



The

NATURALISTS CLUB

NEWSLETTER

Springfield Science Museum at the Quadrangle, Springfield, Massachusetts

July to September

Calendar of Events

JULY

- | | | |
|----|----------|--|
| 2 | Saturday | Yoga on the Mountain, <i>Russell</i> |
| 9 | Saturday | Paddling at Pillsbury State Park, <i>Washington, New Hampshire</i> |
| 16 | Saturday | A Short Walk along and in the Scantic River, <i>Enfield, Connecticut</i> |
| 23 | Saturday | Holcomb Farm Hike, <i>West Granby, Connecticut</i> |

AUGUST

- | | | |
|----|----------|---|
| 15 | Monday | Registration due for Stump Sprouts Weekend (see p. 5 for details) |
| 20 | Saturday | Afoot & Afloat in the Berkshires, <i>New Marlborough</i> |
| 27 | Saturday | Biking the Norwottuck Rail Trail, <i>Northampton</i> |

SEPTEMBER

- | | | |
|------|---------------|---|
| 9-11 | Friday-Sunday | Stump Sprouts Weekend, <i>West Hawley</i> |
| 11 | Sunday | Asters and Goldenrods, <i>Westfield</i> |
| 17 | Saturday | Upper Goose Pond Ramble, <i>Lee</i> |
| 21 | Wednesday | SEPTEMBER MEETING: Conserving the Timber Rattlesnake in Massachusetts |

Whenever the sun is shining, I feel obligated to play outside!

~ Charles M. Schultz

Summer was our best season: it was sleeping on the back screened porch in cots, or trying to sleep in the tree house; summer was everything good to eat; it was a thousand colors in a parched landscape.

~ Harper Lee

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<https://www.facebook.com/Springfield-Naturalists-Club-420275528018838/>

NATURALIST'S CORNER

THE OLD MAN AND THE RIVER

“My father used to tell me stories about how this river turned colors and stank to high heaven,” one fisherman said to the other. The two were standing calf-high in waders casting shad darts into water teeming with American Shad. “No fish in its right mind wanted to be here,” he went on.

“Hey Grandpa, I got one!” the younger fisherman shouted excitedly.
“Reel ‘er in easy there, son.”

“He’s really puttin’ up a fight.” The young boy worked the fish with a practiced hand, while his grandpa coached in a measured tone.

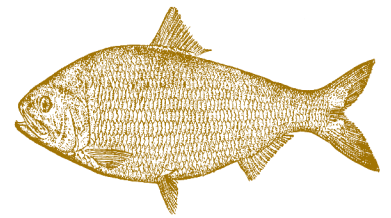
“It’s a big one,” the gleeful boy announced as the shiny fish jumped and fought the line. The old man, having reeled in his line to help his grandson, gently scooped up the shad with a net as the boy drew it near.

“That’s a beauty,” the old man said as they both admired the submerged fish, cradled within the net. “I bet that there’s a 4-pounder at least.”

“This is the biggest one today,” the boy exclaimed, beaming with pride. “Take my picture.”

With pictures accomplished, the old man said, “Okay now, time to cut ‘er loose.”

“I know, I know, the mouth is fragile and I’ll be careful,” the boy heard the instruction before. Carefully and oh so gently the boy freed the shad. “Bye-bye girl. Make some more babies for me to catch.”



It is springtime and the anadromous fish are coming up the Connecticut River as they have since time immemorial. Sea lampreys, blueback herring, gizzard shad, are all coming up, but the American shad far outnumber all the others. It is a beautiful May morning and the fishermen watch as four paddlers launch canoes and kayaks from the opposite bank. Grandpa goes back to his reminiscing.

“This ‘ole river has come a long ways from those old times when Holyoke and other cities were pumping out industry waste and sewage,” he said. “Ya know what they used to call it?”

“Oh, yeah, I heard this in school,” the fisher-boy responded, reaching back in his memory. “It’s a word from the Mohegan tribe... ‘next to the long tidal river’, or something like that.”

Grandpa chuckled. “Yes, that’s what the name Connecticut means, but I was talking about when it was so dirty. They called it the ‘best landscaped sewer in the U. S.’”

“Ewww.”

“Now they call this a ‘National Blueway.’ Do ya know why they call it a blueway son?”

“‘Cause the water’s blue?”

“That’s as good an answer as any. Now the river is good for swimming... boating... camping...”

