

# WANDERING AND WONDERING

FRIENDS OF THE ASHLEY SCHIFF PRESERVE  
SPECIAL WRITING SERIES



*A shot taken on one of my walks on Lake George*



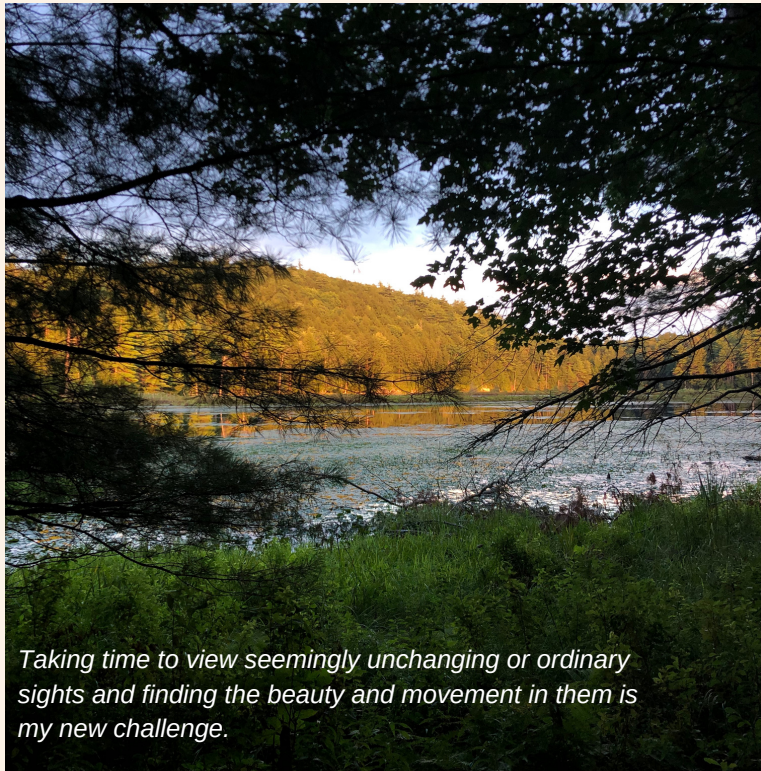
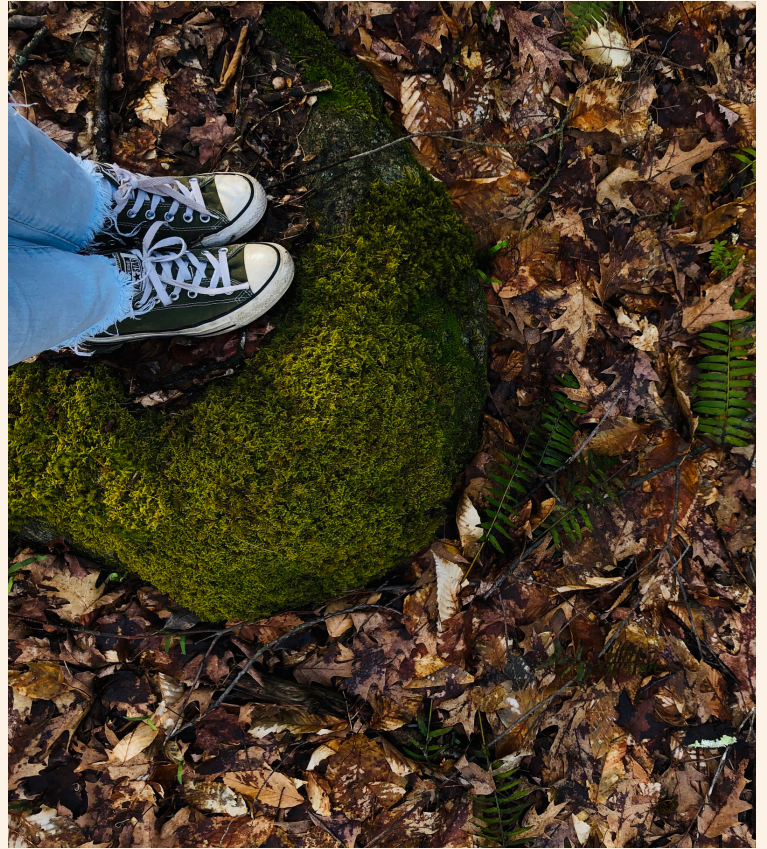
*I make sure to take a picture on each walk. It helps me to keep track of my thoughts and my views.*

## Walking as my Relaxing Routine

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY MOLLY SHOWERS

I stare at my laptop screen, my tired eyes squinting at my course list. Taking a deep breath, I peek at my assignment pad, the homework list seems to grow with no end in sight. Shifting my focus back to the bright display in front of me, I feel the beginning of a headache stir in the back of my mind. Exasperatedly running a hand through my frizzy hair, I make the snap decision to shut the laptop, leap up from my desk, throw on a jacket and a pair of sneakers, and walk out my front door. It is time for a walk.

As a Stony Brook sophomore STEM student (biology major with a marine science minor), I am no stranger to stressful times, such as midterms or finals. It seems, though, that the COVID-19 pandemic has only intensified this stress. Health care professionals have confirmed this. I made the decision to stay home and participate in only virtual classes. With this decision, I sacrificed being with friends on campus and interacting with other Stony Brook University members in an in-person fashion. My mechanisms for stress relief, such as grabbing a coffee or listening to music with friends, were no longer feasible. To give myself a break, I began to walk small distances up and down my street when I felt mentally exhausted.



*Taking time to view seemingly unchanging or ordinary sights and finding the beauty and movement in them is my new challenge.*

As soon as I take that first step outside, I take a deep breath. The breeze dances across my face, pulling my negative thoughts with it as it passes by me. I look out to my street, quiet and inviting. I live in a small town in Upstate New York, where up to an hour can pass before a car passes my house. It is just me, the clouds, the birds, and the trees. The immediate serenity I feel is not a new feeling. Growing up in the mountains and attending college on Long Island, I have grown accustomed to relaxing walks along the beaches or on a hiking path. I always thought of it as a time-consuming activity, however. Now, just a quick 10-minute stroll is enough to clear my mind and rejuvenate my body.

*A small hike near Lake George with a rewarding view!*



Walking has become my go-to pastime, a quick moment of solitude when I feel peacefully alone yet surrounded by life. It has become a moment of productive diversion, where my focus is hauled away from my pile of work and is held on the movement of the forest and wildlife around me. It is a brief time where I can shut my mind off, and just take one step after another. On my walks, I look up at the environment around me instead of down at my harsh screen.



*Me and my walking buddy, Sydney.  
He's a six year-old Australian Shepherd.*



*A creek near my house that I like to explore.  
The running water gives me a calming,  
refreshing view to take in.*

In this series, I will describe some of my thoughts and musings as I reflect on past walks and take you on new ones. Hopefully, it serves as an inspiration, while “normal” life is on pause, to start walking as a hobby and take in nature, whether it be at home or on Stony Brook campus. For me, a simple walk has become a routine for relaxation. MGS

**Molly Showers is a Biology Major and Marine Science Minor at Stony Brook University. She is a member of the SBU Environmental Club, SBU Sustainability Solutions Committee, and an Undergraduate College Fellow. This is her second semester working as a Blog Writer, and she cannot wait to share her thoughts with you!**



*The photos and the article was produced by Travis Cutter.  
Document distributed by the Friends of the Ashley Schiff Preserve  
March 2021*

*Friends.ASPP@gmail.com*

