

CHAUTAQUA



BIRD
TREE
&
GARDEN
CLUB



Tree
of

t h e M o n t h

Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)

by Leslie Renjilian

Beth Miller took the lovely photo above on March 13. This old red maple lives by the Sports Club and has a nice view of the hotel and the lake. The burl on the side gives it added character and provides a handy snow shelf.

Thanks to your donations, this tree has a tree marker on it, so it's easy to identify. But if there's not a BTG in your area installing tree markers, **here are some tips for identifying red maples:**

Something Red: BTG Naturalist Jack Gulvin says one way to identify a red maple is that it has "**something red in every season.**" In winter, the **buds are red**; in spring, the tree has very **small red flowers**; in summer the **leaf petiole (stem) is red**, and then of course there is the glorious **fall red leaf display** (although, surprisingly, some red maples aren't red in the fall!).

The Leaf: The red maple leaf is **NOT the classic 5-lobed leaf** of the Canadian flag - that is the sugar maple. But the red maple does have a **distinctive leaf**, usually sporting three triangular lobes. **Three letters in the word red, three lobes on the leaf, and three sides to a triangle.** (Well, it usually has three lobes, but remember, there will always be freaks and 5 lobes are not uncommon.) There's a photo of the red maple leaf below, but if you want to take a deeper dive into maple leaves, click here for a [Maple Leaf Photo Primer - How to Tell Your Sugars from Your Silvers.](#)

The Whirlybirds: Like all maples, red maple have a **seeded fruits called samaras or schizocarps**, which develop from April to June. Growing in pairs on maples, they have an enclosed seed at one end and a thin, dry, winglike projection at the other. You've seen a million in your life, but check out the photo below if you need a refresher. Many people refer to the seedpods as helicopters or whirlybirds because the "wing" makes them spin when they fall from the tree. So that's a good way to know that you have a maple, but to know whether it's a red maple or not, you'd have to really study your samaras. Red maple samaras are usually - but not always - red. A fun afternoon could be spent collecting samaras to bring home and compare and contrast on the kitchen table.

Branch and Leaf Arrangement: A very good way to identify maples is that they have an **opposite leaf arrangement**, meaning the leaves are attached to the twig directly across from each other. This is unusual in the tree world as most trees have leaves that attach in an **alternate** pattern. Click on the blue title to learn more about the [MAD Horse Mnemonic](#), which helps us remember which trees have opposite leaf arrangement.

Ways NOT to try to identify a red maple:

Its Fall Color: You might think with a name like red maple that this would be a tree you could count on for red fall color. Fool! No, you can't. Horticulturalist Micheal Dirr says, "the only consistent about Red Maple fall coloration is the **inconsistency from tree to tree.**" Fall coloration varies from **greenish-yellow to yellow to red.**

Its Bark: Smooth and light grey when young (almost like a beech), the bark of the red maple ages like human skin, growing **darker, ridged and furrowed with age.** See the four photos below of red maple bark in various states.

Its Range: Sometimes knowing a tree's natural growing range can help you narrow down your identification, but in the case of the red maple - not so much. If you're anywhere in the eastern US, it *could* be a red maple you're looking at. The red maple has the greatest **north-south range** of any tree species living entirely in the eastern forests, ranging from Newfoundland to southern Florida and the native range extends as far west as Minnesota, Oklahoma and Texas.

Slowing down to look closely at the trees you see every day can be a wonderful way to **connect with nature.** Start with the tree nearest to your front door. The red maple is the most common tree in North America, so the odds are good there's one very near you, perhaps even by your door.

Leslie Renjilian
BTG Life Member and President
Aspiring Amateur Dendrologist



The photos above show the triangular center lobe of the red maple leaf in fall and its whirlybirds in spring. That tree is in Upper Miller Park along Lake Drive and puts on a great show of red in the fall.



The **four photos above and below** show the variation of red maple bark.

The **top left** is a young red maple on Bestor Plaza (planted in 2000), showing the light grey bark typical on young red maples.

