

2Q-2023



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

15, Saturday, **Goat Rock**, *Hampden*

19, Wednesday, **April MEETING: How the Nature of Life Changes as you Approach the Equator**

23, Sunday, **Historic Becket Quarry**, *Becket*

30, Sunday, **Chapel Brook Falls Hike to the Summit of Mount Pony**, *Ashfield*

30, Sunday, **Scott Tower in Anniversary Hill Park**, *Holyoke*

MAY

17, Wednesday, **May MEETING, May: New England's Amphibians – What's New and What's Not**

20, Saturday, **Gobble Mountain Preserve**, *Chester*

21, Sunday, **Julian's Bower**, *Shutesbury*

28, Sunday, **Hike at High Ledges**, *Shelburne Falls*

JUNE

3, Saturday, **Spring Bird Walk at Fort River Nature Trail**, *Hadley*

11, Sunday, **Holyoke Range State Park**, *Amherst*

18, Sunday, **Swift River Paddle Paddle**, *Belchertown*

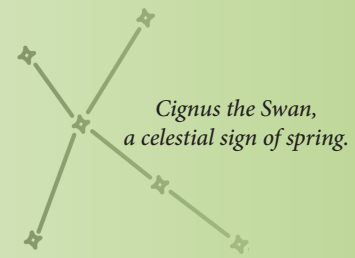
25, Sunday, **Mount Tom North Trail**, *Easthampton*

The Naturalists' Club – Dept. of Biology
Westfield State University
P.O. Box 1630
Westfield, MA 01086-1630



NATURALIST'S CORNER

A SPRINGTIME VOYEUR



It's spring. The sun has crossed the equator. Days are getting longer and warmer. The Earth is slingshotting around the sun and into a new realm of space. Orion is lost to the morning sun, but the birds of spring, Aquila the Eagle, and Cygnus the Swan, now fly across the Milky Way.

It's spring, and I become a voyeur in search of the structures of sex: flowers. The first one I seek emerges while snow and ice still linger on the landscape. My journey home from work takes me on a long, circuitous route so that I might find this harbinger of warmth to come. It is the skunk cabbage that draws my attention. Hidden beneath a spathe lies a structure covered with tiny flowers. Often overlooked due to its swampy location and pungent aroma, it is a survivor. Using stored starch, the plant generates its own heat to attract and shelter gnats as pollinators. It may be cold outside, but inside the spathe, both flowers and pollinators live in a domain of 70°F comfort.

It's spring, and the ground is cold. The sun waxes stronger each day. Outside my front door, the rays beat down on a stone wall. The wall's mass stores the heat, radiating it out at night to warm the surrounding soil. The growing intensity stirs the dormant plants. Energy hidden in roots, bulbs, and seeds is released. The first plant to appear is the exotic European snowdrops. Its narrow scape and leaves push through soil and snow to produce a single nodding flower of three white tepals. Its bent head protects the growing pollen and nectar from April showers. Squirrel corn, Dutchman's britches, wild oats, Solomon's seal, blueberries, huckleberries, and even some trilliums employ the same strategy. Pollen and nectar are too precious to be lost in a deluge.

It's spring, and nights may dip below freezing. Like Henry David Thoreau, I go on early morning walks to the same locations year after year to "visit my ladies." My favorite is an early riser like me: bloodroot. The snow is gone, and the soil has warmed. Hidden beneath the leaves of fall are the first signs of my friend. She pushes slowly through the detritus, often snagging an old leaf. Both flower stalk and leaf emerge as one, the single leaf wrapped tightly around the stem like a blanket wrapped around a chilled child. As the day warms, the leaf opens to expose the stalk and a perfect white flower – *perfect* in that "she" has both male and female parts. The warmth of the day allows the stamens to produce pollen. As the evening cold settles back onto the plant, the leaf again embraces the flower. Again, it opens as the day warms. Eventually, the leaf's role changes from protecting the pollen to shielding the ripening seed in the pistil's ovary. The leaf's role will change again after the seed has fallen: It will gather and send energy to the roots, to be stored for a new flower next spring.

It's spring, and the world has again awakened from its long winter's nap. Summer is but a few weeks away. Trees will leaf out. Our spring ephemerals will retreat back to the soil. But summer will bring a new crop of flowers and new challenges for those plants to overcome.

