



The Naturalists' Club
 Department of Biology
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THE NATURALISTS' CLUB NEWSLETTER

Springfield Science Museum at the Quadrangle, Springfield, Massachusetts
www.naturalist-club.org

JULY to OCTOBER SCHEDULE of ACTIVITIES

JULY	Wednesday	14	Some of the Best Water in the World, <i>Westfield</i>
	Thursday	15	Catching a Breath of Air at Ashley Reservoir, <i>Holyoke</i>
	Saturday	17	Make Your Own Birdbath, <i>Blandford</i>
	Sunday	18	Ferns and Their Relatives for Beginners (Stanley Park) <i>Westfield</i>
AUGUST	Friday	13	Stars and Meteors (Laughing Brook) <i>Hampden</i>
	Saturday	14	Bash Bish Falls and the South Taconic Trail, <i>Mount Washington</i>
	Thursday	19	Round and About Ludlow Reservoir, <i>Ludlow</i>
	Friday	20	Shoot the Moon, <i>Northfield</i>
	Saturday	21	Nature Reclaims History (Stanley Park) <i>Westfield</i>
	Sunday	29	A Hike to Ice Glen through an Old-Growth Forest, <i>Stockbridge</i>
SEPTEMBER	Friday-Sunday	10-12	Stump Sprouts Weekend, <i>West Hawley</i>
	Wednesday	15	SEPTEMBER MEETING: Sand
	Thursday	16	Ambling Through Robinson State Park, <i>Feeding Hills</i>
	Sunday	19	Canoeing the Quaboag, <i>East Brookfield</i>
	Sunday	19	Late Summer Wildflowers (Stanley Park) <i>Westfield</i>



Note: You will find Stanley Park and Laughing Brook events listed under Announcements on page 6.

NATURALIST'S CORNER



ISLANDS

When we think of islands, our minds conjure up distant vacation spots in the tropics or perhaps those rocky, isolated shores off the New England coastline. An island's separateness is reflected not only in its geography but also in the way life adapts to this isolation. Let's look at the way life responds to being set apart from the mainstream.

In 1835, sailing on the HMS Beagle, Darwin was introduced to the Galapagos Islands. Several members of the Naturalists' Club and I visited these island that sit on the equator, 600 miles off the western coast of South America.

There Darwin saw plants and animals he had seen nowhere else but that were obviously related to forms he had observed elsewhere. There were birds that were finch-like yet distinct from any other finches yet observed. It took him years to offer a suggestion about this paradox. Eventually he published *On the Origin of Species*, in which he proposed that these birds had ancestors like the mainland birds but that they had changed because of their island isolation. Descent with modification later became known as evolution.

The question in this century focuses on why evolution happens differently on islands than on the mainland. It seems logical that with fewer individuals, there is less genetic diversity available to the next generation. We know that inbreeding with dogs and cats has produced some very distinctive breeds, and this same sort of inbreeding happens on an island, where the gene pool is separated from the larger, more diverse population base. If conditions on the island are in any way different from those on the mainland ~ for instance, different foods or a lack of predators ~ those young with genes giving better chances to survive and reproduce will pass on those genes to future generations. In this way the population is gradually reshaped, with more prominence given to characteristics providing the greatest survival advantage in the particular environment.

Two factors will determine how island life evolves: one, the size of the island; the other, its isolation. The Galapagos are of volcanic origin, 600 miles offshore, so we can surmise that initial life forms floated or flew out from mainland. Terrestrial mammals do not do well swimming such a distance and so are not represented. Reptiles, with their lower metabolism, could have made it across on rafts of debris and in fact are the dominant land form today ~ however, very changed from the original colonizers.

An interesting experiment on the effects of island size resulted from the building of the Panama Canal: Gatun Lake was created in the center of Panama, with locks at each end, allowing passage between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. In the process one mountain was surrounded by water on all sides, creating the six-square-mile Barro Colorado Island. I have been fortunate enough to visit the biological station there. The Smithsonian Institute set about to record all the plants and animals, observing changes as this hilltop became an isolated island.

