



Rogers Ramblings

Newsletter from the Friends of Rogers
Fall | September-November 2023 | Vol. 1 Issue 4



In This Issue

- 2 | Message from the Director
- 3 | Wild Cucumber
- 4 | Upcoming Programs
- 6 | Programs at a Glance
- 7 | Fall Festival & Animals of Halloween
- 8 | Membership at Rogers
- 9 | Family Adventure Page
- 10 | NewsFlash
- 11 | Getting Involved
- 12 | Staff & Board Info.

Message from the Director

Chenango River | photo: EJRathbone

As the summer sun subsides and days grow shorter, we begin again to gather around those things that keep us warm. The company of friends, the companionship of hikes, the firesides of fall, they weave us back together. We are drawn again to one another, and in the respite of the cool, crisp air, stories begin again to pour forth.

This fall, Rogers Center will hear the stories it has heard many times. The Animals of Halloween, much as they have for the last twelve years, will come out to entertain and engage our audience with tales of the season's most spectacular animals. This season, however, Rogers Center welcomes a new set of stories too, older than our organization and rooted in the land that we live on. The Oneida Indian Nation, following their first public program at Rogers this summer, will again be providing their signature Story Walk, sharing the legends and lore of the Haudensonee on October 7th. All are invited and the program is offered free of charge.

Furthermore, the stories of Sherburne's most historic institutions will ring out from the center of town in a way they have not in nearly three decades. This October, Rogers Center and the Sherburne Inn are partnering to showcase the immaculate renovation of the bar, lobby, and restaurant while celebrating and supporting Friends of Rogers in our Fall Festival fundraiser. Big Band Sounds is back in town, maple mojitos are in the works, and the stage is set to showcase the best of what Sherburne has to offer. Keep an eye out for tickets and order yours soon.

Finally, we would like to share that we are in the process of upgrading our website! With new programs, a simplified membership structure, and more regularly scheduled events, we felt it was time to streamline our online navigation to make it easier for you all to follow along and participate in all that Rogers Center has to offer. We hope to have the new website up and running this fall, so stay tuned for the new look, new links, and new functionality. You will be able to find us where you always have before, www.friendsofrogers.org.

Enjoy the rest of your reading as you dive into the environmental curiosities and contemplations that follow. We're all looking forward to the festivities of fall and can't wait to see you again soon.

Yours,

David W. Carson

David W. Carson
Executive Director



Contemplating Wild Cucumber

wild cucumber pods | photo: EJRathbone

In the summer you've seen the leaves, and maybe thought, well, those maple leaves look a bit odd. And in the fall or winter you've seen the pods, and thought, well, those spiky things are odd; they look a bit like loofas. And if you took the time to follow up on these rather odd-looking plants, you discovered that they were one and the same: wild cucumber.

Wild cucumber comes in two flavors: one-seeded bur cucumber (*Sicyos angulatus*), and wild balsam apple (*Echinocystis lobata*). Both are in the gourd family, so your comparison to a loofa is spot on. If you used *Newcomb's Wildflower Guide* to identify the plants, you noted that the illustrations look very similar, and it notes that the difference between the two is the number of petals on the flowers (five for the former, six for the latter). In fact, however, there are several traits that you can use to tell them apart.

- Wild balsam apple (aka wild cucumber) has smooth stems, whereas the one-seeded bur cucumber has sticky hairs along its stem.
- The fruit on the wild cucumber hangs singly from the stem, while the fruit of the one-seeded are borne in clusters.
- The wild cucumber fruits are large - up to two inches in length; the one-seeded fruits are significantly smaller (and clustered).

So, the species we have here at Rogers Center is wild balsam apple - henceforth simply referred to as wild cucumber, because it's easier to type and less confusing.

First, the good news: it's a native! This vining plant likes moist areas, which is why we see a lot of it along the trails at Rogers. Some vines can get up to 25 feet in length, and it is what is referred to in gardening parlance

as a "vigorous grower." So, if you are intrigued by it and are considering adding it to your landscape, you have been warned. They can damage trees and shrubs by covering them and hogging all the sunlight. But it is an attractive plant, especially when in bloom, looking like a cascade of white foam covering the foliage in mid-summer. It adds "interest" to your landscape.