“And fishing!” the boy interjected.

“And fishing.”

The Connecticut River was designated a “National Blueway” in May of 2012 as part of President Obama’s America’s Great Outdoors initiative. This designation recognizes the grassroots collaboration of over 40 organizations involved in advocating for a healthy and enjoyable watershed. These organizations are involved in land and habitat protection, river restoration, environmental education and enhancing recreational opportunities throughout the Connecticut river watershed. Today our river is and will remain the first and only “National Blueway.” The program dissolved in January of 2014.

The Connecticut River today boasts an abundance of wildlife, a growing number of access points, numerous recreational opportunities such as swimming, boating, fishing and camping. A great example of these collaborative efforts is seen in the Connecticut River Paddlers' Trail – a loose collection of organizations that work to establish primitive campsites and improve river access for paddlers all along the river's 410 mile length. The Connecticut River Watershed Council (CRWC) is another organization making great strides in protecting the River. The group works to keep water clean, ensure safe passage for fish, protect endangered species, and provide education for neighbors throughout the watershed.

"I'm glad the water's a lot cleaner now," the boy said as he cast his line out.

"Me too. It a source of clean power too. The flowing water makes electricity at many dams across this river."

"But what about these fish that want to get by?"

"Oh, each dam where fish migrate has to provide a way for the fish to pass. This fishlift here upriver at the Holyoke Dam was the first on the Atlantic seaboard. Other dams further upriver have fish ladders.

"That's good. Hey I got another one!" The boy braces himself and tugs against the line.

"That ain't no Shad," the old fisherman announces as the boy brings the fish closer.

"This one feels different."

"Holy Smokes!" Grandpa exclaims.

"Wow! What is that? Is that a shark?"

The old man stoops down, gets the net underneath, and a long fish covered in bony plates comes into view. "Well I'll be. This 'eres a shortnose sturgeon."

"It looks bizarre. It looks like a dinosaur."

"These guys are ancient fish. It's also an endangered fish."

"Oh," the fisher-boy voices concern.

"We'll have to let it go and be real careful."

"After pictures."

After a very rewarding day, the two fishermen tromp out of the water, head up to the truck and peel off their waders.

"That was great Grandpa. Can we come again tomorrow?"

"Sure, but don't you have school?"

"Oh yeah. How about after school? I'm glad it's not stinky anymore."

"It's come a long ways, son, especially since 1972 when the Clean Water Act was passed." He takes both poles and lays them in the bed of the truck. "But there are still things to do. It still gets polluted sometimes when treatment plants overflow or rainwater washes stuff into it from land or the river banks erode. Sometimes even fishermen break the law and take sturgeon home."

"Aww man!" the boy shakes his head as he ties his dry shoes on. "I'd never do that. I'd never hurt this river."

"That's my boy."

The two fishermen hug. The fisher-boy hops into the passenger seat and the old man climbs in behind the wheel.

The Naturalists' Club has supported many organizations involved in conservation efforts in the Connecticut River Watershed, including donating to The CRWC's water testing lab. We should certainly be proud of how much progress has been made on the lifeblood of our valley, but must be diligent to ensure that improvements continue. As Liz Austin of the CRWC would say, "Happy River, Happy Valley."

~ Nancy Condon

From birth to death, anyone can fish. I just think it's fantastic to see old people going fishing with young people and teaching them things. I'm very, very critical. ~ Rex Hunt

Yoga on the Mountain, Russell

Saturday, July 2 from 1 to 2:30 p.m.

Registration: Contact Laura Stinnette at (413) 454-3232 or laura.stinnette@gmail.com

Meeting Place: Noble View Outdoor Center, 635 South Quarter Road

Sally Barber from Westfield Yoga Center will lead this yoga session, designed for adults & children 7 years & up. Bring the whole family to share in a series of gentle movements and soothing breathing exercises. We will be in a lovely meadow, surrounded by beautiful trees and the amazing views of Noble View! Be sure to wear comfortable clothing and bring a blanket or sitting pad. If there's rain, we will postpone the event to Sunday, July 3. Feel free to come for the session and then enjoy a picnic and Noble View's 360 acres of hiking trails!