The events and the creatures of the meadows and woodlands show all degrees of provincialism. Some identify the countryside as definitely North American. Others are as characteristically New England. But the living things of the Oyster River, whether they be its duckweeds or water striders or caddis worms, resemble those to be found on ponds and slow streams all the way from the arctic tundra to the tropical rain forests. The English naturalist Thomas Belt first noticed this in the wilds of Nicaragua. He remarked that whenever his life in the remote parts of Central America made him lonesome, he had only to borrow a canoe and to paddle out on a broad river or a lake in order to feel at home again. The water lilies and dragonflies around him resembled so closely those he had known elsewhere as a boy that he could temporarily forget the tapirs and monkeys, the strange snakes and jungle vegetation along the shores.

~ Lorus and Margery Milne ~

Information gathered there since 1923 showed that the first organisms no longer able to live on the island were large fauna like the panther. Important studies have been conducted there to ascertain just how much space some organisms need ~ facts very important when setting aside wildlife preserves.

Isolation can be a physical distance, as in the Galapagos, or it can be more subtle. Our speaker last year, Donald Kroodsma, showed us that black-capped chickadees on Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket have a slightly different song than chickadees on the mainland. Since song is a key factor in mate selection, these chickadees will eventually produce a different gene pool from mainland birds.

The old-growth forests in Massachusetts we learned about from our speakers in the spring of 2010 can also be classified as islands. These isolated areas provide habitat for organisms that could not make it in what is now a sea of managed forests surrounding them. And if habitat size truly is important, what would happen to these delicate islands if they were bisected by a road, making two smaller but unsustainable islands?

It is said that we are in the midst of the sixth great extinction in geological history and that the ways of humankind are at the root of it. Since the one great continent of Pangaea separated eons ago, each of the continents evolved its own diverse "island" species. But with gardeners planting exotic species and jet planes carrying spores and bugs from distant lands, it is as if humanity is reuniting Pangaea. We will gain the woolly adelgid but lose the hemlock.

Islands can exist on many scales, and their separation need not be by water. A rotting stump can be an island refuge to organisms needing moisture and nutrients of the soggy wood. A vernal pool is effectively an island without fish, a condition advantageous to developing amphibians. On Hawaii, surrounded by old lava flows, islands of forest within the island host endemic trees and birds. In Arizona, mountaintops with a cooler environment than the surrounding desert are called sky islands. Unfortunately, as global warming increases, species will follow cooler temperatures to the summits and then have nowhere to go but to extinction. Inside the Grand Canyon, buttes are islands to anything that cannot fly. We need to be able to recognize these kinds of islands and help preserve their potential as important reservoirs of biodiversity.

Can you think of unique islands of life? Perhaps it is two colonies of ants separated by your driveway or the population of one-celled and multicellular organisms living in your rain gutters. Islands can be bogs surrounded by forests or can be whole continents, or even the Earth in space. We need to be able to define and study the way life responds to being either connected or disconnected on islands if we're to understand this great sixth extinction. I guess that is what being a naturalist is all about.

~ Sonya Vickers ~



Blueberries

When the woods on some hillside are cut off, the *Vaccinium pennsylvanicum* [blueberry] springs up, or grows more luxuriantly, being exposed to light and air, and by the second year its stems are weighed to the ground with clusters of blue berries covered with bloom, and much larger than they commonly grow, also with a livelier taste than usual, as if remembering some primitive mountain-side given up to them anciently. Such places supply the villagers with the earliest berries for two or three years, or until the rising wood overgrows them and they withdraw into the bosom of Nature again. They flourish during the few years between one forest's fall and another's rise.

July 3, 1852 ~ Henry David Thoreau ~

An almost endless variety of wild animals tend their young throughout the summer. Some merely lead the way. Others prepare nurseries for their babies. A few go to great lengths to distract attention from their little families. Along the marsh margins and over the dry uplands, the sandpipers and killdeers make use of every trick their instincts provide. If we come close to where their chicks crouch motionless, the parent bird puts on a conspicuous display - pretending that one wing is broken. When we turn and face in the opposite direction but do not move away from the unseen brood, the mother bird generally circles into view and again invites attention by crying loudly. A fox, which might be fooled by this ruse into following the parent bird, is equally ready to lead a dog by many a devious route away from the den in which her own pups are hidden. ~ Lorus and Margery Milne ~

Some of the Best Water in the World, Westfield

Wednesday, July 14, meeting time 9:30 a.m.

