



The NATURALISTS' CLUB Newsletter

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Springfield Science Museum at the Quadrangle, Springfield, Massachusetts
<http://naturalist-club.org/>

O C T O B E R - D E C E M B E R 2 0 0 7 S C H E D U L E · O F · A C T I V I T I E S

OCTOBER

- 6 Saturday Signs and Tracks of Wildlife, *Westfield*
- 13 Saturday Canoeing the Quabog, *East Brookfield*
- 17 Wednesday OCTOBER MEETING: Cellar Holes and Stonewalls: The Abandoned Farm Experience
- 18 Thursday Signs of Nature, Fall and Winter
- 20 Saturday South Sugarloaf Mountain, *South Deerfield*
- 21 Sunday Eagle Cliff Hike, *Huntington*
- 27 Saturday Abandoned Farm Community Field Trip, *Russell*
- 28 Sunday Lost Towns of the Quabbin: A Natural History and Historic Field Trip, *Hardwick*

NOVEMBER

- 3 Saturday McClean Game Refuge, *Granby, CT*
- 10 Saturday Benedict Pond, Beartown State Forest, *Monterey*
- 15 Thursday Signs of Nature, Fall and Winter
- 17 Saturday Early Morning Paddle on Littleville Lake, *Huntington*
- 24 Saturday Dinosaur State Park, *Rocky Hill, CT*
- 28 Wednesday NOVEMBER MEETING: The Iceland-Connecticut Valley Connection:
Fire, Ice, and Continental Creation



DECEMBER

- 8 Saturday Nighttime at Noble View, *Russell*
- 9 Sunday Annual Late Fall Quabbin Hike, *New Salem*
- 13 Saturday Signs of Nature, Fall and Winter
- 19 Wednesday DECEMBER HOLIDAY MEETING: Holiday Celebration with Naturalist Friends

Curiosity and Familiarity

Two Rewarding Qualities for a Naturalist

My husband was recently backpacking with a group of teenagers. The teens had a tendency to march right along, head down, not noticing a thing. Tom made a point of showing something at every stop they made: a fragrant leaf, a salamander, a marking on a tree. It was mostly a ploy to allow him to catch his breath I think, but by the third day, they started to become familiar with their surroundings. The kids did not see trees; they saw hemlocks and beeches and oaks. They did not hear birds singing; they heard black-capped chickadees and rufous-sided towhees. The teens found prints of a mother black bear and cub, wild boar tracks, coyote scat, deer chew, and many more subtle forest treasures that were overlooked at the beginning of the trip. By the end, one girl commented, "I didn't even notice anything until the about the third day. Then I saw so much!"

Examining, naming, and learning natural history tidbits about the plants and animals around them stimulated the kids' curiosity. They soon were no longer strangers in an exotic world. The plants became familiar and the kids learned what animals to expect. By recognizing the familiar, they were more adept at finding the more hidden treasures.

In the meantime, I went camping with my family in Herkimer, New York. I happened to look up at a tree limb extending over my car to find a black bird sitting there. It piqued my curiosity not only because it just perched there, doing nothing in particular, which is unusual for birds, but also I could not immediately recognize it. It was nothing spectacular, rather a dull looking bird really. "What is that bird?" I asked my mom, who is the one responsible for getting me interested in birds in the first place.

"Grackle?" she replied, at first glance.

"No, I thought so at first too, but it's too chubby and the tail is too short."

Then my brother got in on the guessing game. "It's pretty nondescript," he said eyeing our guest.

"I know, but it's not a crow, grackle, starling, or cowbird..." I replied.

"Time for the books," Mom said, and we each pulled out our favorites.

"How 'bout this?" My brother put down the National Geographic bird guide on the picnic table and tapped a finger on a picture.

"Eurasian Jackdaw?" my mother and I chorused.

