



The

NATURALISTS' CLUB

NEWSLETTER

Springfield Science Museum at the Quadrangle, Springfield, Massachusetts

July to September ~ Calendar of Events

JULY

- 13 Saturday **Northwest Park Nature Center**, Windsor, Connecticut
 20 Saturday **Evening Paddle on Upper Spectacle Pond**, Otis

AUGUST

- 3 Saturday **Warner Mountain Trail**, Hadley
 17 Saturday **Robinson State Park**, Agawam
 18 Sunday **Grandmother's Garden Stream Study for Kids**, Westfield

SEPTEMBER

- 14 Saturday **Lunden Pond and Temple Brook**, Monson
 18 Wednesday **SEPTEMBER MEETING:**
Weather Prediction and Climate Change in Western Massachusetts
 22 Sunday **Hike on the Autumnal Equinox**, Somers, Connecticut
 29 Sunday **Fall Colors Along Bob's Way**, Monterey

Bring me the sunset in a cup.

~ Emily Dickinson



NATURALIST'S CORNER

The Peaceful and Healthy Activity of Forest Bathing

Years ago, on the Bridge of Flowers in Shelburne Falls, I met another flower lover. With time, the conversation came around to hiking. “Ah!”, she said, “Forest bathing! How wonderful!” In answer to my question, she explained it was a popular pastime in Japan, taking a relaxing walk in the woods. I later learned it’s also known as forest therapy: You go in stressed, you come out calm. Shinrin-yoku, the Japanese word, is a particular way of being in a meditative mode while in total sensory immersion in the forest.

First, what it’s not:

- Walking your dog. Spending time with your beloved pet roaming in the forest is a wonderful experience, but he’ll tug on his leash so hard you won’t be able to “stop and smell the roses.”
- A social walk with family and friends. Conversations and chasing kids both distract from the purpose of forest bathing.
- Hiking. This is generally exercise, having a purpose/destination, straining your muscles, and breathing heavily.
- Training for a triathlon. Your friend is a triathlete and needs to train for a competition. In contrast, you need to absorb your spectacular surroundings. Your friend runs off, disappearing into the woods within seconds. Meanwhile, you stand still, listening to a nearby waterfall, amazed by rocky cliffs, smelling sweet flowers. Suddenly she reappears and yells “C’mon! Let’s go! We have to get to XYZ by 5 o’clock!” No, we really don’t. We can come back for that next time.

Now to what it is:

On a leisurely, meandering walk, completely for yourself, in solitude, along a forest trail, you breathe slowly and deeply and take this time to tune in to your senses—body, mind and soul. It’s important to be alone at times to reduce stimulation, staying with your thoughts and feelings. It’s possible to be together with another person, but, for forest bathing, each will need to be “in their own world”. This is known as “companionate solitude”.

During forest bathing, one focuses on:

- The visual—what you can see, such as animals, birds, trees, colors, a glimpse of sky;
- The tactile—what you can feel, such as moss, leaves, tree bark, the earth, cool breeze on your skin;
- The olfactory—what you can smell, such as fresh clean air, pine trees, flowers, musty dry leaves, muddy earth;
- The auditory—what you can hear, such as birds, rustling leaves, woodpecker, buzzing insects, drizzling rain, a breeze in the treetops, a plane overhead; and
- The taste—maybe you even found some wild forest fruit to taste.

When you’re in the forest, you experience and appreciate its beauty. You may discover something you hadn’t noticed before and learn something new. You may derive a new insight, or even have a spiritual experience, going beyond your self and your community. “Biophilia” refers to the idea that humans are emotionally connected to Nature. Well, I say of course! It’s obvious! We evolved in Nature and are still part of it, no matter how hard we try to distance ourselves from it with cities, technology, agribusiness, etc. We are one with Nature.

In the 1980s Dr. Qing Li, professor at Nippon Medical School, Tokyo, and President of the Society of Forest Medicine, found that “excessive sensory overload” and “tech-boom burnout” lead to increased stress and anxiety. Forest bathing grew into preventive healthcare and healing and soon became a popular mindfulness practice. Forest bathing offers a way to help protect forests from pollution and deforestation and is supported by the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

Forest bathing is meant to be a physiological and psychological exercise, and medical providers now prescribe shinrin-yoku. Just being in the forest takes you away from day-to-day stressors. You forget your worries. Your shoes and your clothing are comfortable, the air is fresh and clean, you have some nourishment and a refreshing drink. It's also much cooler than in the city.

