



# WINTER/SPRING 2022 NEWSLETTER



2 AM Walks by Juliana Seedorf

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# A Message From the Program Coordinator

It's a new year and newsletter! We are kicking things off a little differently by merging two seasons into this edition but that just means it'll be extra stuffed with content and pictures!

January threw us some bone chilling, icy, windy and snowy weather. It was the perfect time for rest and dormancy; the old seed heads were topped with ice caps, the barren tree branches outlined in white, not a lot of chatter to be heard. I always like to reflect on our program from the year before, which projects were popular, new ideas and planning for the upcoming year.

As I'm sitting here writing this, our praying mantis egg cases were freshly picked from the meadows, we are approaching the spring mow, our little seedlings are climbing towards the grow lights, the robins are prodding the soft ground to capture

a worm, osprey and cormorants are making their way back to nest, and a light breeze is felt through the open window.

Through hiking, cooking over the campfire, planting our first seeds, sharing perspectives and ideas, observing and journaling, we've been out there exploring and learning new things. I always admire watching you all on our projects as you interact with your peers, and the joy and satisfaction from a job well done. You all go above and beyond and your efforts are always appreciated. Keep asking questions, continue to make an impact as you inspire others to create positive change for our environment.

Enjoy the sunshine,

*Kayla*

**PROTECTING OUR PLANET STARTS WITH YOU**

<p><b>BIKE MORE DRIVE LESS</b></p> 	<p><b>reduce REUSE recycle</b></p>  <p>Cut down on what you throw away. Follow the three "R's" to conserve natural resources and landfill space.</p>	<p><b>choose sustainable</b></p>  <p><b>seafood</b></p> <p>Learn how to make smart seafood choices at <a href="http://www.FishWatch.gov">www.FishWatch.gov</a>.</p>	<p>Trees provide food and oxygen. They help save energy, clean the air, and help combat climate change.</p>  <p><b>PLANT A TREE</b></p>
<p><b>EDUCATE</b></p>  <p>When you further your own education, you can help others understand the importance and value of our natural resources.</p>	<p><b>CONSERVE WATER</b></p>  <p>The less water you use, the less runoff and wastewater that eventually end up in the ocean.</p>	<p><b>-SHOP- WISELY</b></p>  <p>Buy less plastic and bring a reusable shopping bag.</p>	<p><b>Don't send chemicals into our waterways.</b></p>  <p>Choose nontoxic chemicals in the home and office.</p>
<p><b>Volunteer!</b></p>  <p>Volunteer for cleanups in your community. You can get involved in protecting your watershed too!</p>	<p><b>Long-lasting light bulbs - ARE A - BRIGHT IDEA</b></p>  <p>Energy efficient light bulbs reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Also flip the light switch off when you leave the room!</p>		

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*Earth Day is this Friday! Here are some ways we can give back! Thank you to our volunteers for all that you do to protect, conserve and restore every week!*

## Wildlife Sketches by Mira Benigno



*The Red Fox*

*Mira has been drawing since she was about 7 years old and she is passionate about all animals! Wildlife is her favorite subject to draw. Mira also writes and plays guitar!*



*The Solitary Fox, Wild and Free*

## Project Spotlight

Two years ago, we ran our first ever book club with our 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grade students with great success! Given the response, we decided to do it again. This time we read Carl Safina's *Beyond Words: What Wolves and Dogs Think and Feel*. This was the second book of the young readers version of *Beyond Words*.

8 students were selected from the Seedlings and Nature Initiative Programs (four from each). We had a total of five meetings with our last meeting being an author visit from Carl, who resides locally in Setauket. I've had the privilege of meeting Carl multiple times and attending his talks. Fun fact- he was actually my commencement speaker for my department graduation at Stony Brook University! Carl speaks with a true passion for the living world and the animals inhabiting it. He also runs the Safina Center, a nonprofit organization committed to advancing the conservation of wildlife and the environment, and giving a voice to nature.