Leader: Jack Megas (782-3962)

Some of the world's highest-quality drinking water comes from our region. So why pay for bottled water, with all its associated environmental problems ~ transportation cost, misuse of petrochemical resources, ocean trash, landfill issues, etc.? Join us for a tour of our local water facility, the West Parrish Filters, run by Springfield Water & Sewer Commission. Call Jack for directions.

Catching a Breath of Air at Ashley Reservoir, Holyoke

Thursday, July 15, starting at 8:30 a.m.

Leader: Colette Potter (786-1805)

Let's head out for an early morning scenic walk along a flat waterfront trail on this midsummer day. Come along on this pleasant stroll, conversing the while away, reacquainting yourself with the birds and plants all round. Please call to register and for meeting place. Bring your binoculars and dress for the weather. Bad weather cancels

Make Your Own Birdbath, Blandford

Date: Saturday, July 17, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Leaders: Debbie Lovejoy (848-2047) and Nancy Condon (564-0895)

Location: Lovejoys' home. Call Debbie for directions.

Registration: Required, to be sure we have enough materials. Call Debbie or Nancy to sign up.

Materials Cost: In the neighborhood of \$10

More birds will be attracted to your yard if you provide a source of water. For drinking and bathing, many species benefit from this simple addition to your garden. So roll up your sleeves and let's get dirty and make a leaf-shaped birdbath you can take home. Our birdbaths will be made of cement molded around a large leaf ~ hosta, burdock, or rhubarb, for instance. We'll go through the process together, step by step. A small fee is requested to cover the cost of sand and cement mix. Several days' drying time will be necessary, so a return visit will be in order to unveil your completed leaf birdbath.

Bring a lunch to enjoy in Debbie's backyard once we're finished.

Bash Bish Falls and the South Taconic Trail

Mt Washington

Saturday, August 14, from 8 a.m. to about 4 p.m.

Leaders: Tom and Nancy Condon (564-0895)

Meeting Place: Dunkin' Donuts in Southwick on Rte. 10-202

Was Bash Bish Falls the site of double tragedy? Or is it just one of the most dramatic falls in the state? Legend holds that Bash Bish Falls is not only the highest falls in the state but also the site of the death of an Indian maiden and her mother.

We'll explore this falls in the southwest corner of the state, in an easy walk up from the New York state line. We'll then continue along the South Taconic Trail and explore the forests of this unique area of Massachusetts. Our path will take us to the highlands of Alander Peak, about 3 miles above the falls. At 2250 feet, Alander offers spectacular views of the surrounding area.

Wear sturdy hiking boots, and bring along lunch and plenty of water. Expect to hike about 7 miles round trip. Parts of the hike will be steep so a walking stick might be in order. Bash Bish Falls is a popular tourist destination, but only a few hardy souls hike past the falls to explore the cool forests and outstanding views of the South Taconic Trail.

Round and About Ludlow Reservoir, Ludlow

Thursday, August 19, starting at 8:30 a.m.

Leader: Colette Potter (786-1805)

When constructed in the mid 1870s, three brooks within its 22 square-mile watershed ~ Broad, Jabish, and Higher ~ were diverted to feed Ludlow Reservoir. Surrounded by a wildlife conservation easement, the reservoir creates a lovely setting for a morning waterside promenade in company of acquaintances old and new. Please call to register and for meeting place. Bring your binoculars and dress for the weather. Bad weather cancels.

Shoot the Moon, Northfield

Friday, August 20, at 8 p.m.

Contact Jack Megas (782-3962)

Directions: Drive up Route 63 to Northfield Mountain Environmental Center. Proceed up mountain road, turn left at gate, follow signs, and park.

Most astronomy conventions avoid featuring the moon for viewing, but after 27 years looking the other way, The Conjunction (originally a Naturalists' Club activity) will be highlighting that familiar celestial object, along with a couple planets, for telescopic viewing. Clouds and rain will cancel.

A Hike to Ice Glen Through an Old-Growth Forest

Stockbridge

Sunday, August 29, starting at 9 a.m.

