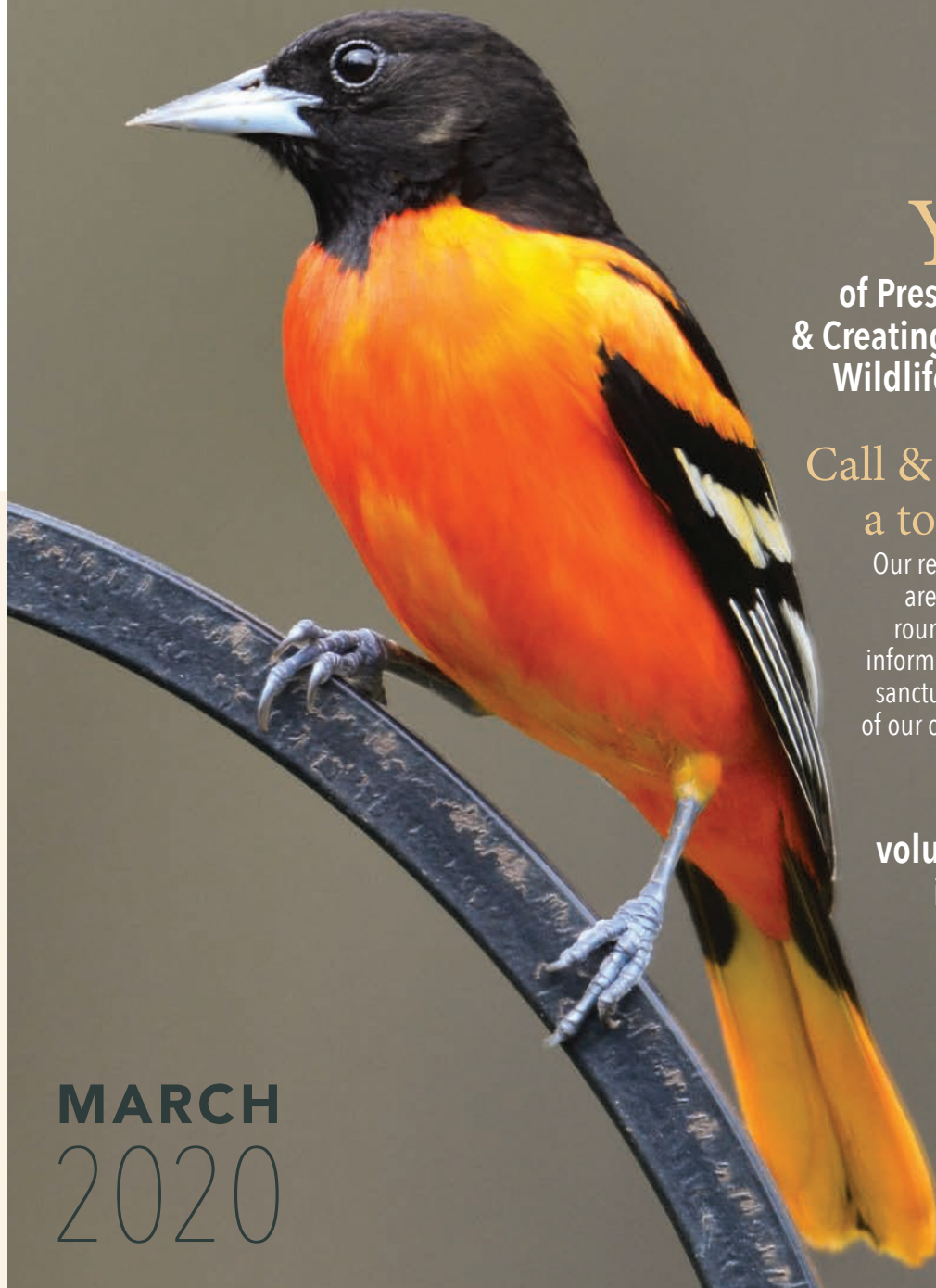


# SPRING FARM CARES

## NATURE SANCTUARY PRESERVE & RESTORE



20  
Years

of Preserving Land  
& Creating Habitat for  
Wildlife and Plants

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Our resident naturalists  
are available all year  
round to educate and  
inform guests about our  
sanctuary and about all  
of our on-going projects.

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volunteering or  
internships!