~Tom Condon

Green is the prime color of the world, and that from which its
loveliness arises.

~ Pedro Calderón de la Barca

Goat Rock, Hampden

Saturday April 15, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
 Leader: Sonya Vickers
 Meeting Place: Parking lot of Hampden Memorial Park
 Registration: Please call Sonya (413-218-7742) for directions.

Join us for a 2.6-mile walk along a rocky trail that offers many scenic views of the town of Hampden and beyond, all the way to the Connecticut River Valley. Our moderately difficult route will take us through a hardwood and hemlock forest. Once we reach the road, we'll carpool back to our starting point. Bring hiking poles, and a camera to capture photos.

Naturalists' Club Elections

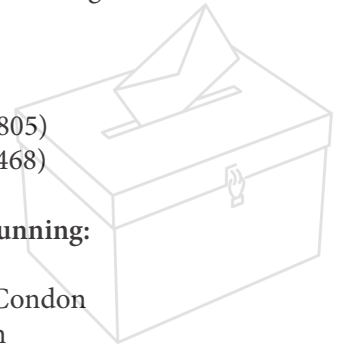
Naturalists' Club Elections will be held at the May Meeting. Members may contact the Nominating Committee to make any additional nominations.

Nominating Committee

- Colette Potter (413-786-1805)
- Leo Riendeau (413-224-1468)

The following members are running:

- President — Dave Gallup
- Vice President — Nancy Condon
- Treasurer — Tom Condon
- Corresponding Secretary — Sue Gallup
- Recording Secretary — Dave Lovejoy
- Director — TBD



How the Nature of Life Changes as You Approach the Equator

Speaker: Sonya Vickers
 Wednesday April 19, starting at 7 p.m.
 Tolman Auditorium, Springfield Science Museum

Ever notice that you encounter increasing numbers of bird and plant species as you travel south from Massachusetts? When traveling north, you may notice an opposite trend, with the diversity of oaks and maples dwindling down to just a few. Massachusetts has about 300 different species of birds; Belize, in Central America, has 600. The difference is especially surprising given that Belize is about the same size as Massachusetts. New England has only about 400 bird species, while Ecuador, directly on the equator and just a bit larger than New England, has about 1,600. It is not just the birds that are more diverse but the plants and insects too! These observations reflect a well-known pattern: Nearer the equator, species diversity is greater. Why is this? Is it the temperature gradient — or something else? Join Sonya to figure out this mystery.

About the speaker: Longtime Naturalists' Club member Sonya Vickers has traveled in Central America to Panama, Costa Rica, southern Mexico, and, most recently, to Belize. She has also stood on the equator in Ecuador and visited the Amazon basin.

Historic Becket Quarry, Becket

Sunday April 23, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
 Leaders: Tom & Nancy Condon
 Registration: Please contact Tom (413-454-2331 or science@condon.net)
 Meeting Place: Blandford Post Office on Route 23

Millions of years ago, an intrusion of blue granite pushed its way into the foundation of the Berkshire Mountains. During the 1860s, at the height of the U.S. Civil War, local entrepreneurs began mining the site for material to make headstones and other monuments. By the 1940s, the demand for this beautiful stone waned, and the quarry closed. In the 1990s, the people of Becket secured funding to preserve the quarry and the surrounding forests. Today, the land is managed collaboratively by The Trustees of Reservations and the Becket Land Trust.

We will start our hike with a visit to the quarry site, where we'll view some of the tools left behind after its commercial closure. Then we'll head off into the surrounding hills to explore the forests as they awaken from their winter slumber. Wear some sturdy shoes and bring a walking pole, if you wish, and lunch. Dress for the weather, and remember that Becket is a bit higher than the Valley so conditions may be cooler.