"Eurasian??" I said. But we all had to agree that it looked exactly like the picture, with lightness around the head and otherwise very drab except for his golden yellow eyes. "Recent visitor to the northeast," I read from the description. "Lively and inquisitive," it went on to say as I read aloud.

"That sounds like him," my mother said hesitantly. Mom and I were reluctant to believe it was that easy to chalk up a brand-new "life bird" right here at our campsite. Shouldn't it be something more common? Maybe a fledgling grackle or a female something-or-other. A perusal of all the other possibilities increased the chances that my brother was absolutely right. The obliging bird could not have

Dorothy Anne Wheat Trust

Curiosity...continued.

given us more time to examine him. We simply exhausted all other possibilities. So what we were left with was a bird from Europe right there in our campsite in eastern New York State.

Without curiosity and a little perseverance, we would have overlooked just a black bird in a tree. Instead, we acquainted ourselves with a bird none of us had ever seen before. The Jackdaw is not listed in my Golden guide or Audubon guide; they were not known in this area at the time of publication. I discovered that it was probably a passenger on a ship from a European port who “disembarked” here in the New World. A little wonder mixed with some familiarity enabled me and my family to realize how unusual this sighting was.

Anyone who pursues his or her curiosity with the outdoors reaps similarly satisfying rewards. We could trudge through the woods and reach the end of the trail without looking about and asking questions, but we will have gained nothing but exercise. Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*, writes, “Nature is reflected in our capacity for wonder.” I would tend to agree that the more wonder and curiosity we have, the more nature will reveal herself to us. Having been a member of the Springfield Naturalists’ Club for ten years now, I find that “wonder” is contagious. If you don’t have it, someone else will, and before you know it, you’ve learned something. I’ve learned from, and been enthused by, many wonderful naturalists in the club who continue to inspire and share their knowledge. Reap the rewards that come from the varied activities offered this fall. Come on outdoors and familiarize yourself with your home with wonder and curiosity.

~ Nancy Condon

As a result of the generosity of long-time Naturalists’ Club member Dotty Wheat, the Club established a fund administered by the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts a decade ago. Periodically, the Club has used the interest generated by this fund to donate to organizations in the region, often for the purpose of habitat protection (Arcadia, Peaked Mountain, Conte Refuge). In 2006, we received an additional and final distribution from the trust, a sum of approximately \$69,000. This money has been earning interest in a certificate of deposit while the Board meets to discuss and determine how to invest the money and utilize the interest generated to further the Club’s mission of promoting the knowledge, appreciation, and preservation of the natural environment. Anyone with questions or suggestions regarding this issue is encouraged to speak to a Board member at any time.



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 non-profit organization.

Education is a main focus of **The NATURALISTS’ CLUB**. Programming, with an emphasis on local natural history, is designed to create camaraderie among people of diverse interests through experiences deepening their appreciation of nature. Activities are geared to acquaint the layperson with the natural world, mostly through field trips. Monthly meetings are held at the Science Museum at the Quadrangle in Springfield, Mass. Most field trips and programs are free.

Signs and Tracks of Wildlife, Westfield

Date and Time: Saturday, October 6, from 2 p.m. till 4 p.m.

Leader: Art O'Leary

Meeting Place: At the entrance sign to the Frank Stanley Beveridge Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary

Fall is the season for wildlife to explore the sanctuary, establish new territory, and locate additional food to fatten up for the lean winter months. Weeks before this Nature Workshop, Art will salt certain spots (off the beaten path) in the Wildlife Sanctuary with food for wildlife. Return to these same salted areas with field guides and illustrations of wildlife tracks to identify the wandering wildlife that have visited and partaken of this bounty.

Please note that due to the Thanksgiving holiday, the **November** meeting of the Naturalists' Club will be held the **fourth** Wednesday, at the Science Museum in the usual place.

Canoeing the Quaboag, East Brookfield

Date: Saturday, October 13, from 9 a.m. till 4 or 5 p.m.