MARCH  
2020

Please visit our Facebook page and  
Spring Farm CARES Blog page: [www.springfarmcares.org/blog/category/nature/](http://www.springfarmcares.org/blog/category/nature/)

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**T**his past August, Spring Farm CARES Nature Sanctuary marked the 20th anniversary of its wildlife habitat restoration projects. For two decades we've been helping wildlife by rebuilding their habitat one tree, one pond, and one meadow at a time. As part of our ongoing reforestation project, we have planted over 15,000 trees representing 100 native varieties. We have restored native plant diversity to our meadows, and with the help of our resident beaver colony, vital wetland habitat has also been restored. Through our Wildflower Restoration Project, we have re-introduced over two hundred species of native wildflowers, thus reestablishing links between plant species and insect pollinators. We closely monitor the evolution of all our projects, and we gauge our success by the status of our wild denizens.



YELLOW LADYSLIPPER



PAINTED LADY BUTTERFLY

*Some of the plant species re-introduced are endangered or considered at risk of extinction.*



# WHY IS HABITAT RESTORATION NECESSARY?

With most of the natural world subject to development and various forms of exploitation, nature sanctuaries like ours have become vital to the preservation of native species diversity. Even many parks and state-owned lands designated as reserves and wildlife management areas, do not provide real safe havens for some of the most

vulnerable wildlife. Too often, there is no real effort made to restore the habitat by re-introducing native sources of food and other essential habitat. Many of these municipally owned areas allow logging, hunting, and trapping, as well as non-wildlife-friendly recreational activities. The Spring Farm CARES Nature Sanctuary is different, and

our first concern is always the animals – their needs and their safety is our top priority. We protect them, create and preserve their habitat and we respect them for the important beings they are. After all, they are our fellow travelers on this fragile planet, and they deserve a chance to live their lives with peace and security.



DEER



RED BACKED VOLE



RACCOON



RED FOX

*Our Sanctuary's bird list is close to 200 species, which makes it one of Central New York's premier sanctuaries for wild birds.*

*We not only create habitat for wildlife, but we continually monitor animal activities throughout the year. We get to know many of our wild residents as individuals and not just as members of a given species. We've had long-standing relationships with members of our beaver colony, our waterfowl, and even some of our songbirds.*

**B**eavers are natural wetland restorers. By creating their own wetland domain, beavers make habitat for many other species. We have been very fortunate to have an active beaver colony at the Nature Sanctuary for 20 years. The wetland habitat and associated meadows they've created provide homes for fish, amphibians, mammals, and many bird species. The beavers are also inadvertent gardeners. Their dams are as raised flowerbeds, hosting dozens of native wetland plant species. The rich silty soils of their abandoned ponds become meadows where even the most finicky native plants can grab hold and thrive. These beaver gardens provide additional opportunities for hummingbirds and pollinating insects to flourish in.

We have always known our beavers well and they know us. We



BEAVER

are now on our third generation. Tippy, the current matriarch, is the granddaughter of Sarah, the first female beaver to live on the preserve. For several years Tippy was an assistant matriarch to her mother, Julia. Julia was also born on the property and lived here her entire life. She died in 2018 (of natural causes) having prepared her

daughter well for the job of colony matriarch. Like her mother before her, Tippy produces and cares for one litter of kits a year. Tippy has always been a very friendly beaver and is happy to come out of the water and accept treats from staff and visitors. Her favorite treat is a sweet potato.

# GIVE THANKS FOR THE RAIN

The Nature Sanctuary is home to over a dozen amphibian species. Some are almost exclusively found breeding in our woodland vernal ponds. These include amphibians such as Wood Frogs and Yellow-spotted Salamanders. In April (usually), droves of these amphibians aggregate in vernal ponds to reproduce. After the short season, they disperse back from whence they came and are seldom seen again until the following spring. The spring of 2019 was productive for our vernal pond breeders, but it almost ended in catastrophe. One of our most prolific vernal ponds had come close to completely drying out before this year's offspring had developed out of their larval stage. Only in their adult form would they be able to survive outside the pond. By mid-June, a small remnant of the pond held dozens of tadpoles of at least four different species. They were stranded and their lives hung by a thread. We thought we were going to have to mount an intervention and rescue what we could, but fortunately, the rain came and replenished the water. This gave the amphibian larva the extra couple of weeks necessary to develop into adults.