Often the first question asked when one learns that this is a cucumber is "can I eat it?" The simple answer is no. The detailed answer is that there is no flesh on the fruit to eat - it is a prickly mesh that exists only to hold the seeds inside. If you look at dried husk in late fall or winter, you'll see two large holes inside (where the seeds developed) and the skeleton of the mesh that sheltered the seeds. Even if it had flesh, this is not a plant you'd want to

consume, for it is known to cause intestinal distress, diarrhea and even some burning reactions. Some sources even caution handling the fresh fruits.

The next question is "do any animals eat it?" It seems that the flowers are a food source for a variety of insects (bees, flies, wasps), and that's about it. Which begs the question (at least in my mind): then why does this plant exist? Is it anachronistic, like honey locust and Osage orange - a plant from another time (after the last ice age) when large land mammals that are now extinct actually consumed the fruits? It turns out I'm not the only one to ask this! There might be something to this argument.

Regardless, the wild cucumber is a delightful find while you are hiking the trails at Rogers. Have fun observing it and pondering its existence. 🌸



Upcoming Programs Fall 2023

milkweed seeds | photo: EJRathbone

All programs require preregistration unless otherwise noted.

To register or for more information, call (607)674-4733 or email Ellen@friendsofrogers.org.



Monday Morning Rambles

Start the week off right with a nature walk. We meet every Monday at 10:00 AM.

Most will be at Rogers, but some days we may travel somewhere new.

Sept. 4, 11, 18, 25
Oct. 2, 9, 16, 23, 30
Nov. 6, 13, 20, 27



Storytime & Hike

At 10:30 AM every Wednesday, families are invited to join Jenni Larchar for an hour and a half of stories, music and outdoor exploration.

Sept. 6, 13, 20, 27
Oct. 4, 11, 18, 25
Nov. 1, 8, 15, 29

September

Late Summer Wildflower Walkabout Saturday, Sept. 9, 10:00-11:30 AM

Join us for a leisurely stroll as we look for the wildflowers of late summer. This free program is brought to you by the Otis Thompson Foundation. **Space is limited.**

Second Sunday Scribblers Sunday, Sept. 10, 1:00-3:00 PM

Summer is drawing to a close, so we'll spend this meeting of our Nature Journal Club trying to capture the essence of summer's end. Will your entries reflect this essence in poetry, prose or illustration? **Call or email to register.**

Beaver Creek Paddle Saturday, Sept. 16, meet at Rogers by 8:45 AM

Join us for a relaxing day on Beaver Creek. **Spots are limited. Registration deadline Sept. 14, 4PM.** Bring your own boat (\$15 members/\$20 general public) or use one of ours (\$25 members/\$30 general public per kayak and \$30 members/\$35 general public per canoe). Anyone under 18 years old must be accompanied by an adult. **Registration required; payment due upon registration.**

Three Things Thursday: Oh Deer! The Myriad Impacts of Overabundant Deer Thursday, Sept. 21, 7:00 PM

Your day isn't complete until you've learned at least one new thing. We'd like to expand that to THREE new things, and tonight it's all about the white-tailed deer. Deer are native to our region, however they have become overabundant due to the extirpation of the wolf and effective hunting laws that brought them back from the brink of extinction. Dr. Cardelús, professor of Biology and Environmental Studies at Colgate University, will discuss her research on deer overabundance and its impacts, from forest loss to tick-borne diseases, as well as potential mitigation strategies. **\$5 for members; \$7 general public. Call or email to register.**

Equinox Fire Pit Nature Trivia Night Friday, Sept. 22, 7-8:30 PM

Do you know your bird trivia? How about botany? The names of famous naturalists? Stretch your mind and celebrate your inner nature nerd. Come as an individual or form a team. Gather at the fire pit; dress for the cooling evening. If it rains, we will go indoors. **Call or email to register.**

Upcoming Programs

Fall 2023

The Outdoor Classroom

All programs require preregistration unless otherwise noted.

