



The **NATURALISTS CLUB**
 NEWSLETTER

Springfield Science Museum at the Quadrangle, Springfield, Massachusetts

September to December Calendar of Events

SEPTEMBER

- 16 Wednesday SEPTEMBER ZOOM MEETING:
 Protecting Biodiversity in the COVID-19 Era
 26 Saturday A Paddle on Otis Reservoir, *Otis*

OCTOBER


- 10 Saturday An Evening Paddle on an Active Beaver Pond, *Otis*
 21 Wednesday OCTOBER ZOOM MEETING:
 Scotland – In Search of Very Old Things

NOVEMBER

- 7 Saturday Hiking Buffum Brook Community Forest,
 18 Wednesday NOVEMBER ZOOM MEETING:
 Ten Things You Ought To Know Before Embarking
 On A Cross-Country Canoe Expedition

DECEMBER

- 16 Wednesday DECEMBER ZOOM MEETING:
 Holiday Party

 Winter is an etching, spring a watercolor, summer an oil painting
 and autumn a mosaic of them all. ~ Stanley Horowitz

NATURALISTS

thinking out loud . . .

Letter from the President

As you are aware, there have been a lot of changes in our lives since the Commonwealth State of Emergency that made it necessary to cancel our March, April, and May meetings, and led us to decide against publishing a Summer 2020 newsletter.

While September through December meetings cannot occur in person at the Museum, we do plan to meet online, using the Zoom webinar platform. We will see how this works out. Also, we plan to hold a few field trips. I believe we can do this if we social-distance.

These are truly crazy times we are living in. I personally miss you all and miss seeing you at the meetings! But there is light at the end of this COVID-19 tunnel, and if we are patient and take care of ourselves, we will be back together soon! I trust that you and your families are all well and are going through this unsettling time successfully.

~ Dave Gallup

Register to attend Fall Meetings by Zoom!

As Dave mentions above, we are trying something different for Fall 2020: Naturalists' Club meetings by Zoom! Zoom is a webinar platform that allows users all over the world to "attend" a talk from the comfort of home.

Our Zoom meetings will focus on a variety of topics: the implications of Covid-19 for conserving biodiversity, a visit to Scotland, and tips on preparing for a cross-country paddling trip! We'll also host the December Holiday Party through Zoom. Online, you'll be able to raise questions and talk with other Club members.

So that we can resolve any technical issues ahead of time, we ask that you register for our Zoom meetings ahead of time. Here's how:

Attend online: Please email me at natclubnewsletter@gmail.com no later than 10 p.m. the Tuesday evening before the first Zoom meeting you plan to attend. I'll email you a link that you can use to connect.

Attend by phone: If you don't use email, please call me at 413-388-2830 and we'll find a way for you to listen by phone.

Watch the recorded talk: We'll post recordings of talks on the Club website so that you can watch them (or watch them again!) later.

Hope to see you on Zoom for Fall 2020!

~Diane Genereux

When this is over, may we never again
take for granted
A handshake with a stranger
Full shelves at the store
Conversations with neighbors
A crowded theater
Friday night out
The taste of communion
A routine checkup
The school rush each morning
Coffee with a friend
The stadium roaring
Each deep breath
A boring Tuesday
Life itself.
When this ends
may we find
that we have become
more like the people
we wanted to be
we were called to be
we hoped to be
and may we stay
that way — better
for each other
because of the worst.

~ Laura Kelly Fanucci



NATURE DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC

Well, we couldn't meet this summer with friends or gather for Naturalists' Club meetings, but the trails and forest were not off limits – thank goodness. It is a rough time, but there have been benefits, and at a time like this, one has to concentrate on the positives.

With nothing scheduled, I was free to take a deep breath (for which I am grateful) and delve into some of the things that interested me, but for which I had no time before. The two things one often hopes for are more time and more money, and in the last few months we certainly did get a gift of time.

I wandered some of the local trails, not just walking but observing, and sometimes observing in microscopic detail. I found a fairly large American chestnut tree in bloom and wondered how it got that big amid the Chestnut blight pandemic. Unfortunately, I eventually found a canker on the trunk, so this tree, too, will succumb. It's quite a feat to have grown so tall. I studied the fungus under my microscope and learned a lot about its structure and transmission. Nature rewards resilience: In spite of blight, some American chestnut trees grow long enough to bloom and produce fruit.

