



The

NATURALISTS' CLUB

NEWSLETTER

Springfield Science Museum at the Quadrangle, Springfield, Massachusetts

April to June ~ CALENDAR of EVENTS

April

- 15 Wednesday **APRIL MEETING: Magnificence, Mysteries and Death:
Geostories from Western Massachusetts**
- 19 Sunday **Chapel Brook Falls Hike to the Summit of Pony Mountain, Ashfield**
- 25 Saturday **Mount Tom Quarry Trail, Holyoke**
- 26 Sunday **The Secret Lives of Flowers, Huntington**

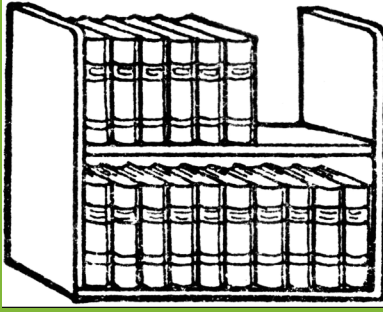
May

- 3 Sunday **Spring Wildflowers, Westfield**
- 16 Saturday **Robert Barrett Fishway Tour, Holyoke**
- 17 Sunday **High Ledges, Shelburne Falls**
- 20 Wednesday **MAY MEETING: Did an Asteroid Really Kill the Dinosaurs?**
- 23 Saturday **Mount Warner, Hadley**

June

- 7 Sunday **Mount Holyoke Range State Park, Amherst and Granby**
- 13 Saturday **Mill River and Smith Botanic Gardens, Northampton**
- 15-20 Monday-Saturday **Camping in the White Mountain National Forest, New Hampshire**
- 22 Monday **A Springtime Paddle in Dismal Bay on Otis Reservoir, Otis**





NATURALIST'S CORNER

A HISTORY OF MONTHLY MEETINGS

When I thought about introducing John McDonald, our speaker for January 2026, it seemed appropriate to review how many previous programs he had provided for the Club since his first one 30 years ago. This inspired me to examine past newsletters, which I was able to do back through about 1976. The Club was founded in 1969, but newsletters from its first six or seven years could not be found. This history of 50 years of monthly meetings includes about 400 total programs. Arranging them by speaker was rather straightforward; sorting by topic (e.g., general natural history, botany, programs with a geographic focus) was not as simple.

It is not surprising that Club members who have served for years as officers and/or directors head the list for the number of programs given. Among those currently serving, Sonya Vickers leads with 14, followed closely by Nancy and/or Tom Condon with 13 and then Dave Lovejoy with 11. However, these totals are greatly exceeded by past board members Richard Sanderson (20) and Jack Megas (19). Other local naturalists not associated with Club as board members have also presented many programs. Heading this list is Tom Tynning with 12; it is also noteworthy that Tom and Richard share a “longevity” record, each having given programs from 1977-1978 through the present. Other non-Club members with five or more programs include Tom Ricardi (8), Richard Little (6), and John McDonald (5).

As mentioned above, classifying programs by topic is not precise. About 40 programs have focused on conservation/endangered species/environmental problems, about 30 on local or regional natural history, and another 30 on botany. Nature photography has been the subject about 20 times, with presentations by Les Campbell, John Green, Jack Swedberg, and most recently Kevin Kopchynski (4 times). Programs featuring particular animal groups have most often discussed mammals (both local and from other regions). We have learned about gorillas, whales, and elephants and local wildlife such as coyotes (3), beaver (2), cougar (2), and cottontails (2). Black bears have been featured five times with presentations by Jim Cardoza (twice), Wendell Dodge, Mark Sayre, and John McDonald, each of whom has been the bear biologist for Mass Wildlife at various times. Birds, amphibians, reptiles, and insects and other arthropods have each been discussed about 15 times.

Regarding aquatic biology, if we combine freshwater and marine, we have seen about 30 programs, including such topics as salmon restoration, wild and scenic rivers of Massachusetts, and underwater marine life along the North Shore. Over the years, we have had many programs centered on a particular region, covering such sites as the Antarctic, Alaska, Nepal, Isle au Haute, Costa Rica, and the American Southwest. Nearly 30 programs have featured astronomy, with most presented by Richard Sanderson and Jack Megas; occasionally Dave Gallup and Jack collaborated on a single program, as did Richard and Jack a few times. Occasionally, there have been programs in a category by themselves. Programs featuring nature poetry, viewing nature through Tiffany stained glass, and the Condons’ cross-country canoe trip are examples of this.