To register or for more information, call (607) 674-4733 or email Ellen@friendsofrogers.org.

Mushroom Walk at Adams Farm

Saturday, Sept. 23, 10:00 AM

Mushroom aficionados and others are invited to join us on a walk to meet the mushrooms at Adams Farm. Collecting is photographic only - it is not legal to collect physical specimens from state land. Meet at the Adams Farm Trailhead on Williams Road, just off Route 80 about a mile north of Rogers Center. **Call or email to register.**

Forest Bathing with Linda Lombardo

Saturday, Sept. 30, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Forest bathing began in the 1980s in Japan as a way to help people relax and recover from psychological and physiological burnout. Join certified forest therapist Linda Lombardo for a gentle stroll through our woods to learn some relaxation practices. **Space is limited - registration required. Members \$5; General Public \$10.**

October

Oneida Story Hike with Jessica Farmer

Saturday, Oct. 7, 10-11:15 AM & 12-12:45 PM

Jessica Farmer joins us from the Oneida Nation to lead this program introducing you to the culture & history of the Oneidas. **Space is limited.** Call or email to register.

Second Sunday Scribblers

Sunday, Oct. 8, 1:00-3:00 PM

October usually means brilliant colors, so we'll be exploring how to record the splendor of autumn in our journals this month. **Call or email to register or for more information.**

Fall Foliage Photo Foray

Saturday, Oct. 14, 10:00-11:30 AM

Whether you use a cell phone or a DSLR camera, bring it with you to join us for a photographic expedition around the trails at Rogers. This free program is brought to you by the Otis Thompson Foundation. **Space is limited. Registration required.**

Fall Festival

Saturday, Oct. 14, 6:00-10:00 PM

Join us for our annual fundraiser at the newly renovated Sherburne Inn. For more information, see page 7.

Animals of Halloween

Saturday, Oct. 28, 4:00-7:00 PM

Our annual torch-lit trail program where your family can learn all about different animals, who are really actors dressed in costume. See page 7 for more information.

November

Family Fort Building

Saturday, Nov. 11, 10:00-11:30 AM

Join us for a morning of manual labor, learning the ins and outs of creating a debris shelter that can protect you in an emergency. Plus, it's fun! This free program is brought to you by the Otis Thompson Foundation. **Space is limited. Please call or email to reserve your place.**

Second Sunday Scribblers

Sunday, Nov. 12, 1:00-3:00 PM

Turkey season is upon us, so our journals this month will reflect a turkey theme. We'll use turkey feathers and any other turkey artifacts we can find to fill our journals with some turkey trivia. **Call or email to register.**

Black Friday Syrup Sale

Friday, Nov. 24, 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Save big on Rogers Center Maple Syrup. Stop by the Visitor Center and pick up your syrup at a shocking 25% discount! Several sizes available, including the new glass flasks. And while you are at it, you can support the Friends of Rogers by shopping for other unique gifts in our gift shop. We have many new items this year - so come check us out.