Observing the large American chestnut tree led me to set up my workshop — “Gamma's Playroom”, as my grandkids call it. Having moved last year, this gift of time made it possible to plan out just how I wanted everything set up. Then I started walking in the White Cedar Swamp and learning about the myriad of microbial life associated with the sphagnum moss growing there. It is a whole different, fascinating world! The pH of the swamp water is acidic, so only acid-tolerant microorganisms can live there. There were many golden single-celled diatoms, each with large vacuoles of oil which they use to store food produced by photosynthesis. Some even speculate that it is ancient diatom oil that gives us our oil reserves today.

I feel refreshed with the pause I have had during this time and grateful for what I have learned observing local nature. The resilience of American chestnuts and the diatoms that have prospered in a seemingly hostile environment show me the strength found in nature. Someday, we will return to “normal” but I hope I bring with me the lessons learned during this downtime.

~ Sonya Vickers

PLAGUE

In 1901, when my grandparents immigrated to the United States, there were fewer than 2 billion people on the planet. Today, we are approaching eight billion! The Arctic and Antarctica are melting, causing sea levels to rise, encroaching on human societies and threatening polar bear and penguin populations.

Our rainforests, the lungs of the planet, are being destroyed. California, Australia and the Amazon are burning. Lemurs have lost half of their forest homes in Madagascar in just 25 years. Our insane lust for ivory has decimated elephant populations. Rhino populations, too, are in decline. Only 4000 tigers are left. Three billion birds have been lost over the last 50 years alone. One million of Earth's estimated 8.7 million species are threatened with extinction in our lifetime. July 2020 tied with July 2016 as the second-hottest month ever recorded. Most of these changes have been shown to be caused by us humans.

Many of our religious institutions follow the dictum “be fruitful and multiply”. They forget that The Holy Book also reminds us to be shepherds of God's creation. Ebola, SARS, AIDS, and COVID-19 have all been released from large forests that were once home to thousands of animals and plants. We *are* the Plague. Make Love, Not Epidemics. Moderate our numbers and destructive activities. Protect The Creation and Mother Earth.

~Jack Megas

SAFETY FROM AN INVISIBLE FOE

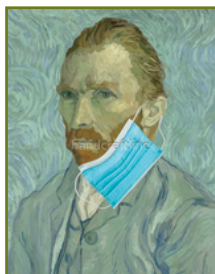
Ben was 30 feet above me as he searched for the next handhold. I was anchored to a tree and had Ben on belay as he climbed. We were in the middle of Moosehead Lake in Maine on an island called Mount Kineo. Glacial geologists refer to Kineo as a roches moutonnées, or sleeping sheep. From a distance, the mountain can be seen this way. The northwest side is a gentle slope, while the southeast side has sheer 800-foot cliffs. The last ice age shaped the mountain. Glaciers rode up the northwest side and plucked out loose volcanic rocks that now form the cliff face.

I stood at the base of these cliffs as Ben climbed. I had established an anchor for the rope about 50 feet up the cliff, and Ben was supposed to be climbing to that point, but he kept moving left. I would yell up to him to move back right, but he kept moving left. The rope ran from me through the anchor above and then down to Ben. The problem with moving left was that Ben was creating a pendulum with his body as the bob. Should Ben lose his grip, I could not catch his fall before he swung across and hit a rockface to the right. Ben was putting himself in danger. A danger that he should be able to see but was not anticipating.

Whenever we go out to explore the natural world, we must always be aware of the dangers that await us. Perhaps you might think “bear” or “snake” – or even poison ivy – when I say *danger*. These sorts of dangers are easy to see and plan for. We can wear long pants to avoid the poison ivy or talk loudly to avoid bears. Other risks are harder to see, but we need to plan for them as well. Weather is one such danger. We carry water to avoid dehydration and pack a raincoat as a shelter to prevent hypothermia from a cold rain. But today, we are faced with a foe (COVID-19) that is both invisible and hard to anticipate. This Fall, the Club will be offering some outings, and you may choose to join your friends on one or more of these. But we need to remember that, unbeknownst to us, COVID-19 could present on our outings. We will need to take precautions. We will need to remember to social-distance, even when stopping for a break on the trail, and remember to have our masks available for situations when it becomes impossible to physically distance from others. It is our responsibility not to participate in an event if we feel ill or have come into contact with those who have tested positive for the coronavirus, for everyone’s safety.

Back to Ben. He eventually lost his grip and fell. He swung into the rockface and gashed his leg. Kineo has been known for hundreds of years as a source of *Kineo Flint* used and traded by Native Americans to make arrowheads, axes, and other sharp tools. We were prepared to treat and transport Ben. It was harrowing for a time as we tended to his wound and shipped him to a hospital for surgery. The danger was real. Ben couldn’t see it and got hurt. Let us all understand the risks ahead of us and enjoy the natural world and Club camaraderie in a safe and responsible manner this fall.

