

STONY KILL ALMANAC

SPRING 2021





THE MISSION OF STONY KILL FOUNDATION IS...

To educate the public and cultivate environmental stewardship through interpretation of the rich historical, environmental and agricultural heritage of Stony Kill Farm.

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From the Executive Director



Spring is a busy time at Stony Kill. The forest and fields awaken from their winter slumber. Blossoming flowers and leaf buds paint new colors on the landscape every day. Visitors flock to the farm, enjoying the longer days and welcoming weather. Honey bees and pollinators venture out to greet the spring ephemerals. The cows and sheep begin to graze the pasture, baby lambs frolicking in tow. The community garden is abuzz with gardeners prepping and planting for the season. And our education team is busy running programs like Junior Farmer, Homeschool, and community workshops for students of all ages. It is a spectacular season to be on the farm, and this edition of our Almanac highlights some of these springtime stories. We hope you enjoy these chronicles from Stony Kill, and we look forward to seeing you on the farm sometime soon.

Erik Fyfe
Executive Director
Stony Kill Foundation

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Nature's Milestones

By Tim Stanley

May 1st-10th - Look for bloodroot and twinflower along the Woodland Trail. The forest floor is flooded with sunlight this time of year and the woodland flowers take advantage before the leaf canopy unfurls by late May.

May 4th - Almost guaranteed that no frost will occur after this date through October 7th. There are about 181 frost free days for the growing season in Dutchess County.

May 15th-30th - Look for swarms of honey bees, this is how honeybee hives split naturally. As hive populations build, the queen will leave the hive with half of the bees to find a new hive. Queen cells hatch in the old hive and a new queen will take over.

May 26th - Full "Super Flower" Moon

Late May - First hay crop ready to harvest. Farmers need three days dry weather to allow time for hay to dry before baling.

Late May-June - Fireflies emerge once weather becomes warm and humid, flashing at dusk to attract a mate.

Early-Mid June - Strawberries are the first berries of the season, followed by serviceberries (*Amelanchier sp.*) and wild raspberries.

Mid June-late July - Canada geese molt after nesting and have a 4-5 week flightless period as they regrow their flight feathers.

June 20th - The Summer Solstice marks the longest day of the year.

June 24th - Full "Strawberry" Moon

Humans of Stony Kill



I enjoy taking hikes and seeing everything start to grow. I also always look forward to all of the fun events. Most of all I love seeing all the animals, especially the baby animals! **Halaina Diaz**

We like to come out for peaceful walks and sit by the gardens and watch the birds. How lucky we are to live so close and have this place. It is a gem.

Linda & Rich Stevens



WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO AT STONY KILL IN THE SPRING?



My family and I enjoy hiking the well maintained trails and visiting the animals in the barn. The people there make it very inviting and educational. **Maria McKay**

I love to visit the animals in the barn and hang out with Stamper while she's taking care of the them. **Chris Mendez**

SKF Almanac Editor





Spring Forest Discoveries

By Erin Moseman

Stratus whispers sweep through the barren tree tops; it is a humid, cloudy morning on the Sierra Trail at Stony Kill Farm. Lacing up my hiking boots, I eagerly set foot on the rich organic soil. My hopes are high as I scan the forest floor for spring ephemerals and pollinators eager for a snack on hepatica or skunk cabbage blooms. Spring has sprung and the rebirth of the Earth is evident. The trail is lined with decaying tree trunks and the soil is hard at

work turning over Autumn's remains.

Amphibians are just starting to defrost, and will soon search for wetlands to lay their eggs. As I flip over a fallen log on the trail, a blue spotted salamander gazes up at me, wondering where its roof went.



Jefferson Salamander

In late May at the farm, flowers continue to bloom and native bees zoom around for pollen to feed their young. Jack in the Pulpit peaks through the forest floor with its unique striped flowers on the Woodland Trail. Skunk cabbage leaves are full, shading moisture rich soil where frogs take refuge. A walk along the

Verplank Ridge Trail exposes visitors to the unique meadow system where wildflowers begin to grow, waiting for the heat of late Summer to bloom.

Growing among the ephemerals, is garlic mustard, an herbaceous plant, native to Europe and Asia that thrives beneath open forest canopies in spring. Garlic mustard is problematic for forests because of how quickly it outcompetes native vegetation. It multiplies rapidly and releases chemicals that disrupt the growth of other species. For foragers though, it is edible and makes a fine addition to pesto, salad dressings.