Leaders: Tom & Nancy Condon

Meeting Place: Parking lot across from Valley Communications in Chicopee, where the Mass Pike and I-291 intersect. We'll carpool from there.

Registration: Space is limited, so please call to sign up. Rain or poor weather may cancel.

This year-round novice stretch of the Quaboag River starts in a wide open, flat marshy area rich in bird life and aquatic plants. We will look for great blue herons, red-winged blackbirds, and a variety of ducks among the cattail and pickerelweed. The river eventually narrows down to enter woodlands. We will scoot over a couple of beaver dams, around a fallen tree or two, and through a couple of small riffles. An interesting paddle, combined with plenty of wildlife viewing opportunities, makes this a memorable trip from West Brookfield to Lucy Stone Park in Warren, roughly 6 miles total.

No canoe? No problem. Nancy and Tom can provide one. A nominal fee is required for a canoe and a small dry bag to protect cameras and binoculars. Limited group size, so call to register early. Bring a bag lunch, binoculars, and a hankerin' to be on the water.

OCTOBER MEETING

CELLAR HOLES AND STONEWALLS: THE ABANDONED FARM EXPERIENCE

Wednesday, October 17, at 7:30 p.m.

Tolman Auditorium, Springfield Science Museum

Speaker: Dietrich Schlobohm



Take a trip back in time and relive a part of New England's past. See weathered rows of stonewalls, haunting cellar holes, proud old sugar maples, and overgrown roads leading to homes and lives long since vanished. Our guide for this journey will be Dietrich Schlobohm, an environmental historian and professor emeritus from Springfield College. Through the use of slides and commentary he will explore key forces of environmental change in the 19th and 20th centuries. His presentation will provide a sense of what life was like for earlier generations of New Englanders. Land use change and signs of farm abandonment in western Massachusetts will be featured.

After seeing this program, you may want to accompany Dietrich on a field trip later in the month to explore an abandoned farm community.

Signs of Nature, Fall and Winter

Date and Time: Thursday, October 18

Leader: Collette Potter (786-1805)

Get out, take a walk looking for birds and signs of nature! Call Collette for meeting time and place.

South Sugarloaf Mountain, Mt. Sugarloaf State Reservation, *South Deerfield*

Date and Time: Saturday, October 20, from 9 a.m. to noon.

Leader: Bill Fontaine (533-2153)

Meeting Place: Reservation parking lot on Sugarloaf Street, just off Sunderland Road (Rte. 116). Call Bill for directions and registration.

At an elevation of just 652 feet, the summit of South Sugarloaf offers some of the finest and most frequently photographed views of the Connecticut River Valley, stretching south toward the Holyoke Range. The summit features an observation tower and pay-for-use binoculars that will increase your enjoyment of the spectacular views. Enjoy the fall foliage and perhaps catch a glimpse of a hawk or two.

Our route to the top will take us along the paved access road. Though it is never steep, the access road does climb steadily for approximately one mile. Bring sturdy footwear and something to eat and drink.

Eagle Cliff Hike, *Huntington*

Date and Time: Sunday, October 21, from 10 a.m. till 1 p.m.

Leaders: Tom & Nancy Condon (564-0895)

Meeting Place: Parking area at Littleville Lake, off Goss Hill Road in Huntington.

Registration: Call Tom or Nancy to attend.

This wonderful little reservoir offers quiet seclusion and some little-known trails. We will first take an easily walked trail that encompasses the lake and is sometimes used by 4-wheelers. After a mile or so, we'll turn off and start hiking upward on a less used, more challenging trail. Although roughly a one-mile loop, the trail is steep in places and not yet well-trodden. It winds back and forth through a pleasant open forest. Up top there is a nice moss-covered rock to sit upon. The view from the top at this time of year will be a toss up: It may be obscured by beautifully colored deciduous leaves or more evident if the leaves have dropped. Join us to find out. Total hike length: 3 miles.

Wear sturdy hiking boots and clothes to suit the weather. Bring plenty of water to drink and a lunch to enjoy at the top.

