



The  
**NATURALISTS CLUB**  
 N E W S L E T T E R

Springfield Science Museum at the Quadrangle, Springfield, Massachusetts

*April to June*  
**CALENDAR of EVENTS**

**APRIL**

- 5 - 8 Sixth Annual Festival of Flowers, *Springfield*
- 15 Sanderson Falls Hike, *Chester*
- 18 APRIL MEETING: People and the Land in Western Massachusetts
- 21 Earth Day on the Green, *West Springfield*
- 22 Looking at the Small Signs of Spring, *West Springfield*



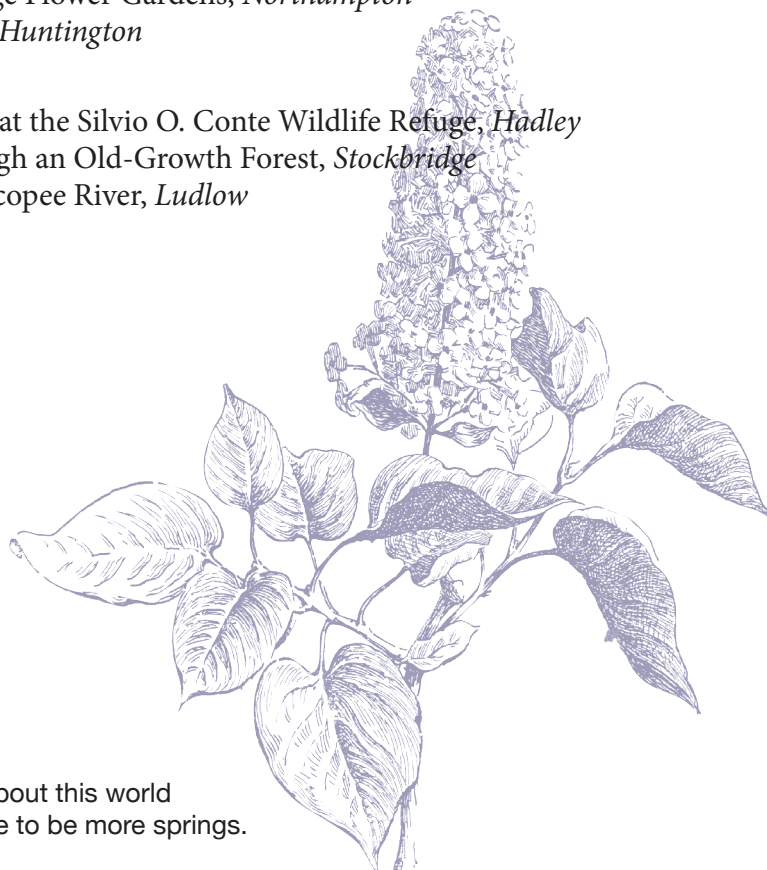
April 27  
 ~ It's Arbor Day! ~  
 Plant a tree!

**MAY**

- 6 Spring Flora in Forest Park, *Springfield*
- 16 MAY MEETING: South Africa: Flora, Fauna, Conservation, and Culture
- 19 Mill River & Smith College Flower Gardens, *Northampton*
- 26 The Sex Lives of Flowers, *Huntington*