Reviewing 50 years of newsletters has also yielded the following observations. In 1977, the Club initiated a plan to hold a “Dinner and Awards night” in lieu of the October regular meeting. These evenings took place at a local restaurant (at Storowton in West Springfield for many years) and the event came to be called the “Environmentalist of the Year” dinner. Those honored during the first decade or so included John Brainerd, Tom Tynning, Bill Tomkins, Ed Piela, Bill Doty, Helen Bates, Robie Hubley, and Les Campbell. Later, the dinner meetings occurred every two or three years and honorees have included Jack Megas, Tom Ricardi, Dave Gallup, and Tom & Nancy Condon, who were recognized in 2012, the year of our last such meeting.

Occasionally at Board meetings, we discuss whether the October dinner meeting should be revived, but consensus seems to be that the total number of members is currently insufficient to support it. Membership history shows an increase during the Club’s first decade to about 300 in 1979 to an all-time high of “nearly 600” in 1982, largely a result of the very successful “Whale of a Day” program in 1979 and the Club’s campaign opposing logging on Mt Tom. However, a steep decline occurred later in the

1980s, causing newsletter editor Richard Sanderson to warn in a March 1986 editorial that the Club might disband by the end of the year if members did not volunteer for leadership positions. The May election that year left the position of President vacant, and by 1988 membership was only 35. But recovery occurred and the Club has clearly survived. Membership totals hovered around 200 in the 1990s until 2010, when a slow decline began, continuing through to the present.

It is probably extremely unlikely that anyone reading this has an association with the Club as far back as its earliest years and even less likely that they may have newsletters from those days. However, if anyone does, please contact me. We have an almost complete set back through mid 1976 (half of 1987 is missing) and would like to be able to add to this archive if possible.

~Dave Lovejoy

APRIL
MEETING

APRIL MEETING: Magnificence, Mysteries and Death: Geostories from Western Massachusetts

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

Speaker: Richard Little, Professor Emeritus, Greenfield Community College
Tolman Auditorium, Springfield Science Museum

Western Massachusetts is the best place in the world to study geology! Professor Little will discuss its many mysteries, including deep holes in the bed of the Connecticut River, weird post-glacial river directions, how the Connecticut River cut through the Holyoke Range, and why the so-called “glacial potholes” can’t be glacial. Our magnificent local geology can kill you! I will tell you how to save your life (really!). This evening’s presentation is based on Professor Little’s book, *Exploring Franklin County*. He will have copies available.

About the Speaker: A geologist and an educator, Professor Little has been a long-time resident of Western Mass. He has taught at Greenfield Community College, Holyoke Community College, and Deerfield Academy, written several books, and created geology videos. His talk will convince you that Western Massachusetts is the best place in the world to study geology. He leads excursions around our area and is championing the initiative to designate armored mud balls—which he describes as “intriguing, amusing, and photogenic Mesozoic rarities”—as the state sedimentary structure.

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

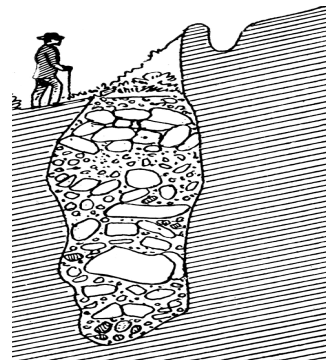
Sunday, April 19, from 9:30 a.m. to mid-afternoon

Leaders: Dave and Suzy Gallup

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

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

Chapel Brooks Falls is a ruggedly beautiful place of ridges and forest. Old-growth trees dot the landscape, and wildflowers cover the forest floor. Streams surge and trickle for most of the year, but in spring, Chapel Falls is in full roar! After we explore the Falls, we will hike the Two Bridges Trail, crossing over 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.



When I am among the trees,
especially the willows and the honey
locust,
equally the beech, the oaks and the pines,
they give off such hints of gladness,
I would almost say that they save me, and
daily.

~Mary Oliver

Mount Tom Quarry Trail, Holyoke

Saturday April 25, starting at 10 a.m.

Leader: Dori Dittmer

Register: Text or call Dori (917-346-0969)

Meeting Place: We'll carpool from the parking lot of Stop & Shop in West Springfield.