The **top right** is a young red maple on the Vincent Brick Walk (planted in 2002), showing a cool horizontal line of holes made by a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker as well as vertical lines likely caused by frost cracks.

Bottom left is red maple in the College Lodge Forest in Fredonia showing target pattern in the bark. This happens in response to a canker (a bacterial or fungal disease that infects open wounds on trees). The disease only strikes maples and does not kill them.

The **bottom right** photo shows the red maple in Lower Miller Park near Timothy's Playground. The bark is so old and deeply furrowed that it looks like a shagbark hickory. With a girth of over 12 ft and a height of nearly 90 ft, it is the largest red maple in Chautauqua, our Champion Red Maple. Learn more about [Chautauqua's Champion Trees](#) here.





Sad News from Bestor Plaza

by Jack Gulvin

Western New York was hit with high winds on March 24 and 25. Branches were still bare, but despite the lack of wind resistance, a lot of trees came down.

As you can see in the photo above, **an old sugar maple on Bestor Plaza lost a big branch.**

This type of damage is due to **narrow limb crotches**. As the two sides of the limb increase in diameter over the years **their bark gets sandwiched** between them. This means little or nothing holding the halves together. It also creates a crevice where **moisture and decay** can set in.

The big branch on the opposite side of the tree survived well since it formed a nearly 90 degree angle with the main trunk and thus a very strong joint.

Pruning young trees with narrow crotches is a good practice.

Older trees with this problem can be fitted with a cable to hold the two halves together, which is not a perfect solution but better than what you see in the photo.

The limb has been removed and the tree will stand for now, but such a large wound may doom that precious big maple in a prime location.

Jack Gulvin is the BTG Naturalist. During the season, Jack leads a weekly Tree Walk on Wednesdays and a weekly Nature Walk on Fridays. He also cares for Chautauqua's Purple Martins and collects aluminum cans to recycle. He donates the majority of the money he earns from that effort to the Purple Martin Conservation Association.

Photo above by Kindy Parker, CI Garden Crew. This photo was taken the morning after the limb broke. There was no snow when it broke.

See historical photos and read [more about this tree here](#).



U n s u n g H e r o s o f T h e L a k e

by Doug Conroe

Ever wonder why the invasive nuisance **Eurasian watermilfoil** (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) (EWM) plant in Chautauqua Lake has not been a problem for the past several years? It is not that it has been absent. EWM continues to be present throughout the lake. The difference is that Mother Nature has provided

a natural control that has limited its growth. Its limited growth has then allowed the native plants to proliferate, lessening EWM density opportunities. **Mother Nature's solution: invertebrate herbivores**, specifically the *Acentria ephemerella* (moth) and the *Euhrychiopsis lecontei* (weevil) invertebrates. These herbivores have been augmented by the *Cricotopus myriophylli* (midge) and by several species of caddisflies (*Nectopsyche* spp).

The **moth and midge** (photo below) **feed upon the top of the plant stem**. The plant is then unable to grow to reach the surface of the lake. The **weevil's eggs are laid upon the plant**. When the eggs hatch, the larvae burrows into the stem of the plant **causing the stem to weaken and subsequently collapse**.

The **caddis** (photo above) feed upon the plant **defoliating its leaves** thereby affecting the plant's growth.

The life cycles of the herbivores varies, thereby impacting the plant at different times during its growth. The combined impact causes the plant to be controlled in its presence.

EWM is a well-established invasive plant in Chautauqua Lake that has been present for decades. It is just one of the lake's great biodiversity of aquatic plants. Fifty-two different species of aquatic plants have been observed in Chautauqua Lake over the years. Of recent, 33 species were inventoried in 2021. Although it may be a nuisance at times, it also provides benefits. **EWM helps to stabilize the lake bottom, absorb nutrients, provide fishery habitat and now, most importantly, emits an allelopathic substance that helps to retard the presence of Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs)**.

For more information about Chautauqua Lake's herbivores and its plant colonies, consult the Chautauqua Lake Association's website - lake science reports tab: <https://chautauqualakeassociation.org/science/aquatic-reports/>.