Amidst the spring ephemerals, garlic mustard, and animals who call the farm's forest home, each of Stony Kill's five trails has many stories to tell. Each offers a unique journey through a variety of Hudson Valley ecosystems in the spring and all year long.



Jack in the Pulpit



Garlic mustard

Garlic Mustard Pesto Recipe

1 c Garlic Mustard
½ c Basil
3 Cloves Garlic
2 oz Toasted Pine Nuts
Juice of 1 Lemon
4 oz Olive Oil

Developed by Robert Dunn, from
Garlic Mustard: From Pest to Pesto

In a food processor, puree the first five ingredients. Then add oil with processor running. Add salt, to taste.



Be Smart About Your Soil - Tips for the Garden

By Joyce Tomaselli

Gardeners and farmers know soil must be nurtured and managed. Good decisions about compost, mulch and watering practices are key. Undisturbed soil has layers, which have naturally formed over time. The top layers, where roots retain water and nutrients are exchanged, are the most important.

Initially soil is defined by its texture – the proportion of sand, silt and clay. Sandy soil has the largest size particles and drains very quickly. Plants growing in sand must be drought tolerant. Clay soil has very small particles which stick together, going from a wet soggy state to a very dry state. Few plants thrive in clay soil.

The ideal soil is “loamy”: a combination of sand, silt and clay that holds water well and drains well, has spaces for air, and good nutrient exchange ability. Loamy soil is 45% mineral matter, 25% moisture, 25% air and 5% organic matter. Organic matter is made up of 10% biomass (living); 15% residual matter (almost dead); and 75% humus (very dead). It adds sponginess and structure to the soil and helps plants take up the nutrients they need, making them healthier and more disease resistant.

Adding compost to soil is a good gardening practice. However, unfinished compost or manures can actually cause harm to some plants. Once you've achieved a nice loamy soil, take care to avoid soil compaction which removes water and air spaces: don't work soil too early in spring; don't walk where your plants are; and only till the soil by hand.



Finished Compost

Proper use of mulch, such as grass clippings, straw, newspapers and wood chips, is important for water conservation, weed management, and to mitigate temperature extremes. Avoid using mulch that is too heavy or deep, especially on plants with fine roots, and keep it away from the plant stem. Mulch can also help prevent diseases like blights caused by pathogens in the soil splashing up during watering.

Mulched loamy soil with appropriate organic matter will not guarantee success without good watering practices. Water in the morning at the base of the plant, keeping leaves dry. Water deeply, reaching all the plant's roots. Avoid runoff and erosion. Invest in a rain gauge. Then enjoy the amazing results your garden produces.



Flight of the Timberdoodle

By Richard Parisio. First Printed in Hudson Valley One on April 10, 2012. Excerpts Reprinted with Permission

It usually takes sharp eyes, and a bit of luck, to find the American woodcock, also called “timberdoodle,” “bogsucker,” and “big eyes” (which is descriptive). Woodcocks have very effective camouflage, their rich brown plumage melting into the leaf litter of the wet woods they live in. If you do flush one from its cover, the plump, long-billed bird, about the size of a small chicken, will whirl away swiftly in a zigzag flight, wings whistling.

This time of year, from March through May, woodcocks abandon their reclusive habits and come out into the open where anyone can see them. In slightly overgrown fields throughout our area, except in very windy or stormy weather, woodcocks are putting on an amazing spectacle. The show begins at dusk, and is announced by nasal calls that sound like “peent,” made by the male birds as they strut about through the grass. Suddenly, you hear a rapid, twittering trill, probably made, at least in part, by wind rushing through the bird’s scythe-shaped primary feathers. You can watch the woodcock as it flies from the ground in an ascending spiral, till it becomes a mere speck in the twilight sky, hundreds of feet from the ground. Just then the sound changes to a kind of bubbling warble as the woodcock drops down, often landing quite close to the spot where it took off. To add more adventure to your viewing experience, you can wait until the woodcock takes flight again, after the bird has completed another round of strutting and “peenting,” and run over to the place where he left the ground. Lie down there, on your back, and wait, enjoying the cool evening

breezes sifting through the tall grasses. When the bird makes its next landing, he may come down very close to you, close enough for you to get a really close look at his huge eyes and long bill. If you're really lucky, the woodcock, who won't see you lying there, if you're still, may land right on top of you, astonishing himself as much as you!

