

# The NATURALISTS' CLUB Newsletter

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**PAID**  
Westfield, MA  
Permit No. 18

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

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## J U L Y — S E P T E M B E R 2 0 0 7 SCHEDULE · OF · ACTIVITIES

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### **JULY**

- |    |          |  |
|----|----------|--|
| 13 | Friday   | Summer Star Party, <i>Northfield</i>                           |
| 14 | Saturday | Connecticut River Canoe Trip, <i>Sunderland to Northampton</i> |
| 14 | Saturday | Invasive Plants and Animals, <i>Westfield</i>                  |
| 15 | Sunday   | Edible Flowers and Herbs, <i>Greenfield</i>                    |
| 21 | Saturday | Quabbin Reservation: Gate 29 – Rattlesnake Hill, <i>Orange</i> |

### **AUGUST**

- |    |          |   |
|----|----------|---|
| 18 | Saturday | Connecticut River Canoe Trip, <i>Northampton to Holyoke</i>     |
| 25 | Saturday | Nature along the Trail, <i>Westfield</i>                        |
| 25 | Saturday | Biking the Norwottuck Rail Trail, <i>Northampton to Amherst</i> |

### **SEPTEMBER**

- |     |               |   |
|-----|---------------|---|
| 7-9 | Friday-Sunday | Stump Sprouts Weekend, <i>West Hawley</i>               |
| 8   | Saturday      | Connecticut River Canoe Trip, <i>Holyoke to Enfield</i> |
| 16  | Sunday        | The Oak Forest, <i>Westfield</i>                        |
| 19  | Wednesday     | SEPTEMBER MEETING: Catch a Falling Star                 |
| 22  | Saturday      | Hiking the Holyoke Range, <i>Amherst</i>                |
| 29  | Saturday      | Alander Mountain Trail, <i>Mt. Washington</i>           |



# NATURALIST'S CORNER



## Will It Rain?

### The Charm of Weather Lore

*If the oak is out before the ash, the summer will be filled with rain and splash.  
If the ash is out before the oak, the summer will be filled with fire and smoke.*

Sometime in my youth I heard this old wives' tale predicting the weather and somehow it stuck. I found it quaintly intriguing that nature could somehow provide a long-term forecast. Surely, before Doppler and computers and sophisticated predicting devices, people had to figure out something to help them predict the weather. Invariably, those clues came from nature.

Have you every heard that you should not stomp on ants or beetles, for doing so will cause rain? Did you know that when a frog croaks in the middle of the day, rain is due? If the fish are biting voraciously, a storm is imminent. As these examples illustrate, most weather lore centers on whether or not rain is coming. In an agricultural society, people would be understandably anxious for clues about impending weather.

Dr. Tim Sparks, an environmental scientist at the Centre of Ecology and Hydrology in England, puts no stake in oak and ash as predictors of weather. This researcher has studied historical rainfall and temperature data and finds no support for my cute little ditty at all. In fact, most of this type of nature lore has no basis in reality. However, on the bright side, there is scientific credence to some animal and plant behavior for short-term weather predictions:

Birds have been found to be fair meteorologists. We still do not know all the special perceptions that birds seem to utilize, allowing them to migrate with great accuracy for hundreds and sometimes thousands of miles and to perform many other strange and wondrous things. Shore birds do have sensitivity to barometric pressure, giving credence to the adage *Seabirds, stay out from the land; we won't have good weather while you're on the sand*. Detecting a low-pressure system and its attendant adverse weather leads birds to stay closer to land for protection.

Had you ever heard *Swallows high, staying dry; swallows low, wet will blow*? We can explain why this adage tends to be true by noting that during nice weather, the insects these birds feed on are carried up high on warm currents.

*If the sparrow makes a lot of noise, rain will follow*. Some birds, such as crows and geese, have been shown to call more frequently with falling air pressure.

Then again, I'm unable to footnote any of this evidence. Ah, weather lore. How enchanting, yet how appealing. Oh ~ by the way ~ I noticed that, in my yard, the oak leaves were out long before the ash leaves this spring! Let's see if it will be a wet summer.

~ Nancy Condon ~

### **Summer Star Party, Northfield**

Friday, July 13 ~ Sunset at 8:20 p.m.

Viewing after 9:30 p.m.