Douglas Conroe
BTG Life Member
Chautauqua Institution Director of Operations, retired
Executive Director/Chief Operating Officer
Chautauqua Lake Association, Inc.

Photos above and below courtesy of Racine-Johnson Aquatic Ecologists. Below left: Weevil (*Euhrychiopsis lecontei*) ; Below right: Moth (*Acentria ephemerella*). Bottom: Apical Stems of Herbivore Damaged Watermilfoil.





What's on Stilts?

Shorebirds: World Travelers on Stilts by Twan Leenders

As the weather outside confirms that we are on the cusp of spring, it is time to start preparing for the big change from wintering birds to summer visitors. But before we get into the excitement of neo-tropical migrants arriving in our backyards, an entirely different group of birds will be passing through.

During the months of April and May, we see shorebirds passing through on their long-distance trek from South America. They sometimes make the journey from as far south as Tierra del Fuego on the southern tip of the continent, towards their breeding grounds in the arctic tundra of northern Canada.

At least 35 species of shorebird have been reported in Chautauqua County, but most will just make a brief stop along a lake shore, marsh, or flooded farm field before continuing north. Seeing any of these species requires luck and dedication, as the window to spot them is limited to a few weeks in the spring and another brief period in late summer when these birds and their offspring head back south again.

Shorebird parents barely spend enough time on the arctic tundra to lay their eggs and have their chicks hatch before turning around for their return journey as they have such a long distance to travel. Young shorebirds are precocial, meaning they hatch with a full down covering and their eyes open. Unlike the case songbirds, in which parents feed their young for some time, no parental care is needed, and baby shorebirds can feed themselves within hours after leaving the egg. Their parents generally leave the nesting grounds well before the young birds' flight feathers have fully grown in, and they can commence their first journey to South America.

Only four species routinely stay in our area during the breeding season to raise their young right here in Chautauqua: the American Woodcock, Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper, and Wilson's Snipe.

Woodcocks start their incredible display flights right about now. If you have never seen or heard this phenomenon, I would recommend you find an area of dense scrub and listen closely after dark for the erratic whistling, whirring, and chirping that these birds make during their explosive courtship flights. It can be quite a spectacle if you hit the right night!

Killdeer are likely the more visible of our resident shorebirds as they will soon show up in open, sandy, or gravelly areas, including flat rooftops and parking lots in built-up areas. Their loud namesake call is hard to miss, and their gangly little chicks – avian Q-tips – are among the cutest baby birds around. Killdeer parents are famous for their “broken wing” distraction displays during which they feign an injury and attempt to draw you (or any other potential predator) away from the location of their nest, which is just a little scrape in the dirt. Once you follow the bird far enough that it feels confident that you'll never find its eggs or chicks, the injured wing will miraculously heal, and the Killdeer flies off.

Shorebirds are truly amazing in their fascinating behaviors and ability to fly staggering distances without stopping. Keep your eyes peeled in the next month or two to catch a glimpse of their elusive lives!

Articles and photos by Twan Leenders. Top photo above shows a Killdeer, bottom photos are captioned beneath. of a Spotted Sandpiper, an American Woodcock, a Killdeer chick, a Killdeer nest, Sanderlings, and Wilson's Snipes.