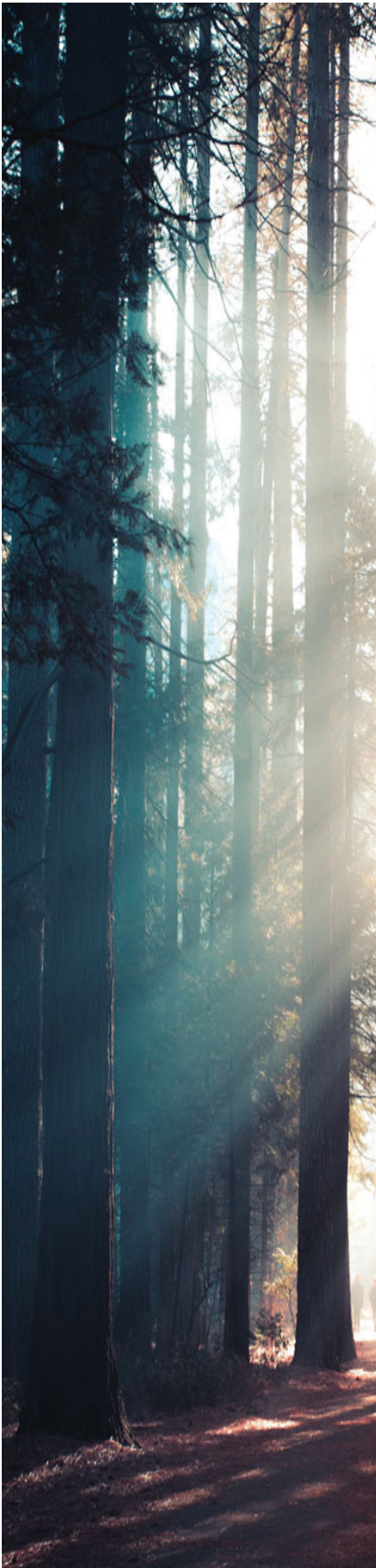
**JUNE**

- 3 Birding and Nature Walk at the Silvio O. Conte Wildlife Refuge, *Hadley*
- 10 A Hike to Ice Glen Through an Old-Growth Forest, *Stockbridge*
- 23 Spring Paddle on the Chicopee River, *Ludlow*



That is one good thing about this world  
 . . . there are always sure to be more springs.  
 ~ L.M. Montgomery

# NATURALIST'S CORNER



## THE SCIENCE OF A WALK IN THE WOODS

Members of The Naturalists' Club certainly enjoy being outdoors and learning about the natural world! It is an important part of who we are and what makes us feel good. I had always taken this for granted as a given until I read *The Nature Fix, Why Nature Makes us Happier, Healthier and More Creative*, by Florence Williams. She presents scientific findings that help to explain the specific impacts of nature on our physiology and psychology, revealing that time in nature is not a luxury, but a human need.

You know the benefits of a walk in the woods because you return feeling good. We use the word *recreation* because, yes, we are *re-created*, with a sense of calm. But did you know that a study comparing people taking a walk in the city with the same people walking the same distance in woods found the woods walkers — far more so than those walking in the city — to have reduced blood pressure, heart rate, and cortisol levels? As Naturalists' Club members, we'd of course prefer the woods walk . . . but it's surely nice to understand the details of how being in nature benefits our physiology.

Why, exactly, does time in nature have such substantial health benefits? The answer, it seems, lies in the history of our species. We humans have lived in nature for most of our history. Those early humans who were most attuned to the clues of nature were the ones who survived and passed on their traits. Edward O. Wilson has written about biophilia, which he defines as the love of other living things and nature. This inheritance from our ancestors would explain why a cottage on a sea coast or a home with a mountain vista is so prized by our fellow man and therefore assigned a higher real estate value. Such locations place us closer to the natural world, and our ancestors who preferred such places would have had the survival benefit of seeing approaching predators. How often do we in New England take a long hike to a place where the view is the destination?

Turns out, a good view is not just nice — it may be essential to our health. One study compared hospital beds with a window view to those with a hallway view. Surgery patients facing nature healed, on average, one day earlier and needed less pain medication than did those facing the interior of the hospital building. A similar pattern holds in residential settings: urban dwellers in neighborhoods with a higher density of trees had a lower incidence of heart and metabolic disease than did those with little access to parks and green space. Even the age-adjusted mortality rate is lower for city residents who live near urban parks with trees.

Views help even more than your health. Workers have been found to have increased productivity if their workspace offers a view of nature. Academic performance increases if there is a connection to nature, even just a window offering recurring glimpses of green space. Our creative brain needs that connection to work effectively. Subjects in rooms with potted plants have been found to be more generous to others. The author suggests we should line the halls of Congress with ficus trees!

