

Comments on Connetquot

Published by the Friends of Connetquot River State Park Preserve

VOLUME 31 NUMBER 2 Summer 2026



Photo by John Williams

Parks & Trails New York's
I LOVE MY PARK *days*

Hello Friends!

This edition's cover photo does not need commentary; I Love My Park Day was one of our many Spring highlights! On that day, the wader building at the hatchery got a fresh coat of stain as did the clubhouse porch. The pollinator and the Grist Mill gardens look fantastic, and another ADA pathway was added to access the Ice House. The First Phase of the Red Trail Loop project was completed and it's a magical hike! We welcomed our new Park manager Frank Stark and said farewell to Park Managers Patrick Hein and Ryan Albinski. We wish all the very best in their new roles at NY Parks. Work continued on the Ice House and Riverbank Community Exhibits. I look forward to holding the Open Reception for these exhibits. It always surprises me how quickly spring turns into summer. One day we are enjoying the peepers and daffodils and in a heartbeat, the summer is upon us!

See you out there!
Janet Marie



BOARD SPOTLIGHT

Park Manager Frank Stark

Friends of Connetquot are delighted to introduce Frank Stark, the new Park Manager 2 of Connetquot River! Frank has a long history in Parks working for Robert Moses, Chenango Valley, Bethpage, and most recently at the Montauk State Parks Complex.

He comes with a vast knowledge of NYSOPRHP and all of its various functions and intricacies, as well as experience in all that Parks has to offer.

Hello Friends,

I am very excited to be one of few on Long Island that will be able to call such beautiful natural preserve land my home and I can't wait to learn and discover all the interesting history of the land and the people that have cherished it over the years. My hobbies include playing and singing music in my two bands as well as trying to get out and explore the world a little more each year when I can, most recently hiking the Portugués Camino de Santiago trail from Porto, Portugal to Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

Frank



What's Happening Around the Preserve

By Frank Stark

Connetquot hosted I Love My Park Day on Saturday, May 2nd. Volunteers and staff worked together clearing out plants and weeds from the gristmill garden and the pollinator garden. Volunteers also helped increase park accessibility by laying down crushed bluestone walkways by the Pump House and Ice House.

On the subject of accessibility, phase one of the Red Trail boardwalk project has been completed. We are very excited for these improvements as it means even more accessibility for our park patrons to some of the most beautiful locations in our park. More accessibility projects are on the horizon!

As spring turns to summer, the staff have been approaching landscaping and pruning on a daily basis to keep our trails as enjoyable and safe as possible for hikers and riders. We have also dove head first into river stocking for the season. At the Hatchery, we are excited to be cultivating a new batch of rainbow trout eggs that are on their way to becoming fry.

Red Trail Phase 1 Construction Completed!



Red Trail next Phases –Funding applications are being submitted for the next Phases of the “Loop”. Consider making a donation to help us make this well-needed additional feature a reality!

www.friendsofconnetquot.org/donate

Sales Pitch

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. We have restored the Nicoll Grist Mill, 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, and purchased many artifacts for display. We are currently working on the Ice House and are restoring the Ladies Room. The Friends helped to reopen the Hatchery after it was closed in 2009, raising funds for a water filtration system. We recently completed the Interpretive Exhibit in the hatchery, and 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.

Hoof Beats

By Carole Scialdone

Photo by Nicole Scialdone

Summer is a season that equestrians eagerly anticipate and thoroughly enjoy, riding Connetquot's beautiful trails. The tree canopy fills in, with its leaves providing the perfect protection from the intense summer sun and those short, pop-up sunshowers. The trails have exploded in green, contrasting with the beautiful, bright blue sky and white puffy clouds. Riders leave their busy lives behind, letting nature set the pace for this peaceful escape from the summer heat. The preserve offers an escape where the stresses of daily life are replaced by the rhythmic sound of hoofbeats and the quiet beauty of nature. It is especially nice to share these days with like-minded friends and their trusty mounts.



The preserve's fifty miles of scenic trails wind through 3,473 acres of shaded forests and open meadows while passing by spring fed ponds and alongside the crystal clear Connetquot River. Even those of us who ride daily, can enjoy taking a different route each day of the week while appreciating the beauty of Long Island's protected wilderness. Numerous white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, fox, the occasional chipmunk and countless songbirds are frequent companions along the way, making every ride a unique experience.

