



The

NATURALISTS' CLUB

NEWSLETTER

Springfield Science Museum at the Quadrangle, Springfield, Massachusetts

July to September ~ Calendar of Events

JULY

- 11 Saturday **Stanley Park Tree and Shrub Identification, Westfield**
 18 Saturday **Bartholomew's Cobble, Sheffield**
 26 Sunday **Paddling Beautiful Tully Lake, Royalston**

AUGUST

- 8 Saturday **Amethyst Conservation Area, Amherst**
 19 Wednesday **Sweet Alice Conservation Area, Amherst**
 22 Saturday **Cranberry Pond and Roaring Falls Trail at Mount Toby Reservation, Sunderland**

SEPTEMBER

- 13 Sunday **Mount Sugarloaf State Reservation, South Deerfield**
 16 Wednesday **SEPTEMBER MEETING: The Naturalists' Club Trip in Africa**
 19 Saturday **Harvard Forest and Fisher Museum, Petersham**
 26 Saturday **Bear Hole, West Springfield**
 27 Sunday **Bob's Way, Monterey**



NATURALIST'S CORNER



Hold On Tight: My Bumpy Ride Through Botswana

As I write, Sonya is working on her September presentation for the Naturalists' Club. She will be presenting a talk about the Club's recent adventures in Africa. As always, the talk will be engaging, informative, and beautifully illustrated with Sonya's photography. My comments here are intended to complement her presentation.

First of all, it is a long flight to get to Africa. We took off from Washington D.C. Then, surprisingly, we headed north, flying over New England before crossing the North Atlantic. We passed over Western Europe and the Mediterranean. Then, we flew up the Nile, past Mount Kilimanjaro, and, finally, to Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. As planned, we arrived a day early to shake off the cobwebs of jet lag and perhaps explore the city. Some Naturalists' Club members chose to take a helicopter ride over the Falls, some interacted with domestic elephants, and some chose to engage in cultural immersion. I chose to raft the Zambezi River. It was amazing to be down in the Rift Valley, running class IV and V rapids on a beautiful day. The hike out of the Valley was so steep that my calves and thighs felt it for days afterwards, but the rafting was well worth it.

Fortunately (or unfortunately, depending on your view), African safaris involve a lot of sitting. You basically ride around in a moving wildlife blind. Brightly colored clothing, quick movements, and standing in the vehicle are not allowed, so as to avoid scaring off the animals. Our vehicles were converted Toyota pickups, all of them very well used, with over 250,000 kilometers on them. In the bed of each truck, three rows of seating had been created using a frame of two-inch round steel pipe. Each row was a bit higher than the one in front of it, ensuring a great view for everyone.

Throughout our travels, drivers Julius and OT were on the radio with other guides in search of the charismatic megafauna. One morning, after a simple breakfast in camp, we were cruising around the southern end of Chobe National Park when we rode up to a cluster of other safari vehicles. We pulled into formation. Then, without any explanation, our vehicles stopped and waited.

Why were all the vehicles here? Sure there were impala around, but they're everywhere. So why were we watching these particular antelope? Then, all of the sudden, the quiet exploded. A cheetah rocketed out from behind one of the other vehicles and into the herd of impala. The impala scattered in all directions. There was excited conversation in and between all the vehicles, but no kill. The cheetah missed but we followed it around for another hour or so. I bet that Sonya will share some of her excellent photos from this encounter.