Paddling at Pillsbury State Park, Washington, NH

Saturday, July 9, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Leaders: Tom & Nancy Condon

Registration: Contact Nancy at (413) 297-0778 or spiderwoman@russellma.net

Meeting Place: Vermont Welcome Center on I-91

Pillsbury State Park in southern New Hampshire is marked by a string of small ponds that glisten in the summer sun. These tranquil little gems are perfect places to be on a warm summer day. Our plan is to paddle Butterfield, May, Mill, and North Ponds. Portages between ponds are short. It is possible we'll see loons, deer, and moose, but more certain sightings – and clearly fascinating in their own right – are the plants we'll encounter along the way. Ferns at shoreline are home to pitcher plants, sundews, and other unusual plants. Bring your paddling gear and your lunch. Don't forget the sunscreen or raincoat. We'll be late and far from home, so plan to join us for dinner in Brattleboro on the way back home. There is a user fee of \$4 per person for New Hampshire State Parks.



The light of an early Summer afternoon as it slips toward dusk has so many good things wrapped up in it... ~ Brandi L. Bates

A Short walk along and in the Scantic River, Enfield Connecticut

Saturday, July 16, starting at 9:30 a.m.

Leader: Sonya Vickers

Registration: Please call Sonya at (413) 566-3406

Meeting place: Carpool to meet at Hampden Mini Mall, intersection of Allen St, East Longmeadow Rd, Wilbraham Rd and Somers Rd.

We will explore part of the Scantic River in Enfield, Connecticut. The Scantic originates in Hampden, Massachusetts and flows 40 miles before joining the Connecticut River in East Windsor, Connecticut. Alongside the river runs a short trail, a perfect vantage point for observing the wildflowers and birds. Bring an extra pair of sneakers or water shoes so we can explore both sides of the river, and learn about some of the organisms that call it home. After our relaxing hike we will visit a local creamery for lunch and ice cream.

Holcomb Farm Hike, West Granby, Connecticut

Saturday, July 23, from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Leader: Carole Dupont

Registration: Please contact Carole at (413) 896-0124 or drbyo@verizon.net.

Meeting Place: Holcomb Farm parking lot, 113 Simsbury Road, West Granby. To reach the lot, take I-91 south to Exit 40, Rte. 20 west. Follow Rte. 20 for about 10 miles to Granby Center. Stay on Rte. 20 for another 2.6 miles & then turn left onto Day St. South; Holcomb Farm is at the end of the street.

In 1976, the Holcomb Family donated 367 acres of former farm land for public agricultural and recreational use. At the start of our trip, we will pass through a well-managed, fenced-in farm area *en route* to the trailhead. We will follow scenic Salmon Brook for a while, likely observing some interesting birds and wildflowers on the way. Then, we will cross a bridge to reach trails on the west side of the property. Our route has a couple steep hills, with an overall altitude gain of 341', as well as some very rocky sections that call for good, sturdy boots. Hiking poles and waterproof boots are recommended, as there will be a water crossing that may be tricky, depending on recent rainfall. Please bring water, snacks, lunch, and attire appropriate to the weather.

Summertime is always the best of what might be."

~ Charles Bowden

Register by Monday, August 15 for ...

Stump Sprouts Weekend, *West Hawley*

Friday, September 9 through Sunday, September 11, from dinner on Friday evening through Sunday luncheon.
Leaders: Dietrich and Julie Schlobohm, (413) 788-4125.

Registration: All-inclusive cost for two nights' lodging and six meals is \$162 per person. Please indicate your roommate preference when registering. Reservations and 50% deposit, submitted by check written to the Naturalists' Club, should arrive by Monday, August 15, and be addressed to Dietrich Schlobohm, 52 Poplar Ave., West Springfield, MA 01089. This trip may be cancelled if fewer than 18 people have paid by that date. Please contact Dietrich or Julie for an update on the availability of spots.



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 meat or vegetarian fare. Bring along binoculars, good footwear, curiosity, and a sense of adventure.

Afoot & Afloat in the South-Central Berkshires,

New Marlborough

Saturday, August 20, from 9 a.m. to around 3 p.m.

Leaders: Tom and Nancy Condon

Registration: Call Tom or Nancy or leave a message at (413) 297-0778

Meeting Place: Blandford Post Office

Hidden deep in the hills of the south-central Berkshires are plenty of gems for hiking and paddling. On this trip, we will tie two of these gems together. We'll start our day with a paddle on the Thousand Acre Swamp in New Marlborough. Averaging only 4-feet deep, this quiet little lake is the perfect place to brush up on our aquatic vegetation identification skills. With shores free of development, Thousand Acre Swamp is also a great place for viewing and identifying birds, so be sure to bring your binoculars!