Research shows that just 20 minutes daily of forest bathing has many positive effects. It lowers your heart rate, blood pressure and the stress hormone cortisol. It raises your level of serotonin, the “feel-good” hormone. It calms and clears your mind, helps your ability to solve problems, and sparks new ideas. Further benefits include reduced anxiety, and improved memory and sleep.

According to the USDA, and as we intrinsically know, forests hold a higher concentration of oxygen than urban spaces. Plants release waste-product oxygen into the air, and animals (including us humans) inhale it as a life-sustaining factor. Plants also produce phytoncides, oils that protect plants from pests, and as they stick to our skin they can bolster human immunity, too. They also increase anti-cancer proteins and help to reduce blood pressure, heart rate, anxiety, depression, anger, fatigue and confusion. These benefits can last over a month. Evergreens are among the best trees for producing phytoncides, so on your next forest-bathing walk, give yourself some extra time near a pine or spruce. As a thank-you gift, talk to it—you will give it some extra life-giving carbon dioxide.

And have you thought about the colors of the forest? When you leave the hustling bustling gray city and enter a forest, how do you feel seeing all that green? There is a body of research on the psychology and physiology of colors. The long wavelength of green has a calming effect on your brain via the pituitary gland, increasing focus and concentration. Green is also symbolic of motivation, health, peace and life. In an indoor work or educational environment, performance can be better if you have a plant or a vase of fresh flowers.

So next time you go out into the forest, or even a park, experience all your senses — mind, body and soul. Take it all in, one sense at a time. But if you're unable to get to a forest, buy yourself a plant, and take good care of it.

~Dori Dittmer

How strange that Nature does not knock, and yet does not intrude!

~ Emily Dickinson

Northwest Park Nature Center, Windsor, Connecticut

Saturday, July 13, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Leader: Dori Dittmer

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

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

This 473-acre park, established in 1981, is situated on a former tobacco farm and offers 12 miles of hiking trails. We will explore meadows, woods, and water! The Nature Center includes exhibits and barn animals. Bring bug spray, water, snack or lunch, binoculars, and a camera. The park is accessible and has sensory and braille trails. Rain date: Saturday, July 20.

An Evening Paddle on an Active Beaver Pond, Otis

Saturday, July 20, from 6 to 8 p.m.

Leader: Tom Condon

Registration: Please contact Tom (413-454-2331; or email: tomnancycondon@gmail.com)

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

You are gliding quietly along in your canoe when all of the sudden 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 beavers on the pond that there are interlopers here. Fortunately, beavers are curious and if you are quiet, they will resurface to check you out. This is the experience we hope to have on Upper Spectacle Pond in Otis. We hope you'll join us.

Upper Spectacle Pond is a small but active beaver pond. Paddle your own canoe or kayak if you have one. If not, you can rent a canoe from our local scout troop to enjoy the experience and learn more about beaver behavior. We'll be paddling in the evening because this hour gives us the best shot at viewing beavers, which tend to be shy creatures. We will stop on a small island, so bring along an evening meal and, if you wish, a folding chair.

We will meet at Papa's Healthy Food & Fuel (the Gulf Station) on Route 23 in East Otis. We can use the restrooms and buy snacks here. The pond is down a mile-long dirt road. We have traveled this road in our Prius, so you should be fine. Plan for the weather and bring along a camera or binoculars.

Warner Mountain Trail, Hadley

Saturday, August 3, meeting at 9:30 a.m. to carpool from West Springfield

Leader: Sonya Vickers

Registration: Please call Sonya (413-218-7742)

Meeting Place: Table and Vine Parking Lot in West Springfield

This loop trail around Warner Mountain is an easy 2.2 mile hike through the woods. This so-called "mountain" is really a 500-foot hill next to the Connecticut River, accessible via a well-maintained trail. This area is a Trustees of Reservations property.

Robinson State Park, Feeding Hills

Saturday, August 17, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Leader: Dori Dittmer

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

Meeting place: Parking lot of Stop & Shop in W. Springfield (Rt 5). We will carpool from there.

This accessible park is situated on the Westfield River, directly across from West Springfield's Mittineague Park. We will walk along either the East and Small Waterfall Trails (3.6 mi total), or just the Small Waterfall Trail (2.9 mi). Our route is partially paved, with several side trails. We'll look for eagles, beavers, rare dragonflies, and turtles. Bring bug spray, water, snack or lunch, binoculars, and a camera. Rain date is Saturday, August 24.