Riding strengthens the partnership between horse and rider. Each quiet mile traveled together builds trust, patience and appreciation for the remarkable natural setting that surrounds them. Whether enjoying a leisurely walk or an energetic trot, every outing reminds equestrians why Connetquot River State Park Preserve remains one of Long Island's most treasured riding destinations. Whether enjoying a leisurely trail ride with

friends or a solitary morning ride, every visit offers a renewed appreciation for the unique bond between horse, rider, and nature.

To enjoy riding Connetquot's trails, Bridle Path Permits are available for purchase in the Park Office. The Daily Permit is \$15 and an Annual Permit is \$60.



WELCOME TO OAKDALE!!

Friends of Connetquot are excited to introduce you to our new neighbor, Twisted Kitchens Café & Bakery! The Café is located in the Lighthouse Shopping Center, 915 Montauk Highway. Friends of Connetquot are honored to have Twisted Kitchens as a sponsor! We look forward to enjoying their treats at future programs! Please show them the FOC Support! Stop in and say hello!

Get Offline, Get Outside Challenge

ACTIVITY LIST

The "Get Offline, Get Outside" campaign encourages New York State's kids and families to put down their phones and computers, take a break from social media, enjoy recreation and outdoor social gatherings, and put their mental and physical health first.

Kids ages 12–18 are challenged to complete all 50 activities before the age of 19. Visit <https://dec.ny.gov/things-to-do/get-offline-get-outside> for tips, resources, and upcoming events to help you complete the activities. We encourage you to adapt these activities to your abilities.



1. Walk, run, or roll a mile.	26. Try archery.
2. Learn to cast a fishing rod.	27. Identify 3 native pollinators.
3. Pitch a tent.	28. Enjoy fall foliage on a nature walk or hike.
4. Identify 3 animals by their tracks.	29. Paddle a canoe, kayak, or paddleboard.
5. Grow something from a seed.	30. Go ice skating.
6. Have a picnic outside with family or friends.	31. Learn how to use a compass and map.
7. Try a new hiking trail or nature walk.	32. Plant a tree.
8. Learn how to compost.	33. Build a sandcastle or sand sculpture.
9. Visit a pond, lake, stream, river, waterfall, or the ocean.	34. Sleep in a tent under the stars.
10. Draw something from nature.	35. Take a dip at a lake or the beach.
11. Roast marshmallows or cook food over a fire.	36. Go for a bike ride.
12. Go birding.	37. Learn and attempt an animal call.
13. Spend 20 quiet minutes immersing your senses in nature.	38. Identify 5 flowers.
14. Make a snow angel.	39. Visit an environmental education center or nature center.
15. Join a local outdoors group or club.	40. Start a nature journal.
16. Learn the 7 Principles of Leave No Trace™.	41. Build a snowman or snow fort.
17. Identify 5 trees.	42. Lay in a hammock outdoors.
18. Play a team sport outdoors.	43. Watch the sunrise or sunset.
19. Complete a nature scavenger hunt.	44. Find a fossil.
20. Read a book under a tree.	45. Identify 3 constellations in the night sky.
21. Learn how to safely start and put out a fire.	46. Eat something you grew, foraged, harvested, or caught.
22. Go fishing.	47. Try a new winter sport.
23. Stay out for a lunar eclipse or meteor shower.	48. Learn about hunter safety.
24. Volunteer at a cleanup event near you.	49. Visit a fire tower or lighthouse.
25. Identify the phase of the moon in the night sky.	50. Participate in a community science survey.



Finished all 50 activities? Use the QR code to receive a commemorative sticker, a downloadable certificate, a one-year subscription to the *Conservationist*, and a chance to win other prizes to mark your accomplishment.



Parks & Trails New York's

I LOVE MY PARK *days*



OUR HISTORY – The History of the South Side Sportsmen's Club & Islip Township Sunday, June 28th



What an amazing and informative program! Islip Town Historian George Munkenbeck and FOC's Historian Ed Gross carried on a conversation about our shared history. It was so well received, we plan on hosting another session. Do you have a topic you'd like to examine? Contact us!



Friends of Connetquot Programs

Register at www.friendsofconnetquot.org

Mindfulness September

Sunday, September 13 - 10:30 AM – 3:00 PM



Join us for a day focusing on yourself and your surroundings! We begin the morning with mild yoga to help us disconnect from our phones! After lunch, we will head out into nature for a Forest bathing hike led by Linda Lombardo. We'll slow down, wander and notice what most of the world simply walks past; the beauty of nature in any season. We'll do some grounding, connect with the trees and water, and may even create some nature art together. These walks are always slow and easy-going, not a hike; not a tour of plants. Walks always end with a ceremonial tea; something that could have been foraged in the forest. According to Linda, "Take this time to be present, lower any stress you may be experiencing, and naturally boost your immune system."