We began exploring the lives of wolves in Yellowstone National Park. Since wolves were reintroduced into the park in 1995, there has been an extensive amount of research on wolf packs; who is who, their body language and communication with other wolves, family status, territory and rivalry, and their movements to/from the 2.2 million acres of national park. Not all the wolves had happy stories, but rather triumphant and heartbreaking ones.

The students had some amazing discussions and healthy debates about controversial topics such as hunting regulations, perspectives of the indigenous peoples, cattle ranchers, researchers, and tourists and how to achieve a stable balance

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## Boat Building Update

This past October, we began our third boat building stewardship. In 2018, we started this program as a partnership with the Bayles Boat Shop and the [Long Island Seaport and Eco Center \(LISEC\)](#). Each year we work on a different build which takes about 8 months to complete. The goal of this program is to encourage an appreciation and understanding of Port Jefferson's nautical history and working to craft something that serves a purpose to the marine environment.

This season we have been working on a Wood Duck 12 Kayak from a stitch and glue kit by [Chesapeake Light Craft](#). The pre-cut wooden panels come in a slender box and it is hard to imagine that these pieces will actually become a boat. I feel that the most satisfying part of the process is when the students see all the parts come together and take shape.

Stitch and glue kits have predrilled holes where panels will be connected and at first, we actually use copper wire to secure the puzzle joints together. We then use a thick epoxy to fillet the seams and after it cures we can cut the wire and remove it.

John has been leading our class on Monday evenings at the boat shop and we are almost on our finishing touches! Despite the shop being closed briefly in the winter we are making great progress. The mentorship that the staff at the shop create with the students is admirable. Students have learned to use belt sanders, orbital sanders, drills, mixing epoxy and applying fiberglass and much more. They make a great team!

We've now officially fiber glassed the entire kayak inside and out, joined the deck and the hull together, added several coats of epoxy, did an inlay of a compass rose decal, and finished the hatch piece.

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### Project Spotlight (cont'd.)

for each group to benefit, students' positions on how they felt about individual wolves (especially wolves that were more violent in their packs), and our individual choices and feelings about not eating meat. We spoke about the importance for children to formulate their opinions and have conversations with others even if not everyone agrees with that person's point of view. Miss Sue and I facilitated student-centered discussions in which we had a group leader for each class.

We had special guest presenters including Len Carolan, a retired teacher who spent five summers working at the Lamar Buffalo Ranch in Yellowstone. He has had an array of experiences and was in Yellowstone at the time when famous alpha female O-Six had been hunted on lands bordering the park. He presented the history of the park, told us how in the early 1900s the first park rangers were instructed to kill the wolves, the reintroduction process, and his story of an encounter with a wolf in the middle of the night.

Another guest we welcomed was one of our students, Lindsay, and her mom who are volunteers for [Canine Companions](#). We were in the second half of our book, reading and discussing the parallels between wolves and dogs, and how dogs were domesticated by humans. It was interesting how dogs have domesticated us as well since we are so dependent on one another. Lindsay and her mom are raising an 8-month-old service puppy who is a Labrador and Golden Retriever mix named Nico. After his initial training for 18 months, he will go on to professional training at a regional center. Nico's initial training consists of learning basic commands and being socialized in public and private settings. Lindsay and her mom dedicate a large portion of their time ensuring Nico has the proper training. After Nico graduates from his professional training, he will be placed with either a veteran, someone who needs a hearing dog, someone with a physical disability, or as a facility dog. While it is difficult to give up a puppy, Nico will be serving someone in need.

We wrapped up our book club with questions for Carl Safina and he shared many stories of his journey as an ecologist and a writer and the places across the world where his journey has led him. He signed our books and it was a fun opportunity! Looking forward to doing another book club in the coming years!

### Boat Building Update (cont'd.)

We'll be sanding, sanding and more sanding! We need to add another coat of epoxy and then we'll do about 4 coats of varnish. The varnish allows protection against the sun; the UV rays would break down the epoxy over time.

The last steps will be adding the coaming around the cockpit, installing the seat and the foot pedals. Then in June, we'll get her on the water!

If you would like to check out our boat, the Bayles Boat Shop is located on Pass Way in Port Jefferson Village (adjacent to the village center; big red building). The boat shop is open on Saturdays, Sundays, Mondays (evenings) Tuesdays and Wednesdays. All are welcome!



