

The NATURALISTS' CLUB Newsletter

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Springfield Science Museum • 243 State Street • Springfield, MA 01103
<http://naturalist-club.org/>

J A N U A R Y - M A R C H 2 0 0 5 SCHEDULE • OF • ACTIVITIES

JANUARY	16	Sunday	Winter Walk at Westfield Reservoir
	19	Wednesday	JANUARY MEETING: African Sampler
	22	Saturday	A Winter Walk at Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary
	23	Sunday	Observing Winter Wildlife at Quabbin
	29	Saturday	Peaked Mountain Winter Carnival
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FEBRUARY	5	Saturday	An Evening with Naturalists
	12	Saturday	Nature in Winter Walk at Mittineague
	16	Wednesday	FEBRUARY MEETING: Elephants of Africa
	20	Sunday	Exploring the Winter Forest on Snowshoes
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MARCH	12	Saturday	Tregellys Fiber Farm
	16	Wednesday	MARCH MEETING: Who's Flying in Your Yard: Changing Bird Populations in the Pioneer Valley
	19	Saturday	Spring Season Trail
	26	Saturday	Falling Waters
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APRIL	2	Saturday	An Opportunity to Study Vernal Pools



Life in Snow

Question: *What is the reason Moose's legs are stilt-like long and Snowshoe Hare's back feet are so big and fur-packed, why the Long-tailed Weasel turns white in the winter and the Ruffed Grouse grows feathery combs on the sides of its feet?*

Answer: *Adaptation to snow.*

Snow is an extremely influential force for animals to contend with. Snow can be helpful for some and detrimental for others. Deep snow creates hardships for deer, hindering their fleetness and hampering their ability to travel great distances. To compensate, during winter they tend to gather together and stay in a "deer yard," or a sheltered area, traveling and packing down trails to facilitate access to feeding sites. Deer eating habits change with the shift to a winter landscape: as grass is covered and deciduous leaves have fallen, they concentrate on vegetation found above snow level, such as buds, bark, evergreen leaves and twig.

By contrast, deep snow provides a stepstool for smaller animals like rabbits and hares to new sources of food, in the form of buds and bark on shrubs and saplings they could not otherwise reach. Snow also furnishes cover for shrews, mice, moles and voles, who dig mazes of tunnels through it, out of sight of ever-watchful hawks. However, out of sight does not mean undetectable. Up on the surface, a fox can hear the patter of little feet under the snow, then punch right through with stiff front legs to trap and snatch up a small mammal for lunch. Likewise, a slender weasel may chase down a meal along the very roadways its prey has built to gain access to its own meals. Yes, snow cover changes the whole predator-prey dynamic.

Some mammals turn their backs on the whole business of snow and winter's lack of food altogether, by either hibernating or spending time in dormancy. True hibernators in our region are little brown bats, jumping mice, and woodchucks. Stores of fat nourish them through the winter months as their metabolism, heart rate, breathing rate and temperature all drop to a level just barely supporting life. Animals that spend at least some of the winter dormant include chipmunks, black bears, striped skunk and raccoons. For these animals body functions are reduced except for body temperature, allowing them to rouse more easily and perhaps take a midwinter stroll on occasion. Most of our other mammals stay fairly active, hunting, being hunted, foraging and dealing with the snow.

In this issue, you will find several offerings inviting you out into the winter landscape to investigate snow-covered nature. A seemingly quiet landscape does not mean it is devoid of activity. Look for tracks, scat, tunnels, and evidence of browse or bedding sites. In many cases, snow provides us more of an opportunity to examine wildlife activity. So bundle up, step outside, and take advantage of the seasonal opportunities afforded us by snow to observe winter wildlife!

