



The
NATURALISTS' CLUB
 NEWSLETTER
 Springfield Science Museum at the Quadrangle, Springfield, Massachusetts

October to December 2023

Calendar of Events

OCTOBER

- 7 Saturday, **Westfield Watershed Wildlife Conservation Easement**, *Montgomery*
- 14 Saturday, **Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary**, *Wales*
- 15 Sunday, **Shatterack Mountain Hawks**, *Russell*
- 18 Wednesday, **OCTOBER MEETING: An Adaptive Approach to New England Cottontail Conservation**
- 21 Saturday, **Quabbin Hike**, *New Salem*
- 22 Sunday, **Hiking at Horse Mountain**, *Williamsburg*

NOVEMBER

- 4 Saturday, **Ninigret National Wildlife Refuge**, *Charlestown, Rhode Island*
- 5 Sunday, **Meigs Point, Hammonasset Beach State Park**, *Madison, Connecticut*
- 12 Sunday, **Bob's Way**, *Monterey*
- 15 Wednesday, **NOVEMBER MEETING: Rehabilitating Birds of Prey**
- 19 Sunday, **Drawing Day at Smith College's Lyman Conservatory**, *Northampton*
- 26 Sunday, **Hike Away Your Thanksgiving Meal (Goodbye to the Pie)**, *Monson*

DECEMBER

- 2 Saturday, **Huntington State Forest**, *Huntington*
- 3 Sunday, **Hiking at Fannie Stebbins Memorial Wildlife Refuge**, *Longmeadow*
- 9 Saturday, **Annual Late Fall Hike at the Quabbin**, *Belchertown*
- 10 Sunday, **Hike Along the Westfield River**, *Huntington*
- 16 Saturday, **An Evening with Naturalists**, *Wilbraham*
- 20 Wednesday, **DECEMBER HOLIDAY MEETING**



NATURALIST'S CORNER

A Super Woman Deserves a Super Tree

A newly planted tulip tree stands at the edge of a field in Mittineague Park. It is Julie's tree. Julie Schlobohm. A woman who no longer walks this earth but still resides in many people's hearts, including mine.

Julie was a long-time member of the Naturalists' Club and a strong environmental advocate. She pushed for a conservation restriction at Bear Hole Watershed — and got it. She was on the tree committee to establish street trees throughout West Springfield. She fought to prevent the transformation of Mittineague Park into a golf course. Julie was a superhero. She deserves a superhero tree.

The tree selected to honor Julie is the tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*). Also known as the yellow poplar, it is the perfect tree to represent her because it also works hard for the environment. I call it the Wonder Woman Tree! It tops the charts* in capturing and storing carbon and in cooling the air. It is a superhero in size, longevity, and growth rate. Plus, it's in the top 10% of trees to clean the air of pollutants. Not only that, but this tall, stately tree sports beautiful yellow and orange tulip-shaped flowers in the spring. Gotta love this tree!

There are many superhero trees that help fight climate change and provide services to our environment. First, if you'll excuse me, I must digress for a quick primer on earth systems before explaining why trees are such superheroes.

For millennia, immense amounts of carbon have been stored underground in the form of coal, oil, and natural gas. For a much shorter time, humans have been extracting these carbon-based fossil fuels and burning them for energy, releasing that carbon into the atmosphere as carbon dioxide (CO₂). The trouble is that CO₂ is a significant greenhouse gas, blanketing our planet and altering Earth's systems. We need help taking CO₂ out of the atmosphere. Our world supplies such helpers: oceans, grasslands, soil...and trees.

How, exactly, do trees help? Green plants absorb CO₂ from the air during photosynthesis, disassemble it, and make many compounds with it. (Let us not forget that oxygen is a byproduct of this marvelous process, allowing oxygen-breathing souls like ourselves to live on this planet!) Woody plants use that carbon to make support structures like trunks, roots, and limbs. Unlike most herbaceous plants, trees can live a long time, snatching carbon from the atmosphere and storing it for hundreds of years as wood. Like all living things, trees will someday die, and the carbon stored in them goes back into the atmosphere if left to decompose, so it is not a permanent solution. But hey, we need all the help we can get.