~ Tom Condon



~Vincent Van Gogh image credited to:
FLASHBACK FRIDAY from haer.blogspot.com



As long as autumn lasts, I shall not have hands, canvas and colors
enough to paint the beautiful things I see. ~Vincent Van Gogh


 SEPT-
Meeting
Protecting biodiversity in the Covid-19 era

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

On the Zoom webinar platform

Speaker: Diane Genereux

Registration: Please email Diane at natclubnewsletter@gmail.com

by 10 p.m. on Tuesday September 15th to register for this online meeting

COVID-19 has brought harm to human populations around the world. The causative virus, SARS-COV-2, is zoonotic, meaning that it is inferred to have arisen in another species before finding its way into humans. Recent infections in tigers and mink in captivity indicate that transmission can also occur from human into other species. Echoing the phenomenon of asymptomatic carriage in humans, some of these species recover from infection without apparent symptoms. Others, including mink and at least some non-human primate species, become very ill. During this Zoom talk, I will describe our work to predict which species may be at high risk of infection and illness, with a focus on endangered species that are in frequent contact with humans through captive-management programs. I will also discuss how clues from species that avoid getting sick can help identify new strategies for treating human patients. **As noted above, please email natclubnewsletter@gmail.com to register.**

A Paddle on Otis Reservoir, Otis

Saturday, September 26, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Leaders: Tom & Nancy Condon

Registration: Space is limited, so please call to sign up.

Meeting Place: say: Papa's Gulf Station, Route 23 (2000 E. Otis Rd.), Otis. Heavy Rain Cancels.

Grab your boat and join us for a paddle in Tolland State Forest in Otis. We will launch at the forest boat ramp and explore the southern end of Otis Reservoir.

We'll paddle in and around Clark Island and then explore Southeast Bay. My favorite part of the day will be when we push through The Narrows to explore the stump sprouts and tiny islands of Dismal Bay.

No canoe? No problem. Tom can provide one. A \$10 donation per person to the Southwick scouts is all it will cost you. We limit the size of the group to make logistics reasonable, so please call early. Bring a bag lunch, camera, binoculars, or whatever.

An Evening Paddle on an Active Beaver Pond, Otis

Saturday, October 10, from 5 to 8 p.m.

Leaders: Tom & Nancy Condon

Registration: Please contact Nancy at 413 297-0778 or email: nancy@paddleforwater.net

Meeting Place: Papa's Gulf Station, Route 23 (2000 E. Otis Rd.), Otis

You are gliding quietly along in your canoe when you hear a crack, like a gunshot. You turn quickly to see a splash and radiating ripples disturbing the calm surface of the pond. You have almost seen a beaver, but he saw you first. His tail slap is a warning to other beaver on the pond that there are interlopers. This is the experience we hope to have on Upper Spectacle Pond.

Upper Spectacle Pond is a small, but active beaver pond. Join us with your own canoe or kayak, or rent a canoe from our local scout troop to enjoy the experience and learn more about beaver behavior.

We will paddle in the evening, because this time of gives us the best shot at viewing these shy creatures. We will stop on a small island so bring along a small evening meal and perhaps a folding chair.

The pond is down a mile-long dirt road. We have done it with our Prius, so you should be fine. Plan for the weather and bring along a camera or binoculars. Canoeing/Kayaking is a good social-distancing activity, but don't forget your mask for when we load and unload our boats.



Scotland – in Search of Very Old Things

Wednesday, October 21

On the Zoom webinar platform, starting at 7 p.m.

Speaker: Sonya Vickers

Register: Please email natclubnewsletter@gmail.com to register for this online meeting

Due to COVID-19, we missed our March meeting, when I was going to discuss my travels in Scotland. In October, I will be giving a Zoom presentation of that program. Scotland and New England used to be joined before the Atlantic Ocean separated us, but Scotland got some of the older parts of the things we shared. Some of the insights into how geology works came from early Scottish scientists unraveling the mystery of how rock layers and whole mountains could actually move. The geology is fascinating and the scenery it produced is magnificent. Escape to the highlands for an evening. **As noted above, please email natclubnewsletter@gmail.com to register.**

Hiking Buffum Brook Community Forest, Pelham

Saturday, November 7, time T.B.A.