~ Nancy Condon

Winter Walk at Westfield Reservoir

Date and Time: Sunday, January 16, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon

Leaders: Tom and Nancy Condon (413-564-0895)

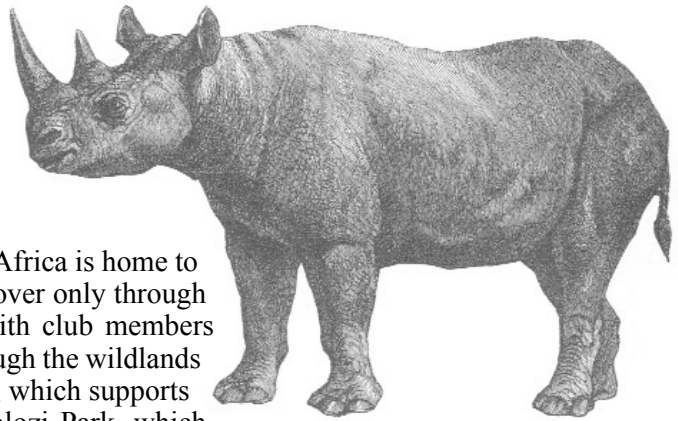
Registration: Please call to register, so if bad weather forces cancellation we can contact you.

Meeting Place: Westfield High School, Montgomery Road

Tucked into the hills of Montgomery is a pretty little reservoir. Around it winds a small trail, through hardwood and conifer forests. Come explore this property with the club as we search for signs of resident animals and learn how they survive this season. The trail is level and about one mile. Dress for the weather. Bring lunch, water and a pair of binoculars.

JANUARY MEETING **AFRICAN SAMPLER**

Wednesday, January 19, at 7:30 p.m.
Tolman Auditorium, Springfield Science Museum
Speakers: Tom and Nancy Condon



From awe-inspiring elephants to fleet-footed mongooses, Africa is home to so many of those animals known to most of us the world over only through books, TV shows and children's songs. Come along with club members Nancy and Tom as they take you on a naturalist's tour through the wildlands of South Africa and Tanzania. Visit Tembe Elephant Park, which supports some of Africa's largest elephants. See Hluhluwe/Umfolozzi Park, which supplies 90% of the rhinos to other parks and reserves. See Nile crocodiles in the world's largest natural estuary. Vicariously experience the Serengeti, Ngorongoro Crater, and the "cradle of mankind," Olduvai Gorge. In so doing, learn of the secret lives of lions, marvel at magnificent baobab trees, gaze at a giraffe, and so much more. At the end, enjoy some authentic Serengeti snacks.

A Winter Walk at Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary

Date and Time: Saturday, January 22,
from 10 a.m. to 12 noon
Leader: Sonya Vickers (413-566-3406)
Registration: Call Sonya with any questions

Meeting place: Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary
Directions: From Monson center, take Route 32 south
for 1 mile. Turn left onto Wales Road. Norcross
Wildlife Sanctuary will be 3.5 miles, on your right.

Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary, one of those hidden natural wonders in our area, is dedicated to the study of natural habitats. They are open to the public without charge. We will be given a personalized tour by the staff naturalist, investigating the winter world of animal tracks, winter birds, and plants preparing for spring.

Bring boots that can walk through snow, and bundle up in layers. You can bring snowshoes if the snow is deep, or call Sonya about snowshoe rentals. Restrooms are available on the premises.

Observing Winter Wildlife at Quabbin

Date and Time: Sunday, January 23,
from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Leaders: Jack Megas (413-782-3962) and
Dave Gallup (413-525-4697)

Meeting Place: Take Route 9 East from Belchertown center. Turn left at second road after the Quabbin (MDC Police) entrance sign. Follow road, bearing right at the overflow. Enfield Lookout is at the top of the hill. Rain, ice, or snow cancels.

Quabbin's Enfield lookout is an excellent vantage point from which to view eagles, deer, turkey, coyote, and other wildlife. We are offering this popular trip again this year to observe winter wildlife in a pristine setting.

Dress warmly and bring binoculars (and a spotting scope if you have one). Dave and Jack will bring telescopes for use by the group. Dave will lead a hike for those wishing to explore a little of the winter wonderland!

Afterwards, join us for an enjoyable dinner and conversation at a nearby restaurant.