Abandoned Farm Community Field Trip, *Russell*

Date and Time: Saturday, October 27, from 9:30 a.m. to early afternoon

Leader: Dietrich Schlobohm (788-4125)

Meeting Place: We will meet at the tennis courts in Stanley Park (Western Ave.) in Westfield (opposite Westfield State College). From Stanley Park we'll carpool to Russell, approximately ten minutes away.

Registration: Registration for this trip is required. Please call Dietrich in advance.

Dietrich Schlobohm, an environmental historian, will be our guide for this exploration of an abandoned farm community. During this two-mile walk, participants will examine several abandoned farm sites and gain a better understanding of land use change and how earlier Americans lived. By using history, nature, and our imagination we can share in the fun of discovery and gain insight into the lives of those who came before us.

As we begin our walk, there is an initial moderately steep climb for five to ten minutes, but after that the pace will be casual and on level ground. Be sure to bring along water and lunch. Proper footwear is a must.

Lost Towns of the Quabbin: A Natural History and Historic Field Trip, *Hardwick*

Date and Time: Sunday, October 28 at 9 a.m.

Leader: Dave Gallup (525-4697)

Meeting Place: Please contact Dave to register and for directions.

Join Dave Gallup as we step back into the 19th century to discover the once thriving community of Dana ~ one of the four towns lost when the area was flooded to form the Quabbin Reservoir. This all-day adventure will include spectacular views of Quabbin Reservoir, en route to Quabbin Cemetery, where we will examine artifacts from the four lost towns (Enfield, Prescott, Greenwich, and Dana) before moving on to Hardwick, a town resembling Dana as it was in the early 1900s.

On this two-mile journey (four miles round trip) you will hike along an old road through the open forest, with stops along the way to reflect upon the history and wildlife of the region. Once at Dana Commons, you will inspect the fascinating cellar holes, stonewalls, sidewalks, and streets of a town frozen in time. Dave has many surprises, including rare photographs of the beautiful Dana homes that stood there one hundred years ago before being dismantled to make way for the reservoir project.

Bring a lunch, beverage and a camera. Due to ecological concerns, this hike is limited to 12 participants. Sign up early! This field trip will fill fast!

McLean Game Refuge, Granby, Connecticut

Date and Time: Saturday, November 3, from 10 a.m. to midafternoon

Leader: Dave Lovejoy (572-5307)

Meeting Place: Dunkin' Donuts in Southwick center (Rte. 10-202) for carpooling.

Several hiking trails on this property offer a variety of possibilities for pleasant fall walks in the woods. Some fall flowers may still be blooming, but let's make this a general natural history hike, drawing on the expertise of the group. We'll choose a particular trail when we get together. Bring a trail lunch.

Benedict Pond, Beartown State Forest, Monterey

Date and Time: Saturday, November 10, from 9 a.m. to noon.

Leader: Bill Fontaine (533-2153)

Meeting Place: Town parking area behind the Otis Fire Department, at the junction of Rtes. 8 and 23. Call Bill to register.

Beautiful Benedict Pond in Beartown State Forest is undeveloped except for a boat launch and small beach. This area features diverse habitats, including a deciduous forest and a cattail marsh, and it is rich in wildlife, particularly birds.

On this walk we'll follow the Pond Loop Trail and then a short section of the Appalachian Trail to complete our circuit of the pond. Trail length is about 2.5 miles over fairly easy grades. For those who are interested, a short, steep half-mile detour leads to the Ledges, with attractive views westward, toward Mount Everett and the Catskills beyond. Bring sturdy footwear and something to eat and drink.

Signs of Nature, Fall and Winter

Date and Time: Thursday, November 15

Leader: Collette Potter (786-1805)

Get out, take a walk looking for birds and signs of nature! Call Collette for meeting time and place.



A Early Morning Paddle on Littleville Lake, Huntington

Date and Time: November 17, from 8 to 10 a.m.