Due to the cold weather in January, we had to cancel this hike. We'll try again now that the weather will (hopefully) cooperate with us. An easy walk along the beautiful out-and-back three-mile Quarry Trail includes the murmuring little Bray Brook and ends at a fence. The old rock quarry is visible from behind the fence. However, because there is no barrier to protect us from falling in, we won't continue beyond the fence. Instead, we'll explore trails such as the New England Trail. Most of our hike will be moderate rather than easy. Wear sturdy boots, dress in layers for the weather and bring hiking poles, insect repellent (ticks are active year-round), binoculars, camera, water and snack/lunch.

Blow, O blow, you happy winds,
Singing summer's praises,

Up the field and down the field
A-dancing with the daisies.

~Marjorie Pickthall

The Secret Lives of Flowers, Huntington

Sunday, April 26, from 9 a.m. to noon

Leaders: Tom & Nancy Condon

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

Meeting Place: Littleville Elementary Parking Lot, Huntington.

In the lowlands of the Knightville Dam Wildlife Management Area, spring arrives as a parade of wildflowers. As we stroll the dirt road, we'll keep our eyes peeled for the stories unfolding at our feet. Spring ephemerals linger but a few brief weeks, transforming the forest floor into a living tapestry of color, history, and quiet ecological intrigue.

Among the plants we see may be the delicate trout lily, its mottled leaves said to resemble the speckled sides of a brook trout. Early spring bees, newly awake and hungry, eagerly visit its nodding yellow flowers, carrying pollen from bloom to bloom as the forest stirs back to life. Expect to find trilliums standing as three-petaled lanterns. Ants carry trillium seeds through the woods, planting the next generation.

This walk will be easy and flat, and the pace leisurely. We will walk roughly two to three miles. Dress for the weather. Bring sturdy shoes, water, snack, and binoculars if you wish.

Stump Sprouts Weekend 2026, West Hawley

Friday evening through Sunday morning, September 4 through 6

Leaders: Sheila and Richard Paquette, Kevin Kopchynski

Registration: Please contact Sheila for information regarding deposit, and make your check payable to The Naturalists' Club. Mail to Sheila Paquette, 62 Brentwood Drive, Westfield MA 01085. Spots will be filled first-come, first-served, so be sure to act quickly.

A new era has begun for Stump Sprouts, as Lloyd and Suzanne have retired from cooking. We have the opportunity to make Stumps an even more intimate community experience by preparing and sharing food while enjoying nature together. We will have complete access to the kitchen facilities, utensils, and dishes, so long as we commit to cleaning up after our meals.

The pricing structure has also changed from previous years. In the past, a stated attendance level guaranteed a certain per-person cost. Under the new structure, attendees simply split the cost of renting the lodge. The estimated capacity of the lodge is 12 to 14 people; this is the attendance we will aim for. Information on costs will be available soon.

As we organize and talk to attendees, we will gauge preferred meal arrangements. As you budget for the trip, please plan to include the cost of the groceries you contribute for our shared meals. Once you have submitted your deposit, the remaining balance of your contribution to lodge rental will be due at the event. Please note that your deposit will not be refundable if you later opt not to attend and we can't fill your spot. For further information, contact Sheila (413-262-8994; spaquette139@gmail.com).

Spring Wildflowers, Westfield

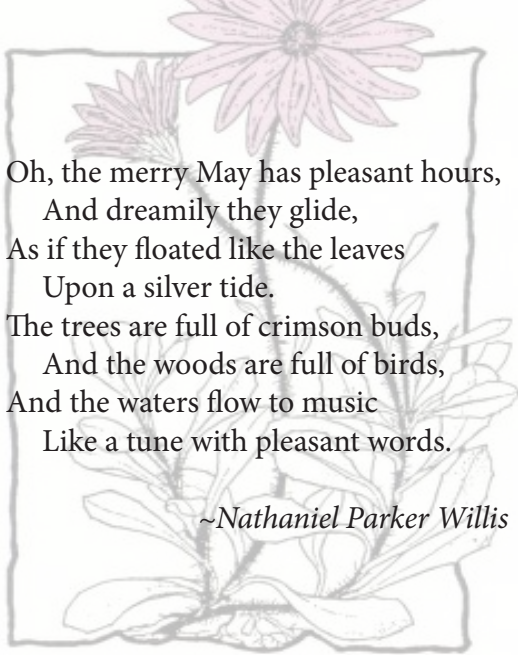
Sunday, May 3, from 1 to 3 p.m.