It is a pleasant surprise to walk over a hill where an old wood has recently been cut off, and, on looking round, to see, instead of dense ranks of trees almost impermeable to light, distant well-known blue mountains in the horizon and perchance a white village over an expanded open country. I now take this in preference to all my old familiar walks. So a new prospect and walks can be created where we least expected it.

Journal entry dated November 9, 1850, Henry David Thoreau

ANNOUNCEMENT

Peaked Mountain Winter Carnival

Date and Time: Saturday, January 29, from 12 noon to 4:00 p.m.

Location: Miller Forest Tract at Peaked Mountain, in Monson.

Registration: Please preregister by calling 978-248-9455
or email central@ttor.org.

Free to all. Donations welcome.

Peaked Mountain, a 296-acre property The Trustees of Reservations acquired in 1999, has been visited by Naturalists' Club members in spring, summer, and fall. Now's time for midwinter celebration! At past Winter Carnivals, there's been ice skating on Lunden Pond, a guided snowshoe hike, sled dog and ice sculpting demonstrations, as well as hot drinks and refreshments by a bonfire. Bring your own skis, skates, or snowshoes.

An Evening with Naturalists

Date and Time: Saturday, February 5, at 7 p.m.

Hosts: Dave and Debbie Lovejoy

Registration: Space is limited. Please call ahead.
(413-848-2047).

This is the 10th year in a row for this winter evening gathering for conversation, food and drink, perhaps a little observation of the cold winter sky, then warming up again by a cheery fire in the woodstove. Dessert and refreshments will be provided ~ please let us know if you'd like to bring something to share.

We'll provide directions (if necessary) when you call to register. (We're located in the center of Blandford, about 15 minutes from downtown Westfield.) Extreme weather cancels.



There were few colder nights last winter than the last. The water in the flower-stand containing my pet tortoise froze solid,--completely enveloping him, though I had a fire in my chamber all the evening,--also that in my pail pretty thick. But the tortoise, having been thawed out on the stove, leaving the impression of his back shell in the ice, was even more lively than ever. *March 15, 1853, Henry David Thoreau*

Nature in Winter Walk

Date and Time: Saturday, February 12,
from 10:00 a.m. to noon

Leader: Dietrich Schlobohm (413-788-4125)

Registration: Call Dietrich to register.

Limited to 20 participants.

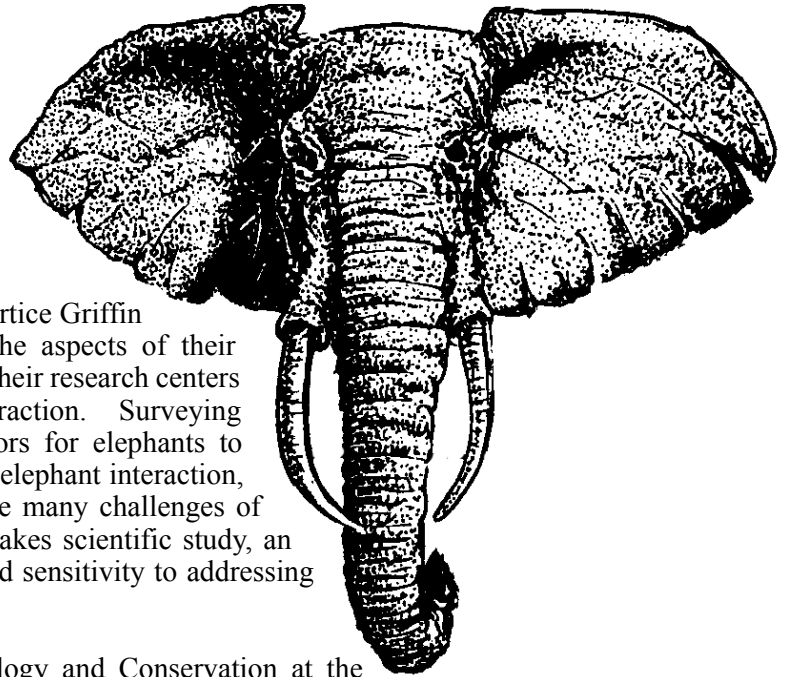
Meeting Place: Main entrance to Mittineague Park
in West Springfield (off Route 20).