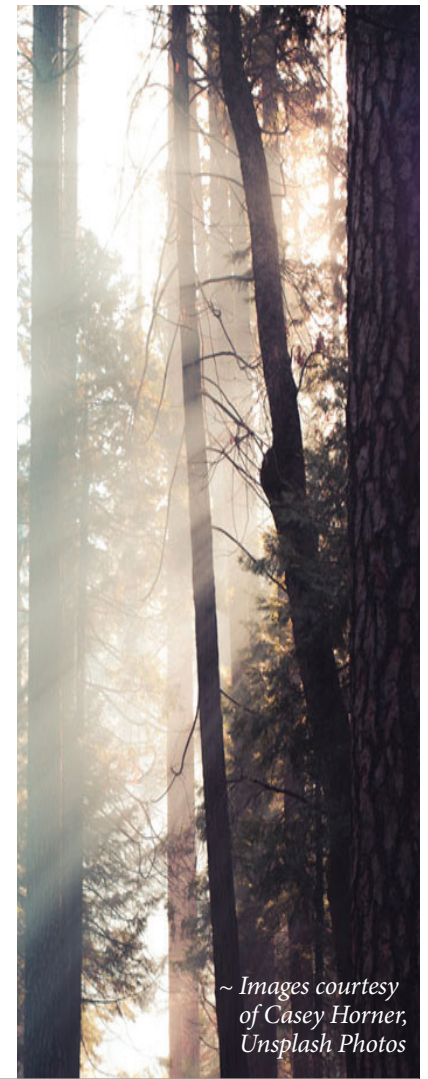
We experience the natural world not just through our eyes, but through all our senses. In Japan, where the population density is high and wilderness area is low, “forest bathing” is popular as a sort of spa treatment. People visit small areas of green space to walk and breathe in the scents of the forest. Trees emit a chemical that reduces their parasite load; that same chemical reduces stress in humans, and lowers blood pressure.

Have you ever inhaled that good fresh odor after a rain? You are smelling geosmin, which is produced by bacteria in the soil, those same *Streptomyces* that supply us with antibiotics. Geosmin, taken in through our nostrils, reduces stress, also leading to decreased blood pressure. Geosmin is also antiviral and limits the growth of cancer cells. In South Korea, where forested areas are limited, there is great emphasis on forest walks as opportunities for healing. So, next time you are on a Naturalists’ Club hike, stop to take a deep breath and know it is not your imagination — there are specific biological explanations for why being in nature feels so good!

So how essential is that walk in the woods? It has been shown that taking a walk every day is a leading preventative measure of cognitive decline in older people. Children have fewer problems with attention deficit disorder when they are immersed in a natural setting. In contrast to Japan and Korea, unfortunately, institutions in our fast-paced society here in the United States have limited outdoor time rather than embracing it. School recess time has been curtailed and children are spending more time with video games and TV than playing outside.

Next time you go on a walk in the woods with the Naturalists’ Club, be aware that the good feeling you get can be explained by specific biological processes . . . and that you’ll get to enjoy genuine, specific benefits for your physical and mental health.

~ Sonya Vickers



~ Images courtesy  
of Casey Horner,  
Unsplash Photos

### **Sixth Annual Festival of Flowers, Springfield**

Thursday to Sunday, April 5 to 8  
Springfield Museums

The Springfield Museums are pleased to announce the sixth annual Festival of Flowers. Galleries and exhibits in four museums will burst with color when museum objects are creatively interpreted by florists, designers, and garden club members. Please join us to celebrate spring throughout the art, history, and science museums! Flower show and activities are included with museum admission unless otherwise noted. For more information, visit [SpringfieldMuseums.org/flowers](http://SpringfieldMuseums.org/flowers).



Daffodils are yellow trumpets of spring.  
~ Richard L. Ratliff

### **Sanderson Falls Hike, Chester**

Sunday, April 15, starting at 10 a.m.

Leaders: Dave and Suzy Gallup

Registration: Please call to let us know you are coming (413-525-4697).

