

December 2021



* * * **ANNOUNCEMENTS** * * *

THIS IS WHAT A MAST YEAR LOOKS LIKE

Anyone who has been able to get outside this fall can't help but notice the pine and spruce trees dripping with cones, the bumper crop of acorns rolling underfoot, and thousands of maple seeds that twirled to the ground earlier in the season. This is a mast year "in which tree species reproduce prolifically and in sync, creating a bounty that will reverberate through the ecosystem for years," according to Elizabeth Pennisi, writing in the November 26th issue of *Science*. The article goes on to say that researchers have tried to explain masting for decades. Now ecologists are exploring a once-ignored idea about its trigger: that masting occurs in years when seeds are likely to have favorable weather for sprouting the next spring or even in the next year or two. Researchers suggest that trees are alert to large-scale, long-term climate patterns. Inspired by the potential of a large database to be published in 2022, a group of researchers has begun exploring the correlation between major climate oscillations and masting, the "environmental prediction hypothesis." However, this hypothesis doesn't explain all masting. The work of Elizabeth Crone of Tufts University backs the idea that a burst of nuts uses up so many resources that it takes a tree more than a year to restore them, and that's why masting is erratic. Ecologist David Kelly studies masting in alpine grasses in New Zealand and says that masting in many species doesn't match big climactic patterns. On the other hand, he has noticed that masting occurs when a summer is much warmer than the previous summer and suggests that temperatures temporarily modify a plant's DNA, such that the plant "remembers" the heat level of the previous summer.



Whatever the cause of all the acorns, seeds, and cones on the ground, be careful out there!

AUCTION

ANNUAL MEETING & SILENT AUCTION COMING UP IN FEBRUARY

When our ninth year as Ware River Nature Club arrives in February 2022, our annual celebration will take place once again at Hartman's Herb Farm in Barre. We'll share a fine afternoon meal, listen to a lively and informative expert speaker, learn about an organization that helps turtles, and visit with fellow nature-lovers. Last but not least, we'll host a silent auction fundraiser so we can continue to support natural history education and organizations that help wildlife.

We are now accepting donations for the auction. Consider making or creating an item for the auction table, or maybe you can offer your skills or a particular service for a designated period of time—a 2-hour cooking lesson, 3 hours of help planting perennials, a short tutorial on using a digital camera. If you decide you're ready to part with a favorite outdoor, nature-related, or gardening item in good condition that you no longer need, the auction could help it find a new home. Ditto for attic treasures, especially anything with a nature theme or made with natural materials. Books about the natural sciences, wildlife and the like, if in good condition, are popular items, too. Even certain kinds of clothing or outdoor accessories would be welcome additions to our auction table. Bidders also like gift certificates or gift cards from area businesses or restaurants, so we welcome those if members are willing to ask potential donors.

In addition to the live event, participation in the auction will also be available through our web-site.

To donate, contact warerivernatureclub@yahoo.com .

Meanwhile, we aren't ignoring COVID, and it's highly likely that we'll be making plans around health and safety guidelines in place at the time. For now we're optimistically planning an in-person event and will be asking that attendees be fully vaccinated. We're also hoping to be able to livestream via ZOOM the talks and presentations by our speakers, enabling members who are unwilling or unable to attend to join us virtually.

Stay tuned, and stay COVID smart!

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UPCOMING EVENTS

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NORTHFIELD BIRD CLUB & DICKINSON MEMORIAL LIBRARY

Virtual Program—

BIRDING THE LIFE ZONES OF COSTA RICA

with David Moon

Tuesday December 14th 5:30 -6:30 p.m.



Travel from Costa Rica's tropical regions to its highlands from the comfort of your home. Known for its incredible biodiversity, Costa Rica is home to many fabulous birds and other animals whose evolution has been driven by tropical ecosystems. Learn why such a small area can be home to so many species. We'll also hear about how maintenance of strong democratic principles has helped

Costa Ricans double the forested area of the country in the past 30 years. David Moon has taught tropical ecology in Costa Rica since 1991 and is the Community Science and Coastal Resilience Manager for Mass Audubon North Shore.

Registration requests for this free program must be received at least 24 hours before the program begins. Register at

www.bookeo.com/northfield .

PRINCETON OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE--PRINCETON HIKES!

HIKING AT LEOMINSTER STATE FOREST

Saturday December 18th 9 a.m.