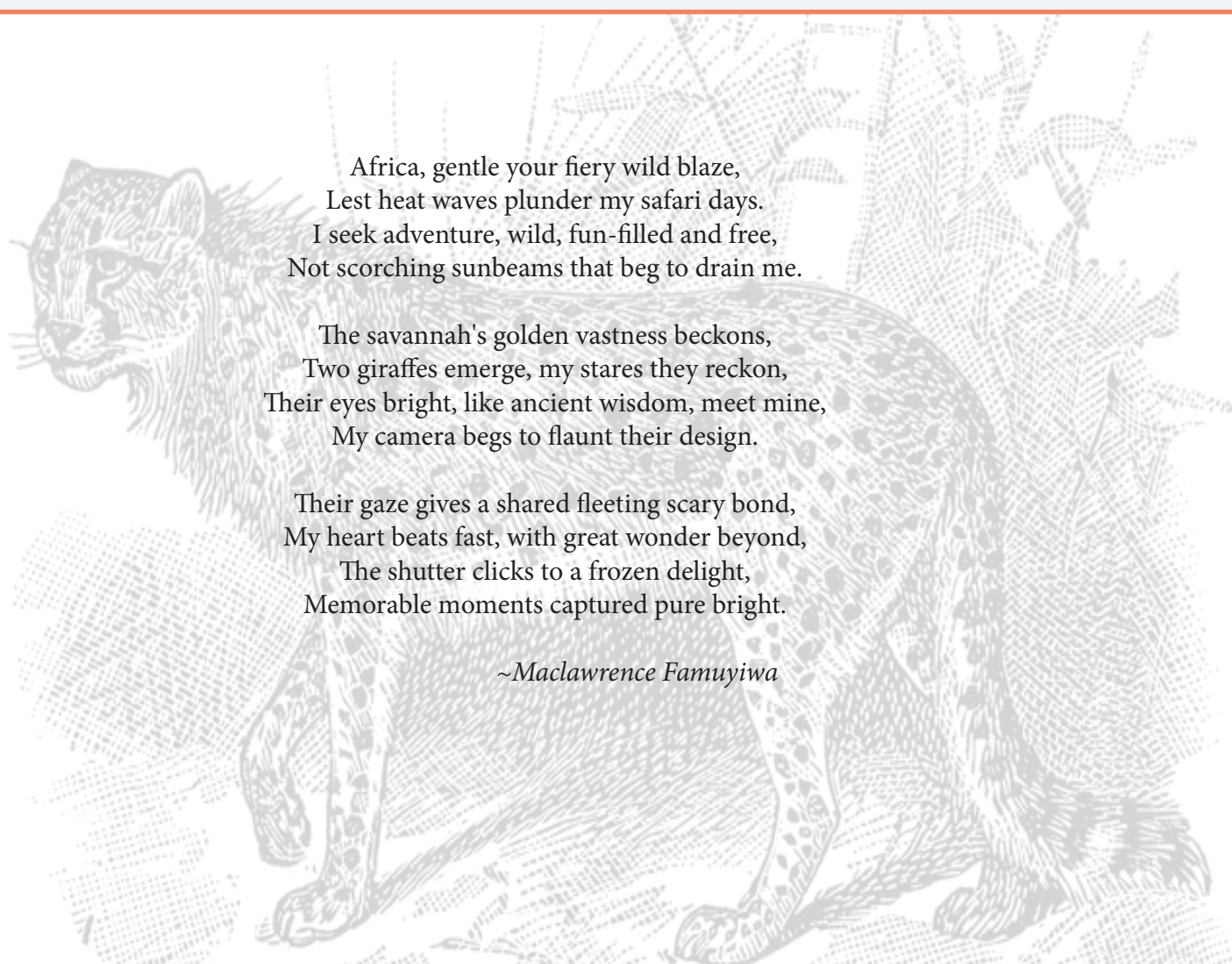
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Later that evening, after we were out of safari, Julius turned the vehicle around. Without a word, he started tearing through the bush at what I considered breakneck speed. Ruttled roads be damned, he was on to something! We shot past zebras, giraffes, and even elephants without hesitation. I wondered where we were going. All I could do was hold on to the metal bar in front of me. A beautiful sunset was developing in front of us. Was that our goal? We passed plenty of vantage points for taking photographs. There must be something else, but what? Finally, we crashed off the road and through some brush to find ourselves staring at a tall, crooked tree. And to our amazement, that tree held two leopards, a male and female. I felt like a bit of a voyeur as we watched the male courting the female. In the distance an owl watched, too. Eventually the sun set and we had to go. There is no driving after dark—park rules.