Registration is \$20 for non-members, \$10 for members.

Dress for outdoor weather. Closed shoes and long pants are recommended. Organic bug spray only, please

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 25 people, so please apply as soon as possible.

Registration will open on our website in September.



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.

Through education, outreach and advocacy, Birdability works to ensure the birding community and the outdoors are welcoming, inclusive, safe and accessible for everybody. The focus is on people with mobility challenges, blindness or low vision, chronic illness, intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental illness, and those who are neurodivergent, deaf or hard of hearing or who have other health concerns. Our hope is to introduce birding to people with disabilities and other health concerns who are not yet birders so they too can experience the joys of birding. We need our physical environment to be

accessible, and we need our social, cultural and institutional environments to be welcoming, safe and inclusive for all those potential new birders so they know they are genuinely wanted, and to make sure they come back!

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 6th 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'd love to have you come out for a morning of beginning birding! Birdability is a free program, open to all.

Register at www.friendsofconnetquot.org

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



AND THE WINNER IS!!!! Turner Van Nostrand East Islip High School

The Friends of Connetquot are delighted to award our \$1,000 scholarship to Turner.

Here's an excerpt from Turner's essay that we think you will agree with us that Turner deserved this scholarship.

It didn't strike me until my family friend from Oceanside, in Nassau Country said to me, 'You mean, you have this park right here, and you can go here all the time?', as we were strolling through the Connetquot River State Park Preserve, then added, 'Wow, you are lucky!'. I really wasn't sure at first what she was talking about, because I guess you tend to take things for granted when they are so accessible to you, but she was right! The fact that I live just moments away from Connetquot State Park is truly awesome and I am so very lucky to live nearby and have this park extremely accessible to me. When I thought about this further, I realized that my family and I have a lot of core memories at Connetquot River State Park Preserve.... I am not sure whether I prefer to see everything blooming after the long winter, or the fall foliage after a long and hot summer... Trips to and from the fish hatchery and all that there is to see on our walk is one of the reasons I really enjoy Connetquot State Park.

As our population grows, it is essential to conserve this and other land spaces because human activity can change the environment of existing landscapes and wildlife habitats.... Protecting and respecting these parks are a way to maintain biodiversity by protecting endangered species, ensure that humans have clean air and water, and hopefully help to combat climate change because our plants and trees deserve as much space as buildings and roadways. ...I have been coming to Connetquot River State Park Preserve for many years. One of my earliest memories is taking a picture by the "4" tree, as we call it, right around my 4th birthday. The trunk of this tree has formed a perfect number four and after we noticed it at the beginning of the trail, we cannot miss it to this day. Thinking about my many times at the park, I see a deeper meaning of that tree. I now like to think about that tree by thinking this park is 4 me! This park is 4 everyone!



Our next application cycle will begin in the fall school session. 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. Details are on our website.

6th Annual Long Island Women's Fishing Expo

Saturday, September 12 - 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM



A FREE event hosted by women for women! Learn how to fly-fish on the beautiful Connetquot River! Pre-registration required.

The day includes:

Fly fishing clinic	Fly casting instruction	Basic knot tying
Trout hatchery tour	Fisheries management	Advanced fishing
info		

... and much more!

For questions and to register call 631-444-0283 or email fwfish1@dec.ny.gov with the subject, *Women's Fishing Expo*

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

Gardens Galore	July 22 nd	Fossil Finds	September 2 nd
Whales of the Deep Blue Sea	August 5 th	Trout-tastic!	September 16 th
What's the Buzz?	August 19 th	Shark Extravaganza	September 30 th

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.

Bat Safari: (Family Program)

Friday

July 10th

7:15pm – 9:30pm

Bats are both mysterious and misunderstood. Dispel the myths, learn their behaviors, and take a walk with us through the park in search of our nocturnal neighbors!

Citizen Science: Bat Map Walk (Free Adult Program)

Wednesday

July 15th

8:00pm – 9:30pm

Join us for a citizen science walk as we explore the Preserve after dark looking for bats. We will be contributing any sightings to Bat Map LI. The goal of Bat Map LI is to better understand where bats are on Long Island, where their foraging areas and roost sites may be, and how to better conserve them. We will be hiking anywhere between 1-3 miles. Dress for the weather. Please note: we will just be observing bats in their natural environment.