Meeting Place: Westfield State University commuter parking lot

Join us for a hike to one of the most beautiful waterfalls in Western Massachusetts — Sanderson Falls, located in Chester-Blandford State Forest, in the foothills of the Berkshires. As we hike to the falls, we should see a number of spring wildflowers. This hike is about two miles along a dirt road, through an oak and hemlock forest. Bring a lunch to enjoy near the crystal pool at the foot of this magnificent waterfall. Hardy climbers can explore the forest and see another waterfall seldom seen! Sturdy hiking boots are recommended. Heavy rain cancels.



## People and the Land in Western Massachusetts

April 18, starting at 7 p.m.

Speaker: Dennis Picard

Tolman Auditorium, Springfield Science Museum

Tannery, Ice Pond, and Sawmill are not just quaint road names for suburban subdivisions. Instead, they provide clues to the not-too-distant past of Western Massachusetts, hinting at the human efforts that have shaped our landscape. The people who created the farms and businesses that gave rise to these names have long since gone, and many of their works have been reclaimed by nature. However, their efforts have permanently transformed the landscape. Starting hundreds of years ago, our region supported several types of water-powered industries. The homes of the people who worked those mills, the animals that grazed in the meadow, and even the herbs and flowers of the kitchen gardens all left hints of that time. Come stroll the byways and woods to witness what remains from the 17th through 19th centuries!

Dennis D. Picard is a museum professional. He has worked in the field of living history for the past forty years. He began his career at Old Sturbridge Village in 1978, where he worked for twelve years, filling various positions including lead interpreter, and researching and designing many of the public programs still offered today. He also served on the staff of Hancock Shaker Village as a historic trade craftsman and site interpreter, and as Assistant Director and Director at Fort Number Four in Charlestown, New Hampshire and the Sheffield Historical Society in the Massachusetts Berkshires, and recently retired after 27 years at Storrowton Village Museum in West Springfield. Currently, he is teaching a course in Museum Studies & Historic Site Interpretation at Westfield State. He is also on the Board of Directors of the Pioneer Valley History Network and is a member of the editorial board of *The Country School Journal*.



### Earth Day on the Green, West Springfield

Saturday, April 21, from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Location: West Springfield Green

Celebrate Earth Day on the West Springfield Green! In 1970, Gaylord Nelson established the first Earth Day, set to occur annually on April 22nd, the day after John Muir's birthday. West Springfield's Environmental Committee is carrying on the tradition of celebrating the Earth and helping people learn how to protect it, just as John Muir did. The Boys of the Landfill band will fill the air with lively music, Master Gardeners will conduct soil testing, electric cars will be on display, solar energy information will be available, and area clubs and organizations will have exhibits. The Naturalists' Club will have a booth, too! Interested in representing the club at our table and telling folks about the great things we do outdoors? To volunteer, please contact Nancy Condon at 413-297-0778 or [spiderwoman@russellma.net](mailto:spiderwoman@russellma.net). We have a great planet. Come celebrate and preserve it!

### Looking at the Small Signs of Spring, West Springfield

Sunday, April 22, from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Leader: Sonya Vickers

Registration: Please call Sonya for location (413-566-3406)

Meeting Place: Unico Building, Mittineague Park, off Route 20 in West Springfield

We often notice the large signs of spring: flowers bloom and trees take on a green tint. But spring gets its start on the small scale. This workshop will involve looking through a variety of magnifying devices to witness the awakening of spring. First, we will walk outside to collect samples. Then, we will return indoors to see everything up close and personal. There will be field microscopes as well as microscopes attached to TV screens for all to view. We'll discuss how to transform your cell phone or simple point-and-shoot camera into a powerful close-up or macro device to record what you have discovered. Bring a lunch. Wear clothes and shoes suitable for a short hike, and bring your camera and cell phone. This event will occur rain or shine.



Today has been a day dropped out of June into April.