Rogers Center Programs at a Glance - Fall 2023

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|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----|---------------------|---|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| S E P T | | | | | | 1 | 2 |
| | 3 | 4 Monday Morning Ramble | 5 | 6 Storytime & Hike | 7 | 8 | 9 Late Summer Wildflower Walkabout |
| | 10 2nd Sunday Scribblers | 11 Monday Morning Ramble | 12 | 13 Storytime & Hike | 14 3 Things Thursday - Impacts of Deer in CNY | 15 | 16 Beaver Creek Paddle |
| | 17 | 18 Monday Morning Ramble | 19 | 20 Storytime & Hike | 21 | 22 Equinox Nature Trivia Night | 23 Adams Farm Mushroom Walk |
| | 24 | 25 Monday Morning Ramble | 26 | 27 Storytime & Hike | 28 | 29 | 30 Forest Bathing |
| O C T | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 Story Hike with the Oneida Nation |
| | 8 2nd Sunday Scribblers | 9 Monday Morning Ramble | 10 | 11 Storytime & Hike | 12 | 13 | 14 Fall Festival |
| | 15 | 16 Monday Morning Ramble | 17 | 18 Storytime & Hike | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| | 22 | 23 Monday Morning Ramble | 24 | 25 Storytime & Hike | 26 | 27 | 28 Animals of Halloween |
| | 29 | 30 Monday Morning Ramble | 31 | | | | |
| N O V | | | | 1 Storytime & Hike | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | 5 | 6 Monday Morning Ramble | 7 | 8 Storytime & Hike | 9 | 10 | 11 Family Fort Building |
| | 12 2nd Sunday Scribblers | 13 Monday Morning Ramble | 14 | 15 Storytime & Hike | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| | 19 | 20 Monday Morning Ramble | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 Black Friday Syrup Sale | 25 |
| | 26 | 27 Monday Morning Ramble | 28 | 29 Storytime & Hike | 30 | | |



Join us **October 14th** for a first of its kind Fall Festival fundraiser! Showcasing two of the most iconic institutions in Chenango County, the Friends of Rogers and the Sherburne Inn are partnering to host the

season's most exciting event. All proceeds go toward the continued improvement and long term sustainability of Rogers.

With musical performances by Big Band Sounds and special guest Jenni Larchar, you'll want to bring your dancing shoes for a true night out on the town. We'll be highlighting the ten year anniversary of Storytime & Hike, making maple mojitos with syrup from the Rogers Center sugarbush, and providing top notch food throughout the evening. Tickets are set to go on sale in September and will be capped at 150 attendees. Don't wait to secure your spot at Sherburne's most exciting seasonal spectacle. Tickets will be made available on our website.

Animals of Halloween

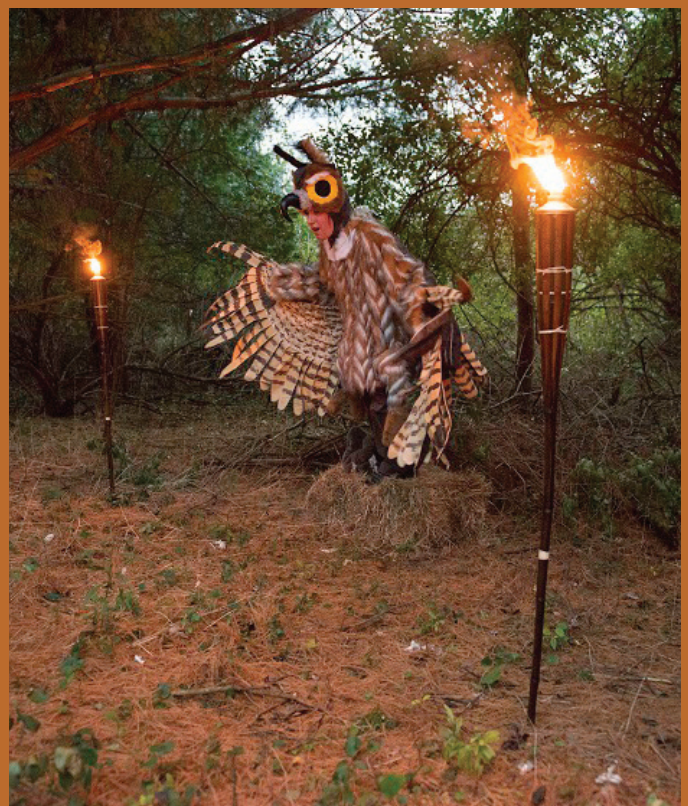
not-so-scary Halloween fun

A guided stroll along the wooded trail at twilight brings you to meet several costumed animal characters who will delight you with tales of the wild life.

Tours depart every 20 minutes, starting at 5:00 PM. The last group heads out at 7:40 PM.

Call to sign up for your slot!
There is a limit of 20 patrons each.
Walk-ins will be accommodated as space allows.