*Young Readers Book Club; Nico is a service dog in training for Canine Companions*

## Using Drones for Wildlife Research

If you've taken a walk at Avalon, you might've noticed white tailed deer with various colored ear tags. We have been assisting on a six-year research project in collaboration between the Village of Head of the Harbor, the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). We are testing the efficacy and cost-efficiency of immunocontraceptive delivery methods with the goal of enhancing the viability of these methods in long term deer management plans.

Another aspect of this project is using technology to recognize and track individual deer in the landscape and to quantify the deer population in Head of the Harbor. We've been using trail camera grids set up throughout the village, vehicle surveys, GPS/PIT identification tags as well as drone surveillance surveys.

When I'm not on student projects, I have been training and flying full grid patterns of Avalon with the drone. In order to do this type of work, I hold a Remote Pilot Certificate from the FAA. Some of the benefits of using drones for field research include the ability to count and observe animals from a distance without disturbing them (as long as you are not hovering- it can sound like a big mosquito!), covering a large survey area in less time, covering areas that are not easily accessible, it is more cost effective (than other methods), and it poses less risk to animals and people.

This year, we were able to successfully fly 5 grids in the early morning (6:00 AM-8:30 AM) and early evening (6:00 PM-8:30 PM) covering over 230 acres of land. The drone is a DJI Mavic 2 Enterprise Advanced, equipped with a thermal camera and a standard 32x zoom camera. The best time to spot deer in the landscape is around dusk and dawn, and the temperatures are low enough to create a heat signature on the thermal images.

Drones for wildlife conservation have become more popular in recent years and have even been used by law enforcement to catch poachers! It is pretty amazing what this technology can do! We will be continuing our monitoring over the next few years of this study.

*Pictured on right; 7 deer grazing near the tulip circle. Thermal image taken at 250 ft AGL*

### Upcoming Projects:

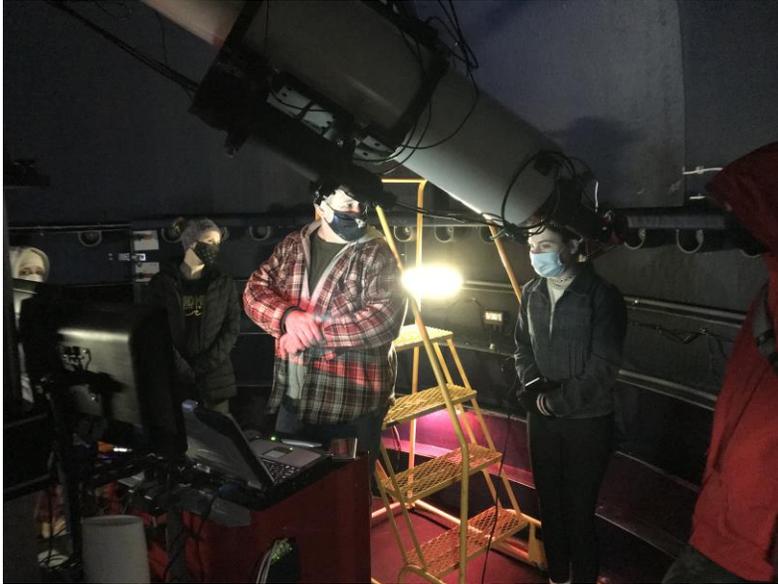
- Native Habitat Garden: 4/29 from 4:00-6:00 PM @ Sunken Meadow
- Arcadia Planting Day: 5/6 from 4:30-6:00 PM at Avalon
- Native Habitat Garden: 5/15 from 2:00-4:00 PM @ the Smithtown Library
- Kindness Garden Signage Project Pt II: 5/20 from 4:30-6:30 PM
- Native Habitat Garden: 5/27 from 4:00-6:00 PM @ Sweetbriar
- Four Harbors Audubon Tree Fest: 5/28 from 10:00 AM-3:00 PM @ Three Village Historical Society

*Stay Tuned! More Projects Being Added for the End of May!*









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