Leaders: Rich Sanderson, Dave Gallup  
and Jack Megas (782-3962)

Meeting Place: Northfield Mountain Environmental  
Center, Route 63, Northfield, Mass.



The Astronomers' Conjunction, which began as a Naturalists' Club activity, is celebrating its 25th anniversary. Join us for dark sky stargazing. Clouds/Rain cancel.

### **Connecticut River Canoe Trip: Stage 3**

*Sunderland to Northampton* (13.5 miles)

Saturday, July 14, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Leaders: Tom and Nancy Condon (564-0895)

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

Meeting Place: Barnes & Noble parking lot in Holyoke

This portion of the trip takes us through some of the least as well as most used sections of the Connecticut River. We will start below the red cliffs of Sugarloaf Mountain and travel a long, straight stretch of the river through a pastoral setting. As we approach Northampton, the river begins to make wide curves through the valley floodplain, reminding us that the Connecticut is but a young river, born from Lake Hitchcock a mere 10,000 years ago.

Today Northampton brings with it plenty of motorboat traffic but also a number of small islands behind which we can escape to search out birds and other wildlife frequenting this area. Bald eagles have been known to nest here, as well as shore birds.

Call ahead to reserve your space. We have canoes and all the gear needed, for a mere \$5 per person charge, if you are without. Dress for the weather. Bring a lunch and plenty of water to drink. For priority reservations, be sure to identify yourself as a member of the Naturalists' Club since there is lots of interest in this series and limited space.

### **Invasive Plants and Animals, Westfield**

Saturday, July 14, from 2 to 4 p.m.

Leader: Art O'Leary

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

Call them alien invaders, invasive species, non-natives, non-indigenous ~ the Wildlife Sanctuary is being overtaken by plants and animal species lacking local biological control, outcompeting and displacing native species, those here since before the time of arrival of the Europeans. Explore, identify, and map invasive plants such as oriental bittersweet, Russian olive, Japanese barberry, honeysuckles, multiflora rose, and phragmites. Learn how these plants and some insects affect the flora and fauna in the Sanctuary. Early detection and environmentally safe removal done early are part of a winning strategic management plan.

### **Edible Flowers and Herbs, Greenfield**

Sunday, July 15, from 1 p.m. till ??

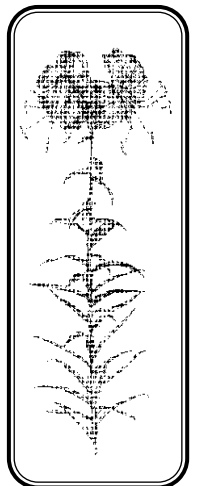
Leader: Joan Presz (Call after 6 p.m. 569-6663)

(Unavailable after Thursday, July 12th)

Meeting Place: Mass. Information Center  
in Greenfield by 1 p.m.

Registration: Pay \$15 cost of luncheon by Monday,  
July 9. Include names and phone numbers.

At last year's Lavender Tea, several people asked if we could have a luncheon with flowers and herbs. So Joan Presz asked Stockbridge Farms, and their answer is yes. This luncheon will be combined with a garden tour of daylilies and herbs at Glendale Gardens in Greenfield. At this is one-time event, menus of the dishes served will be provided, as well as a guided stroll through the daylilies and herbs. At least 20 must sign up for luncheon, but garden tour is free. Rain or Shine.



In my garden, the greatest attraction for bees in August and September is the blue cardinal flower with its tall, long lasting sapphire blue spires. In September, the bees go wild about the New England aster, with gold centered purple flower clusters that also draw crowds of monarch butterflies. The deliciously scented red purple sprays of the butterfly bush, which blooms from July to September's end and attracts all butterflies and many other insects, is also a magnet for bees.

~ *The Naturalist's Garden*, Ruth Shaw Ernst

## Quabbin Reservation: Gate 29 Rattlesnake Hill

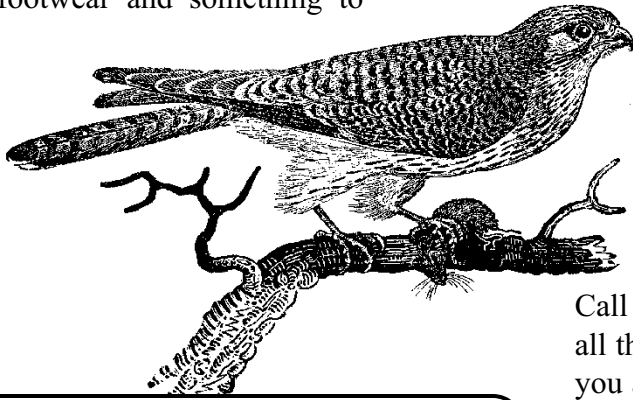
Orange

Saturday, July 21, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Leader: Bill Fontaine (533-2153). Please call to register.

