

Comments on Connetquot

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Photo by Carole Scialdone

Hello Friends!

After such a cold winter, I welcome Spring with open arms! I am so looking forward to the skunk weeds popping up, the Peepers singing their song, the trout eager to take my fly, the flowering trees all around the preserve and the beautiful overwhelming display of our daffodils!

Stuck inside for most of February, I had time to work on Spring Program offerings that I hope won't disappoint you! After all, we do all this for you – our Friends! I am so looking forward to meeting many of you at our Members Meeting on April 18th. It should be a great opportunity to meet, share some news with you and invite you to get involved. I Love My Park Day will be an amazing day of service projects around the Preserve thanks in part to a generous grant from Athletic Brewing, our new Sponsor! Registration will open in early April, so please sign up!

As the season progresses, we look forward to the launch of the Parks Wheelchair Program, our beginner Birding hikes and the opening reception of the Connetquot Riverbank Community of Color Exhibit. Spring is a wonderful time at Connetquot! Come out and enjoy it with me!

See you out there!
Janet Marie

What's Happening in the Preserve

By Patrick Hein

Connetquot hosted the Long Island Arboricultural Association (LIAA) for their annual volunteer Arbor Day event on March 7th. They removed multiple hazardous trees, limbs, as well as provided some great preventative pruning of various trees around the park with their crews. They also did some root excavation of several specimen trees by the building complex to ensure the health of said trees

With the snow finally melted staff are beginning to repair fences and gates damaged by the snows over the winter again

Stocking of the river begins again with the favorable weather and after a brutal winter brought extremely low water temps to the Hatchery

With the trails accessible again trail maintenance will start up and mowing will most likely begin mid April

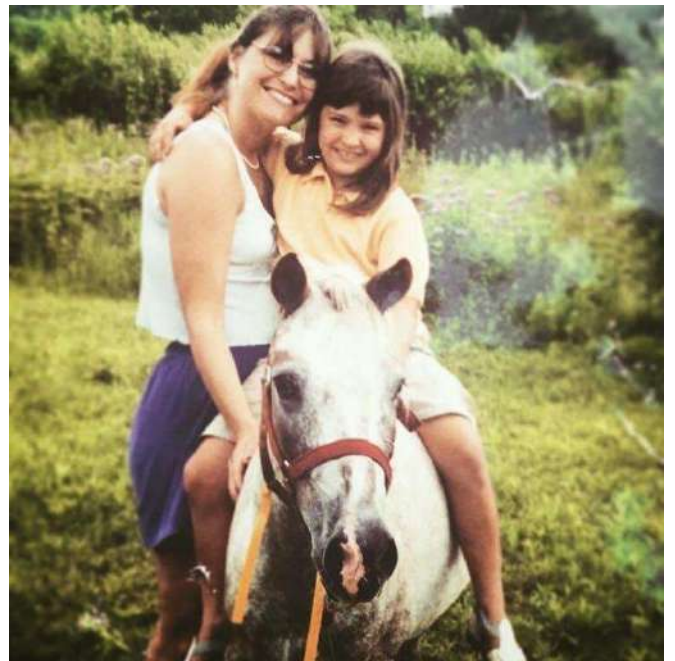
Staff are working on refinishing and painting the second floor hallways and two of the interpretive rooms



BOARD SPOTLIGHT *Board Member Khristine Bryan*

Dear Member of the Friends of Connetquot,
It is a true honor to join the Friends of Connetquot Board as your newest Equine Advocate. Since moving to Long Island from Buffalo in 2022, the Connetquot River State Park Preserve has become the heart of my experience here. What began as a place to ride quickly transformed into a community where I found a profound sense of belonging.

Having lived on both the Bohemia and Islip sides of the park, I have developed a deep appreciation for our unique equestrian landscape. My journey with horses began at age five, and that lifelong passion (combined with my professional background in photography) has given me a distinct perspective on the beauty and importance of this preserve. The park has allowed me to build lasting friendships that I truly cherish.



As I step into this role, my primary goal is to ensure the preserve receive the recognition it deserves and remains a vibrant, welcoming home for equestrians for generations to come. I am eager to contribute to our community outreach efforts to protect and celebrate this extraordinary resource. The park and its riders welcomed me with open arms, and I am committed to extending that same spirit to others.

Thank you for this opportunity and for the warm welcome. I look forward to working alongside all of you to support the preserve.

Khristine Bryant

Hoof Beats

By Carole Scialdone

Photo by Jack Cottone



We survived the Winter of 2026 and Spring is finally here! While the snow makes everything look so pretty on the trees and trails, its longevity definitely overstayed its welcome this year. We had almost two full months of deep snow covered paths. The temperatures were so low, for so long, even parts of the river froze! As winter loosens its grip on Long Island, the preserve's miles of bridle paths begin to awaken with the steady rhythm of hooves on the softening trails.