Please note, there is a parking fee: \$5 for MA residents, and \$20 for non-MA residents. A lifetime pass offering access to most MA state parks is available to those 62+ for \$10, and can be purchased online—for details, visit www.mass.gov. Dori has a pass, so if you carpool with her, there will be no fee.

As long as I live, I'll hear waterfalls and birds and winds sing. I'll interpret the rocks, learn the language of flood, storm, and the avalanche. I'll acquaint myself with the glaciers and wild gardens, and get as near the heart of the world as I can.

~ John Muir

2024 JULY to SEPTEMBER

Aquatic Critters for Kids, Westfield

Sunday, August 18, from 10 a.m. to noon
Leaders: Nancy Condon and Katie Weglarz
Registration: Please contact Nancy (413-297-0778; or email nancy@paddleforwater.net)
Meeting Place: Grandmother's Garden, Smith Avenue

Bring your kids or grandkids to explore the lives and habits of wetland critters in Chancey Allen Park, adjacent to Grandmother's Garden in Westfield. The program is engaging and educational, designed for kids to learn about aquatic life in and around a small pond. Using nets, children can explore different areas of the pond and discover various critters like tadpoles, dragonfly larvae, and small fish. Children can then use small microscopes to explore the unique adaptations these critters use to survive. Through this hands-on experience, kids can learn about the importance of pond ecosystems and the different species that live in and around them.

The program is part of Grandmother's Garden's 90th Anniversary Celebration. Volunteers will be available to answer questions about the gardens, and light refreshments will be available afterwards.

Lunden Pond and Temple Brook Hike, Monson

Saturday, September 14
Leader: Sonya Vickers
Registration: Please call Sonya to register, and for start time (413-218-7742)
Meeting Place: The trailhead on Butler Road in Monson one half mile in from Lower Hampden Rd. The parking area is on the right and the sign says "Peaked Mountain Tract".

This is a wonderful tract of land saved by the Trustees of Reservations. There is a pond and a stream to explore. While the walking is a little hilly, it is not steep. We will be traveling about 2.2 miles. There are beavers living in the pond and dragonflies around the shoreline. I can introduce you to wonderful lichens and even orchids on the shoreline. Bring binoculars and your cell phone so that we can use the Merlin app to identify the many birds we are sure to hear.

Nature will bear the closest inspection. She invites us to lay our eye level with her smallest leaf, and take an insect view of its plain.

~ Henry David Thoreau



Stump Sprouts Weekend, West Hawley

Stump Sprouts Weekend, West Hawley
Friday, September 6 to Sunday, September 8
Leaders: Sheila and Richard Paquette, Kevin Kopchynski
For further details, contact Sheila Paquette (413-262-8994; spaquette139@gmail.com).

*****Late-breaking update:
Stump Sprouts Weekend 2024 is full.*****

**Rooms have been assigned, and organizers
have been designated for each meal.**

**Sheila Paquette will contact all those
registered with final information.**

A new era has begun for Stump Sprouts, as Lloyd and Suzanne have retired from cooking. We now have the opportunity to make Stumps an even more intimate community experience by preparing and sharing food while enjoying nature together.

As we organize and talk to attendees, we will gauge preferred meal arrangements. In budgeting for the trip, please plan to include the cost of the groceries you contribute for our shared meals. The deposit to reserve your spot will be \$65, along with a commitment to contribute to meals. Your balance will be due at the event and depends on how many people join in for the weekend. Spots will be filled first-come, first-served.





Weather Prediction and Climate Change in Western Massachusetts

Wednesday, September 18, starting at 7 p.m.
Tolman Auditorium, Springfield Science Museum
Speaker: Brian Lapis, Evening Meteorologist at 22 News

Join us for an evening that's all about the weather! Meteorologist Brian Lapis will describe his work to forecast weather here in Western Massachusetts. He'll also describe some of the ways that our climate—and his meteorology work—are changing in the present era of rapid climate change.

About the speaker: Brian Lapis got his start in broadcasting at the age of 15 at the WILI radio station based in his hometown of Willimantic, Connecticut. Brian earned a Bachelor's in Television Radio Film Management from Syracuse University, plus a certificate in Broadcast Meteorology from Mississippi State University. He's worked as a radio on-air talent for KISS 95.7 in Hartford, Connecticut, WIOQ in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, WYYY and WJPZ in Syracuse, New York, and WPRO-FM in Providence, Rhode Island. These days, you can catch Brian's forecast on 22 News each weeknight at 5 p.m.

A Hike on the Autumnal Equinox, Somers, Connecticut

Sunday, September 22, starting at 10 a.m.