GIANT MOLE SALAMANDER



GRAY TREE FROG





WILD INDIGO & NATIVE COLUMBINE



BALTIMORE CHECKERSPOT



CANADA ANEMONE

## NATIVE PLANTS TO ATTRACT HUMMINGBIRDS, BUTTERFLIES, AND OTHER POLLINATORS:

- Beebalm
- Black-eyed Susan
- Blue Lobelia
- Blue Vervain
- Butterflyweed
- Buttonbush
- Canada Lily
- Cardinal Flower
- Common Milkweed
- Echinacea
- Elderberry
- Figwort
- Golden Alexanders
- Jewelweed/Orange Touch-Me-Not
- Lupine
- Native Columbine
- New England Aster
- New Jersey Tea
- Ninebark
- Prairie Blazing Star
- Pussywillow
- Royal Catchfly
- Spicebush
- Spotted Joe Pye Weed
- Trumpet Creeper
- Virginia Mountain Mint
- Virginia Rose
- Wild Bergamot
- Wild Geranium
- Wild Senna

## AN ORCHARD FOR WILDLIFE

Unlike commercial farms that work hard to keep wildlife out of their orchards, we at the Nature Sanctuary have designed and installed an orchard specifically for wildlife. Among the many trees and shrubs we've planted are Red Mulberry, American Persimmon, PawPaw, American Plum, Serviceberry, Chinquapin, and Elderberry. When mature, these plantings will provide a wide variety of wildlife with the resources necessary to sustain them through the long winter months. Also, in the orchard, wildflowers are being integrated with fruit trees to assist butterflies, bees and other pollinators. The hedges being planted around the perimeter of the orchard are intended to be attractive to nesting songbirds. Our aim at the sanctuary is to create a landscape that will encourage a healthy and diverse ecosystem.

## WHY PLANT NATIVE?

Replacing lawns with native plants can be a great asset to the natural world. Instead of polluting by mowing, native plants sequester carbon from the atmosphere and help mitigate climate change. They provide food and shelter for insects and animals whose habitats are dwindling due to development. They also support the pollinators we depend on for much of our own food supply. Since native plants are naturally adapted to our climate and conditions, they generally require less water and fertilizers. They also eliminate the need for chemical sprays. When we increase native plant diversity, we help the insects and animals that rely on those plants to survive. In that way we support the ongoing cycle of life.

*We have consciously done a lot for resident pollinators, particularly native bees and butterflies. For our Monarch butterfly population, we have maintained a large meadow that is heavily populated with milkweed plants – the main food plant for the species. Our many native wildflower gardens and meadows provide Monarchs and other pollinators with varied nectar sources throughout the growing season. One insect species that we have concentrated on helping is the beautiful Baltimore Checkerspot. The main food plant for this checkerspot butterfly is native turtlehead. The vast amount of turtlehead plants growing along our biggest stream's floodplain has increased the population of checkerspots to record numbers, even as populations of other butterfly species have suffered in the region.*

Do you believe that migratory songbirds pair up with the same mates year after year? Most researchers say no. However, we have had a pair of Rufous-sided Towhees that have now been together in a devoted relationship for at least three years. We got to know them back in 2016 after they returned from the south where they spent the winter. As a pair they soon stood out due to their lack of fear of humans. In fact, they became so bold that they would fly over to us and beg for peanuts. We began catering to them and before we knew it, we had friends for life. Both the male and female don't hesitate to approach us on the trail, give a few volleys of their distinctive "ta-weee" calls, and ask for treats. For three seasons the towhee couple has been one of multiple pairs of their species that have lived their lives in the brushy borders of our biggest meadow. During their time with us they have raised several broods and have had a wonderful life foraging and frolicking in the Sanctuary's beautiful and unspoiled landscape.

Sometimes no matter what we do we cannot change the fate of species. In the early 2000's our sanctuary hosted the rare and beautiful Golden-winged Warblers. Due to external pressures and negative population trends the Golden-winged Warbler has become regionally extinct as a breeding species.

Over time we've have had several pairs of resident Canada Geese raise young on the property. Our current pair, named Roddy and Lydia, experienced multiple nesting failures for five consecutive years. This was due to the eggs being taken by predators before they hatched. The geese had been making their nests on beaver dams and beaver lodges and on other sites vulnerable to predation. In 2018, before the

geese returned north, we erected a nest platform on a tiny submerged island in the main beaver pond. That platform was designed to remain above water throughout the goose nesting season. With just a little coaxing, our resident pair accepted the new site and now has successfully raised young for two years in a row. A little effort on our part made a huge difference in the life of a devoted pair of our animal friends.