Meeting Place: Florence Savings Bank parking lot at the Stop & Shop Plaza on Route 9 in Belchertown.

This walk will take us along a gated, paved road, through a variety of habitats on the northern end of Quabbin Reservoir. This area features abandoned fields and orchards, and it is home to the yellow-rumped and Canada warbler, eastern towhee, American kestrel, and red-tailed and red-shouldered hawk. We'll begin with an interpretive walk keyed to numbered posts along the first part of the paved road. Afterward, we'll continue toward the shore of the reservoir, some 2.5 miles away. Bring sturdy footwear and something to drink.



### 20th Anniversary East Coast Mineral Show

Friday-Sunday, August 10-12

Better Living Center

Eastern States Exposition (The Big E)

Memorial Avenue, West Springfield

One of the largest mineral shows in the U.S.A.

~ come see gems, minerals, fossils, and meteorites, offered by over 100 vendors from around the world. Special exhibits from the Sterling Hill Mining Museum and the Franklin Mineral Museum, featuring a special fluorescent mineral display.

Admission is charged. Look for newspaper discounts. Free rocks for the kids!

## Connecticut River Canoe Trip: Stage 4

Northampton to Holyoke (11 miles)

Date and Time: Saturday, August 18, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Leaders: Tom and Nancy Condon (564-0895)

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

Meeting Place: Barnes & Noble parking lot in Holyoke

Imagine western Massachusetts 65 million years ago when dinosaurs roamed the valley in a much more tropical climate than we experience today. On this stretch of the river we will find such evidence at the dinosaur footprints along Route 5 in Holyoke. Imagine, too, the valley 200 million years ago when volcanoes and earthquakes threatened to tear this valley apart.

The Connecticut River passes beneath evidence of these dramatic changes along this stretch, as well. This 11-mile paddle will take us between Mt. Tom and the Holyoke Range and end at the historic Holyoke Dam. We will talk about geology and about the impact of the Paper City on the development of the Connecticut River.

Call ahead to reserve your space. We have canoes and all the gear needed, for a mere \$5 per person charge, if you are without. Dress for the weather. Bring a lunch and plenty of water to drink. For priority reservations, be sure to identify yourself as a member of the Naturalists' Club since there is lots of interest in this series and limited space.

... the Connecticut River has thirty eight major tributaries, each with its own network of minor brooks and branches, a vast web of gravity depicted. In the damp places where each rivulet rises, in ponds deep in the woods, in back yards where small streams commingle, in cities where tributaries enter the main stem—whether in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, or New Hampshire—those places, too, are the origins of the great river. No matter where you locate yourself on the map of the physical and the cultural landscape, one of those places is near you, and surrounds you, and is within you.

~ from *This American River*, edited by W.D. Wetherell

## Nature along the Trail, Westfield

Saturday, August 25, from 2 to 4 p.m.

Leader: Art O'Leary

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

We will be using maps of four local nature trails and wildlife management areas on this interpretive nature walk. Food, water, cover, and nesting sites for wildlife will be the focus of the walk. Learn how people, as well as animals, have made use of the natural resources. Examine educational opportunities for nature study by using interpretive trail maps and comparing them to the Wildlife Sanctuary in the park.

You must not know too much or be too precise or scientific about birds and trees and flowers and watercraft; a certain free margin, and even vagueness, ignorance, credulity helps your enjoyment of these things. ~ Walt Whitman

## Biking the Norwottuck Rail Trail

Northampton to Amherst

Saturday, August 25, at 10 a.m.

Leaders: Dave and Suzanne Gallup

Meeting Place: Parking lot at beginning of trail, off Route 9

Norwottuck means "in the mist of the river," apropos of our starting point crossing the Connecticut River on a truss-type bridge that spans more than 1400 feet. Further along on the ride, we'll cross the Hadley Commons and the Route 9 tunnel, both filled with history. The trail runs 8.5 miles each way, but due to the work of those pesky beavers, we'll have to cut our ride short by about 1.5 miles. The Norwottuck Rail Trail makes for an easy, beautiful tree- and pond-lined ride. We could also stop for brunch at Whole Foods! Make sure you wear a helmet! Hope to see you there!