~ L.M. Montgomery

**Spring Flora in Forest Park, Springfield**

Sunday, May 6, from 1 to 3 p.m.

Leader: Dave Lovejoy (413-572-5307)

Meeting Place: Please call Dave

Forest Park is by far Springfield's largest natural area and has many different habitats accessible by roads or easy trails. The focus of our walk will be plants, but participants interested in other groups of organisms are welcome and will be encouraged to contribute their expertise. Plan to leave your phone number or email address when calling to register. (The number given is an office phone which may not be answered evenings and weekends.)



Spring is the time of plans and projects.  
~ Leo Tolstoy

**Nominating Committee and Election**

Naturalists' Club elections are held at the May meeting. Anytime prior, members may contact the Nominating Committee to make additional nominations.

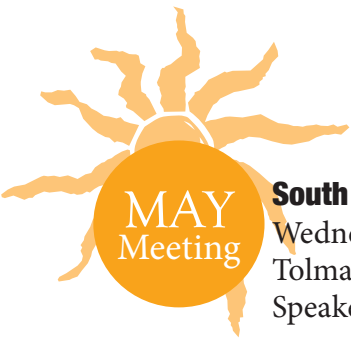
Committee members are:

- Karen Daniels (413-786-8228)
- Delores Gentile (413-783-6113)
- Colette Potter (413-786-1805)

The following incumbents are running for office:

- President ~ Dave Gallup
- Vice President ~ Nancy Condon
- Treasurer ~ Dave Lovejoy
- Corresponding Secretary ~ Suzanne Gallup
- Recording Secretary ~ Sonya Vickers
- Directors ~ Tom Condon, Carole Dupont, Jack Megas, Dietrich Schlobohm

Nominations may also be made from the floor at the May meeting.

**South Africa: Flora, Fauna, Conservation, and Culture!**

Wednesday, May 16, starting at 7 p.m.

Tolman Auditorium, Springfield Science Museum

Speaker: David Lovejoy

The above title is only slightly modified from the one used for a 15-day trip sponsored by the University of Connecticut Alumni Association in late summer 2017. Dave and Debbie Lovejoy were two of only eight participants on the trip. Dave's presentation will focus on the fauna and flora of this beautiful country and will include Cape Town's Table Mountain, the Cape of Good Hope, the "wildflower capital" of Nieuwoudtville, and Kruger National Park. Although plants and animals will be emphasized, conservation issues and poaching will be discussed as well, along with some comments on the cultural and economic inequities of this diverse land. (Apartheid did not magically disappear in 1994.)

**Mill River & Smith College Flower Gardens,**

Northampton

Saturday morning, May 19

Leader: Carole Dupont

Registration: Please call or email Carole (413-896-0124; [carole0136@gmail.com](mailto:carole0136@gmail.com)) for directions & meeting time

We will hike along a very pleasant, flat stretch of the Mill River, observing some interesting rock formations and wildlife. Afterwards, we'll continue on the trail to the adjacent Smith College outdoor flower gardens, which should provide us with some wonderfully

colorful spring blooms. The 125-acre Botanic Garden of Smith College preserves the historic Olmsted campus landscape. It sits at the edge of Paradise Pond and offers an outstanding view of nearby mountains. The outdoor gardens include a systematics garden, woodland and wildflower garden, Japanese garden, and rock garden. We'll also see the perennial garden, hardy xerophyte garden, and herb garden. In total, there are over 7,000 plants labeled and mapped. We will enjoy the beautiful May flowers before heading back to our cars at the trailhead. Bring water, snacks, lunch, and proper attire for the weather.



What a strange thing to be alive beneath cherry blossoms.  
~ Kobayashi Issa

**The Sex Lives of Flowers, *Huntington***

Saturday, May 26, from 10 a.m. to noon

Leader: Tom Condon

Registration: Please call Tom (413-454-2331)

Meeting Place: Huntington Country Store, 70 Worthington Rd., along Route 112

In the lowlands behind the Knightville Wildlife Area dam, a number of spring wildflowers thrive. We will walk a dirt road alongside the Little River, seeking out trout lily, wild ginger, leeks, trilliums and other spring ephemerals. The walk is easy and flat, and the pace will be leisurely. Afterwards, we'll stop at the Huntington Country Store for a delicious baked good or specialty drink.