Some trees are especially good at carbon sequestration, the capture and storage of carbon. Here's a list of a few of them. In addition to being proficient at storing carbon, these superheroes offer myriad benefits for wildlife, help keep local temperatures cooler, and filter pollutants out of the air.

Speedy Softwood! Among conifers, pines are the best at sequestering carbon. Being evergreen, they can photosynthesize throughout the year, even in the winter when deciduous trees are leafless. Plus, they're speedy growers, taking in a lot of carbon from the air to add to their size. Because they grow so quickly, pines are often planted for harvesting and for windbreaks.

Captain Carbon! Oaks are long-lived trees, putting away thousands of pounds of carbon in trunks and roots during a lifetime. Our familiar red oaks can live for more than 300 years, and white oaks can live for 500 to 600 years. The Southern Live Oak, however, beats them both, tucking carbon away for a lifetime of about 1,000 years. Just look at a massive oak and realize that about half its dry weight is carbon! As for wildlife benefits, oaks are unrivaled. Few animals will pass up a fat-and-carbohydrate-rich acorn, and hundreds of wasps, butterflies, and moths utilize oak leaves.

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Under-Dogwood! For understory trees, the beautiful flowering dogwood and kousa dogwood can surely squeeze a lot of carbon into a little trunk. Black walnuts share this trait of dense wood. Provider of berries savory to wildlife, plus beautiful flowers, dogwood is no underdog.

Mr. Clean! Hemlock tops the list compiled by a consortium of tree experts for its amazing power to filter air pollutants. Its wax-coated evergreen leaves work year-round to absorb carbon and catch tiny particulate matter. Many other tree species with rough or hairy leaves are also good at trapping airborne contaminants.

Captain Cool Team! The Japanese zelkova's arching branches shade streets and sidewalks that would otherwise absorb and radiate heat. Teamed with horse chestnut and our hero the tulip tree, this team and other large-leaved trees provide solar relief under their umbrellas.

Trees alone will not reverse climate change, but they sure can be part of the solution. These superheroes can also prevent erosion, slow stormwater runoff and improve mental health. Be part of Massachusetts' effort to save 30% of the state's forests by 2030 and 40% by 2050. You may want to support tree-planting initiatives and advocate for existing forests. I'm sure Julie would be well pleased.

~Nancy Condon

* <https://species.itreetools.org/> A USDA Forest Service forest and community tree software tool.

Westfield Watershed Wildlife Conservation Easement,

Montgomery

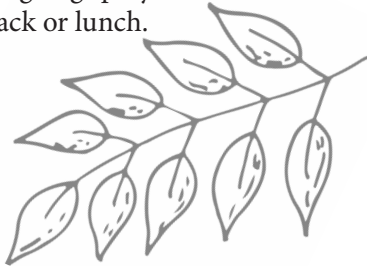
Saturday, October 7, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Leader: Dori Dittmer

Registration: Please contact Dori (917-346-0969; or dordittmer@gmail.com)

Meeting Place: Parking lot of Stop & Shop on Route 5 in West Springfield. We will carpool from there.

Join us on a three-mile round trip hike around Tekoa Mountain to enjoy the fall colors. Along the beautiful and stony wooded path, we'll cross over a small dam, pass a quiet reservoir, take a look at some historic stone walls, and finish at a beaver pond just two years in the making. We will stop at the reservoir for lunch. This hike includes a short section that is a bit steep, so be sure to bring your poles! Please also wear sturdy hiking boots, dress for the weather and bring bug spray, bird call, camera, binoculars, water, plus a snack or lunch.



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

~Vincent Van Gogh

Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary, Wales

Saturday October 14, starting at 9:30 a.m.

Leader: Sonya Vickers

Registration: For registration and directions, please call Sonya (413-218-7742).

Norcross invited us to hike to areas that are usually closed to the public, and I jumped at the chance to schedule a time to visit with other Naturalists' Club members. We should have fine foliage at this time of year. Please be sure to register so that we can let Norcross know how many of us plan to attend. When you call, I will provide directions.