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

Chapel Brook Falls Hike to the Summit of Pony Mountain, Ashfield

Sunday April 30, from 10 a.m. to midafternoon
Leaders: Dave and Suzy Gallup
Registration: Please call Dave and Suzy (413-525-4697)
Meeting Place: Table and Vine parking lot, Rt. 5, West Springfield

Chapel Brooks Falls is a ruggedly beautiful place of ridges and forest. Some old-growth trees dot the landscape and wildflowers cover the forest floor. Streams surge and trickle for most of the year. In spring, though, Chapel Falls is in full roar! After we explore the Falls, we will hike the Two Bridges Trail, which has a beautiful wooden footbridge. We then will take a short and exhilarating hike along the summit trail to the top of Pony Mountain. The panoramic views of the highland forests and the foothills of the Berkshires are well worth the hike. All this in another Trustees of Reservations property! Don't forget to bring snacks or lunch and a camera. Rain cancels.

Spring adds new life and new beauty to all that is. ~Jessica Harrelson

Scott Tower in Anniversary Hill Park Holyoke

Date: Sunday April 30, in the morning
Leader: Carole Dupont
Registration: Please contact Carole (413-896-0124, or carole0136@gmail.com) for meeting place and time.

The purchase of Craft's Hill in 1923 commemorated the 50th anniversary of Holyoke's status as a city. During the 1930s, hundreds of local people employed through the Works Progress Administration built roads, paths, bridges and Scott Tower at the top of Craft's Hill. In the 1970s, President Nixon's Legacy of Parks initiative provided funds to rehabilitate Scott Tower, which had descended into a graffiti-covered eyesore. The Tower was cleaned and restored to its former glory. Just in time for Holyoke's 150th anniversary as a city, Governor Baker in 2022, in partnership with the Kestrel Land Trust, allocated further restoration funds to revitalize this recreational area.

We will hike to the top of Craft's Hill, passing a cell tower and enjoying some outstanding views. On arrival, we will visit Scott Tower, once again covered in graffiti. The first level of the 54-foot structure is easily accessible, and many visitors climb the stairs for the spectacular vista from the top of the tower. As we make our way down pleasant wooded trails, we will walk by three stone bridges and enjoy the emerging April vegetation. Bring your binoculars, water, snacks, good hiking boots, and hiking poles. Dress according to the weather conditions.

May Meeting

New England's Amphibians – What' New and What's Not

Speaker: Tom Tynning
Wednesday May 17, starting at 7 p.m.
Tolman Auditorium, Springfield Science Museum

Beginning in the mid 1970s, serious attention was finally focused on frogs and salamanders. This was the start of a remarkable journey of discovery, yielding countless exciting findings. The study of amphibians was once the domain of a few laboratory biologists, private nature enthusiasts, plus a few people who thought these animals might make intriguing pets. The study of frogs and salamanders still lacks a title of its own, with "herpetology" used to describe research on both amphibians and reptiles, despite the remarkable differences between these two lineages.

Today, amphibians are the focus of many people, from government agency personnel to preschoolers. They are important drivers of state, federal, and international regulations, laws, and policies. Popular knowledge about vernal pools and wetlands has increased greatly, and many citizen science efforts focus on amphibian conservation. Implications for amphibian survival are often highlighted in discussions of the detrimental effects of pollutants, landscape changes, and, of course, climate change. In their own way, amphibians are pointing the way to more effective conservation strategies.

We'll hear from Tom Tynning about his lifetime studying amphibians in Western Massachusetts. We'll hear what inspires him to walk forest trails on rainy nights and to gaze at ponds in summer. Tom will share some incredible stories about frogs and salamanders — and offer glimpses of what they are still trying to tell us.

About the speaker: Tom Tynning has served as a field biologist and master naturalist with the Massachusetts Audubon Society.



Gobble Mountain Preserve, Chester

Saturday May 20, starting at 1 p.m.

Leader: Dave Lovejoy (413-572-5307)

Registration: Not required.

Meeting place: Park in the lot at the Chester Elementary School, on Middlefield Road, about 1.4 miles north of Route 20, in Chester. Allow 25-30 minutes to get to this point from the center of Westfield.

Gobble Mountain Preserve is a Nature Conservancy property that rises in elevation to 995 feet and includes very steep east-facing slopes overlooking the west branch of the Westfield River. The 1.3-mile main trail to the forested summit avoids the steep east-facing slopes. There is a summit tower, visible from the road, which is accessed by a scary ladder and allegedly provides extended views. This has not and will not be experienced by the leader, nor will he recommend this experience for other participants. One of the several emery mines in Chester (all now abandoned) is visible from the trail. On the return to the trailhead, anyone interested may accompany Dave onto the steep slopes to look for some violet and sedge species, whose only Hampden County records are on this mountain.