Winter is a season when nature appears to slow down. Leaves have fallen from the trees, plants are dormant, and many animals appear to be hibernating. The familiar sounds of spring and summer are gone. How plants, insects, animals and birds survive the challenges of winter will be one focus of our walk. In addition, we will try to detect patterns of life which are not clearly visible: Are bears really hibernating? Have all the insects died? Where are the snakes, frogs, and salamanders? Are plants as lifeless as they appear? And what's really going on beneath that blanket of snow? We may be surprised to find that there's more life and vitality to winter than meets the eye.

Participants should dress warmly, wear good, warm footwear, and pack a snack. The outing will last about 2 hours. All ages are welcome. Pets should be left at home.

FEBRUARY MEETING
ELEPHANTS OF AFRICA

Wednesday, February 16, at 7:30 p.m.
Tolman Auditorium, Springfield Science Museum
Speakers: Alfred Kikoti and Curt Griffin



This evening we have the pleasure of hosting Dr Curtice Griffin and Mr. Alfred Kikoti, who will share with us the aspects of their ongoing studies surrounding the African elephant. Their research centers on solving the problems of human-elephant interaction. Surveying populations and developing safe migration corridors for elephants to travel from one park to another, minimizing human-elephant interaction, is the main thrust. Crop raiding, poaching, and the many challenges of elephant research will be addressed. Such a task takes scientific study, an intimate knowledge of elephants, political savvy and sensitivity to addressing the needs of both people and elephants.

Dr. Curtice Griffin is Professor of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Dr. Griffin has extensive experience working with elephants in southern Africa, where he has served as the principal investigator for the Northern Botswana Elephant Research Project since 2001. He also directed the aerial survey project in northern Botswana initiated by Conservation International in 1999-2000 and the Kruger aerial survey project in August 2002.

Mr. Alfred Kikoti, a Ph.D. student at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, has extensive experience working with elephants in Tanzania. He worked as a park warden with Tanzania National Parks from 1995-98. Since 2001, he has directed the Kilimanjaro Elephant Research Project and founded the KNRS Network, aimed at ensuring that stakeholders, who include local Masai communities in West Kilimanjaro, protect elephants and other wildlife.



What are the natural features which make a township handsome? A river, with its waterfalls and meadows, a lake, a hill, a cliff or individual rocks, a forest, and ancient trees standing singly. Such things are beautiful; they have a high use which dollars and cents never represent. If the inhabitants of a town were wise, they would seek to preserve these things, though at a considerable expense; for such things educate far more than any hired teachers or preachers, or any at present recognized system of school education. I do not think him fit to be the founder of a state or even of a town who does not foresee the use of these things, but legislates chiefly for oxen, as it were. *January 3, 1861, Henry David Thoreau*

Exploring the Winter Forest on Snowshoes

Russell, Mass.

Date and Time: Sunday, February 20,
from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Leader: Dave Gallup (413-525-4697)

Registration: Call Dave.

Meeting Place: Commuter Parking Lot,
Westfield State College

Join us for a fun day snowshoeing Noble View. Hopefully, we will have lots of snow! For those who have never attempted snowshoeing, come along and learn how ~ it's easy! Snowshoeing through a winter forest is so beautiful, and hopefully we will see lots of animal and bird signs. Who knows, we might see a deer or wild turkey. Dave has six extra sets of snowshoes, so sign up early and reserve a pair.



Tregellys Fiber Farm

Hawley, Mass.

Date and Time: Saturday, March 12, from 12:15 to 3:30 p.m.

(Snow date Saturday, March 19)

Leader: Arthur O'Leary (413-789-7274)

Registration: Call Art with questions and for carpooling.

Meeting Place: Old Creamery Store parking lot, Route 9
(at the intersection with Route 112) in Cummington, Mass.