Leaders: Tom & Nancy Condon (564-0895)

Meeting Place: Parking area at Littleville Lake, off Goss Hill Road in Huntington

Registration: Space is limited, so please call to sign up. Rain or poor weather may cancel.

Anytime is a good time to canoe, even this late in the season. Get up early and join us as we explore this surprisingly picturesque reservoir by canoe. Tucked up in the hills of Huntington, Littleville Lake offers paddlers a unique opportunity. With so many lakes overrun with oversized powerboats, there are few quiet places to enjoy a morning paddle. Littleville restricts engine size so the worst we could experience are small trolling motors on tiny skiffs. Come enjoy this tranquil lake, its wildlife, the scenery, and the early morning.

No canoe? No problem. Nancy and Tom can provide one. A \$5 donation per person to Venture Crew 872 in Southwick is all it will cost you. We have only six canoes, so please call early. Or, feel free to bring your own boat. Bring camera, binoculars, or whatever. We can provide a small dry bag to keep things safe.

Dinosaur State Park, Rocky Hill, Connecticut

Date and Time: Saturday, November 24, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Leader: Leo Riendeau (739-5546)

Meeting Place: Park & Ride Lot in Windsor Locks, CT, located off Exit 42, Route 91 South.

One of the largest dinosaur track sites in North America is located at Dinosaur State Park in Rocky Hill, Connecticut. Beneath the park's geodesic dome you will find an exceptional display of fossil tracks made early in the Jurassic period, 200 million years ago. The museum also has a number of exhibits depicting the ecosystem when dinosaurs roamed the Connecticut Valley. Surrounding the Exhibit Center are more than two miles of nature trails and the Dinosaur State Park Arboretum, containing more than 250 species and cultivars of conifers, as well as katsuras, ginkgoes, magnolias, and other present-day representatives of plant families growing at the time of the dinosaurs.

Admission to the park is \$5. The walk on the nature trails and in the arboretum will be leisurely, with stops to take a closer look at the trees and the autumn foliage

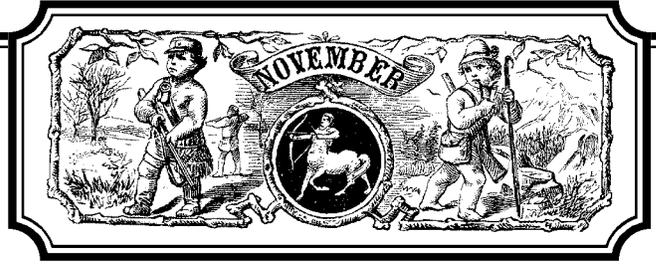
NOVEMBER MEETING

THE ICELAND-CONNECTICUT VALLEY CONNECTION: FIRE, ICE, AND CONTINENTAL CREATION

Wednesday, November 28, at 7:30 p.m.

Tolman Auditorium, Springfield Science Museum

Speaker: Richard Little



This PowerPoint program will feature pictures and experiences of Professor Richard Little's 2007 "Fantastic Landscapes" tour to Iceland in August. He not only will discuss the unique geology of Iceland but will relate it to the geology of western New England.

Richard Little is professor emeritus at Greenfield Community College and was inducted into the Mass. Science Educators Hall of Fame in 2004. He is author of *A Trip Through Time in the Connecticut River Valley* and creator of two videos on the geologic history of our valley. Copies of his book and videos as well as information on trips he's leading in 2008 (to the Southwest in January, Hawaii in July) will be available.

Annual Late Fall Quabbin Hike, New Salem

Date and Time: Sunday, December 9 at 9 a.m.

Leader: Dave Gallup (525-4697)

Meeting Place: Crystal Springs Mall, Routes 9 and 202, Belchertown

It's that time of the year again, folks! Our destination is Gate 15, which takes us on a wonderful loop hike with great views of the northern section of the Quabbin. Lots of stonewalls and farm sites. We may see eagles and hear loons. We have seen moose tracks on the sandy beaches. It is a great hike and one of the most beautiful areas to explore.