Julian's Bower, Shutesbury

Sunday May 21, in the morning

Leader: Carole Dupont

Registration: Please contact Carole (413-896-0124, or carole0136@gmail.com) for meeting place and time

We will view incredibly interesting sculptures designed by renowned local artist and landowner, Julian Janowitz, as we hike along his self-designed, enjoyable recreational trails in the 35 acres of forested and non-forested wetland, including a 2-acre bog. Janowitz himself built an 860-foot boardwalk, so visitors could traverse his bog. Like children, we will delight in walking through his magical red door creation, striking the gong to resonate throughout the forest, announcing our arrival in Julian's fantasy world. We will cross over the bridges and walk the trail along Ames Pond and hike some of the other trails around the property. As we stroll, we can enjoy reading Julian's poetry, which is tacked to trees. We will sit, overlooking Ames Pond, to enjoy our snacks. A truly unusual and fascinating hike to transform us into spring mode.

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

Hike at High Ledges, Shelburne Falls

Sunday May 28 at 10a.m. to mid-afternoon

Leaders: Dave and Suzy Gallup Registration: Please call to let us know you are

coming (413-525-4697)

Meeting Place: Table and Vine parking lot, Route 5, West Springfield

On this moderate 2-mile hike, we will get to enjoy the beauty of the forest and its wildflowers, including the rare yellow lady's slipper. One of the many treats of this route is the breathtaking view from High Ledges, overlooking Shelburne Falls. After the hike we will visit Shelburne Falls, a picturesque New England town known for its Bridge of Flowers. If you wish, take the afternoon to explore the town's unique shops and beautiful waterfalls. Wear sturdy footwear and bring lunch. Rain cancels.

Spring Bird Walk at Fort River Nature Trail, Hadley

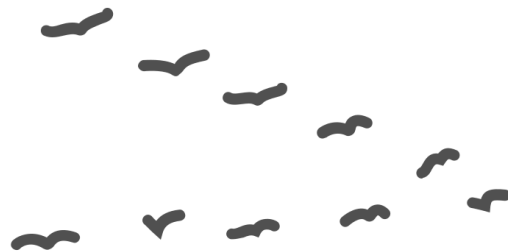
Saturday June 3, from 10 a.m. to noon

Leaders: Dan Russell and Dietrich Schlobohm

Registration: Please contact Dietrich (413-788-4125)

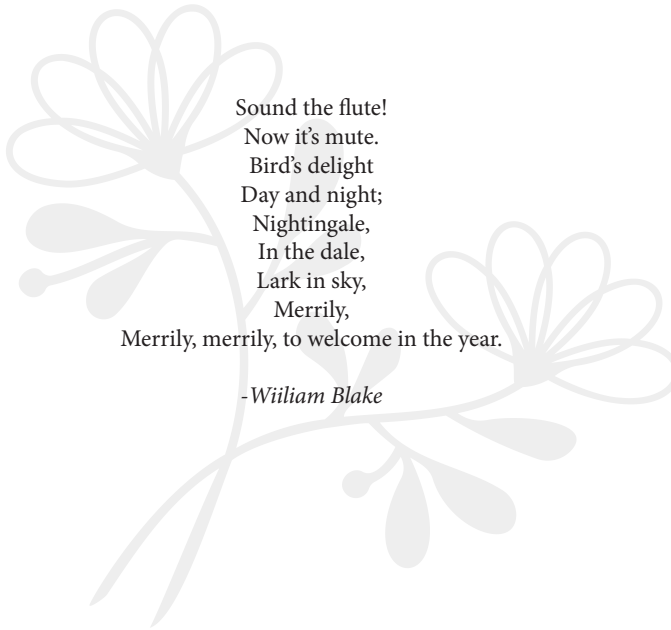
Meeting Place: Fort River Nature Area. In Hadley, take Bay Road to Moody Bridge Road, continue on Moody Bridge until you reach Fort River Nature Trail.