Shatterack Mountain Hawks, Russell

Sunday, October 15, 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: Russell Post Office, Main Street. We will carpool from there.

In mid-October, raptors are still heading south for the winter, and Shatterack Mountain provides a great vantage point for watching them. Join us to look for hawks and to learn about their behavior. Our 2.4-mile hike around Shatterack Mountain will take us along an abandoned road through the woods. We'll encounter some slippery areas, so please be sure to wear sturdy and comfortable shoes. We will carpool from the post office, then drive most of the way up Shatterack Mountain to start our hike. Bring binoculars, water, lunch, plus hiking poles, if you wish.



An Adaptive Approach to New England Cottontail Conservation

Wednesday, October 18, starting at 7 p.m.
Tolman Auditorium, Springfield Science Museum
Speaker: Marianne Piché



The New England Cottontail Conservation Initiative, formed in 2009, is a collaborative effort across state agencies, federal agencies, and non-governmental organizations. Guided by the Conservation Strategy for the New England Cottontail, the Initiative focuses on habitat management, monitoring, research, captive rearing, habitat protection, and outreach in support of the New England cottontail. Through its work, the Initiative is establishing new standards for wildlife conservation. At our October meeting, Habitat Biologist Marianne Piché will describe the history of the project and describe its current work.

About the speaker: Habitat Biologist Marianne Piché is based at MassWildlife. She has been working for 15 years to bring habitat management resources to landowners throughout Massachusetts.

Quabbin Hike, New Salem

Saturday, October 21, starting at 10 a.m.
Leaders: Dave and Suzy Gallup
Registration: Please call Dave and Suzy (413-525-4697).
Meeting Place: CVS Plaza, near the junction of Routes 9 and 202 in Belchertown

Join us for a wonderful October hike at the northwestern side of Quabbin (Gates 25-26), one of the area's most beautiful locations. From this northern edge of the water, we will be able to spot a string of small islands. Our hike will be an approximately three-mile loop along an old road through mixed hardwood forest, with beautiful autumn foliage along the way. Bring a lunch or snack. After the hike, we can visit the town of New Salem, a little village that looks just as it did in the nineteenth century. From New Salem, we will have the option to take an additional, short hike to some beautiful vistas that you will love! We will then visit a farm and orchard in town for some tasty hot apple cider.

Hiking at Horse Mountain, Williamsburg

Sunday, October 22, in the morning
Leader: Carole Dupont
Registration: Please contact Carole for meeting place and time (413-896-0124; or carole0136@gmail.com).

Join in for an easy hike along the Potash Trail. Along the way, we'll enjoy abundant autumn foliage and spot "mysterious circles" thought to be vestiges of charcoal production fires. After climbing up to the White Rock formation, we will relax and snack as we enjoy spectacular views of the surrounding mountains and the Connecticut River Valley. From there, we will hike back over the talus rock slope, past the bear clawed beeches, and along the edge of a beautiful shrub swamp of the Habitat Trail to the wooded forests along the Horse Mountain Trail. As we walk, we will take note of nature's magical transformation to winter. Bring your binoculars, water, snacks, hiking boots and poles, and dress for the weather.

September Meeting Report

The opening meeting for 2023-2024 was rescued by Sonya Vickers, filling for Sue Kendrick. Sonya had worked with Sue on the program and was able to present it largely as Sue had planned. (Sue had written the script in Maine on a solar-operated iPad over the summer.) The topic was honeybees, valued, of course, for their pollination activities and for their production of honey, beeswax, and other products such as propolis and mead. The audience heard about Sue's efforts to maintain her hives, protect them from mites, bears, porcupines and skunks, and had the opportunity to purchase some of her products (except for mead, which could only be given away since Sue lacks a liquor license). Unfortunately, no mead was provided so we had to be satisfied with the traditional beginning-of-the-year cake, which appeared to be an adequate substitute.

