-Spooky Animals as we meet some of nature's most misunderstood creatures. Discover the fascinating ways these animals live, survive, and play an important role in our ecosystems!

Citizen Science: Freshwater Bio-Blitz: (Free Adult Program)

Wednesday

November 4th

10:00am – 12:00pm

Join us for a citizen science initiative at Connetquot River State Park Preserve! We will be recording observations of freshwater fish species in the Connetquot River and any other aquatic wildlife we may come across. Parks Staff will be electrofishing in the river, giving us a unique opportunity to observe otherwise unseen freshwater fish species.

Scary Stories to Tell in the Park: (Adult Program)

Friday

November 13th

6:30pm – 8:00pm

Join us for an eerie walk through the forests of Long Island accompanied by stories that are guaranteed to send shivers down to your bones and keep you up through the night. Then, we will gather around the fire to write frightful tales to bring out our own horrors to life.

Revolutionary Remedies: The Women Who Healed a Nation: (Family Program)

Saturday

November 14th

10:30am- 12:00pm

Explore the overlooked medical work of women during the American Revolution. We'll highlight the nurses, caregivers, Indigenous healers, and enslaved African women whose herbal knowledge, improvised remedies, and daily labor sustained the Continental Army. Discover how ordinary women used extraordinary ingenuity to keep a nation alive.

Living History Clubhouse Tours: (Family Program)

Sunday

November 15th

1:00pm, 2:00pm, & 3:00pm

Step back in time and learn the history of the tavern and clubhouse and meet the club members that made the South Side Sportsmen's Club the historic landmark that it is today!

Citizen Science: Mammal Survey: (Free Adult Program)

Wednesday

November 18th

1:00pm – 3:00pm

You never know what a camera can capture. We will take a leisurely hike to collect trail cameras that were placed in several locations throughout Connetquot. Once collected, we will head back to look over the footage together. Noteworthy sightings will be submitted to Snapshot NY.

Great State Park Programs!

Nature Knowledge Night! : Microscope Night Bug Bazaar! (Children's Program)

Friday

November 20th

6:30pm – 8:00pm

Join us for Microscope Madness and discover how to use a microscope to explore the tiny world around us. Learn how to prepare specimens, focus your microscope, and uncover details that are impossible to see with the naked eye!

Art in the Park: Origami: (Family Program, ages 8+)

Sunday

November 22nd

1:00pm – 2:30pm

Learn the art and history of Origami through nature themed designs! You'll get to fold your own critter to take home. All skill levels are welcome!

Self-Care Saturday: (Adult Program)

Saturday

November 28th

1:00pm – 2:30pm

Cozy up for a Fall Self-Care Saturday and learn how to make your own simple, nature-inspired self-care remedies using seasonal ingredients. Spend the afternoon relaxing, creating, and treating yourself to a little autumn-inspired pampering!

Nature Knowledge Night!: Constellations: (Children's Program)

Friday

December 11th

6:30pm- 8:00pm

Join us for a night of Constellation Exploration as we discover the stories and patterns hidden among the stars. Learn how to identify some of the most recognizable constellations and find your way around the night sky!

Stars and Meteors: Geminids: (Family Program)

Saturday

December 12th

6:00pm – 8:00pm

The Geminid meteor shower begins this week! Join us after hours and look up at the sky – you may see something out of this world! Bring a lawn chair for viewing after our lecture, weather permitting.

Citizen Science: Mammal Survey: (Free Adult Program)

Wednesday

December 16th

10:00am – 12:00pm

You never know what a camera can capture. We will take a leisurely hike to collect trail cameras that were placed in several locations throughout Connetquot. Once collected, we will head back to look over the footage together. Noteworthy sightings will be submitted to Snapshot NY.

Citizen Science: Owl Prowl: (Adult Program)

Saturday

December 26th

6:00pm – 9:00pm

Survey and discover the raptors of the night in a "citizen science" program to study the owls of Connetquot. You'll learn about the owl species that could be found in the Preserve and then we'll embark on a long hike around the Preserve to hear evidence of owls in certain locations while taking data. We may hike between 3-5 miles.

Reservations are required and are taken beginning 2 weeks prior to each program.

To make a reservation, visit [Eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com) and search #NatureAdventure (Notice that's "Ed" not "Ad").

Fees: \$4.00 per adult, \$4.00 per child and children under 3 are free.

Seasonal Parking Fees are required.

Outdoor programs are rain or shine, so please dress appropriately.