Enjoy music, stories & cider by the fire while you wait or after your stroll.



Members are the Backbone of Rogers Center

In 2011, when the Friends of Rogers reopened Rogers Center, a regional icon was once more a part of the Central New York community. And while people throughout Central New York continue to visit and enjoy the trails, trout ponds, camps and programs at Rogers Center, many do not realize that we are no longer a state-funded facility. The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) still maintains the grounds, but all the programs (school and public), the fish feeders, and management of the Visitor Center are made possible by the nonprofit Friends of Rogers.

When you become a member of the Friends of Rogers, your dollars help cover our program expenses, our new community science initiatives, the salaries of our staff, and keep our doors open. This is invaluable support.

As a way to say thank you to our members, we provide “perks,” such as discounts on programs, early registration options for summer camp, discounts on gift shop purchases, and, for those who travel and visit other nature centers and zoos, reciprocal “membership” to participating venues (a list of participating organizations is available upon request).

Our new membership rates simplify the membership process. For the public, we now offer two membership options: Individual (\$35) and Family (\$50). For businesses and corporations, we still have business and corporate membership levels (see our website for details).

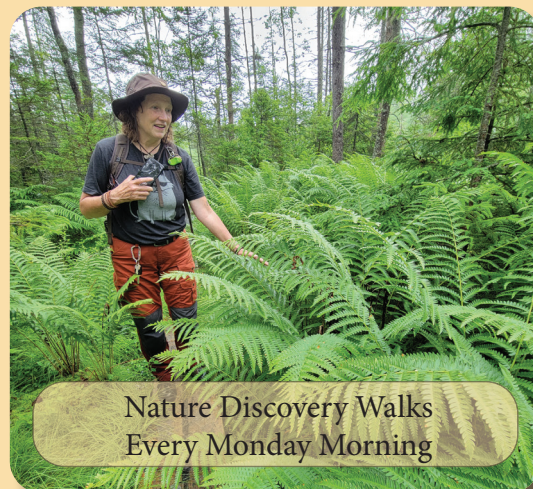
Benefits of Membership:

- Being part of a community of nature enthusiasts.
- (Re)connecting people to nature and each other.
- Reduced admission to programs at Rogers Center.
- 10% discount in the Gift Shop on purchases over \$10.
- Enrollment to receive our eNewsletter and eUpdates.
- Free admission to participating ANCA* member nature centers across the country. *Contact us for a list of participating nature centers.*

Please consider becoming a member today. Stop by, call, or visit our website for details.

* Association of Nature Center Administrators

A Sample of What Your Member Dollars Help Fund:



Where the Road Might Lead

Family Adventure Page with Jenni Larchar



Wednesday mornings you may hear the laughter of young children ringing through the trees at Rogers Center. It's true that quiet voices and slow steps will increase the chances of observing a red squirrel snacking on the seeds of a pine cone, but the excited movement of the children increases the chances of getting to hear that squirrel's scolding chatter about his lunch being disturbed.

When young children are brought to Rogers Center and given a chance to explore the woods and water, and simply exist in nature, they develop a connection that sparks imagination and teaches them about themselves and their relationship to the world around them.

When children are given a chance to entertain themselves in nature, magical learning takes place. They tap into their curiosity, learn to study and observe, and become mindful of the things occurring in nature right around them.

There is a network of family-friendly trails that make a half-hour wooded adventure manageable. Each walk across the Big Bridge is different. How many turtles do you see? What are the turtles doing? Is the surface of the Cunningham Ice Pond covered in lily pads? Are there geese nearby? Maybe a few ducks? What are the geese doing? What do you notice that is different today from the last time you stood excitedly to observe at the edge of the pond?

Bring a child to Rogers Center to run across the grass, quietly stroll through the woods, sit at the edge of the water and look up to the treetops. It doesn't take much to spark imagination or conversation. Nature teaches children to learn, to feel excited, to experience calm and to understand the effect that their actions have on their world. Share nature with a child and help them establish a foundation for learning, growth and exploration that may continue for a lifetime.