The above "instructions" for experiencing the courtship flight of the timberdoodle were first given to me when I was in my teens, by Howard Cleaves, naturalist and pioneering photographer from Staten Island, then in his nineties. After he told me how to watch woodcocks in this way, he added this bit of encouragement; "If you don't do some of these things, you've missed the boat." I took his advice to heart, and the 40 years or so since then have had many 'close encounters' with this mysterious bird (though a woodcock hasn't quite landed on me, yet).



American Woodcock

...any of us could, if we chose to, find a meadow where some small bushes and shrubs are growing, and go out at dusk to witness the woodcock's rite of spring. The question of exactly why male timberdoodles perform these aerial ballets hasn't been fully answered. They seem to help define the birds' territories for breeding, and it's assumed that they play a role in courtship and mating, but it's not known just how the females of the species actually choose a mate. Perhaps, by observing, you'll solve this puzzle. Or maybe, like me, you'll just marvel at the woodcock's performance.



From Africa to America: The Tunis Sheep Story

By Tim Stanley

In 2019, Stony Kill Foundation bought its first two breeding stock of registered Tunis sheep, Caramel and Butterscotch. When the Foundation decided to transition to a purebred flock, the Tunis breed was selected because of the breed's deep roots in the history of American Agriculture and Stony Kill's aim to teach people about the plight of heritage breed animals that are vanishing from American farms.

The story of the American Tunis breed began with two sheep gifted to George Washington by Hammuda Ibn Ali, Bey of Tunis, in 1799. The ewe, Selima, produced lambs until she was 16 years old. The ram, Garamelli, was bred to native ewes, launching the development of the Tunis breed in America. Additional sheep were later imported from Africa, and flocks became established in Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia. Thomas Jefferson kept a flock of Tunis sheep and admired the breed for their good

quality mutton. Tunis popularity later diminished due to factors such as improved English mutton breeds, the difficulty of breeding broad-tailed sheep, and the Merino sheep craze between 1807-1815. Over the years, American farmers used selective breeding to develop the Tunis we know today, and in 1896 the American Tunis Breeders Association was established, setting guidelines for breed standards.

Today, the Tunis Registry keeps track of the remaining sheep from this breed. In 2006, they recorded 1,475 sheep (up from 605 in 1990), moving the breed from the Livestock Conservancy's "threatened" list to the "watch" list. In 2011, Tunis flocks were recorded in 32 states.

At Stony Kill, you can recognize the Tunis sheep by their tan to red faces and wool-free cheeks. They have white on the crowns of their heads and the tips of their fat tails. Tunis are considered a "dual-purpose" breed meaning they are raised for both wool and meat. They are well suited for warmer climates and tolerant of cold winters, making them well adapted to the Hudson Valley climate. Today, a walk along Farmstead Lane is often rewarded with the pastoral image of our ancient red-faced flock, whose story began in Africa, contentedly grazing the green fields of the farm.



Exploring Maple Sugaring Traditions with Students

By Stacey Lynch Adnams

Earlier this year, as winter gave way to warmer days, Stony Kill educators led our homeschool families, scouts, and students on a journey back through time, exploring the tradition of maple sugaring from its Native American origins to present day.

The journey began at the campfire. Students learned the story of Woksis, the Iroquois Chief who discovered maple sap after throwing a tomahawk into a maple tree. His wife, Mozua discovered sap dripping into a trough the next day and boiled their



San Miguel Academy students learning about maple sugaring

meat in the liquid. The resulting sweet maple smell and flavor inspired them to collect more. They carved wooden spiles from sumac and developed a process for reducing the syrup using heated stones. At the time, maple syrup was primarily concentrated into sugar for cooking and easy storage.

After learning this story, our students journeyed to the Verplanck Tenant House to learn how European colonists modified the sugaring process, using wooden buckets and yokes to transport sap, and kettles to cook it, turning the golden syrup into sugar.

Our syrupy journey through time culminated with present day practices. Our students tapped trees using drills and metal spiles, emptied sap buckets, and cooked syrup in a steel pan on the fire. Finally, everyone enjoyed homemade maple popcorn and left with a new appreciation for the storied traditions of maple sugaring.

Volunteer Spotlight: Dick Lahey

By Chris Mendez

Dick Lahey visits Stony Kill nearly every day of the year, walking the farm lane, scouting for birds, or swinging by to drop something by the Stony Kill Foundation office. A lifelong educator and longtime friend of the farm, Dick has been part of the Stony Kill family since the 70s, when the Foundation was chartered.