Leader: Dave Lovejoy

Meeting Place: The entrance sign to the Frank Stanley Beveridge Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary at Stanley Park (on the right, several hundred feet past the tennis courts)

Registration: Not required.

On this casual walk, we will visit several different habitats within the Sanctuary. We will focus on the 25 or so species, both native and introduced, that are likely to be blooming in early May. If you happen to have a field guide that you would like to practice with, bring it along.



Oh, the merry May has pleasant hours,
 And dreamily they glide,
 As if they floated like the leaves
 Upon a silver tide.
 The trees are full of crimson buds,
 And the woods are full of birds,
 And the waters flow to music
 Like a tune with pleasant words.

~Nathaniel Parker Willis

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

- Leo Riendeau (413-224-1468)
- Jack Megas (413-782-3962)

The following members are running:

- President – Dave Gallup
- Vice President – Nancy Condon
- Treasurer – Tom Condon
- Corresponding Secretary – Sue Gallup
- Recording Secretary – Dave Lovejoy
- Directors – Carole Dupont, Dori Dittmer, Dietrich Schlobohm, Sonya Vickers

Robert Barrett Fishway Tour, Holyoke

Saturday, May 16, starting at 2 p.m.

Leader: Tom Condon

Meeting Place: Robert E. Barrett Fishway, 1-3 County Bridge, Holyoke

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

Every spring, an ancient migration pushes upriver along the mighty Connecticut River. At Holyoke Dam, thousands of determined travelers arrive, each with the same goal: getting upstream to spawn. Instead of a wall that would stop them, they find one of the most fascinating fish passage systems in the country. Join Tom as he guides you through the fishway, where both migratory species, including American shad, sea lamprey, striped bass, blueback herring, and resident species are lifted over the dam in a remarkable aquatic elevator. It's part wildlife spectacle, part engineering marvel, and part river drama.

If the timing is right, the viewing window becomes a living documentary, with hundreds of fish swirling just a few feet away. Come see one of New England's great spring migrations up close and discover how this ingenious lift helps keep an ancient river tradition alive.

The tour is limited to 15 people, so please call Tom to register. The tour is free.

High Ledges, Shelburne Falls

Sunday, May 17, from 10 a.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

Enjoy the beauty of the forest and its wildflowers, including lady slippers, on this moderate two-mile hike. One of the many treats of this route is the breathtaking view from High Ledges, overlooking Shelburne Falls and the valley below. After the hike we will visit Shelburne Falls, a picturesque New England town known for its Bridge of Flowers, recently refurbished. If you wish, take the afternoon to explore the town's shops and glacial potholes. Wear sturdy footwear and bring lunch. Rain cancels.



MAY MEETING

MAY MEETING: Did an Asteroid Really Kill the Dinosaurs?

Wednesday, May 20, starting at 7 p.m.

Speaker: Dave Gallup

Planetarium, Springfield Science Museum

For this meeting, we will visit the Planetarium for a presentation using the full-dome video system Zeiss velvet projector. Did an asteroid really kill the dinosaurs? So many questions to explore, using geology, astronomy and paleontology! To find the answers to these questions is a learning experience and a real detective story. You will find this program interesting and entertaining.

But outer Space,
At least this far,
For all the fuss
Of the populace
Stays more popular
Than populous.

~Robert Frost



Mount Warner, Hadley

Saturday, May 23, starting at 10 a.m.

Leader: Dori Dittmer

Register: Please contact Dori (917-346-0969)

Meeting Place: We'll carpool from the parking lot of Stop&Shop in West Springfield.

The Salamander Loop Trail of this Trustees of Reservations property includes many gentle slopes, making this an easy-to-moderate two-mile trail. Mt. Warner is a 500-foot hill and offers great views of the Connecticut River Valley, along with informational signs describing various plants and animals found here. Wear sturdy boots, dress for the weather and bring hiking poles, insect repellent (ticks are active year-round), binoculars, camera, water and snack/lunch. Due to the cold weather in February, we previously canceled this hike—let's hope for more comfortable weather in May!

January Meeting Recap

Ruffed Grouse Ecology and Life History

Speaker: Dr. John McDonald

Attendance: 25

Thirty years and four days before this talk in January 2026, Mr. John McDonald spoke about black bears at our monthly meeting. Since then, he has presented on three other mammal species (moose, deer, and polar bears). In our write-up for his 1996 program, we noted that John, now Dr. McDonald, had studied ruffed grouse for his Master's degree. After a thirty-year delay, he has returned to talk about this widely distributed and tasty game bird. John interspersed facts about grouse natural history with numerous anecdotes about the bird, reflecting his experience as a wildlife biologist and as a hunter. He reported on two significant threats responsible for grouse decline in Massachusetts and elsewhere: West Nile virus, which kills about 70% of infected birds, and forest succession, which has replaced young forests with mature stands that fail to provide suitable food and cover for the species.

