

Playful Spirits by Nancy Conway, Guided School Program Coordinator



Share your Five Rivers' memories and stories.

The Friends of Five Rivers would like to have you share your memories and stories about your time spent here at Five Rivers.

These stories will be shared on our website and in our newsletters.

Email your memories and stories to us at frltd@juno.com.

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On a brisk Thursday morning in January, Craig Thompson, Center Director, led a Winter Bird Walk for the Guided School Program's volunteer instructors. All were eager to head out into the field to spy the remarkable birds who brave the cold winters in upstate New York. The group of 12 made their way to North Loop Trail well aware that their footsteps, crunching in the snow covered ice, were scaring away the very wildlife they had come to see, yet the group stayed the course.

Why? Experience. Yes, experience has taught the volunteer instructors to let nature lead. Nature always has something wonderful to show us, even if it is not what we are looking for. On this day, the group's perseverance was rewarded with a rare sighting ~ otter tracks right in the middle of North Loop Trail!

The Friends of Five Rivers and the Five Rivers Environmental Education Center will both be celebrating our 40th Anniversaries this year.

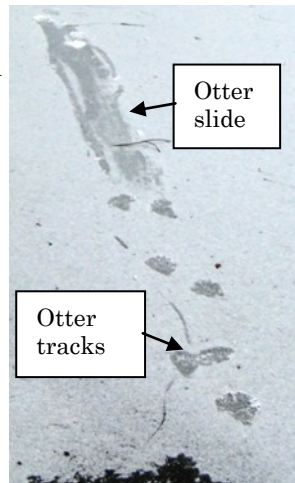
The Friends are planning

Bounding and sliding down the icy path over and over again, the otter had passed this way the night before. Tracks and slides caught in the light dusting of snow drew the awed group to Sunfish Pond, Fox Marsh, Wood Duck Marsh, and Goose Pond. Slides crisscrossed the ponds' surfaces giving observers a sense of carefree, almost gleeful, play.

This otter's playful spirit brought to mind the playful spirits of Mary Lou Riccardo and Carolyn Miller, two dedicated volunteer instructors who passed away in 2011. Mary Lou and Carolyn were experienced, enthusiastic teachers who

enjoyed the pond and stream habitats immensely. Both would have loved seeing these fleeting tracks and slides. Fortunately, Mary Lou and Carolyn's tracks are forever cast in the Guided School Program, and their playful slides are deeply grooved in the memories of all those guided by them.

Volunteer instructors have a unique opportunity to help children create their own remarkable memories of time spent in nature. Experience has taught instructors to guide a group to a field, stream or pond, keep them safe, and then step back and let them explore. Mary Lou and Carolyn did this remarkably well, as did Craig Thompson on this unforgettable Winter Bird Walk.



40th Anniversary

to host their 1st Annual Honorary Reception on April 20th at the Albany Country Club.

The Friends and the Center will also be hosting an event on June 16th at the

Center in celebration of the Center's 40th Anniversary. The event will include family and children's games, music, thank-you's and cake. Watch our website for further updates on these events and others.

President's Message

Rich Bader, Esq.

In my "day job", I teach the New Visions Law & Government program in downtown Albany, a career-exploration program for gifted and talented high school seniors from throughout the Capital Region. I also chair the Law, Youth and Citizenship Committee of the State Bar Association that runs great civics education programs throughout the State.

These days, in times of the ever-tightening public belt, it seems that environmental education, like civics education, is fated to get the fuzzy end of the lollipop.

Short-sighted? Absolutely.

Are we vastly increasing the odds that future generations will both lack an appreciation of the environment necessary to foster its protection and the knowledge of how to effectively participate in government to make positive change? You betcha.

Look around now and ask yourself. Presidential election campaigns reduced to issueless mudslinging. And on the state environmental front, two of New York's four Environmental Education Centers now go unstaffed, with the staff at the two remaining open Centers cut significantly.

Nonetheless, the Friends are moving forward at Five Rivers. Anyone who has been to the Center in the past year has seen the construction activity on the new Guided School Program Building. We continue to give thanks for the unprecedented generosity of Herb and Peggy Repass whose donations to the Friends not only make this project possible, but support our bus scholarship as well.

The new building will help us immeasurably. However, buildings don't teach students. We are so very fortunate to have dedicated, indefatigable staff (our Administrator, Joanne Macklin, and Guided School Program Coordinator, Nancy Conway), as well as so many qualified volunteers who generously give of their time to be instructors in our Guided School Program.