We spent ten days out on safari in Botswana. We saw elephants. We saw giraffes. We saw all sorts of birds (although we did not succeed in making birders of all our crew). My favorite animals, though, were the African wild dogs. I am sure that Sonya will talk about them in her presentation on Wednesday, September 16. If she doesn't, you can ask me. I will be there. I hope you will, too.

~Tom Condon



Africa, gentle your fiery wild blaze,
Lest heat waves plunder my safari days.
I seek adventure, wild, fun-filled and free,
Not scorching sunbeams that beg to drain me.

The savannah's golden vastness beckons,
Two giraffes emerge, my stares they reckon,
Their eyes bright, like ancient wisdom, meet mine,
My camera begs to flaunt their design.

Their gaze gives a shared fleeting scary bond,
My heart beats fast, with great wonder beyond,
The shutter clicks to a frozen delight,
Memorable moments captured pure bright.

~Maclawrence Famuyiwa

Stanley Park Tree and Shrub Identification, Westfield

Saturday, July 11, 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.

Taking the time to learn a half-dozen kinds of deciduous trees will make it possible for the hiker to identify most of the common ones seen in the woods (a few more are likely to be found at the edge of a woodland). We should see all of these on our walk, including a few evergreen trees. We can also discuss other plants, depending on the interests of the group.

Bartholomew's Cobble, Sheffield

Saturday, July 18, starting at 10 a.m.

Leader: Dori Dittmer

Register: Please text or call Dori (917-346-0969)

Meeting Place: We'll carpool from the parking lot at the West Springfield Stop & Shop. Please note that there is a \$5 fee per person to visit the property.

What's meant by the word *cobble*? It's a geology term for a sedimentary or clastic rock or, in this case, a rocky knoll. During our visit to this National Natural Landmark of the Trustees of Reservations properties, we'll explore sections of five miles of trails, traversing a diverse landscape of open fields, forests, marshes, and small caves. If you are a fern fan, you'll appreciate that the area boasts one of North America's greatest diversities of fern species. We'll also look for one of the largest cottonwood trees in the state. We may also be able to visit the on-site natural history museum.

Wear sturdy hiking boots, dress in layers for the weather and bring hiking poles, insect repellent, binoculars, camera, water and snack/lunch.

This grand show is eternal. It is always sunrise somewhere; the dew is never all dried at once; a shower is forever falling; vapor is ever rising. Eternal sunrise, eternal sunset, eternal dawn and gloaming, on sea and continents and islands, each in its turn, as the round earth rolls.

~ John Muir

Paddling Beautiful Tully Lake, Royalston

Sunday, July 26, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

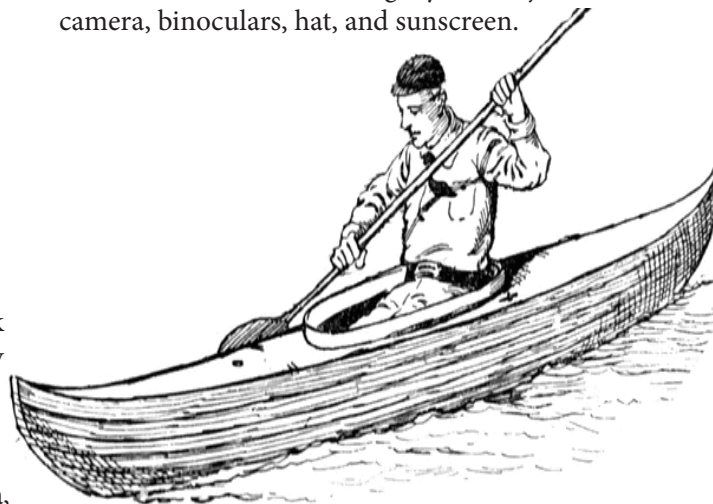
Leaders: Nancy and Tom Condon

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

Meeting Place: We'll carpool from the parking lot of Barnes & Noble in Holyoke.