From 1980-2015, Dick chaired the Stony Kill Foundation Board, providing leadership to the organization and forging connections with local farmers and community partners. When New York State announced a plan to close Stony Kill in late 2009, Dick and others involved with the organization were instrumental in securing the necessary funding for the Foundation to take over operations and programming from the state and keep Stony Kill Farm open.



Pete Seeger with Dick Lahey, advocating to keep Stony Kill Farm open in 2010

Over the years, Dick has been involved in establishing many of the Foundation's signature events. He fondly remembers first bringing sleigh riding to the farm in the '80s, which evolved into an annual tradition as part of the Winter on the Farm celebration.

Dick is the sort of person who has always been willing to lend a hand at Stony Kill in whatever way he can. His long-term dedication, warm personable nature, and hard work have left an indelible impression on Stony Kill Foundation, helping steward the organization toward the success it is today.

Stony Kill Then and Now

By Ed Cigna

As Henry Hudson sailed up the “North River,” he recorded that its resources and forested shores could become sources of significant trade wealth. At the time, the Wappinger Nation dominated much of the eastern side of the river from present day Manhattan to Poughkeepsie and their society included 18 decentralized groups of 3,000-13,200 people. Arrowheads and spearheads have been found on the land where Stony Kill Farm is today. The Wappinger grew crops, gathered food from the forests, fished, and hunted throughout the winter when the rivers were frozen. The arrival of Henry Hudson’s ship in 1609, and the subsequent colonization of their land would come to alter the Wappinger’s lives forever.

By several accounts, the Wappinger and the arriving Dutch both recognized opportunities for trade. The Dutch brought knives, hatchets, glass beads, and “trifles,” while the Wappinger had grapes, shell beads, animal pelts, tobacco, and corn to trade. Some of the most valuable trading items were beaver pelts, which were widely used for clothing in Europe, and especially favored for hats. Europe’s supply of pelts from Russia, Scandinavia, and Asia was becoming scarce, and the Dutch sought to generate great import wealth from the Wappinger’s land.

Stories following Hudson’s expedition suggest that the Wappinger taught the Dutch hunting, trapping, and farming. As the Dutch began to settle the area, they encouraged the Wappinger to sell their land. This is an important interaction: the Dutch and the Wappinger had different ideas of what selling meant. To the colonists, it meant turning over complete control and exclusive rights to everything on the land. To the Wappinger, it meant sharing the right to hunting and farming.

Violent conflicts over trade, land use, and livestock control followed. The most famous of these conflicts was named Kieft's War, after Willem Kieft, the then Director of New Netherland. In 1643, Kieft led an attack against a Native community in Communipaw, killing 120 people and launching an intense period of violence between the colonists and Native nations. One of the individuals behind this war was land developer and speculator Abraham Isaacsen Verplanck, father of Gulian Verplanck. Abraham and others sent a petition to the Dutch government at the time, advocating that the Wappinger be massacred. By the time the war ended in 1646, hundreds of colonists and more than 1,500 Wappinger were killed. The colonists were shaken, and in 1664 a British fleet arrived and laid claim to the Dutch colonies in NY. Again Abraham Verplanck sent a petition to the Dutch, this time to support the colony's surrender to England.