Leader: Dave Gallup (525-4697)

Meeting Place: Dick's Sporting Goods, Riverdale Road/
Rte. 5, West Springfield

Join us on a hike to a magical place, a historic spot people have ventured to for over 100 years. We will traverse an old-growth forest along the way, to a site where giant boulders, left behind by glaciers, form craggy ice-filled caves in a cool, dense moss-covered forest. After our adventure, let's put up our feet and enjoy a cool, refreshing drink on the Red Lion Inn's patio in historic Stockbridge. Rain Cancels.

Baldwin Apple



So much is going on at every hour all summer in our valley that the most complete almanac could not record the full details. Yet the wild things do meet their appointments with reasonable regularity. The late Aldo Leopold relied on his personal chronicle to report that each week from April until September, an average of ten different wild plants came into bloom. No one, he claimed, could keep watch on so many, or ignore them all either.

~ Lorus and Margery Milne ~

Stump Sprouts Weekend, West Hawley

Friday, September 10 through Sunday, September 12, from dinner on Friday evening through a Sunday luncheon

Leaders: Dietrich and Julie Schlobohm (788-4125)

Registration: All-inclusive cost for two nights' lodging and six meals is \$139 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 have been received by June 1.

This trip will be canceled if 18 people are not paid by that date. Please note: By this point 20 people may be signed up, but we are creating a waiting list. Call Dietrich or Julie first for current information.

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

SEPTEMBER MEETING SAND

Wednesday, September 15,, at 7:30 p.m.

Presenters: Sonya Vickers

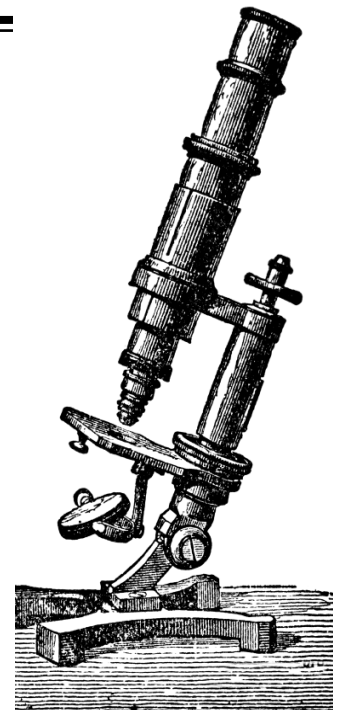


*Grain of sand,
magnified.*

In her travels round the world Sonya Vickers has collected samples of sand and brought them home to study under a microscope. Come join her in a delightful exploration of the miniature! You'll see how, when magnified and photographed, sand reveals its cache of tiny jewels ~ garnets, rubies, peridot and, yes, even gold!

The view Sonya shares of this small world speaks to origins of immense geological phenomena such as glaciers and volcanoes and, as well, brings to light tiny life forms sand hosts that look and behave as if from an alien world. These animals, diminutive though they may be, in their long history have had some bearing on biogeochemical cycles of the planet: Tiny shells, built using calcium carbonate from the sea, end up as grains of sand; this sequestration of carbon over the long term is a process influencing global climate. Also, these minuscule fossils open a window to scientists by facilitating forensic investigation of the ancient environments in which the creatures existed.

Please join us for this first meeting of the 2010-2011 year as our friend and world traveler Sonya Vickers, in words and close-up photos, demonstrates how microscopic examination of a substance as common as sand, gathered from far and wide, brings to light surprising views of our planet on a scale far different from that we're used to experiencing.



Ambling Through Robinson State Park, Feeding Hills

Thursday, September 16, starting at 8:30 a.m.

Leader: Colette Potter (786-1805)

Just upstream from the confluence of the Connecticut and Westfield rivers, Robinson State Park, with five miles of riverbank frontage, is relatively narrow. But within its 852 acres are 20 miles of trails through various habitats ~ a great site to explore with friends as fall approaches! Please call to register and for meeting place. Bring your binoculars and dress for the weather. Bad weather cancels.

Canoeing the Quaboag, East Brookfield

Saturday, September 19, from 9 a.m. till 4 or 5 p.m.