This beautiful lake is a pleasure for experienced and novice paddlers alike. Just north of the town of Athol, the 1,262-acre reservoir is operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and hosts a number of recreational opportunities. We will put in on the main lake and paddle northward, through Tully River to Long Pond and back. We'll encounter a number of islands with sandy beaches, perfect to stop for lunch or to take a swim if the weather warrants—so don't forget to wear your swimsuit. This flatwater paddle will allow us to explore coves and wetlands, with the opportunity to view shorebirds, herons, and other wildlife.

Bring your canoe or kayak. If you don't have one, you can rent one from Tully Lake Campground for a fee, starting at \$35 for two hours. Don't forget your life jacket, lunch, drink, camera, binoculars, hat, and sunscreen.



Amethyst Brook Conservation Area, Amherst

Saturday, August 8

Leader: Sonya Vickers

Registration: Contact Sonya to register and for start time (413 218-7742)

Meeting Place: Ludlow Big Y parking lot, near Rocky's Hardware.

The Naturalists' Club donated to Kestrel Land Trust to help conserve land at Amethyst Brook. Join this hike to explore the place we helped protect, hear birds, and see wildflowers along the stream.

Sweet Alice Conservation Area, Amherst

Wednesday August 19

Leader: Sonya Vickers

Registration: Please call Sonya to register and for start time (413-218-7742)

Meeting Place: Parking lot at Ludlow Big Y, near Rocky's Hardware

This will be our second trip this summer to a Kestrel Land Trust property. The Naturalists' Club has donated money to the Kestrel Land Trust, and this hike will be a great chance to see the land we've help conserve. We'll walk along an easy trail to a pond. Bring a snack if you wish, or save your appetite for fresh produce and bakery goods at Atkins Farm, which is just down the street.



Cranberry Pond and Roaring Falls Trail at Mount Toby Reservation, Sunderland

Saturday, August 22, 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.

We'll start on the moderate trail along the shores of Cranberry Pond. From there, we'll climb a short hill to an observation tower that offers great views of the Valley. Then, we'll follow the loop to the waterfall, Roaring Falls. This trail is cared for by the Kestrel Land Trust. Wear sturdy hiking boots, dress in layers, and bring hiking poles, insect repellent, binoculars, camera, water, and snack/lunch. Perhaps we will also stop in town for ice cream afterwards!

Who wouldn't be a mountaineer! Up here
all the world's prizes seem nothing.

~John Muir

Stump Sprouts Weekend, West Hawley

Stump Sprouts Weekend, West Hawley

Friday, September 11 to Sunday, September 13

Leaders: Sheila and Richard Paquette, Kevin Kopchynski

**At press time, spots are still available!
To register, please call Sheila.
413-262-8994**

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 the weekend and talk with attendees, we will gauge preferred meal arrangements. In budgeting for the trip, please 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. The exact amount will depend on how many people join in for the weekend. Spots will be filled first-come, first-served. For more information, please contact Sheila (spaquette139@gmail.com; or 413-262-8994).

Naturalists' Club members have several activities planned

- **Hikes**— Kevin Kopchynski and Dori Dittmer
- **Microscope adventures**—Sonya Vickers
- **Meditation**—Dori Dittmer
- **A paddle on a nearby pond**—Sheila and Rich Paquette

...and, to conclude the weekend, **Sunday lunch** organized by Jennifer Dugan



Mount Sugarloaf State Reservation, South Deerfield

Sunday, September 13, 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. Should you prefer to drive directly to the trailhead, please note that there is a \$5 parking fee, unless you have a season pass.

The South Sugarloaf hike is about two miles out-and-back, with 456 feet of elevation gain. The hike will take a little over an hour. From the top of the observation tower, we'll have great views of the Connecticut River, Pioneer Valley, and the Pelham and Berkshire Hills. Wear sturdy hiking boots, dress in layers for the weather and bring hiking poles, insect repellent, binoculars, camera, water and a snack or lunch.

The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness.