**Birding and Nature Walk at Silvio O. Conte Wildlife Refuge, *Hadley***

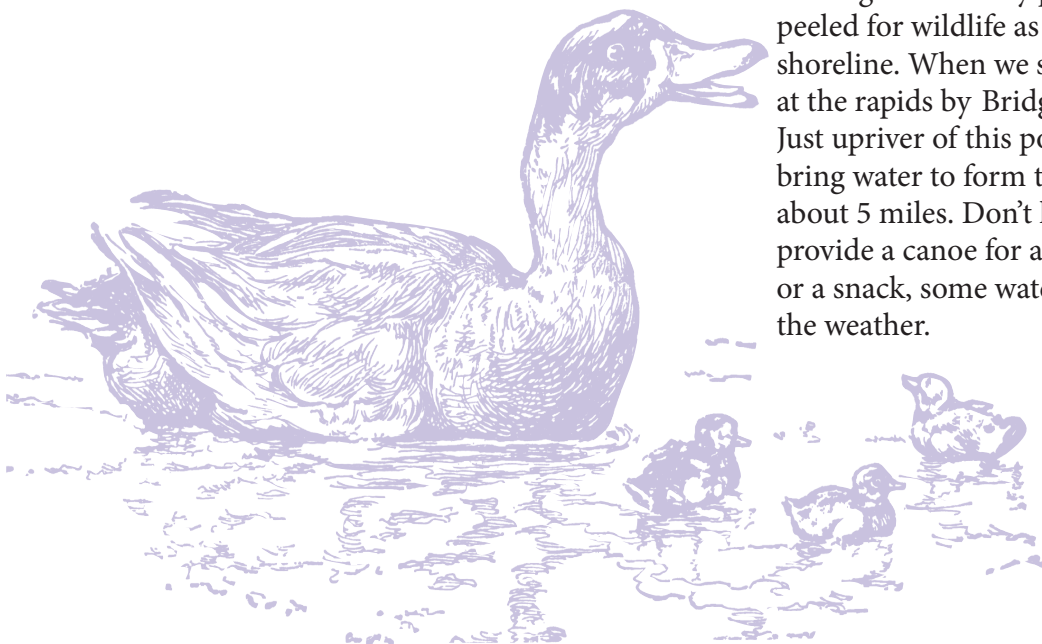
Sunday, June 3, from 9 a.m. to mid-afternoon

Leaders: Dave and Suzy Gallup

Registration: Please call to let us know you are coming and for information on meeting place (413-525-4697)

Meeting Place: T.B.D.

Join us for a hike at this new nature trail, part of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge in Hadley. This will be a loop hike along pine woods, maple wetlands, and marsh edges. There are wonderful raised boardwalks, overlooks, and bridges. We will explore a floodplain along the Fort River. This is a great place for birding, so bring your binoculars! Rain cancels.



**A Hike to Ice Glen Through an Old-Growth Forest, *Stockbridge***

Sunday, June 10, starting at 9 a.m.

Leaders: Dave and Suzy Gallup

Registration: Please call to let us know you are coming (413-525-4697)

Meeting Place: Table and Vine, Route 5, West Springfield.

Join us on a hike to a magical place, a historic spot people have ventured to for over 100 years. The glen is a lush, untended, romantic landscape consisting of piled rocks thick with mosses. The north-south orientation of the glen protects it from direct sunlight; Ice Glen gets its name from the ice that can persist into the summer at the bottom of its deep rock crevices. We will traverse old-growth forests to a site where giant boulders left behind by the glaciers form craggy ice-filled caves in a cool, dense, moss-covered forest. After our adventure, let's put our feet up and enjoy a cool, refreshing drink at the Red Lion Inn's patio in historic Stockbridge.