Leaders: Tom and Nancy Condon (564-0895)

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 birdlife 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 six miles total.

Bring your own canoe or kayak. Bring a bag lunch, binoculars, and a hankerin' to be on the water.

THE NATURALISTS' CLUB ANNOUNCEMENTS

NATURE WORKSHOPS AT STANLEY PARK, Westfield

All walks and workshops will meet at the entrance sign to the Frank Stanley Beveridge Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary and will cancel if there is heavy rain. Bring along your field guides, binoculars, and camera. Call park headquarters, at 568-9312, with any questions.

Ferns and Their Relatives for Beginners

Sunday, July 18, from 2 to 4 p.m.

Leader: Dave Lovejoy

About 50 species of ferns and their relatives (club-mosses and horsetails) grow in Hampden County. Some have rather particular ecological requirements and are not found in the Sanctuary, but about a dozen species are rather common and should be fairly easily found on this casual walk.

Nature Reclaims History

Saturday, August 21, from 2 to 4 p.m.

Leader: Arthur O'Leary

Take a walk back in time using an 1850 map to locate and identify manmade structures, and learn the rich history of industry, homelife, and stories behind the names. Travel old roads and trails and bushwhack through the Wildlife Sanctuary. This little-known portion of Stanley Park contains remnants of a canal, dams, mill foundations, an old channel of the Little River, and footbridge abutments.

Nature steadily reclaims these sites with successional growth, deposition, and weathering. Locate these disappearing sites in the remote reaches of the Wildlife Sanctuary, and learn about John Munn's "Newfoundland," the Ruinsville Mill, Cotton Cooley's boarding houses, Cyrus W. Field, Jedediah Clapp, traumatic amputations at the Saw Mill of Lucas Cowles, and other tales and verbal histories. Wear appropriate hiking attire, sturdy boots, and bring water and a camera/ binoculars.

Late Summer Wildflowers

Sunday, September 19, from 4 to 6 p.m.

Leader: Dave Lovejoy

The Sanctuary provides an opportunity to see a variety of native wildflower species, some of which are more common here than elsewhere in the area. This walk may follow the same path as the springtime hike on May 17, but the change of season will make for a very different list of species this time round. Asters and goldenrods are becoming dominant by now, but many others will also be seen.



Aster

LAUGHING BROOK, Hampden

Friday, August 13, at 8 p.m.

Leader: Kevin Kopchynski (267-4757)

Register with Mass Audubon at Arcadia (800-710-4550). Laughing Brook is located on Main Street in Hampden. This is a star and meteor observing Friday evening event led by Kevin. Fee TBA.

As I look northwestward to that summit from a Concord cornfield, how little can I realize all the life that is passing between me and it,— the retired up-country farmhouses, the lonely mills, wooded vales, wild rocky pastures, and new clearings on stark mountainsides, and rivers murmuring through primitive woods! All these, and how much more, I overlook. September 27, 1852 ~ Henry David Thoreau ~

THE NATURALISTS' CLUB

2010

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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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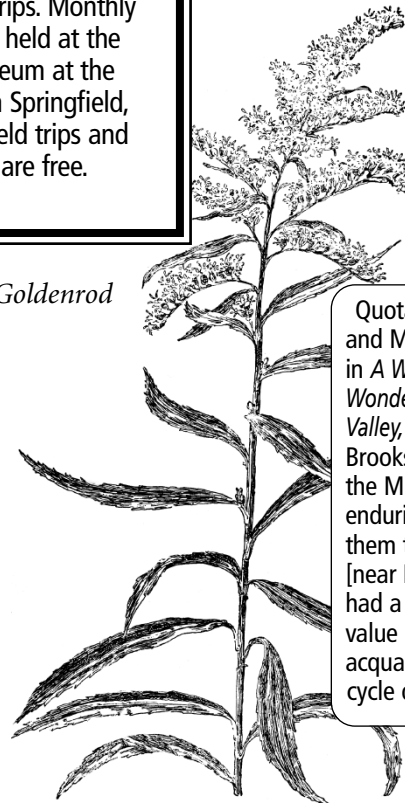
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Goldenrod



Quotations attributed to Lorus and Margery Milne were found in *A World Alive: The Natural Wonders of a New England River Valley*, published in 1977. Paul Brooks in his preface says of the Milnes, "they had an enduring 'sense of place.' To them the Oyster River valley [near Durham, New Hampshire] had a special meaning, a unique value based on intimate acquaintance throughout the cycle of the seasons."