Nature's Nursery Fall Session

Nature's Nursery is a place for learning and exploration for ages 3-6. This program is a unique opportunity for children to be introduced to new concepts, social interactions, and hands-on games and activities about our local wildlife. Jenni Larchar, the program's founder and leader, incorporates playful melody into her stories, lessons, and outdoor adventures as she encourages independent and inquisitive exploration.

Classes are for children ages 3-6 years old with independent bathroom skills, and run when Sherburne Public Schools are in session. If there is a snow day, this program is canceled as well.

Fee is \$125 per child for the session. **Registration is required.** You can pick up a registration form at Rogers, or you can contact us and we will email you a copy. Late registrations are prorated at \$12.50/day.

Items your child must bring to Nature's Nursery:

- clothing appropriate for the weather (i.e. snow pants, hat, mittens, rain gear, boots, etc.)
- one change of shoes (close-toed only)
- two changes of clothes (including socks)
- labeled sippy-cup or water bottle for water
- please apply sunscreen and/or insect repellent prior to your child's arrival at Nature's Nursery

The Fall Session runs Sept. 27 - Dec. 6, with no class on Nov. 22.



News Flash

eastern forktail damselfly | photo: EJRathbone

THE B-TEAM

We are so proud of what the B-Team has accomplished this summer! This is mostly due to the efforts of our Upstate Institute Field School Fellow, Matt McGeary, who joined us in June and July to lead this project.

Matt was here four days a week, and rain or shine, in heat and humidity, he was out tracking down and photographing bees, especially bumblebees, on the Rogers Center properties. He took his data and the data from our iNaturalist project (CNY Native Bee Survey) and applied his background in geography and mapping to create location maps of the bumblebees documented in the nine-county region of Central New York.

Knowing very little about native bees before coming here, Matt has become quite fond of these insects in the short time he has been here. “I chose this project because I see the need for change; I can’t fix all the problems, but I can work on the small ones. Helping document the presence of New York’s 14 species of bumblebees, several of which are declining, has been my way to contribute.”

One of the highlights of Matt’s summer was finding Northern Amber Bumblebees (*B. borealis*). According to the NYS Natural Heritage Program, this bee is in critical decline in New York. “Finding not one, but three, at Rogers was amazing!”

At the time of press, Matt’s final plan for his project is to create a Story Map of the B-Team’s research using ARC GIS. This will consolidate the project’s findings and make them available to all interested parties. It is hoped that it will live on the Friends of Rogers’ website.

Rogers’ Bird Cabin Receives an Upgrade

Starting last winter, the DEC began a much-needed overhaul of the structure known as The Bird Cabin.

The original Bird Cabin was completed in 1971 under the guidance of then-director John Weeks as an information center and housing for the George Lesser Mounted Bird Collection. It was also intended to contain forestry and general construction exhibits, a small gift shop, and a meeting room for small groups.

Over the years, this space has hosted the Chenango Bird Club, been a venue of tasty treats for visitors, and served as classroom space for school groups and public programs. By 2022, the structure was really showing its age, and the DEC decided it was time to give it some much-needed TLC.

In the fall of 2022, a new roof was installed, and over the winter work began indoors. The ceiling, floor and walls have been replaced, and new wiring has been installed. Many mice were evicted and new energy-efficient windows have replaced the old drafty ones.



This summer, the Bird Cabin was used as “base camp” for our summer campers. By fall we anticipate all the birds will have migrated back to the Cabin, and it will reopen to the public.

“Upgrades will continue, including new signage and exhibits,” says FOR executive director David Carson.

Getting Involved

woolly bear caterpillar | photo: EJRathbone

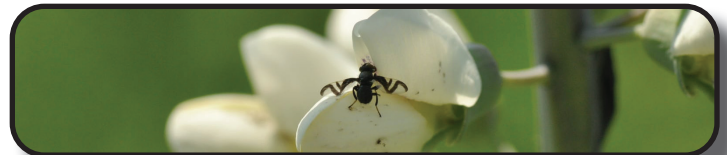
Pollinator Habitat Enhancement

The Friends of Rogers is committed to doing its part to restore our habitats and provide food sources for local pollinators. This is a long-term project that has already begun thanks to a grant awarded this summer to the Friends of Rogers by the Chenango County Soil and Water Conservation District for site preparation and purchase of native plant seeds.