Rain cancels.

**Spring Paddle on the Chicopee River, *Ludlow***

Saturday, June 23, from 9 a.m. to noon

Leaders: Tom and Nancy Condon

Registration: Please call Tom (413-454-2331) or Nancy (413-297-0778)

Meeting Place: Parking lot by the Red Bridge in Ludlow, off Red Bridge Road

Grab your canoe or kayak and paddling gear, and join us for an easy paddle on the Chicopee River on the Red Bridge reservoir. Nature surrounds the reservoir, making this a lovely paddle. We will keep our eyes peeled for wildlife as we paddle upriver along a rocky shoreline. When we start to feel the current — typically, at the rapids by Bridge Street — we will turn around. Just upriver of this point, the Ware and Quabog Rivers bring water to form the Chicopee River. Round trip about 5 miles. Don't have a boat? Tom and Nancy can provide a canoe for a minimal charge. Bring your lunch or a snack, some water to drink, and be sure to dress for the weather.

## Looking Forward to...

### Events at Laughing Brook

For details on events at Laughing Brook, please visit [massaudubon.org/news-events](http://massaudubon.org/news-events) or call 781-259-9500.

#### Introduction To Digital Photography

Sundays, April 8 and April 15, 1-4 p.m. (2-part class)

Learn the basics of nature photography just in time to photograph the beauty of spring in the Connecticut River Valley! We will discuss best practices for capturing an image, understanding exposure and focus, and using both manual and automatic exposure settings. After the first session, participants are encouraged to take photos for review at the second. Meet in the Melville Room of Hampden Town Hall, 625 Main Street, Hampden.

#### Vernal Pools

Saturday, April 21, from 10 to 11:30 a.m.

Vernal pools are unique and critical habitats that are breeding grounds for many state-listed amphibian species. April is the best, and often only, time to see spotted salamanders and wood frogs.

#### Wildflowers at Laughing Brook

Wednesday, May 9, from 9 a.m. to noon

Enjoy an early spring walk at Laughing Brook looking for vernal wildflowers. We hope to see fringed polygala, wild oats, red trillium, wild leeks, and more. We'll walk through both field and forest. Led by wildflower expert Connie Parks.



There's nothing more beautiful than watching trees getting dressed up for Spring and Summer.  
~ Charmaine J. Forde

## Naturalists' Reading List...

**Your Brain on Nature: the Science of Nature's Influence on Our Health, Happiness and Vitality**, by *Eva Selhub, MD and Alan Logan, MD*

This is a fascinating book demonstrating the many ways nature can heal us physically and mentally. Sprinkled with many scientific studies, this book demonstrates that nature actually alters our brain and improves our overall well-being. A fascinating read that substantiates what we naturalists know instinctively.  
*Reviewed by Nancy Condon*

**Mark Dion: Misadventures of a 21st-century Naturalist**, by *Ruth Erickson and collaborators*

Dion, a New Bedford native, believes the job of the artist is to "go against the grain of dominant culture" and to challenge perception and convention. A major aspect of his work is the creation of museum exhibits questioning the role of institutions and the impact of humans on the natural world. Photographs of these exhibits and other examples of Dion's work are included in the book.

*Reviewed by Dave Lovejoy*

Interested in borrowing a copy? Send Dave an email or ask at a meeting!

## Stump Sprouts Weekend

West Hawley

Friday, September 7 through Sunday, September 9, from dinner on Friday evening through Sunday luncheon.

Leaders: Dietrich and Julie Schlobohm

Registration: Reservations and 50% deposit should be sent to arrive by Monday, August 13. This trip may be cancelled if fewer than 18 people have paid by that date. For current information, please call Dietrich or Julie (413-788-4125). All-inclusive cost for two nights' lodging and six meals is \$172 per person. Indicate your roommate preference, make your check payable to The Naturalists' Club, and send to Dietrich Schlobohm, 52 Poplar Ave., West Springfield, MA 01089.

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. Limit: 20 people.