~meeting recap by Dave Lovejoy

Mount Holyoke Range State Park, Amherst and Granby

Sunday, June 7, starting at 10 a.m.

Leader: Dave Gallup

Register: Please call Dave (413-525-4697)

Meeting Place: Notch Visitor Center on Route 116 at 9:30 a.m.

Join us for a hike on the former M&M Trail, exploring the forest and geology of the Holyoke Range. We will hike to the summit of Mr. Norwottuck, where we will 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 Visitor Center on the Robert Frost Trail. Bring some Robert Frost poems to read if you like. The loop we'll follow is about three miles. Wear sturdy footwear. Bring lunch and water. This hike is moderately strenuous in some spots.

Earth is a small town with many neighborhoods in a very big universe.

~Ron Garan

Mill River and Smith Botanic Gardens, Northampton

Saturday, June 13, starting at 9:30 a.m.

Leader: Carole Dupont

Register: Please contact Carole for meeting place (413-896-0124; or carole0136@gmail.com)

We will hike a very pleasant, flat stretch alongside the Mill River, observing rock formations, wildflowers, and, likely, some animals. We will soon arrive at the Smith Botanic Gardens, where we can enjoy the early summer colorful blooms.

Exhibits include a plant systematics garden, wildflower garden, Japanese garden, rock garden, perennial garden, and a garden of hardy xerophytes. In total, more than 7000 plants are labeled! The gardens are set on a 125-acre campus landscape on the edge of Paradise Pond, offering an outstanding view of the nearby mountains.

After enjoying the many displays, we may stop for ice cream, lunch, or both. Be sure to bring water and hiking poles, and wear attire suitable for the weather conditions.

Camping in the White Mountain National Forest, New Hampshire

Monday through Saturday, June 15-20 (tentative)

Leader: Dori Dittmer

Registration: Please contact Dori at (917) 346-0969

Registration Deadline: May 15

Meeting Place: TBD, near Rumney, New Hampshire.

If you love geology, New Hampshire is the place. It has so much to offer! We'll take a week to go camping. There are many amazing natural sites to explore, including:

- The Flume at Franconia Notch State Park, 800 feet long, 70 to 90 feet deep.
- Avalanche Falls, flowers, ferns and mosses.
- Lost River Gorge. 3/4 mile, 300 ft deep, crevasses; caverns with names like the Guillotine, Judgement Hall, Devil's Kitchen, Giant Pothole.
- The Polar Caves. Stairs and boardwalks enable closeup experiences of nine caves.
- Granite State Scenic Railway offers a historic 80-minute ride along the Pemigawasset River. Great for a rainy day.
- Stargazing. I'll bring my telescope and binoculars. Paddling may be an option, too!

As the time grows nearer, details will be firmed up.

Questions? Please contact Dori.

A Springtime Paddle in Dismal Bay on Otis Reservoir, Otis

Monday, June 22, 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: Papa's Gulf Station, Route 23 (2000 E. Otis Rd.), Otis.

Grab your boat and join us for a paddle into the quiet corners of Tolland State Forest in Otis. We'll launch from the boat ramp (parking fee: \$8) and slip out onto the southern part of Otis Reservoir. Our route will wind around Clark Island and into Southeast Bay, where the water is often glassy enough to mirror the sky. The most intriguing stretch of the day arrives when we ease our way through a passage locals call The Narrows. On the other side awaits a place with a name that hints at its character: Dismal Bay. Here the water winds through a maze of stump gardens and tiny wooded islets, remnants of the old forest that stood before the reservoir filled. It feels a bit like paddling through a forgotten landscape where old trees' descendants rise again from the water's edge. We'll keep the group small to ensure a smooth and quiet journey, so please register early. Bring a bag lunch, a camera, binoculars, or anything else that helps you enjoy a day of gentle exploration. Heavy rain cancels.

FROM THE TREASURER

Those with a date of "25-26" (or later) on your newsletter mailing label have paid for this year. Otherwise, your dues are owed for the year that started in September 2025. 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.

Thank you!

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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