Just a reminder... Please be mindful of the environment. If possible, please:

- carpool to destinations
- share costs with your driver

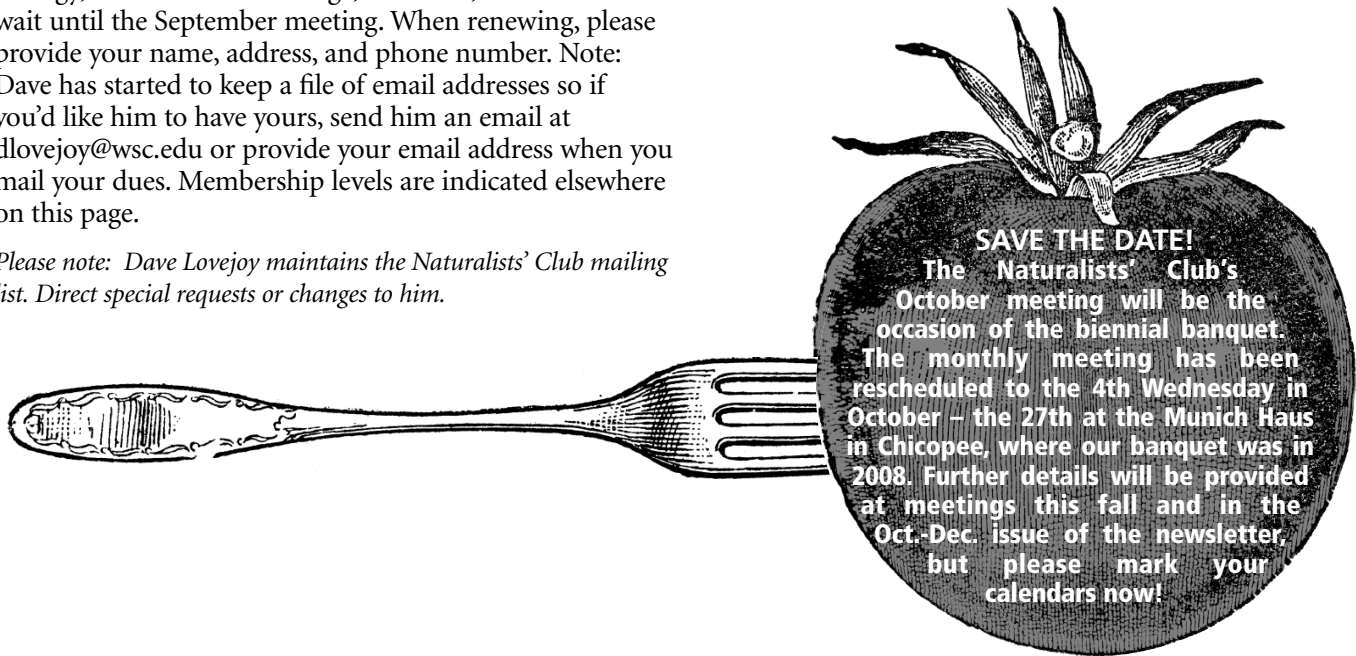
~ Thank you ~ Naturalists' Club Board of Directors



FROM THE TREASURER

Many of you know that September is the month for membership renewal for the year (September to August). Those of you with a 10-11 on your newsletter mailing label have paid for the coming year. Those who are 09-10 may either renew over the summer by sending a check (payable to The Naturalists' Club) to Dave Lovejoy, Department of Biology, Westfield State College, Westfield, MA 01086 or wait until the September meeting. When renewing, please provide your name, address, and phone number. Note: Dave has started to keep a file of email addresses so if you'd like him to have yours, send him an email at dlovejoy@wsc.edu or provide your email address when you mail your dues. Membership levels are indicated elsewhere on this page.

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** **2010-2011**

Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Email _____

Requests for programs/trips _____

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