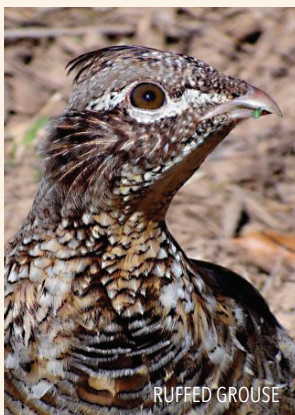
CANADA GOOSE PAIR



RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEE



FOX SPARROW



RUFFED GROUSE

Over the years we have known many amazing animals. One that stands out is a Ruffed Grouse we called "Super Chicken". For five years, Super Chicken lived near one of the property borders. There he ardently patrolled his territory and was not afraid of confronting anyone or anything he perceived as a threat. We spent much quality time with Super Chicken, usually trying to convince him not to do anything too dangerous. Things like challenging hunters on the neighbor's land or confronting the hawks and owls that perused his domain. Please look for the incredible story of Super Chicken on the Spring Farm CARES website. You will find it on the Nature Sanctuary page.

We have hundreds of nest boxes on the property. These boxes are designed to cater to a wide variety of cavity-nesting birds. We have housing for Eastern Bluebirds, Eastern Screech Owls, American Kestrels, Wood Ducks, and Great-crested Flycatchers. Of course, the houses are never really species specific, and that's fine with us. Other birds such as Black-capped Chickadees, Tree Swallows, Tufted Titmice, White-breasted Nuthatches, and House Wrens have all found our prefab housing



**TO RESTORE AND PROTECT THE PRE-SETTLEMENT BIODIVERSITY OF THE PRESERVE THROUGH NATURAL MEANS, AND TO INCREASE ITS RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE. BY...**



- Reestablishing native species of all types (especially those that are endangered or threatened) through reintroduction, reestablishment, and maintenance of habitat
- Limiting the negative impacts of invasive species on native diversity and habitat on the preserve
- Caring for and monitoring important species (including keystone species) to ensure their success
- Introducing plant species projected to shift north due to climate change in a controlled manner to observe their effects and ensure a stable ecosystem shift
- Educating the public on the preserve's goals and work, while facilitating involvement through outreach, programming, and joint projects
- Advocating for endangered and threatened species on and off the preserve and educating the public on the importance of maintaining native biodiversity in local ecosystems
- Completing the above using only humane and ecofriendly means

Partnering with licensed Wildlife Rehabilitators, we have developed methods of release that improve the rehabilitated bird's chance of survival. Our diverse habitats allow various species of raptor to find their niche and reestablish connections in the wild. To date we have released American Kestrels, Merlins, Eastern Screech Owls, Barred Owls and Broad-winged Hawks.

Our Nature Sanctuary's dedication to helping wildlife extends beyond our borders. We often help our local wildlife rehabilitators catch and/or transport sick and injured animals. Our Sanctuary has also played a vital role in the establishment of endangered Peregrine Falcons in the City of Utica. Since the installation of a nest box on the 15th floor of the Adirondack Bank Building in downtown Utica, Astrid and Ares, our resident falcon pair, have raised 19 young in the last six years. Our close monitoring of the nest during the young falcons' fledging period has enabled us to rescue six of the birds that would otherwise have become casualties of busy city streets. The nesting activities of the Utica Peregrines can be monitored by anyone via the Internet. There are several streaming video cameras in and around the nest. The video feed can be accessed from a devoted website: [UticaPeregrineFalcons.com](http://UticaPeregrineFalcons.com).