Leaders: Dave and Suzy Gallup

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

Join us for a hike on the McCann Trail, maintained by the Northern Connecticut Land Trust. McCann is a unique 84-acre property in the center of Somers, Connecticut. The land is characterized by a variety of terrain. We'll see stands of mature white pine, plus many other species of trees in a young to old-growth forest. You will enjoy the diversity of the landscape. On this hike, we will be identifying species of trees and will encourage everyone to share their knowledge of trees and nature around them. It will be a learning experience for all! Rain cancels.

It is the glistening autumnal side of summer. I feel a cool vein in the breeze, which braces my thought, and I pass with pleasure over sheltered and sunny portions of the sand where the summer's heat is undiminished.

~Henry David Thoreau

Fall Colors Along Bob's Way, Monterey

Sunday, September 29, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Leaders: Tom & Nancy Condon

Registration: Please contact Tom (413-454-2331; or email tomnancycondon@gmail.com)

Meeting Place: Trailhead along Route 23 at the Monterey-Otis line

Join Tom and Nancy Condon for this 2.5 mile hike along Bob's Way, a trail maintained by the Berkshire Natural Resources Council. It is named for N. Robert Thieriot, who moved to Monterey in the late 1970s after his California farm was destroyed in a wildfire. Thieriot was a long-time conservationist, having started the Sonoma Land Trust in California and the Monterey Preservation Land Trust here in Massachusetts. He has donated or preserved more than 4500 acres in the Berkshires.

We will cover approximately 2.5 miles, with gentle climbs over two small ridges. The trail offers us many options, so we can pick and choose as we wend through hardwood forests and wetlands. It will offer us outstanding views of the Berkshires and opportunities to reflect on the lives of early residents of these hills.

The trail can be narrow and rocky in places. Good hiking shoes are a must and a walking stick is often helpful. Dress for the weather, and be sure to bring water and lunch.

APRIL MEETING REPORT: The Secret Lives of Wildflowers

Presented by Tom and Nancy Condon

The Condons' program featured images and stories about many familiar wildflowers, including their pollination strategies, edibility, other uses, and etymology. Former president Bill Clinton made many appearances in the accompanying quiz questions, which suggested the time period during which the program was first prepared. Many interesting facts were presented including the gender issues and sex change behavior of Jack (or Jill)-in-the-pulpit, which is a species unsuitable for consumption—not the case for many other familiar wildflowers such as cattail, wood sorrel, and chicory. The early spring blooming bloodroot was mentioned as providing an extract formerly used as an ingredient in toothpaste (who knew?)—no longer recommended, however. Reports on the internet note its removal from the North American market owing to possible carcinogenic concerns.

~report by Dave Lovejoy

Events through MassAudubon

These programs at Arcadia in Easthampton require registration with Mass Audubon (800-710-4550), and most require a registration fee. To register, please, visit the Mass Audubon website at www.massaudubon.org

Hawley Bog

Saturday, July 20, from 9 to 11 a.m.

Come visit this pristine peatland jointly owned by The Nature Conservancy and the Five Colleges. With an elevation of 1,800 feet, Hawley Bog resembles the cold bogs of Canada. During summer we should see blooming orchids such as grass pink and fringed orchid, all three of our native insectivorous plants, and the many others plants that make the bog their home. For questions specific to this event, please contact Arcadia (arcadia@massaudubon.org; or 413-584-3009)

Puffins and Other Seabirds

Sunday, August 11, from 3 to 4 p.m.

With a colorful beak and feet, large expressive eyes, and a comical stance, many people can identify the Atlantic Puffin. The only puffin found in eastern North America, its numbers are declining as waters are warming due to climate change. Join photographer John Green for an afternoon presentation to learn about the Atlantic Puffin and enjoy his wonderful photographs of puffins and other seabirds.



In Memoriam

On June 11, 2024, we lost a wonderful lover of nature, Colette Potter.

Colette was part of the Naturalists' Club for 37 years and supported and helped in many ways as the Club changed and grew through the years. She always made sure the dessert table was ready for every meeting.

I remember meeting Colette in 1987 when she became a member. She loved the Naturalists' Club, and her enthusiasm about sharing her love of nature is what I loved about her! She led many nature walks, and I am sure some of you remember observing nature with her. She will be missed very much.

~Dave Gallup

THE NATURALISTS' CLUB
FROM THE TREASURER

Those with a date of "23-24" (or later) on your newsletter mailing label have paid for this year. Otherwise, your dues are owed for the year that started in September 2023. 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

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 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.

2024 JULY to SEPTEMBER

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