Through our incredible volunteer instructors working with DEC, the Friends of Five Rivers' Guided School Program sparks a rich appreciation of nature in over 4,000 students a year. It has brought enriching environmental experiences to nearly 200,000 children in the past 30 years. I feel like a broken record saying this sometimes but it is the simple

truth: It is the most important work we do.

Here's where you come in: this year we celebrate the 40th Anniversary of Five Rivers and of the Friends. Join us for our reception in April and the other events you'll be hearing about from us. Recruit a friend or neighbor to join the Friends! Better yet, recruit two! Less than one percent of the approximate 120,000 people who come to Five Rivers each year support the Friends. Help continue to build the organization that has sustained and fostered environmental education and appreciation at Five Rivers for the challenges of a new generation.

For so many of us, Five Rivers is an extension of our own backyards. From watching birds and wildlife, to countless nature programs, to walking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing, Five Rivers Environmental Education Center not only fosters appreciation for nature and its wonders, it provides an important place to unplug, contemplate and revitalize. This year, I hope you will join me in resolving to get at least one person or family that you know who uses Five Rivers to become a member of the Friends.

I look forward to seeing you around Five Rivers!



SAVE THE DATE

40th Anniversary

1st Annual Honorary Reception

April 20, 2012

5:00 p.m.—7:00 p.m.

Event will be held at the Albany Country Club, Voorheesville, NY

More information will be available soon.

Love is in the Air: How River Otters Find a Mate

By Samantha Dobin, Friend's Intern

Since Valentine's Day is almost here, let's learn a little about how river otters find that special someone.

River otters actually do share quite a few similarities with humans. First of all, river otters are typically monogamous. This is relatively rare in the mammal world, and animal world at large. In fact, an article published by Emory University states that less than 3% of mammals are monogamous!

Another similarity between river otters and humans is that river otters care for their young for a long period

of time, compared to other animals. Usually large mammals take care of their young for a year, compared to small mammals and other animals, which sometimes care for their young only a few weeks.

Of course, there are some fundamental differences between river otters and humans when it comes to mating and raising young! Gestation

is only 7 weeks long, and a mother usually has a litter of 2-4 babies.



Lastly, even though birthing times are for river otters are from November to April, young otters are rarely seen for the first two months of their lives. As we get into late spring, keep your eyes peeled; you may be lucky enough to spot a new river otter

at Five Rivers!

Summer Family Programs

The Friends of Five Rivers offers two summer programs for families. The aim of these programs is to help parents and children grow in their understanding and appreciation of the natural world through shared activities.

Summer Programs are divided by children's ages. Three weekly programs will be offered for parents

and children ages 2 to 8. A one week program will be offered for parents with children ages 9 to 12.

2012 Summer Family Programs will be offered on the following weeks:

Ages 9 to 12 : July 23—July 27th

*Parents and Children
learning about the
environment together!*

More information and registration will be available shortly on our website.

www.friendsoffiverivers.org

Welcome New Board Members

The Board of Directors of the Friends of Five Rivers would like to introduce our four new Board Members to you.

At our November Annual Meeting the membership elected Daniel Berry, Maureen Cunningham, Eileen Wolck and David Newell to the Board of Directors.

All three of our new Board Members have been long standing members and supporters of the Friends.

Daniel Berry lives in Delmar with his wife. He has worked for 36 years in government service. Dan is an avid runner and has run the NYC Marathon 5 times.

Eileen Wolck has worked for New York State for over 22 years. Eileen says "I look forward to advancing the efforts of the Friends of Five Rivers as a Board Member".

David Newell has been a greeter and naturalist for a number of

years and also volunteers at the Center doing the blue bird boxes. David has lived in Delmar all of his life and remembers when the Center was the Delmar Game Farm. David says "I am looking forward to serving on the Board".

Maureen Cunningham lives in Delmar with her husband and two young children. She has an extensive environmental background and experience.

FRIENDS OF FIVE RIVERS

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It is tax-exempt under the Internal Revenue Code and is registered as a charitable corporation under New York State law. FFR/FRL is a private corporation, separate from the State of New York and is governed by its own board of directors and its members.

Visit the Friends of Five Rivers at:
www.friendsoffiverivers.org or
call us at (518) 475-0295.



We are on the web
www.friendsoffiverivers.org

Providing your email address to the Friends will save postage and paper helping us to direct more funds to environmental education and helping to preserve the environment. Friends will never share your email with anyone. Email us today to get on our list.



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