Our birding trip to the Fort River Trail will take place at a site about 35 to 40 minutes from Springfield. It is a beautiful trail about 1.2 miles long, much of it on boardwalk. Late April, May, and June is the time of year when many birds pass through this area during the spring migration — their annual journey north. Some of these birds reside here until fall, while others move on. We can expect to see or hear warblers, finches, grosbeaks, sparrows, nuthatches, vireos, and some less common birds. Our leader for this trip will be Dan Russell, a professor emeritus from Springfield College who is also an ornithologist and lifelong birding enthusiast. Don't forget your binoculars.



Spring unlocks the flowers to paint the laughing soil.

~Bishop Reginald Heber



Sound the flute!
Now it's mute.
Bird's delight
Day and night;
Nightingale,
In the dale,
Lark in sky,
Merrily,
Merrily, merrily, to welcome in the year.

-William Blake

Holyoke Range State Park, Amherst

Sunday June 11, starting at 10:30 a.m.

Leader: Dave Gallup (413-525-4697)

Registration: Please call Dave if you would like to come.

Meeting Place: Notch Visitor Center on Route 116

Join us for a hike on the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail (also known as the M & M Trail) to explore the forest and geology of the Holyoke Range. We will hike to the summit of Mount Norwottuck, where we can have lunch or snacks as we enjoy magnificent vistas! From there, we will hike to the fabled Horse Caves, where Daniel Shays retreated after his unsuccessful raid on the Springfield Armory in 1786. We will then hike back to the Visitors' Center along the Robert Frost Trail. Bring some Robert Frost poems to read if you like. This is about a 3-mile loop. Wear sturdy footwear. Bring lunch and water. This hike is moderately strenuous in some spots.

Swift River Paddle, Belchertown

Sunday June 18, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Leaders: Tom Condon

Registration: Please contact Tom (413-454-2331, or email science@condon.net)

Meeting Place: Big Y parking lot on Route 32 in Palmer

Join us for a summer paddle on one of the prettiest rivers in Western Massachusetts. The water is cold and clear, coming straight from the depths of the Quabbin Reservoir. We'll first paddle upriver, passing cottages and catching glimpses of turtles, birds, and trout beneath us. We'll go until we can't navigate the river anymore, then turn back downriver and head past our put-in to a large backwater where ducks and herons abound. Bring lunch, water, and dress for the weather. We have extra canoes, so please just let us know if you would like to borrow one.

Mount Tom North Trail, Easthampton

Sunday June 25, in the morning

Leader: Carole Dupont

Registration: Please contact Carole (413-896-0124, or carole0136@gmail.com) for meeting place and time.

The newly opened Mount Tom North Trail, nestled beneath Nonotuck Peak, offers a unique hike with multiple switchbacks. The route is dotted with seating and informational kiosks noting local facts and indigenous plants. After enjoying the excellent views of the Oxbow and Arcadia, we will continue along the Little Mountain Loop Trail, which encircles the Little Mountain Knob, identifying any interesting species along the way. Part of this trail once served as an entrance to the historic Eyrie House resort, so we will also have access to the Eyrie House Ruins trail if we decide to extend our hike.

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

March 2023 Naturalists' Club Meeting Report: Paddle for Water: Tales of a "Little" Canoe Trip

Several changes occurred during Nancy and Tom's "little canoe trip" which took place in two phases in 1986-7 and 1997, perhaps the most significant, at least for them, being the marriage of the participants during the break between phase I and phase II. Anything but "little", this voyage encompassed very close to 5000 miles on nine rivers; the flow of several of these required the inconvenient activity of paddling against the current. Nancy's talk focused on three messages: appreciate the outdoors, be adventurous, and be conscientious about the conservation of water and the environment. This message was ably presented with images, videos, and excerpts from the book which were woven into a very engaging presentation. Nancy's assessment, stated several times during the talk when describing difficult situations, was summarized by her comment "but we made it".

~report by Dave Lovejoy

EVENTS THROUGH LAUGHING BROOK WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Saturday Morning Bird Walk at Laughing Brook, *Online*

Three sessions, with the first on Friday, May 27, from 7 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.

Leader: Patti Steinman, Education Coordinator

Registration: For more information and to register, please visit massaudubon.org

Event fee: \$10 for MassAudubon members, \$15 for non-members

We'll search for songbirds as we walk the trails through the various habitats at Laughing Brook Wildlife Sanctuary. We'll watch for behavior, listen to bird songs, and learn how to submit our data to eBird, one of the largest wildlife databases in the world. We'll also explore the resiliency and adaptations of some birds to our changing climate.