Spring is full of new beginnings. The fresh, crisp air carries the scent of the budding trees and shrubbery. Soft, sandy paths will replace the ice and snow laden trails and soon the fawns, kits and poults will be frolicking in the warm sun. It is such a beautiful time of year, like no other. For equestrians it is one of the most rewarding seasons to experience in this remarkable place.

Our horses seem to sense the seasonal shift as well—moving forward with energy and curiosity after the long winter months. The preserve's wide bridle paths offer an ideal setting for conditioning our horses. The footing is typically forgiving, allowing riders to ease their horses back into longer rides while enjoying the views of the wetlands, open meadows, and the riverbanks where wildlife becomes increasingly more active. The new season brings an abundance of natural beauty. It's not uncommon for riders to spot deer quietly moving through the trees, turtles sunning themselves along the pond edges and the return of our migratory birds. These small moments of connection with nature are part of what makes enjoying a quiet hack through the woods so

special here. For equestrians, spring rides in Connetquot mark the beginning of a new riding season filled with longer days, fresh trails, and the simple joy of sharing the outdoors with a trusted horse and cherished friends.

“If you truly love nature, you will find beauty everywhere.” — Vincent Van Gogh

To enjoy riding our trails, Bridlepath permits are required. They are sold in the Park office; \$15 for a Day Permit and \$60 for an Annual Permit.

2026 I BIRD NY Challenge

The annual I BIRD NY Challenge is back! Use your observation skills and take the Challenge by identifying any 10 bird species of your choosing in New York State. Participants who successfully complete this fun challenge will be awarded a commemorative patch, completion certificate, and be entered into a drawing for great birding prizes!

The challenge is open now through November 1, open to participants of all ages and abilities. Participants may also earn a bonus entry into the prize giveaway by submitting a photo documenting their experience completing the I BIRD NY Challenge. Get started at [I BIRD NY](#)

- [NYSDEC](#) form [2026 I BIRD NY Challenge Log](#). Visit the DEC Website for more information.



Friends of Connetquot Programs

Register at www.friendsofconnetquot.org

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

Long Islands Equestrian History



FOC Board Member Carole Scaildone, Rita and Jerry Trapani, President Janet Soley

Photo by Nicole Scialdone

Happy Lunar New Year! This year we celebrated the Fire Horse, a rare event! Keeping with our Lunar New Year Hike/Bite/Learn Program, our February program featured FOC Life Members, Jerry and Rita Trapani who presented us with their presentation entitled “*A Look Back at The Rich Equestrian History of Long Island in the 19th and 20th centuries*”. They have shown their horses in many disciplines (the quilt was made out of “some” of their winning ribbons!) and bring a lifetime of knowledge and love of history. Many thanks for a terrific presentation!

Members Meeting & Open House

Saturday, April 18, 2026 beginning at 12 noon

Come meet the Board. Learn what’s happening at Connetquot. Sign up to volunteer. Take a tour of the grounds or hike and tour the Hatchery. Please register on our website.



Parks & Trails New York's

I LOVE MY PARK *days*



Join us on Saturday, May 2 to celebrate and enhance New York's parks, historic sites, greenway trails and other public lands.

As the largest single-day volunteer event in New York State, it brings our community together. The work you do that day not only enhances the natural beauty and accessibility of our iconic state park but also ensures that this cherished space is ready to be enjoyed by all throughout the season. By volunteering, you contribute to preserving the environment, fostering community pride, and supporting the long-term sustainability of New York's treasured public lands. Registration opens early April Parks & Trails New York :: Find an Event / Sign Up

Purple Martins - North America's Largest Swallows Saturday, June 13th at 1 PM



Did you know, Connetquot Preserve is home to a colony of Purple Martins? Purple Martins are beautiful, graceful flyers that live in colonies, depend on man-made housing and feed exclusively on flying insects. Martins overwinter in the Amazon Basin and start their spring migration into North America around the end of January, showing up in Florida in early February. Depending on weather and food supply the first Purple Martins, called scouts, arrive on Long Island around the first week of April to start their breeding season. Most Martins in this area start heading back south by the beginning of August.

Enjoy Ranger Ken's presentation on Purple Martins and then he will lead a hike into the field for observations!



Pride Lantern Walk

Friday June 26th 7:30pm-9:00pm

Have you ever wanted to explore the park after dark? Now is your chance! Head to Connetquot for our popular lantern walk with a Pride Month twist! The ambiance will be enhanced with rainbow lanterns!



OUR HISTORY – The History of the South Side Sportsmen’s Club & Islip Township

Sunday, June 28th at 1 pm



Do you know the rich history of the Clubhouse? How it all began at the Nicolls Grist Mill and the Snedecor Tavern? Do you know the names of the many famous people who have visited Connetquot? Come learn the amazing history of this unique 3,473 acre preserve and it’s role in the formation of the Town of Islip.