Bring your lunch, hot drinks and binoculars. Please dress appropriately for the weather. If you arrive early at the meeting place, you can enjoy a hearty breakfast at Hawley's Restaurant. See you there.

Nighttime at Noble View, Russell

Date and Time: Saturday, December 8, from 7 till 9 p.m.

Leaders: Tom & Nancy Condon (564-0895)

Meeting Place: Noble View parking area, South Quarter Road, Russell.

Registration: Please call to register.

Sunset is about 4:30 p.m.; winter is just about upon us. Join us for a pleasant leisurely nighttime walk along the road to the Appalachian Mountain Club's Noble View cabin. Along the way, we will call for owls. Great horned owls nest in late January and begin calling to one another

as early as October so hopefully we'll receive answers. We will be alert for other nighttime creatures, like porcupine or flying squirrels, as well. Our destination will be the stunning view down into Westfield, where we'll enjoy a little stargazing (if the weather permits) and hot chocolate and goodies at the picnic table.

Bring along a mug and flashlight. Dress for the weather. Although this hike is free, a donation to help preserve this beautiful piece of AMC property is suggested. Heavy rain or heavy snow cancels; light snow would be a delight.

Signs of Nature, Fall and Winter,

Date and Time: Thursday, December 13

Leader: Collette Potter (786-1805)

Get out, take a walk looking for birds and signs of nature! Call Collette for meeting time and place.

With today's excessive gasoline prices, please be mindful of the environment, trip leaders, and drivers. If possible, please:

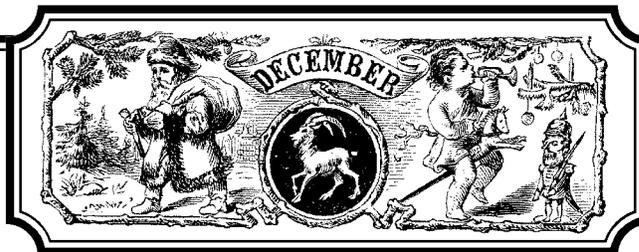
- carpool to destinations
- share costs with your driver

~ Thank you

~ Naturalists' Club Board of Directors

DECEMBER HOLIDAY MEETING

Wednesday, December 19, at 7:30 p.m.
Tolman Auditorium, Springfield Science Museum
Leaders: You and your Naturalists' Club friends!
Emcee: Nancy Condon (564-0895)



Our annual holiday meeting is an opportunity for you to share your most memorable and interesting nature and travel experiences with other club members. Have you visited someplace you would recommend to others? Show us some of the highlights, via slides or PowerPoint or photo album. Do you have photos of Naturalists' Club events from this past year? We want to hear from you. Presentations will be held to a maximum of ten minutes. Artifacts and natural treasures may be put on view in the nature displays. Bring along a holiday dessert to share with the group after the programs. Please call Nancy to get on the roster for presentations.

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FROM THE TREASURER:

The fall of the year is the traditional time to renew membership in the Club. Those of you with an '07-'08 on your newsletter mailing label are paid up for the coming year. For those who are '06-'07, you may renew by sending a check (payable to The Naturalists' Club) to Dave Lovejoy, Department of Biology, Westfield State College, Westfield MA 01086. If you have an '05-'06 on your label, you will receive a final reminder renewal notice but no further newsletters without renewal. Membership levels are indicated elsewhere on this page. Perhaps some of you will join those who have renewed at the supporting or sustaining level.

Please note: Dave Lovejoy maintains the Naturalists' Club mailing list. Direct special requests or changes to him.

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

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

BECOME A CLUB MEMBER OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2007-2008.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Requests for programs/trips _____

Please send information per the above form to Club Treasurer Dave Lovejoy, Department of Biology, Westfield State College, Westfield, MA 01086