



BY ALAINA POTRIKUS

Just three miles south of downtown Buffalo, the sounds of the city disappear at Tift Nature Preserve, 264 acres dedicated to conservation and environmental education.

Chickadees and woodpeckers nestle in the brush along the boardwalks of the cattail marsh, calling out to one another and hopping out to find seeds. Hawks soar overhead and perch on vaulted boxes; in the ponds, turtles and frogs sun themselves on rocks.

In the spring and summer, fishing is permitted along the shores of Lake Kirsty, and guided wellness walks are

held every Thursday morning. In the winter, visitors can rent wooden-frame snowshoes or use their own cross-country skis to enjoy the ungrooved trails.

The preserve was created in 1972 during construction of a landfill by the City of Buffalo, after concerned citizens urged city legislators to set aside the land for preservation and conservation efforts.

The land has a long history. Originally part of the Seneca Indian hunting grounds, the land was acquired in 1848 by dairy farmer George Washington Tift. The farm was converted to an industrial site for the nearby harbor and railyards, the staging site for shipments of coal and iron ore. During the

Clockwise from page 60: A barn owl at Messenger Woods at Tift Nature Preserve. • A red-bellied woodpecker looks around. • A black capped chickadee perches. • A golden crowned kinglet holds on. • A juvenile yellow bellied sapsucker clings to a tree's bark. • A green heron. • A northern cardinal. The Tift Nature Preserve has been dedicated an Important Bird Area by the Audubon Society for its diversity of species.

Photos by Timothy Gryckiewicz