Decoding Fireflies, *Online*

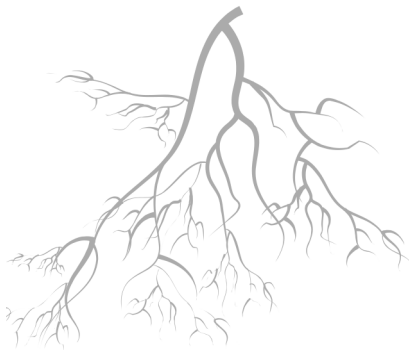
Tuesday, June 13, from 7 to 8 p.m.

Leaders: Doug Lowry, Senior Teacher and Naturalist

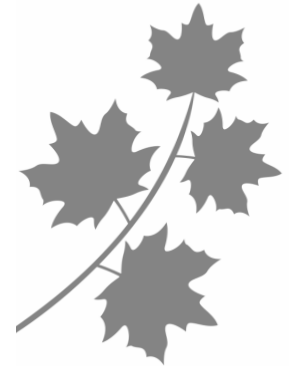
Registration: Please visit massaudubon.org; Event fee: \$15 for MassAudubon members, \$20 for non-members

Watching fireflies brighten up fields and meadows is a summertime favorite, but did you know these dancing beetle lights are species-specific and that you can learn to read their flash patterns? Learn how and why fireflies light up and how to identify them by their flash patterns in this online program. You'll also learn more about a wide array of environmental issues these lightning bugs help inform us on, including climate change, habitat loss, light pollution, and pollinator protection. Familiarize yourself with our nationwide Mass Audubon community science project, Firefly Watch, and local opportunities to get involved.

Spring Pools



These pools that, though in forests, still reflect
The total sky almost without defect,
And like the flowers beside them, chill and
shiver,
Will like the flowers beside them soon be gone,
And yet not out by any brook or river,
But up by roots to bring dark foliage on.
The trees that have it in their pent-up buds
To darken nature and be summer woods --
Let them think twice before they use their
powers
To blot out and drink up and sweep away
These flowery waters and these watery flowers
From snow that melted only yesterday.



~Robert Frost

LOOKING AHEAD: Stump Sprouts Weekend, *West Hawley*

Friday September 8 to Sunday, September 10

Leaders: Sheila and Richard Paquette, Kevin Kopchynski

Registration: Reservations with a 50% deposit should be sent for receipt by August 7. The trip may be canceled if not enough people have paid by that date. For further information, contact Sheila (413-262-8994; or spaquette139@gmail.com). The all-inclusive cost, including tax for two night's lodging and six meals, is \$202. Make your check payable to The Naturalists' Club, and mail to Sheila Paquette, 62 Brentwood Drive, Westfield MA 01085.

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, and optional Friday and Saturday night snacks/wine. Registration is limited, and early registration is encouraged. If you have a canoe or kayak, please indicate to Sheila if you are interested in a paddle during the weekend. Limit: 20 people.

FROM THE TREASURER

Those with a date of "22-23" (or later) on your newsletter mailing label have paid for this year. Otherwise, your dues are owed for the year that started in September 2022. You may renew by sending a check (payable to The Naturalists' Club), to

Tom Condon,
80 General Knox Road,
Russell, MA 01071

Note: If your contact information has not changed, the form below need not be completed. We would, however, like to have your email address if you haven't sent it previously.

Please direct changes or inquiries to Tom Condon, who maintains our mailing list. And please let Tom know if you would like to receive your newsletter electronically.

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

A Reminder

To receive electronic updates, please send us your email address

On occasion, information of interest to club members becomes available after our Newsletter has gone to press. Such information can include, for example, changes in speakers for upcoming meetings and late-breaking trip announcements. If you'd like to receive these electronic updates, please be sure to share your email address with Tom Condon (science@condon.net), who maintains the Club membership list.

Renew your membership

Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____ Email _____

Requests for programs/trips _____

Would you like to receive the electronic newsletter instead of a paper copy? _____

Please send information per the above to: Club Treasurer, Tom Condon, 80 General Knox Road, Russell MA 01071



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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