Seated atop Hog Mountain in Hawley is a place with a distinct Himalayan theme, but a Cornish name ~ Tregellys (Hidden Homestead). Tregellys Fiber Farm, established in 1994, has slowly expanded its menagerie of fiber-producing heirloom and rare breeds until, at present, 150+ herd animals, including Tibetan yaks, Bactrian camels, alpacas, llamas, and Angora goats, lend an exotic aura to this New England setting. A 16-foot tall Tibetan stupa (a Buddhist shrine) at the heart of the farm adds to the Himalayan theme, and Buddhist teachings are shared with guests. There are resident emu from New Zealand, as well as a diverse population of sheep, a staple of life the world over: Persian Karakul, Jacob sheep, Saoy sheep from an island off Scotland, Shetland sheep, Icelandic sheep, and Navajo Churro sheep. The farm's owners are Ed Cothey, formerly a commercial fisherman from England, and Jody McKenzie, a Brookline native who spent much childhood time in Western Mass. Ed mentioned he will speak with the sheep to arrange the year's firstborn lambs in time for our visit.

The farmhouse has a weaving studio and dharma shop. In addition to offering an array of blankets, carpets, and shawls, woven mostly by Ed, handwovens made in India, Nepal, and Tibet are stocked, half the profits from which support three Tibetan teenagers. Tregellys Fiber Farm promotes ecologically sound processing of the fibers grown on their farm.

Join us as we learn the aesthetic and ecological reasons to choose natural over synthetic fibers. Dress in warm layers of natural fibers: The temperature at the farm is usually a breezy 15 degrees below the temperature in the valley. Bring hot beverages, a camera, good gloves, and a hat.

MARCH

MEETING

WHO'S FLYING IN YOUR YARD:

CHANGING BIRD POPULATIONS IN THE PIONEER VALLEY

Wednesday, March 16, at 7:30 p.m.

Tolman Auditorium, Springfield Science Museum

Speaker: Seth Kellogg



Our guest speaker for March will be Seth Kellogg, well-known bird enthusiast and nature writer. Seth will discuss what bird species have moved into western Massachusetts over the past 50 years and which species are struggling or in decline. We will also get a heads-up on what species to expect and watch for in our yards, woods, fields, and ponds.

Seth has been a Sunday Republican bird columnist since the 1990's and has been involved with numerous bird groups and associations, including the Northeast Hawk Watch and the Allen Bird Club.

This program will be a great prelude to the excitement of spring and the return of many of our favorite feathered friends. Come join us and get into the spirit of spring!

Seeing Better Across Four Seasons - Hiking to Harts Pond on the Metacomet- Monadnock Trail

Date and Time: Saturday, March 19,
from 10 a.m. to 2 or 3 p.m.
Guide: Mark Cashman (860-683-0835)
Registration: By phone or email
mcashman@temporaldoorway.com

Please reserve your space as soon as possible. Only the first eight will be accepted, to preserve the experience. Directions, maps and suggestions for equipment/supplies (that is, clothing and lunch) will be provided by mail or email, depending on how you contact us. Hikes are rain, shine, or snow.

Contact Mark Cashman at 860-683-0835 and leave your name, phone number, and address, or send email to mcashman@temporaldoorway.com with that information. Mark will follow up with confirmation.

*A mushroom like hairy lion skin, almost a foot across,
in a hollow of a gnarled oak...
A flock of hundreds of crows littering the sky,
fighting with hawks...
A family of turkeys tugging at the leaves
in a search for delectable morsels...
A quiet marsh with tiny plants and fearless woodpeckers...*

New England Trail Review (www.newenglandtrailreview.com) is a showcase of detailed photographic journeys across the trails and summits of New England. Each trail is examined for features from the tiny to the vast, captured on the fly, handheld with available light - while the photographer tries to keep up a pace close to that of a normal hiker.