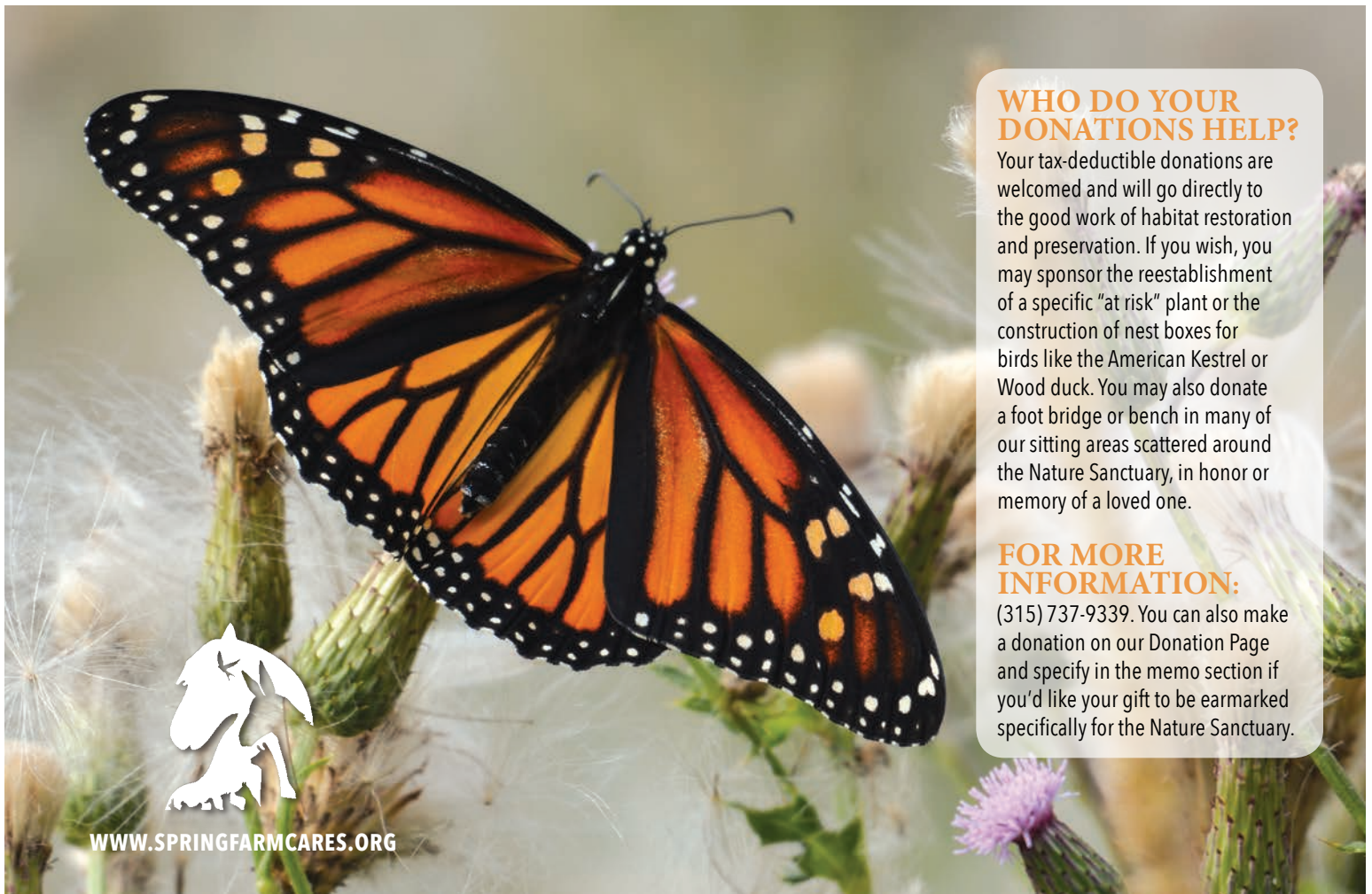
to their liking. Non-birds that take up residence in the houses include Northern Flying Squirrels, Red Squirrels and White-footed Mice. Some of the mice also utilize houses for seed storage during the region's long winter.

For several years the nature sanctuary has maintained a special relationship with raptors – primarily hawks, falcons, & owls. Because of our enhanced habitat, we have become a favorite release site for rehabilitated birds-of-prey.



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### WHO DO YOUR DONATIONS HELP?

Your tax-deductible donations are welcomed and will go directly to the good work of habitat restoration and preservation. If you wish, you may sponsor the reestablishment of a specific "at risk" plant or the construction of nest boxes for birds like the American Kestrel or Wood duck. You may also donate a foot bridge or bench in many of our sitting areas scattered around the Nature Sanctuary, in honor or memory of a loved one.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

(315) 737-9339. You can also make a donation on our Donation Page and specify in the memo section if you'd like your gift to be earmarked specifically for the Nature Sanctuary.



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