Before we can plant seeds, however, we have to prepare the land, and this is where our project truly begins.

Our first site is the Adams Farm property. This tract of land, developed and utilized for raising game birds in the early 20th century, consists of a series of three ponds, their associated wetlands, a beautiful grove of hemlocks, and upland mixed hardwood forest.

Our goal is to revitalize the ponds by fixing their dams, remove invasive species, prepare the soils, and establish



native plants that will feed both birds and insects alike.

A second project, which is more short-term, also focuses on pollinators: refurbishing the flowerbeds along the trout ponds. We are looking for volunteers who would like to adopt these beds and bring them up to snuff. This project will entail not just weeding, but also the removal of invasive and non-native plants, which will be replaced with native species (either by seed, plug or potted specimen) this fall and next spring.

If you would like to be part of either of these projects, please contact Friends of Rogers executive director David Carson: david@friendsofrogers.org or 607-674-4733.

Education Volunteers Needed!

We are entering the fall school season, which means we are looking for a few good volunteers to help lead school programs. If you enjoy being outside, exploring nature and sharing your discoveries, this might be the volunteer opportunity you've been waiting for.

Education volunteers receive training for leading our programs, as well as in techniques for helping guide learners in their discoveries.

Once trained, our volunteers sign up for the programs they'd like to teach. Some weeks we may only need one volunteer, while other weeks we may need two or three each day of the week! And how long is a day? You can anticipate being here 3-5 hours, depending on the program(s).

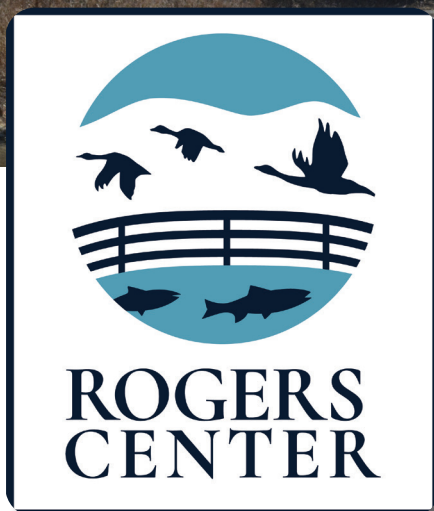
Requirements: love nature, enjoy working with children, be able to walk our trails, have mornings and early afternoons free, and attend our volunteer training class, which is **Thursday, Oct. 5, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM**. (Note that you do **not** have to have extensive knowledge of nature - identifying the trees, bugs and birds is not necessarily the goal of our programs.)

If you are interested, please contact our educator Ellen: ellen@friendsofrogers.org.





Chenango River on a frosty morning | photo: EJRathbone



If you need to reach us...

The Friends of Rogers is here for you. If you have any questions about programs, nature, or visiting, please reach out and contact us.

Contact Us!

Phone: 607-674-4733
Web: www.friendsofrogers.org
Email: info@friendsofrogers.org
Address: 2721 State Hwy 80, PO Box 932, Sherburne, NY 13460

The Visitor Center is Open
Wednesdays- Saturdays
10:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Sundays Noon - 4:00 PM
Mondays & Tuesdays by appointment

Rogers Center, in compliance with the American with Disabilities Act, will assist in providing for those individuals with special needs. Please notify us in advance of your needs that may require special staffing.

A motorized scooter and wheelchair are available for use on our trails and paved paths.

Friends of Rogers Staff

David Carson, Executive Director
Ellen Rathbone, Senior Educator
Jeremy Fetzko, Media & Marketing Coordinator
Jenni Larchar, Children's Program Coordinator
Amy August-Ruiz, Bookkeeper & Administrative Assistant

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frosty leaves | photo: EJRathbone