~Report by Dave Lovejoy

Ninigret National Wildlife Refuge, Charlestown, Rhode Island

Saturday, November 4, starting at 10 a.m.
Leader: Sonya Vickers
Meeting Place: Table and Vine, West Springfield
Registration: Please call Sonya (413-218-7742)

We had planned to visit this area last summer, but we learned that beachgoers often fill the parking lot by 7 a.m., which can complicate the trip for visitors from Western Massachusetts. We've therefore rescheduled our visit for a time of year when there likely won't be so many people eager to relax on the beach...but all the natural history will still be present for us to enjoy. This beach is a wildlife refuge, and one of the longest stretches of wild beach in New England. The ocean is on one side. On the other side, just over the dunes, Ninigret Pond offers a saltwater habitat. The trip to Ninigret is long, so we will plan to carpool and to pick up dinner on the way back. Bring lunch and water.

Meigs Point, Hammonasset Beach State Park, *Madison, Connecticut*

Sunday, November 5, starting at 10 a.m.

Leader: Dori Dittmer

Registration: Please contact Dori (917-346-0969; or dordittmer@gmail.com)

Meeting Place: Parking lot of Stop & Shop on Route 5 in West Springfield. We will carpool from there.

The beach in November? Turns out autumn is a great time to visit! No crowds, no searing heat, and no bugs. The ice sheet of the last ice age terminated here, creating Long Island and scraping out Long Island Sound. As it receded, it dumped the stones and boulders — glacial erratics and moraine — that we will see as we walk the Moraine Interpretive Trail. We'll have a look at what's in the tidal pools this time of year, then stop by Shell Beach, which has an immense number of slipper shells. There is a large spiral labyrinth created from the moraine, making an ideal spot for Buddhist walking meditation, if you are so inclined. The Meigs Point Nature Center will also be open to explore. Perhaps we will see seals in the distance, then spot an amazing sunset, should we decide to stay for it. Spectacular views all around! Dress for the weather, and bring sunscreen, camera, binoculars, snacks, lunch, and water.

Bob's Way, Monterey

Sunday, November 12, 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: Trailhead on Route 23, just west of the Otis/Monterey line

Bob's Way is a trail maintained by the Berkshire Natural Resources Council. It is named for N. Robert Thieriot, a Californian who moved to Monterey in the late 1970s after his farm in California was destroyed in a wildfire. Thieriot was a long-time conservationist, having founded the Sonoma Land Trust in California and the Monterey Preservation Land Trust here in Massachusetts. He has donated or preserved more than 4,500 acres in the Berkshires alone.

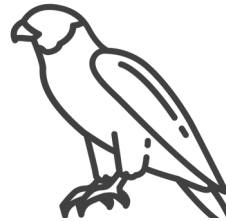
The trail will offer us many choices for our route through hardwood forests and wetlands. We will cover approximately 2.5 miles, with gentle climbs over two small ridges. We'll have outstanding views of the Berkshires and opportunities to reflect on the lives of early residents of these hills. Please dress for the weather, and be sure to bring lunch and water.

**REHABILITATING BIRDS OF PREY**

Wednesday, November 15, starting at 7 p.m.

Tolman Auditorium, Springfield Science Museum

Speaker: Tom Ricardi



In November, we will welcome back an old friend of The Naturalists' Club: Tom Ricardi! Most of us know Tom and the work he has done for many years rehabilitating birds of prey. Over the years, Tom's work to care for injured birds has been supported by various sources, including the Naturalists' Club, donations following his Birds of Prey presentations for schools and civic groups, and by Tom himself, using personal funds. The journey has been special because of Tom and his dedication and passion to saving these magnificent birds. He will bring along some of his birds that cannot be released into the wild. This will be a special night. We hope you can join us.

Events with MassAudubon

These programs require registration and fee. For details, please, visit the Mass Audubon website at www.massaudubon.org, or call (800-710-4550).

Flocktober Fest at Arcadia

Saturday, October 21, from 2 to 5 p.m.

Fall means time for hangouts by the fire, flannel shirts, pumpkins, well, everything, and this year, Flocktober! Spend an afternoon outdoors, listening to live music, making nature-inspired art, and playing a round of cornhole. Fee for members of MassAudubon: \$10; for nonmembers: \$15.

Birding for Beginners

Saturdays, October 7 to 21, from 8 to 10 a.m.