Biking the Norwottuck Rail Trail, *Northampton*

Saturday, August 27, starting at 11 a.m.

Leader: Dave Lovejoy

Registration: Call Dave to register (413) 848-2047

Meeting Place: Parking area at the western end of the trail, just west of the Connecticut River in Northampton.

The newly re-surfaced Norwottuck Rail Trail runs through Hadley into Amherst, eventually ending in Belchertown, for a total of about 11 miles one way. How much of the trail we travel will depend on the preferences of the group, but this is anticipated to be an easy ride. Bring lunch or a snack; we can also take advantage of the many possibilities for a food stop along the way. If the weather seems to be an issue, please call to confirm that we're still planning to pedal.

By all these lovely tokens September days are here,
With summer's best of weather, And autumn's best of cheer.

~ Helen Hunt Jackson

Asters and Goldenrods, Westfield

Sunday, September 11, from 2 to 4 p.m.

Leader: Dave Lovejoy

Meeting Place: Main entrance to the Frank Stanley Beveridge Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary, across from the Stanley Park recreation fields.

In early fall, asters and goldenrods contribute splashes of bright color to the forest floor. A dozen or so species of each can be found in this area. We may not find all of them, but we can learn how to distinguish some of the common ones we come across. We'll likely have the opportunity to identify some other wildflowers, too.

Upper Goose Pond Ramble, Lee

Saturday, September 17, from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m.

Leaders: Tom and Nancy Condon (413) 297-0778

Meeting Place: Trailhead pullout on Route 20 east of Mass Pike Exit 2.

Join us for this early fall hike into the beautiful west end of Upper Goose Pond. We will hike the Appalachian Trail from its intersection with Route 20 in Lee to the Upper Goose Pond. Once there, we will wander its shoreline to look for wildlife.



SEPT.
Meeting

Conserving the Timber Rattlesnake in Massachusetts

Speaker: Anne Stengle

Wednesday, September 21, starting at 7 p.m.

Springfield Science Museum, Tolman Auditorium

The proposal to introduce the Timber Rattlesnake to the Quabbin Reservoir has engendered a great deal of controversy, both in political settings and with the public. Efforts to protect the species have been met with many challenges across the state, including the detection of an emerging fungal disease that can infect the snakes. Anne will discuss the most recent threats to our remaining populations, and current conservation management plans for this snake.

Anne Stengle is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Massachusetts- Amherst. Her research focuses on understanding the fundamental physiology of snakes, and, most recently, on the population genetics and ecology of the Timber Rattlesnake. She has taught courses in herpetology, and has professional experience as a veterinary technician.



Crotalus horridus

Timber Rattlesnakes are large, heavy-bodied snakes in the pit viper family. As with all pit vipers, they have broad, triangularly shaped heads, with a distinct narrowing just behind the head. Color patterns are extremely variable in this species with some individuals almost jet black and others sulphur-yellow with black, brown, or rust-colored blotches separated by cross bands on the back and sides. Timber Rattlesnakes are distinguished from other North American species of rattlesnakes by a lack of stripes or bands on its head and face and by a solid black tail.

The Timber Rattlesnake has a structure uniquely characteristic of all rattlesnakes at the tip of its tail that makes a rattle-like sound when vibrated. A new rattle segment is added each time the rattlesnake sheds its skin, although snakes often lose the rattle during shedding.

Timber Rattlesnakes range throughout the eastern US, west to central Texas and Wisconsin. In the northeast, populations are small, declining or extirpated.

Increasing public and conservation land holdings in prime Timber Rattlesnake habitats continues to be an important conservation strategy for this species. In addition to land protection, educating the public and residents local to Timber Rattlesnake populations with biologically accurate information remains important; highlighting the importance of Timber Rattlesnakes as beneficial native "top predators" of the deciduous forest communities is key.

~ excerpt from Mass. Division of Fisheries & Wildlife fact sheet, *The Timber Rattlesnake*

Looking Ahead

Forests in Transition, Westfield

Sunday, October 2, starting at 5 p.m.

Leader: Dave Lovejoy

Meeting Place: Main entrance to the Frank Stanley Bevrige Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary, across from the Stanley Park recreation fields.