Little rivers, beautiful, wild, and clear, meander through my dreams. ~ Sigurd F. Olson

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

## Connecticut River Canoe Trip: Stage 5

Holyoke to Enfield (18.5 miles)

Saturday, September 8, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Leaders: Tom and Nancy Condon (564-0895)

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

Meeting Place: Barnes & Noble parking lot in Holyoke

Traveling through the cities of Holyoke and Springfield may not sound very appealing; however, you will be surprised how pleasant this stretch of river is. This stage of the journey starts at the Holyoke Dam. The current here is swift yet uncomplicated by rocks so we will get a nice boost. Approaching the city of Springfield, the current slows as we lazily pass beneath the skyscrapers and bridges of the city. Canoeing beneath the Mass Pike, I-91, Memorial Bridge, and both the North and South End bridges in Springfield will give a new perspective to the city. We will keep our eyes out for the peregrine falcons who in the past have nested beneath the Memorial Bridge. The Westfield River flows in at Agawam, increasing the current as we swing past Fannie Stebbins Wildlife Refuge to the sound of shrieking roller coaster riders at Six Flags. We end the day by running the ruins of the Enfield Dam and enjoy riding the swift current to our take-out.

Call ahead to reserve your space. We have 6 canoes and all the gear needed, for a mere \$5 per person charge, if you are without. Dress for the weather. Bring a lunch and plenty of water to drink. For priority reservations, be sure to identify yourself as a member of the Naturalists' Club since there is lots of interest in this series and limited space.



### **Stump Sprouts Weekend, West Hawley**

Date: Friday, September 7 through  
Sunday, September 9

Time: Arrive before dinner Friday evening and  
stay through Sunday luncheon.

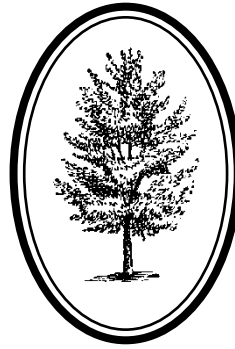
Leaders: Dietrich and Julie Schlobohm  
(788-4125)

Registration: All-inclusive cost for two nights' lodging and six meals is \$129 per person. Make check payable to The Naturalists' Club and send to Dietrich Schlobohm, 52 Poplar Ave., West Springfield, MA 01089. Indicate in your registration your roommate preference. Reservations and a 50% deposit must be received no later than June 1. This trip will be cancelled if 18 people are not paid by that date. Call Dietrich or Julie for more information.

Please note: By this point, 20 people may be signed up, but we are creating a waiting list. Please give us a call.

High on the side of a mountain with a magnificent view, Stump Sprouts ski lodge provides a beautiful setting for walking, hiking, or relaxing in solitude. A ninety-minute drive from Springfield, the property consists of a 450-acre tract surrounded by Dubuque, Savoy, and Mohawk State Forests.

Guests need to bring their own bedding, towels, and toiletries; bathrooms are shared. Our hosts will provide superb family-style garden-fresh meals, complete with homemade breads, and cookies. There is usually a choice of regular or meatless entrees. Bring along binoculars, good footwear, curiosity and a sense of adventure. Limit: 20 people



### **The Oak Forest, Westfield**

Sunday, September 16,  
from 2 to 4 p.m.

Leader: Dave Lovejoy

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

Field guides to southern New England refer to the forest type common here as the oak forest or oak-hickory forest. On this walk, the typical species of this community, including trees, shrubs, and non-woody plants will be identified and described.

Any oak with pointed, bristle tipped leaf lobes belongs to the red oak group. All oaks of this group produce acorns that require two years to mature. Red oak is the fastest growing of all oaks and, in optimal habitats, is among the largest and longest lived (200 to 300 years).

Recognize white oak by its even, rounded leaf lobes that lack bristles and its light gray or whitish scaly bark. Old trees (they may live 500 to 600 years or older) often show gnarled, twisted limbs. Unlike the red oak group, white oaks produce mature acorns in just one season. Acorn production varies, beginning at about age 50, with abundant mast crops occurring every four to ten years.