Hoof Beats

By Carole Scialdone

Photo by Nicole Scialdone



There is something uniquely peaceful about riding a horse through Connetquot River State Park Preserve. As an equestrian, I have come to appreciate that every ride is more than simply traveling along a trail, it is an opportunity to reconnect with my horse, the land, and the natural world around us. Wide, open, well-groomed paths lead us around the Park reminding us how lucky we are to have this beautiful preserve to enjoy. Wildlife is one of the greatest pleasures of riding here. Waterfowl can be seen near the river and ponds, and an occasional osprey or other bird of prey may soar overhead. The adorable fox kits tumbling around in the sand are a joy to stop and watch. Deer often appear quietly between the trees and we marvel at how athletic they are as they leap across the trail and through the woods. The spotted fawns with their moms, a little wary at first, eventually realize we mean them no harm. The rafters of wild turkeys forage along the trails, taking their time ambling off the path so we can pass. As they slowly descend into the forest, they pass through streams of sunlight which lights up their spectacular iridescent feather colors. Our horses take it all in stride, enjoying the sights as much as we do. We inevitably will meet up with fellow riders eager to tell us what they experienced just down the road. As equestrians, we truly enjoy how our horses bring us closer to nature.

With the hot and humid Summer winding down, many are looking forward to the cooler days of Autumn. The leaves will slowly begin to change color making each ride a new adventure. Our mounts will enjoy less bugs and the cooler temps will spark a little extra spunk in their stride.

For me, the most meaningful part of trail riding is the bond I share with my horses. A horse notices things we sometimes miss—the movement in the bushes, a bird taking flight, or the unfamiliar sound ahead. I learn to listen to my horse, and my horse learns to trust me. Together, we navigate the trail, responding to one another through subtle shifts in weight, rein, voice and body language. That connection makes riding at Connetquot special. We are not simply passing through the Preserve; we are experiencing it together. The quiet woods, fresh air, wildlife, and steady rhythm of hoofbeats create a feeling of peace that is difficult to find anywhere else. Each ride reminds me how fortunate I am to share these trails with my horses and friends, and how important it is to protect this remarkable natural sanctuary for generations of riders and wildlife to come.

Leave A Legacy

By Janet Soley

When my husband and I updated our wills & trusts a few years ago, we had an opportunity to designate certain organizations to receive charitable gifts. I chose to include Connetquot River State Park Preserve because the park has provided me a lifetime of joy and I want to ensure they are there for generations to come. I am grateful I can be part of taking care of this Preserve in the long term. If you feel as I do about Connetquot, please consider including Friends of Connetquot River State Park Preserve in your estate planning.



Friends of Connetquot President Get Together!

Earlier this month, our first President Bob Giffen paid Connetquot a visit. Joining current President Soley on Bob's tour of the Preserve was also exPresident Bob Labuski who is now on our Advisory Board!

Photo by Ritamarie Weigand

Executive Board

Janet Soley, President
David Reisfield, Vice President
Glenn Reed, Treasurer
Melissa Spolar, Recording Secretary

Board at Large

Director of Historic Preservation Ritamarie Weigand
Historian Ed Gross
Webmaster Eric Larson
Membership Chair Janet Soley
Social Media Chair Carole Scialdone
Newsletter Editor TBD
Kristine Bryant
James Fitzpatrick
Teresa Simeone

Advisory Board

Sandi Brewster-walker	Edward Kelleher
Bob Labuski	Joe Mikulas
Richard Remmer	Rick & Pat Snedecor
Susanne Wuehler	Bob Giffen

Mission Statement

The Friends of Connetquot is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation, conservation and history of the 3,473-acre Connetquot River State Park Preserve. We work to help management protect a pristine environment and historic buildings and artifacts. We also support educational programs, fishing facilities and hiking and equestrian trails.

The records of the Friends of Connetquot can be viewed in our room at the Preserve. The New York State Office of Charities Registration holds copies of the annual charities reports required by law.

PLEASE NOTE: Automatic defibrillators are available in the administration office, the BOCES room, the main building and at the hatchery. Park staff is trained in their use.

For Emergencies in the Preserve: Call the New York Park Police at 631-669-2500.
Also notify the Entrance Booth at 631-581-1005.

Give Us Your Best Shot

Share your photos of the Preserve with us! Send us up to four photos, in .jpeg or .png digital format, for a chance to win a free year's membership in FOC. Photos must be current (within a year of submission) and shot within the park. Please give the approximate location of the scene whenever possible.

DEADLINE for next issue: January 15, 2027

Send your files to Janet Soley at janetmariesoley@gmail.com

Visit us at www.friendsofconnetquot.org



FRIENDS OF CONNETQUOT
BOX 472
OAKDALE NY 11769

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 96
Smithtown,
N.Y. 11787



John C. Dunphy
Private Foundation, Inc.



The Friends of Connetquot thanks Parks and Trails New York and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation for their support of our efforts.



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic
Preservation**