The most commonplace trails contain spectacular sights, for those who know how and where to look. Mark Cashman, owner and author of New England Trail Review, who has taken over 15,000 photographs on over a hundred miles of New England paths, will help you look for insects, tiny mushrooms, hidden ice formations, slime molds, slugs, and many other fascinating items in this special guided hike across four seasons.

Starting on March 19th, continuing on June 18th, October 22nd, with a final hike to finish on December 17th, you will be guided on a tour of the same trail in each of the four seasons. This provides a unique opportunity to see how a single trail changes over time. The location will be the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail running from a start at Route 57 in Southwick near the Agawam Bowman Archery Club to the border of Connecticut near the intersection of Stone and Barry Streets.

The length of the trail is 1.75 mi., and the terrain is of low difficulty, with 166 feet of elevation loss and 81 feet of elevation gain. We will meet at the Stone and Barry Street location and leave some of the cars there. Then we'll pile into the remaining vehicles and drive to the start of the trail at Route 57. This will allow us to hike straight from beginning to finish without having to backtrack. Each hike will meet at 10 a.m. sharp and will probably end around 2-3 p.m.

Falling Waters

Date and Time: Saturday, March
26, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Leaders: Tom and Nancy Condon
Registration: Please call 413-564-
0895 to register, so if bad weather
forces cancellation we can contact you.
Meeting Place: Commuter Parking Lot,
Westfield State College



As the snows of winter melt away, the rivers rise in a torrent. Come join the club and explore a few of the prettier streams throughout the Westfield River watershed. We will visit some well-known and little known waterfalls and share in their turbulent beauty.

This is mostly a driving tour with stop for short walks to scenic locations. Dress for the weather. Bring lunch, water, and a camera if you wish.

An Opportunity to Study Vernal Pool Biology

Date and Time: Saturday, April 2, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon
Leader: Sonya Vickers (413-566-3406)
Registration: Call Sonya with any questions.
Meeting Place: Minnechaug High School parking lot
Directions: Minnechaug is located in Wilbraham at 621 Main St. The parking lot can also be accessed from Tinkham Road. From Springfield, take State Street to Wilbraham Road, through 16 Acres. Tinkham Road is a left turn at the light after 16 Acres. The Minnechaug High School entrance will be 3 miles down Tinkham Road, on the left.

Ever wanted to wade into the environment of the salamander and frog or investigate the small life through a microscope? Come along and jump into a vernal pool! We will have all kinds of equipment available for our investigation, from hip boots to microscopes to vernal pool field guides. Learn why these puddles are so important and learn how you can certify a vernal pool that you might know about. Some hip boots are available. If you have a pair, bring them along.

'05

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MEMBERSHIP

Here's how to become a member of the Springfield Naturalists' Club: Enclose a check, in the proper amount, payable to The Naturalists' Club.

- \$ 15 for a year of Individual or Family Membership
- \$ 25 per year for Supporting Membership
- \$ 50 per year for Sustaining Membership
- \$300 for Lifetime Membership

Mail to Club Treasurer Dave Lovejoy, Biology Department, Westfield State College, Westfield, MA 01086-1630. Include your mailing address. If there is any change in your mailing address, please notify Dave (413-572-5307, dlovejoy@wsc.ma.edu).

The NATURALISTS' CLUB was founded in 1969, for the purpose of actively promoting knowledge, appreciation, and preservation of our natural environment. It is an all-volunteer nonprofit organization. Education is a main focus of **The NATURALISTS' CLUB**. Programming, with an emphasis on local natural history, is designed to enable people with diverse interests to get together and exchange ideas. Activities are geared to the layperson, to acquaint her/him with the natural world, mostly through field trips. Monthly meetings are held at the Science Museum in Springfield, Mass. Most field trips and programs are free.



NEW MEMBERS AND RENEWING MEMBERS



Become a Club Member or Renew Your Existing Membership for 2005.

Name

Address

Phone Number

Requests for programs/trips

Please fill out the above form, clip, and mail to Club Treasurer, Dave Lovejoy, Biology Department, Westfield State College, Westfield, MA 01086-1630. Or email dlovejoy@wsc.ma.edu