~ *Forest and Thicket*, by John Eastman.

Westfield River Watershed Association's annual fall river cleanup, held in conjunction with the Connecticut River Watershed Council's Source to Sea cleanup, will take place the morning of Saturday, September 29 ~ so save the date!

The last Saturday of September in 2006 marked the 10th annual Source to Sea Cleanup, with the highest volunteer turnout ever. Local groups chose locations along the Connecticut River and favorite bodies of water to clean up. Held in 68 locations, from Pittsburg, NH to Old Lyme, Conn., 2006's effort involved a record 1685 volunteers. And the trash report showed that more than 45 tons of trash, including over 900 illegally dumped tires, was hauled out of the Connecticut River and its tributaries. This year hopefully there will once again be great weather combined with committed volunteers willing to get dirty to make the river cleaner. Participation in this community effort will be a heart-warming experience to remember and feel good about. Check newspapers and online for further details closer to the date ([www.ctriver.org](http://www.ctriver.org) and [www.westfieldriver.org](http://www.westfieldriver.org)).

SEPTEMBER MEETING

**CATCH A FALLING STAR**

Wednesday, September 19, at 7:30 p.m.  
Tolman Auditorium, Springfield Science Museum  
Speaker: Jack Megas

Myriads of stars were my net that night,  
but I no longer felt lonely, for I knew that while man  
might unravel the puzzled skein of life and solve the riddles of  
the universe, what really matters is the wonder which makes  
it all possible. Back of everything is always  
a net of dreams. ~ *Sigurd F. Olson*

Join us for a tour of the Science Museum's new Astronomy Hall, filled with meteorites from around the world and out into the cosmos. Touch a rock older than than the Earth. See specimens from the moon and Mars. Understand the differences between meteoroids, meteors, and meteorites. We will also visit the historic Seymour Planetarium, home of the Korkosz planetarium projector, the oldest made in the U.S.A. ~ seventy years old.

Jack Megas's voice emanating in velvety tones from a dark sky background, regaling his listeners with the science and folklore of stars and astronomical phenomena, is well-known and resonates with us all.

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**Hiking the Holyoke Range, Amherst**

Saturday, September 22, at 9 a.m.  
Leaders: Dave and Suzanne Gallup  
(525-4697)  
Meeting Place: Notch Visitors Center,  
Route 116, in Amherst (Call for more  
information.)

Join us for a hike through the Holyoke Range. We will be hiking the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail to the top of Mt. Norwottuck, the highest mountain on the range. Along the way we will talk about the geology and the forest. After lunch on the summit of Norwottuck, we will hike to the 'horse caves'. Here we will trace the steps of Daniel Shays (c. 1787). Legend proclaims that Shays escaped to the horse caves on the range after an ill-fated attempt to raid the Springfield Armory. From the horse caves, we will connect to the Robert Frost Trail on our hike back to the Visitor's Center. We suggest participants look up Shays' Rebellion on the Internet at [www.encarta.msn.com](http://www.encarta.msn.com) and also bring a favorite Robert Frost poem to read. Please wear sturdy footwear and pack along a snack/lunch and water. This is a 3-mile moderately strenuous hike.

**Alander Mountain Trail, Mt. Washington**

Saturday, September 29, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
Leader: Bill Fontaine (533-2153) Please call to register.  
Meeting Place: Friendly's parking lot, Great Barrington, on Route 7 just north of the Route 23 intersection

The views from the summit of Alander Mountain are well worth the effort it takes to get there. On this strenuous 5.5-mile round trip hike, we'll climb to the summit of Alander Mountain on the western escarpment of the Taconic Range to enjoy views overlooking the Harlem Valley and Catskills to the west, Mt. Everett to the north, and Mt. Frissell and Bear Mountain to the east and south. Our journey will take us through a red oak–northern hardwood forest and along a hemlock ravine that channels Ashley Brook, one of the tributaries feeding Bash Bish Falls. This remote area is home to bear, coyote, and bobcat. Bring sturdy footwear and something to eat and drink.

**Signs and Tracks of Wildlife, Westfield**

Saturday, October 6, from 2 to 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 when wildlife explores the Sanctuary, establishing new territory and locating 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.

Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop away from you like the leaves of Autumn. ~ *John Muir*

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## 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

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.



## 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 among 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.*



## 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*