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

Let's enjoy an invigorating autumn hike exploring the trails of Buffum Brook, town conservation land newly added to the Moose Track conservation area. We will traverse trails that wind through both young and mature woodland, all situated within a vast, relatively non-fragmented forested landscape that includes Quabbin Reservation and Amherst Watershed land. A public loop trail leaves the parking area, to carve

a figure eight with gentle slopes, which takes visitors above and around a historic quarry site sheltering a lovely vernal pool.

We hope to discover porcupine tracks and if we're really lucky, spot a porcupine ambling along or sitting in one of the numerous hemlocks found in their favorite homestead, the quarry walls. Porcupine scat at the entrance to a crevice in the quarry's rocky wall might indicate a family burrow. A discarded quill would be a wonderful discovery.

Bring your binoculars, water, snacks, hiking boots, and dress according to the weather conditions.



Ten Things You Ought To Know Before Embarking On A Cross-Country Canoe Expedition

Wednesday, November 18

On the Zoom webinar platform, starting at 7 p.m.

Speakers: Nancy and Tom Condon

Register: Please email natclubnewsletter@gmail.com to register for this online seminar

Join this Zoom meeting presentation for a lighthearted look at Nancy and Tom Condon's 5,000-mile canoe expedition. Don't worry – you can live it from the comfort of your own cushy chair. **As noted above, please email natclubnewsletter@gmail.com to register.**



Holiday Meeting

Wednesday, December 16

On the Zoom webinar platform, starting at 7 p.m.

Register: Please email natclubnewsletter@gmail.com to register for this online meeting

Even as we physically distance from one another, we can still share photos in our traditional December Holiday meeting fashion. If you would like to share your slides during the meeting, please contact Nancy (nancy@paddleforwater.net or 413-297-0778), and I can let you know how to do it We can even practice beforehand. **As noted above, please email natclubnewsletter@gmail.com to register.**

A note of thanks for the Club's contribution to land conservation


The following hand-written note from Mass Audubon's CT River Valley Sanctuaries Director Jonah Keane was received by Club officers in recognition for the club's \$500 donation to save a parcel of land in Hampden.

*Dear Naturalist Club,
Thank you for your gift towards protecting a 7-acre addition to Laughing Brook Wildlife Sanctuary! Your gift allowed us to close by June 30, saving us additional costs of going into the next fiscal year. This is a lovely and important new parcel, now protected for wildlife forever. Thank you again for this and all of your past support of our work.*

*All my best,
Jonah*

Bear Hole Watershed receives Conservation Restriction

On July 20th, the West Springfield Town Council voted to accept a conservation restriction (CR) on the beautiful 1500-acre Bear Hole Watershed. This CR arrangement between West Springfield – who still owns the property – and the sponsors of the CR, Mass Audubon, and the Department of Conservation and Recreation, prevents future development. The Naturalists' Club has aided West Springfield Environmental Committee's efforts in achieving this victory. Our club publicly endorsed the CR in the West Springfield Record. The club has also financially supported the Student Environmental Education Classroom, which, for the past 10 years, introduces all West Springfield 5th graders to Bear Hole in an environmental education program. The president of the West Springfield Environmental Committee called Nancy Condon to personally thank us for our contributions, allowing Bear Hole to remain a beautiful getaway of natural and historical significance.

 It was October again ... a glorious October, all red and gold, with mellow mornings when the valleys were filled with delicate mists as if the spirit of autumn had poured them in for the sun to drain - amethyst, pearl, silver, rose, and smoke-blue. ~ Lucy Maud Montgomery

The **NATURALISTS' CLUB**

FROM THE TREASURER

How times change! About a year ago, we determined we needed a dues increase owing to rising costs and some decline in membership. Now one of the effects of COVID-19 is reduced costs because of no Tolman rental and no speaker fees. Therefore, we have decided to add a year to everyone's membership. If you are paid for 19-20 (i.e., ending September 2020), your membership will be extended an additional year. The few who have already paid a year or two ahead will receive the same benefit.

This is also a good time for members who receive the paper version to consider electing to receive the newsletter electronically, as an email attachment. Please switch to electronic if it works for you because it does save a couple dollars a year (per membership) in postage. Send me an email if you would like to change. Those who do not wish to switch to electronic will continue receiving a paper copy.

Thanks.

~Dave Lovejoy

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

- \$20 per year for Individual or Family Membership
- \$30 per year for Supporting Membership
- \$50 per year for Sustaining Membership
- \$300 for Lifetime Membership

Renew your membership

Name _____

Address _____

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*



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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