Are you new to birding? Join naturalist John Green who especially enjoys working with beginning birders. You'll learn how to use and adjust your binoculars, what to look for in a field guide, and tips for spotting birds by listening to their songs and calls and watching for behavioral clues. Bring binoculars and a field guide if you have them. We have a few binoculars to lend if you don't. Fee for members of MassAudubon: \$55; for nonmembers: \$65.

Drawing Day at Smith College's Lyman Conservatory,

Northampton

Sunday, November 19, starting at 10 a.m.

Leader: Dori Dittmer

Registration: Please contact Dori (917-346-0969; or dordittmer@gmail.com)

Meeting place: Entrance to Lyman Conservatory

Join us to enjoy the peaceful, meditative beauty of the plants on display in the Conservatory and to do some sketching, too. Bring a drawing pad and/or journal, and your favorite drawing materials such as colored pencils, markers, or oil pastels. If you'd rather do some inspired writing, that's also a great option. Dress for a warm and humid environment, and be sure to bring water.

Hike Away Your Thanksgiving Meal (Goodbye to the Pie), *Monson*

Sunday, November 26, starting at 10 a.m.

Meeting Place: Burlington Store in the shopping mall at Allen and Cooley Streets in Springfield

Leaders: Dave and Suzy Gallup

Registration: Please call Dave and Suzy (413-525-4697)

It's that time again! Join us for this popular annual hike and walk off those calories from Thanksgiving dinner. We will hike to the summit of Peaked Mountain, which offers incredible vistas of the valley below. From the summit, we will be able to see all the way to Mount Monadnock in New Hampshire! Our hike will traverse a few different trails. This is a moderately strenuous hike. Bring lunch and plenty of water. Sturdy hiking shoes are recommended, and don't forget your binoculars!

Huntington State Forest, *Huntington*

Saturday, December 2, starting at 10 a.m.

Leader: Dori Dittmer

Registration: Please contact Dori (917-346-0969; or dordittmer@gmail.com)

Meeting Place: Stop & Shop on Route 5 in West Springfield. We will carpool from there.

This will be a 3.5-mile moderately challenging hike along the Huntington State Forest Loop, including a stretch along a little babbling brook. We'll see what plants and animals are doing to prepare for winter and contemplate how we ourselves adapt to changing light and temperatures. This path can be muddy, depending on the weather. As this hike is during hunting season, it's advisable to wear a safety vest or bright orange or red clothing. Dress for the weather, and bring bug spray, bird call, camera, binoculars, plus a snack or lunch, and water. Rain date: Sunday, December 3.

Hiking at Fannie Stebbins Memorial Wildlife Refuge,

Longmeadow

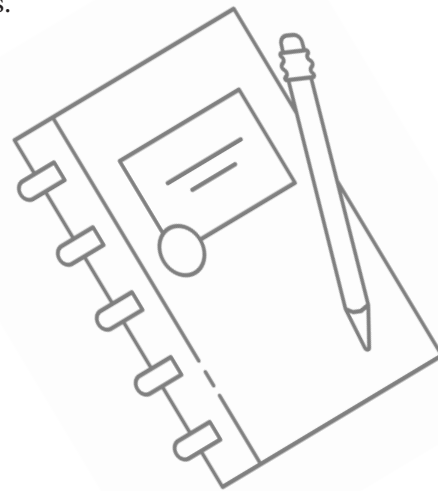
Sunday, December 3, in the morning

Leader: Carole Dupont

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

The Fannie Stebbins Memorial Wildlife Refuge was established in 1951 by the Allen Bird Club, which acquired several acres of land and named the refuge after Stebbins, co-founder of the club and former science teacher in Springfield. Acreage has been added several times over the years, for a current total of 330 acres.

In 1972, the Fannie Stebbins Refuge was named a National Natural Landmark. Then, in 2013, it became part of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The area features a floodplain forest, a type of ecosystem that the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program describes as being "among the rarest and most threatened natural communities in Massachusetts." Floodplain forests, notable for their periodic flooding and unique plant communities, make up a tiny fraction of the forests that line the Connecticut River — about 0.1 percent by area. The rest of the area is occupied by upland forests, which don't flood. Our hike will take us along several easy trails, including one that leads down to the shore of the Connecticut River. From there, we will catch a glimpse of Six Flags Amusement Park. Bring your binoculars, water, snacks, good hiking boots, hiking poles and dress according to the weather conditions.