Our presenters are Islip Town Historian George Munkenbeck and FOC’s Historian Ed Gross.

Register at www.friendsofconnetquot.org

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

The Friends of Connetquot will award a **\$1,000 scholarship** to a graduating High School Senior or Freshman in College!



To qualify, students applying for this scholarship must be graduating high school in Spring/Summer 2026 or be enrolled as a freshman in college. Student must be in good standing with no disciplinary problems. Submit a typed double-spaced essay of 500 words minimum on your experiences and impressions while visiting Connetquot River State Park Preserve. Be sure to include your favorite locations and activities, as well as pictures. See our website for more information and Application. Deadline due May 1, 2026 to Teresa Simeone at tersim4@aol.com.

Presidents of the United States at the Connetquot River

Historical Bits By Bob Giffen

An abridged version of the articles that were published in our Summer 1997 and Spring 2010 Newsletters

The earliest of these notable men to come to the river was our first president, George Washington, in 1790. He left the nation's Capital, which at that time was New York City, and went on a tour of Long Island by horse and carriage. He kept a diary of his trip. On the morning of April 22, he noted leaving Sagtikos Manor located in West Bay shore, heading east over the South Country Road. Today, if you stand in front of the old club house and look toward the preserve's entrance off Sunrise Highway, follow the road into the park going in front of the club house, then over the mill tail and continuing on to East Pond, you have followed Washington's route down the old South Country Road; much as it was in his day.

Between the late 1820s and 1840s, Martin Van Buren who became president in 1837, visited the Snedecor's Inn on the Connetquot River. He was a fishing companion of Massachusetts Senator Daniel Webster. Mr. Webster's second wife was Caroline Le Roy, daughter of Herman Le Roy, a wealthy New York City merchant that had a summer home in Islip. Daniel Webster, alone and occasionally with Kentucky Senator Henry Clay, was known to frequent the Connetquot River. Martin Van Buren must have been with him on some of those fishing trips. Almost all sportsmen who were traveling east stopped at Snedecor's Tavern to fish, dine or stay overnight.

Ulysses S. Grant, in 1871, was the next president to fish the Connetquot River. He was a guest at the South Side Sportsmen's Club and signed the Club's guest book. *Unfortunately for us, not all these guest books survived.*

President Chester Arthur visited the South Side Sportsmen's Club in 1882 as a guest of Austin Corbin. He stayed at his estate "Deer Park" in Babylon. Austin Corbin was President of the Long Island Railroad. While traveling on the Long Island train, Chester Arthur mentioned he was never at a speed of 60 mph, so the rail road engineer obliged and took the train up to that speed!

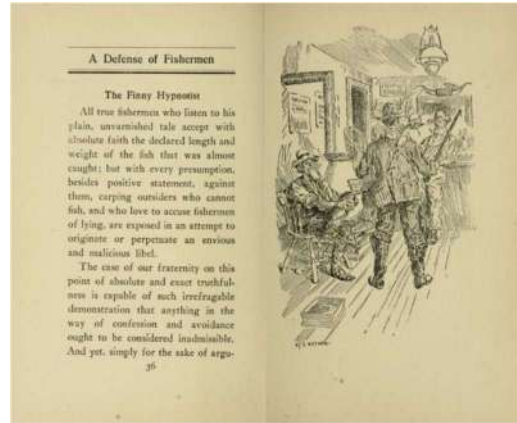
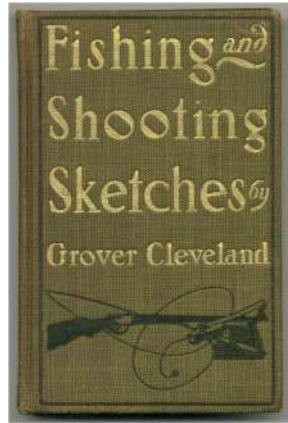
In the 1880's Grover Cleveland who was president from 1885 to 1889 frequently visited the South Side Sportsmen's Club. He was usually a guest of Colonel Alfred Wafstaff and stayed at his estate "Tahlulah", a part of today's Eastward Ho Country Club in Bay Shore.

Teddy Roosevelt was a member of the Suffolk Club on the Carman's River and his uncle, Robert B. Roosevelt has his estate "Meadow Croft" just down the road from The Connetquot River in Sayville. In the Billiards Room, you can view a letter from Teddy to Federick Bourne, who was a South Side Club member stating that he couldn't come to the club. It is believed that he fished the Connetquot River on a number of occasions.