We will hike up Ball Hill from the Crow Hill Ponds and do a loop that visits five or so "witness stones" (Princeton boundary markers). The exact route has not been determined, but the hike will be about 5 miles.

Note: Hike organizer Rick Gardner is now recommending that hikers put microspikes in their backpacks for the winter events. "Please do not come to the hikes with anything that provides less traction than the two recommended brands. YakTrax, Winter Walking Cleats etc. will **not** work on the trails we hike."

To register and/or get information about microspikes:
TrailAroundPrincetonMA@GMail.com



CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS



National Audubon Society's 122nd Christmas Bird Count will take place Tuesday, December 14, 2021 through Wednesday, January 5, 2022.

[Click here for a map view of the circles expected to be included in the 122nd CBC.](#)

If you would like to participate, please contact compiler(s) for details.

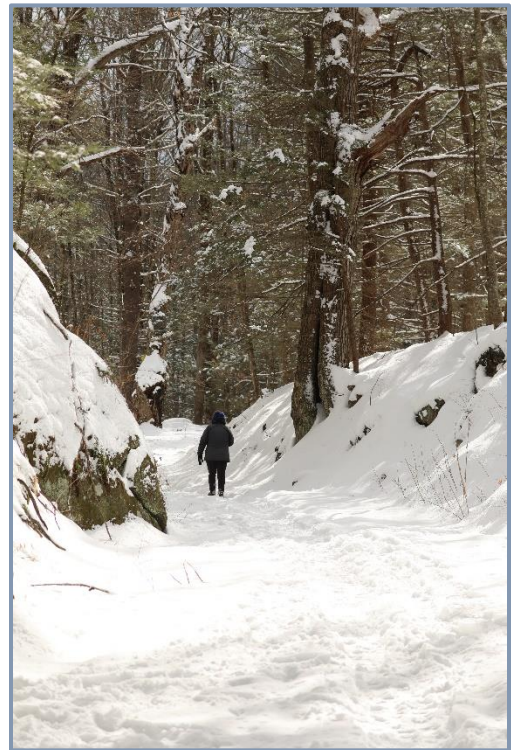
WORCESTER Saturday, December 18th
Compiler: John Liller (508-877-5770) Email: john.liller@worcesteracademy.org
>> snow/ice date: Sunday, December 19th

ATHOL Saturday, December 18th
Compiler: David Small (978-413-1772)
Email: dave@atholbirdclub.org
5:30 pm – 7:30 pm Christmas Bird Count Wrap-up and Party In-person or virtual.
All Covid-19 guidelines will be followed.

GROTON-OXBOW Sunday, December 19th
If interested in helping us cover the town of Shirley, contact warerivernatureclub@yahoo.com

QUABBIN Saturday, January 1st
Compiler: Scott Sumner Email: ssurner@aol.com

WESTMINSTER Tuesday, January 4th
Compiler: Charles Caron (978-874-5649) Email: caronenv@aol.com





PRINCETON “TRAIL MIX” HIKE Tuesday December 21st 2 p.m.

This will be a nice winter walk along the Mid-State trail and a couple of quiet dirt roads in the northwestern Princeton neighborhood. 4.5 miles of easy walking!

To register and/or get information about microspikes:
TrailAroundPrincetonMA@GMail.com

MASS AUDUBON

Online program—THE NATURE OF WINTER Thursday January 6, 2022 7– 8:30 p.m.

Instructors: Patti Steinman, Doug Lowry, & Lucy Gertz



The nature of Massachusetts is filled with seasonal mysteries waiting to be uncovered. This online program (fee: \$10) will introduce the seasonal dynamics of nature in winter, and provide ideas and resources for observing, appreciating, and supporting wildlife near home this winter.

For more information and to register:

<https://www.massaudubon.org/program-catalog/mass-audubon-education/80601-the-nature-of-winter-online>

SAVE THE DATE

ANNUAL DINNER MEETING & SILENT AUCTION

Hartman's Herb Farm
Barre
Sunday, February 27, 2022
12-5

The theme:
HERPS!



"Herp" is a vernacular term for non-avian reptiles and amphibians. It is derived from the old term "herpetile", with roots back to Linnaeus's classification of animals, in which he grouped reptiles and amphibians together in the same class. There are over 6700 species of amphibians and over 9000 species of reptiles.



With guest speaker Tom Tynning, naturalist, educator, and writer, author of *A Guide to Amphibians and Reptiles* in the Stokes Nature Guide Series



and special guests Natasha Nowick and Alexxia Bell of Turtle Rescue League