Drawing is a way of coming upon the connection between things, just like metaphor in poetry reconnects what has become separated.

~John Berger

Annual Late Fall Hike at the Quabbin, Belchertown

Saturday, December 9, starting at 10 a.m.
 Leaders: Dave and Suzy Gallup
 Registration: Please call if you are planning to attend (413-525-4697)
 Meeting Place: CVS Plaza, near the junction of Routes 9 and 202 in Belchertown

Late fall is a great time to get together and share a day outdoors. Our destination is Gate 15, which takes us on a wonderful hike with great views of the northern section of the Quabbin, with lots of stone walls, farm sites and remnants of an old grist mill. There is a chance we will see eagles and hear loons! Previously, we have seen moose tracks on Quabbin's sandy beaches. This is a great hike in one of the most beautiful areas to explore. Bring a lunch, hot drink, and binoculars. Dress for the weather and wear sturdy hiking boots. Rain cancels.



If I were a bird, I would fly about the Earth seeking the successive autumns.

~George Eliot

Hike Along the Westfield River, Huntington

Sunday, December 10, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
 Leaders: Tom & Nancy Condon
 Registration: Please contact Tom (413 454-2331; or science@condon.net)
 Meeting Place: Parking lot at Littleville Elementary School

The East Branch Trail starts above the Knightsville Dam impoundment and follows the Westfield River up through the Knightsville Wildlife Management Area. Our hike will start on a road that is paved but closed, then follow a dirt track, for a total of about five miles. We will reach some of the most remote parts of the Westfield River. Walking is easy and the river is beautiful. Dress for the weather, and bring lunch and water.

An Evening with Naturalists, Wilbraham

Saturday December 16, starting at 7p.m.
 Host: Sonya Vickers
 Registration: Please call Sonya (413-218-7742)

For many years now, we have been getting together in December to celebrate, and this is another chance to continue the tradition! Sonya lives in Wilbraham and invites you to her home to share stories of our encounters in nature through the last year. Bring a holiday treat to share. Please call Sonya to RSVP for this festive event. That way, if there is a big snowstorm, she can call you back to cancel. Sonya will also provide directions to her home.



DECEMBER HOLIDAY MEETING



Wednesday, December 20, starting at 7 p.m.
 Springfield Science Museum, Tolman Auditorium
 Presenters: You!
 Emcee: Nancy Condon (413-297-0778)

Did your summer travels include a destination you would recommend to others? Do you have photos of Naturalists' Club events from this year? We want to hear from you. Our annual holiday meeting is an opportunity to share memorable and inspiring nature and travel experiences with other Club members. Show us some highlights, by way of slides, PowerPoint, or photo album. Presentations should be no longer than 10 minutes. This year we will once again have the "Good Read" table, so if you have enjoyed a good book that you would recommend to other Naturalists' Club readers, bring it along. For those willing to loan a book out, identification tags will be supplied, and loaner and borrower can swap contact information. You may also just display a book without the option to loan. Either way, look through your library — please try to bring at least one title. If you are able, please also bring a holiday dessert to share during the social hour. We can discuss books with other club members while we enjoy delicious holiday treats. Let's celebrate the eve of the Winter Solstice together. Please call Nancy to get on the roster for presentations.

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The layout of this newsletter is based on a design by Loren Hoffman.



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.

FROM THE TREASURER

Those receiving the electronic newsletter will find membership status listed in an upcoming email. For those receiving the paper newsletter, '23-24 (or later) on the mailing label indicates that membership is paid for this year; '22-23 indicates that renewal is due. To establish or renew membership, please send information/payment to:

Tom Condon
80 General Knox Road
Russell, MA 01071

If your address and contact information have not changed, the form below need not be completed, but please do email us to add your electronic address to our list and to indicate whether you'd like to switch from print to electronic newsletter, which helps us save paper and postage.

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 _____

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