Herbert Hoover was the last president to fish the Connetquot River in May of 1945. We owe this knowledge to a letter that was given to the Friends by the daughter of Raymond Garret. Mr Garret ran the fish hatchery and was a guide at the club. President Hoover stated in a thank you letter dated May 18 to Mr. Garret "I don't know when I have so thoroughly enjoyed a day's outing as that which I had at Islip". Were it not for that letter, no one would have known that Herbert Hoover fished at the Connetquot River.

Presidents of the United States at the Connetquot River

Richard Remmer brought to our attention Grover Cleveland's Fishing and Shooting Sketches book. In it, are several sketches that could be of Connetquot, however, it's hard not to agree with Mr Remmer, that the sketch below looks too similar to the Billiards Room to be anyplace but Connetquot!



Reminders

Trail maps to go: You can carry a Connetquot trail map in your pocket. Type Connetquot Park on your phone browser or go directly to the park website, <https://parks.ny.gov/parks/8/details.aspx>; scroll down to a "Maps" button on the right side of the screen, and click on the Download button. This works for iOS and Android phones and is free.

Being a Friend of Connetquot How your support Helps!

We offer our deepest thanks for your continued support of the Friends of Connetquot. Allow us a moment to remind you of just some of what our efforts have accomplished in enhancing the infrastructure and visitor experience at our jewel of a preserve.

Restoration of the Nicoll Grist Mill, Ice House and Carpenter shop

In the Clubhouse we have restored the 19th century stained-glass transom window over the entrance, created exhibits in three upstairs rooms, restored the tin ceiling and the skylight in the Fish Prep Room, commissioned the installation of a fire suppression system, secured the return of Eliphalet Snedecor's portrait and the Astor House stove, restored flooring in several rooms, and purchased many artifacts for display.

The Friends helped to reopen the Hatchery after it was closed in 2009, raising funds for a water filtration system. We installed new interpretive displays in the Hatchery.

We have funded a high school scholarship.

One of our most significant contributions is the work of our History Project in preserving the history of the South Side Sportsmen's Club and its members.

Take satisfaction in the idea that your contributions helped make all these works possible—and please, be sure to keep your membership up to date. Consider raising your membership category one level. Also, encourage your friends to become Friends! It's a big park and needs all the love it can get. Renew or join online at www.friendsofconnetquot.org/join.

Catch a Rainbow



A Day of Fly Fishing for Women Diagnosed with Breast Cancer

Presented by: ➤ Long Island Beach Buggy Association ➤ Art Flick Trout Unlimited ➤
➤ Long Island Trout Unlimited ➤ Long Island Flyrodders ➤

Saturday, April 25th at 8:45 am

To inquire further please contact CathcaRainbowLI@gmail.com

Great State Park Programs!

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

To make a reservation, visit 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

Space Explorers April 1st
Tiny Earth Heroes! April 15th
Hoppy Spring Frogs April 29th
Splish Splash Little Fish May 13th

Horseshoe Crabs! May 27th
Butterfly Bonanza June 10th
Bats in Action June 24th

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.

Nature Trivia Night! (Family program)

Thursday

April 9th

5:45pm - 7:30pm

Put your nature knowledge to the test with a fun and interactive trivia game night celebrating nature, wildlife, and the world around us!

Mystical Creatures (Children's program)

Friday

April 10th

7:15pm-9:00pm

Come discover the Preserve's fantastical and mystical creatures on a unique night hike! Learn to track monsters as we look for Bigfoot tracks, find unicorn fur, and maybe see a mystical creature or two!

Recognizing Women's Right to Vote in New York (Family Program)

Sunday

April 12th

1:30pm- 3:00pm

On November 6th, 1917, women won the right to vote in NY State. Join us for this special America 250th program to hear Islip Town Historian George Munkenbeck share the history of local Long Island suffragists. Also on display will be a travelling exhibit provided by the Long Island Library Resources Council.

Twilight Hikers Special (Adult program)

Friday

April 17th

4:00pm-8:00pm

Join us for an evening hike to the park's northern trails to experience landmarks and sights not frequently seen. Bring a packed "dinner" and water! We will be hiking approximately 6 miles.

Bird and Breakfast: Adult Program

Sunday

May 10th

8:00am – 11:00am

A continental breakfast and short presentation on winter ducks followed by a guided walk through the preserve. Binoculars are provided, or bring your own.

Selfcare Saturday (Adult program)

Saturday

June 20th

1:00pm-2:30pm

Create a relaxing craft to help restore mindfulness techniques and discover simple self-care. Create your own aroma therapy Sugar Scrub Mask for pampering relaxation

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.

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

Executive Board

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Advisory Board

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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.

Visit us at www.friendsofconnetquot.org



FRIENDS OF CONNETQUOT
BOX 472
OAKDALE NY 11769

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John C. Dunphy
Private Foundation, Inc.



SAVE THE DATE!

Friends of Connetquot

Members Meeting & Open House



Saturday, April 18, 2026

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.