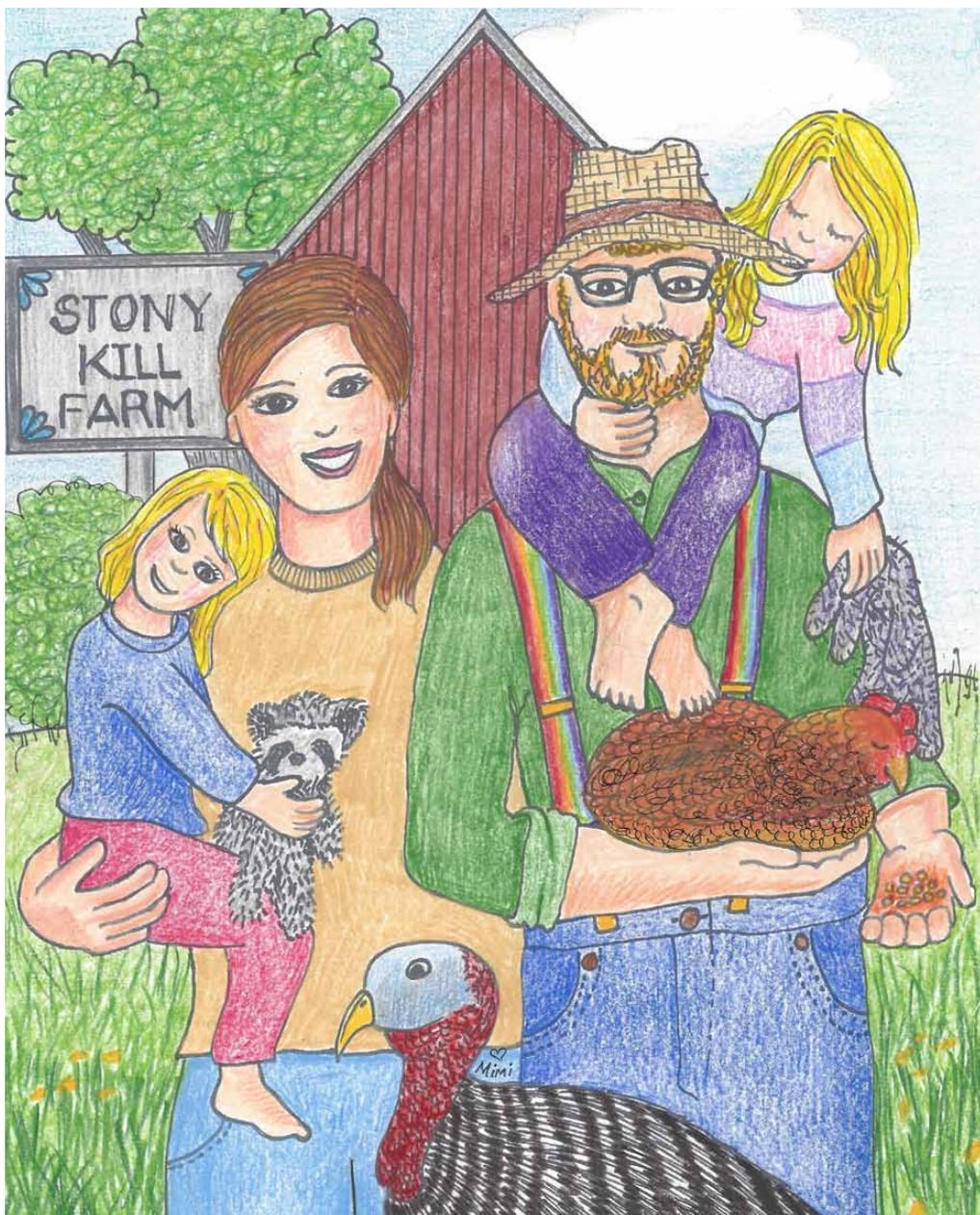


Spear and arrow points found at Stony Kill

During the 100 years that followed, the Wappinger Nation was scattered and forced to leave their ancestral territory of over 7,500 years. Many fell victim to European diseases and colonial violence, and many joined other nations, especially the Mohicans, where they hoped to be protected. Today, the lineage of the Wappinger is carried on through their incorporation into Stockbridge-Munsee Nation who now reside in Wisconsin. The Wappinger's last sachem, Daniel Nimham, visited London in 1766 to petition for the return of their lands, but he was unsuccessful. Ultimately, the Wappinger's land was taken over by colonists and speculators, including Abraham Verplanck, Francis Rombout, and Stephanus Van Cortlandt, eager to profit from the area's rich cropland and natural resources.

Community Corner

Farm Portrait submitted by Eugenia Mullis



To inquire about submitting artwork, poetry, or writing for the
Stony Kill Almanac, email Almanac@stonykill.org

Stony Kill Farm is

a place to slow down, explore, and connect with hands-on experiences in nature and sustainable agriculture. Come enjoy the farm this season!

Open Barn - Register to come inside the livestock barn to meet the animals every Saturday and Sunday from February thru November.

Outdoor Education - Sign your child up for hands-on learning on the farm with our field trips, birthday parties, Junior Farmer, homeschool, and scout programs.

Outings & Workshops - Learn about topics like beekeeping, gardening, natural dyes and more. Or join a guided walk or activity around the farm.

Take a Hike - Explore forests, wetlands, and farmscape on Stony Kill's five hiking trails, totalling 8.5 miles.

Relax - Partake in our Yoga on the Farm series or a outdoor wellness class held throughout the summer.

For info on events and programs, visit Stonykill.org

Help support the farm you love!

Visit: Stonykill.org/donate or mail donations to:

Stony Kill Foundation, 79 Farmstead Lane,

Wappingers Falls, NY 12590

Your support helps keep Stony Kill going for everyone to explore and experience.



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