Join us for an early fall walk to identify the common trees and shrubs of the oak forest, the dominant forest type in the park and throughout Westfield. Most likely, the brightest fall colors will be yet to emerge. Still, we'll discuss strategies that will be helpful in identifying trees even after they've lost their leaves!

Help conserve Club and natural resources by opting for paper-free newsletter delivery!

The number of Club members receiving our newsletter by mail has recently dropped to well below 200, the minimum eligible for bulk mailing. Therefore, starting with this issue, we are using the first-class rate. This shift more than doubles the per-copy mailing costs. As we hope to avoid an increase in Club dues, we wish to ask –

Would you be interested in receiving an electronic copy of the Newsletter, in lieu of the paper mailing?

Approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ of members currently have email addresses on file; if a large subset of us opt for electronic delivery, mailing costs will be substantially reduced. The electronic option offers other benefits, too! Electronic mailing is in keeping with the environmental-preservation goals of our group, and will permit you to receive the Newsletter a few days earlier. Moreover, thanks to the work of Newsletter's Graphics Editor Loren Hoffman, the online newsletter features color graphics! If you wish to opt-in for electronic delivery, please email Dave Lovejoy (dlovejoy@westfield.ma.edu). Thanks to the several members who have already selected this option, and to you for considering it!

Welcome to the Naturalists' Club Board, Carole!

The Club welcomes Carole Dupont as a new Director on the Naturalists' Club Board of Directors. Carole is a professor at Springfield Technical Community College in the Biological Sciences Department. She has completed leader training through the AMC and has led many-a-hike for the Wilbraham Hiking Club and AMC. She is a familiar presence in the Naturalists' Club, too; chances are you've seen her with her hiking poles on the trails and in her kayak on the water. Welcome, Carole!

Events offered by Mass Audubon

Summer Soiree

Thursday, August 11

Long Pasture Wildlife Sanctuary, *Barnstable*

Join us for this annual chef's tasting event and evening celebration to benefit Mass Audubon's Long Pasture Wildlife Sanctuary.

Duck Derby

Saturday & Sunday, August 13 & 14

Allens Pond Wildlife Sanctuary, *Westport*

Support Allens Pond and join us for our fun annual Duck Derby. The Grand Prize Winner gets a dinner for two anywhere in the world!

Nature Mysteries

Saturday, August 20 from 10 to 11:30 a.m.

Meeting Site: Laughing Brook Wildlife Sanctuary, *Hampden*

Leader: Kevin Kopchynski

Nature is filled with mysteries just waiting to be discovered and solved. Mysteries such as what animal left its tracks and where was it going, what critter ate a food item, or who left their scat behind. We'll take a walk at Laughing Brook looking for both mysteries and figuring out the answers to some of these and other questions. Audubon Members: \$5 for each adult, child; Non-members: \$7 for each adult, child.

Cuttyhunk and Elizabeth Island Cruises

Cruises set sail from Falmouth

Special Event September 4, 11, 18, 25 & October 2, 2016

Escape to the unique Elizabeth Islands off the coast of Cape Cod. Discover the windswept landscape of Cuttyhunk and step back into a simpler time. Hike the natural preserves of tiny Penikese Island, known as "the sleeping land out in the water", by the native Wampanoags.

The programs listed above require registration. To register, contact Mass Audubon at (781) 259-9500 or visit the Mass Audubon website, www.massaudubon.org. Nonmembers who join during registration can take immediate advantage of member prices.

There is a time in the last few days of summer when the ripeness of autumn fills the air.

~ Rudolfo Anaya

MEMBERSHIP

September is the month for membership renewal for the year (September to August). Members who have opted for the electronic newsletter will receive an email indicating membership status. Members who receive the paper newsletter and have '16 - 17 (or later) on the mailing label are paid up for (at least) the current year; a 15 - '16 label indicates that renewal is due now.

To establish or renew membership, please send information/payment to:

DAVE LOVEJOY
THE NATURALISTS' CLUB
DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY
WESTFIELD STATE UNIVERSITY
WESTFIELD MA 01086

If your address and contact information have not changed, the form below need not be completed. But please do email us so that we can add your electronic address to our records. *Thank you!*

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

Oh, the summer night
Has a smile of light
And she sits on a sapphire throne.
~ Brian Procter



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.

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Renew your membership

Name _____

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Phone Number _____ Email _____

Do you opt for electronic delivery of the Naturalists' Club Newsletter? Yes _____ No _____

Requests for programs/trips _____

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