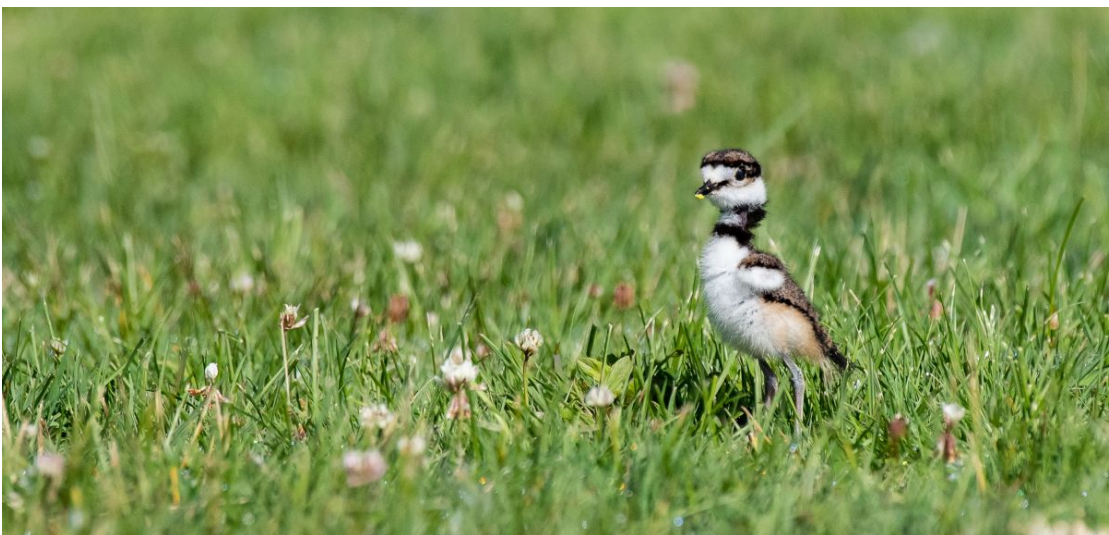
*Twan is the Director of Conservation at the [Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy](#). The author of **Amphibians of Costa Rica** and coauthor of **The Wildlife of Costa Rica**, his photographs have been featured in many books and magazines including *National Geographic*, *New Scientist*, and *National Wildlife*. Twan is a very popular speaker and guide for the BTG each summer.*



above: Spotted Sandpiper



above: American Woodcock



above: absurdly cute Killdeer chick. A photo of the adult Killdeer is atop the article.



above: Killdeer Nest



above: Sanderlings



above: Wilson's Snipe



Reconnecting with Nature



Land really is the best art. - Andy Warhol

Photo by Jack Voelker, BTG Life Member, Director (Retired) of Recreation and Youth, Chautauqua Institution, Aspiring Harmonica Player, Former Hop Farmer



CHAUTAUQUA BIRD TREE & GARDEN CLUB

Excerpts from:

Chautauqua Recipes
A collection of recipes published
by the Bird and Tree Club of 1934

Foreword

“Take a dash of water cold
And a little leaven of prayer,
A little bit of sunshine gold
Dissolved in morning air,
Add to your meal some merriment
And a thought for kith and kin;
And then, as a prime ingredient
Plenty of work thrown in:
But spice it all with the essence of love
And a little whiff of play:
Let a wise old book and a glance above
Complete a well spent day.”

Mrs. Thomas Edison
President.

Chautauqua Bird and Tree Club

Historical

Tidbit

The BTG published its first cookbook in 1934 and second in 2003. Many of you may own the 2003 Sampler and you're lucky you do because they are hard to find.

Good news though - we have just begun the process of creating a new cookbook! Stay tuned for details.

The recipe below is Mina Miller Edison's (Mrs. Thomas Alva Edison). She was very active in the Club and served as our fifth president.

Creamed Oysters

Mina Miller Edison

1934

12 large oysters

1/4 lb. butter

2 small eggs for breading

1/4 pint (generous) thick cream

freshly grated bread crumbs (not crackers)

1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce

Brown butter in large frying pan; [dip in egg and dredge in bread crumbs, then] fry oysters quickly a deep brown; put on hot platter; add to brown butter the seasoning of Worcestershire sauce and salt; add cream boil up and pour over oysters.

Mrs. Thomas Alva Edison



Your Moment of Zen

Just last week, Chautauquan Halle Payne released a song called *Backyard And The Birds*. It's almost as though she wrote it for the BTG. The chorus goes:

"No one come calling,
I'm listening
to the birds.
They tell me stories
that you could not fathom
with words.
I've been waiting my whole life
to feel like

I truly belong
with the backyard
and the birds
and their songs."

You can hear it on [Spotify](#) and [Apple Music](#).



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