~John Muir



SEPTEMBER MEETING: The Naturalists' Club Trip in Africa

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

Tolman Auditorium, Springfield Science Museum

Speaker: Sonya Vickers

In April, the Naturalists' Club took a trip to Africa. Members Tom Condon and Chris Mangano arranged all the details and the ten of us flew to Africa to visit Botswana and Zimbabwe. First stop was Victoria Falls, where the Zambezi River drops off a mile-long cliff into a gorge. Next, we boarded Land Cruisers and bounced our way over the forest and savannah, camping at night in simple tents. Sonya will show photographs of the incredible birds and wildlife we saw there. She saw 61 bird species she had never seen before. We camped in tents very close to a pride of lions and heard them at night. A leopard was detected behind our tents one night. We watched as two cheetahs made a mad dash on a herd of impalas. Everywhere there were elephants and zebras. We lived and slept in their world. After five days, we came out of the bush and went up in a helicopter to see part of the 100-mile-wide delta that gives all these animals an excellent habitat.

Harvard Forest and Fisher Museum, Petersham

Saturday, September 19

Leaders: Dave and Suzy Gallup (413-525-4697)

Registration: Please call Dave to let us know if you are coming, and for information on time and meeting place.

Join us for a special day at the Harvard Forest and Fisher Museum in Petersham. After meeting in Belchertown, we will drive to Petersham for lunch at the country store. The food is great, and the Town of Petersham is like a step back in time to the 19th century! After lunch, we will go to the Fisher Museum, just down the road from Petersham Center. The museum is free, and its spectacular main exhibit features 23 internationally acclaimed dioramas portraying the history, conservation, and management of central New England forests. Time permitting, we will hike one of the many trails on the property. Come join us for a pleasant day.

People must feel that the natural world is important and valuable and beautiful and wonderful and an amazement and a pleasure.

~David Attenborough

Bear Hole, West Springfield

Saturday, September 26, starting at 10 a.m.

Leader: Carole Dupont

Registration: Please contact Carole (carole0136@gmail.com; or 413-896-0124)

We will hike one of the many interesting Bear Hole trails, observing Mother Nature as she prepares for her winter slumber. Sturdy oaks and colorful maples will provide the early autumnal palette of deep reds and sparkling golds, oranges, and yellows. Bring water, snacks, poles, sturdy boots, binoculars and dress for the weather.

When nature looks so philosophical, you know you're in the autumn!

~ Mehmet Murat ildan

Bob's Way, Monterey

Sunday, September 27, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Leaders: Tom and Nancy Condon

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

Meeting Place: Trailhead on Route 23, just west of the Otis/Monterey town 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 started 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.

Events through MassAudubon

These programs at Arcadia in Easthampton require registration with Mass Audubon (800-710-4550). Most also require a registration fee. For further information, please visit the Mass Audubon website at www.massaudubon.org

Summer Birding by Ear and Bird Behavior

Sunday, July 12, from 7 to 8:30 a.m.

Summer birding at Arcadia is as much about reading behavior cues as it is about identification. On this morning walk, our naturalist will help you tune into bird songs and calls as a primary identification tool.

The fruit trees on site will draw a remarkable variety of species in close, giving us an excellent opportunity to observe birds feeding, calling, and interacting in ways that reveal their inner lives. Plus, hear more about what current research is telling us about how bird populations are shifting in response to climate change.

Bluebirds and Nest Box Workshop

Saturday, September 26, from 9 a.m. to noon

Eastern Bluebirds are thriving in Massachusetts today largely thanks to people's efforts installing nest boxes. This program tells that story from the beginning. Starting with an indoor presentation on bluebird natural history and the conservation movement that reversed their decline, participants will assemble and take-home their own bluebird nest box, learning where and how to install it for the best results.

Where are the songs of spring? Ay, Where are they?

Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—

While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,

And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;

Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn

Among the river shallows, borne aloft

Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;

And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;

Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft

The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;

And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

~John Keats

THE NATURALISTS' CLUB

FROM THE TREASURER

September is the month for membership renewal. Those receiving the electronic newsletter will find membership status listed in an upcoming email. For those receiving the paper newsletter, '26-27 (or later) on the mailing label indicates that membership is paid for the coming year; '25-26 indicates that renewal is due. To establish or renew membership, please send information/ payment 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.

2026 JULY to SEPTEMBER

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