Bio Blitz: (Family Program)

Saturday

July 18th

10:00am – 12:00pm

Help document the biodiversity around the park! Using the iNaturalist app, snap photos of plants, animals, and fungi, contributing to real scientific research. This is a free family program!

Marvelous Monarchs: (Children's program)

Tuesday

July 21st

10:00am – 11:30am

Learn about the heroes of the butterfly world! In collaboration with some Master Gardeners, learn all about Monarch Butterflies and their role in our ecosystem! Geared for ages 6 and up.

Selfcare Saturday: (Adult Program)

Saturday

July 25th

1:00pm – 2:30pm

Step into summer with a DIY self-care program designed to help you unwind, recharge, and reconnect with

yourself through simple recipes. Join us in this refreshing experience and take home something to help promote your own self-care!

“He Dared to Sign”: William Floyd Declaration of Independence Special Lecture: (Family Program)

Sunday

August 2nd

1:00pm – 3:00pm

Long Islander William Floyd signed the Declaration of Independence for New York in 1776. In doing so he risked his life, family, and fortunes. But he didn't sign on July 4th! Most of the men signed today, August 2nd, exactly 250 years ago! This lecture covers Floyd's life and the actual signing of the Declaration, along with 3 other New Yorkers. Free Lecture!



Nighttime Sensory Walk: (Family Program)

Friday

August 7th

7:45pm – 9:30pm

See how your own senses can change when the light fades! On a guided walk, test your own night vision, put on your animal ears, and see what it's like to be our nocturnal wildlife!

Citizen Science: Bat Map Walks: (Free Adult Program)

Sunday

August 16th

7:30pm – 9:00pm

Join us for a citizen science walk as we explore the Preserve after dark looking for bats. We will be contributing any sightings to Bat Map LI. The goal of Bat Map LI is to better understand where bats are on Long Island, where their foraging areas and roost sites may be, and how to better conserve them. We will be hiking anywhere between 1-3 miles. Dress for the weather. Please note: we will just be observing bats in their natural environment.

Full Moon Hike: (Family Program)

Friday

August 28th

7:45pm – 9:30pm

Discover your nocturnal neighbors on a guided walk through the park at night! Learn about how our local wildlife adapts to changes each night as we listen for calls, search for tracks, and explore the trails by moonlight.

Citizen Science: Monarch Tagging: (Free Adult Program)

Sunday

August 30th

9:00am – 10:30am

The Monarch Watch Tagging Program is a large-scale community science project that was initiated in 1992 to help understand the dynamics of the monarch's spectacular fall migration through mark and recapture. We will be exploring two parks: Connetquot River State Park Preserve and Robert Moses State Park, for Monarch butterflies to tag and release! For Connetquot, please be prepared to go into tall grass. Wear proper footwear and clothing for hiking on trails this time of year.

Spy Through Parks: (Family Program ages 10+)

Friday

September 4th

6:00pm – 8:00pm

Become a code breaker like Washington's spies! Learn how the Culper Spy Ring used codes during the American Revolution, then try to crack the secret code yourself!

Bird and Breakfast: (Adult Program)

Saturday

September 12th

8:00am – 11:00am

Join us for a continental breakfast, with a short presentation about our seasonal native birds, followed by a walk with the Great South Bay Audubon Society.

Survival and Scavenging Skills: (Family Program ages 8+)

Friday

September 25th

5:00pm – 7:00pm

Ever wonder what you should do if you were stranded in New York's Wilderness? Come join us for an educational hike focused on survival skills and plant foraging identification!

+

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

To make a reservation, visit Eventbrite.com and search #NatureEdventure (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.

Executive Board

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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: September 15, 2026.

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

Visit us at www.friendsofconnetquot.org



FRIENDS OF CONNETQUOT
BOX 472
OAKDALE NY 11769

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Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
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Smithtown,
N.Y. 11787



COME JOIN THE FRIENDS



John C. Dunphy
Private Foundation, Inc.



SAVE THE DATES!

**ONE DAY
3 PARKS**
OCTOBER 3, 2026



BAYARD CUTTING ARBORETUM 9AM
CONNETQUOT STATE PARK 11:30 AM
HECKSCHER STATE PARK 2 PM

EXPLORE, DISCOVER, HAVE FUN

A NIGHT OF
EXCELLENCE

Join us for an unforgettable
evening celebrating our
achievements and success

★ Friends of Connetquot
30th Anniversary GALA ★

SUN | 17 | JAN

The Snapper Inn
Oakdale NY



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**