

July 2021



* * * **ANNOUNCEMENTS** * * *

NESTBOX PROJECTS UPDATES: BEARS AND MORE

High Ridge WMA, Westminster

Jon Skinner Has been keeping a close eye on the 50 nestboxes at this Wildlife Management Area, and the nesting season was off to a good start in May with at least seven bluebird nests found in mid- May. The nests were at different stages, with nestlings in three boxes and full clutches of eggs in four boxes. Of nests found in 21 boxes, a few more seemed to be additional bluebird nests, but many were incomplete and could have been begun by Tree Swallows, the most populous resident of nestbox trail.

House Wrens are common at the WMA. Because of their aggressive nature and tendency to fill nearby empty boxes with twigs—"dummy" nests—efforts are being made to place some nestboxes in brushy areas attractive to wrens, with the hope that the birds will be lured to sites away from the open fields preferred by swallows and bluebirds. A couple of boxes with smaller, wren-size holes were added to the trail this year. One of the boxes was quickly occupied by wrens, but the choice for the box location turned out to be poor. As the wren nestlings were nearing fledging, one or more adult wrens attacked and killed an adult swallow and two nestlings in a nearby box. Fortunately, Jon was monitoring the boxes soon afterward and, along with discovering the sad situation, he found a third nestling that was still alive and brought it to a licensed rehabilitator. It was thought that the nestling would survive in spite of its injuries.

The end of June brought more misfortune to some other pairs of nesting swallows when a bear (or bears) pulled over and destroyed five nestboxes. At least some of the boxes had active swallow nests that were lost.



Moore State Park, Paxton

The nestboxes in the large field along Saw Mill Road and smaller fields north of Davis Hill Road are along the route taken by Bill Platenik when he makes his Bobolink monitoring visits. In June he reported bluebirds nesting in two boxes and swallows using most, if not all, of the others. At the end of June he counted at least 20 Tree Swallows throughout the Park, including the northeast Davis Hill Road field. (Nestboxes there are monitored by an individual not associated with the Club project.)

Photo by Bill Platenik

DCR Prison Camp, Rutland

At the six fields mapped out and being monitored by Doug Wipf, two pairs of bluebirds appeared to have begun nesting at the end of April. Doug has been keeping detailed notes of observations he and Ted Purcell have made, and the peak of Tree Swallow numbers was at the end of June when young began to fledge. Five, six, or seven boxes hosted swallows. Of interest was the appearance of House Wrens at some boxes on July 8th, apparently birds looking for good places to raise a second brood. Tree Swallows nest only once per season, so wrens now have new real estate options.



Photos by Doug Wipf

GRASSLAND BIRDS INITIATIVE UPDATE

Moore State Park Bobolink monitor Bill Platenik reports numbers similar to those of the 2020 season. During a one-hour visit in mid-June 16 males and 5 females were detected. It's likely more females were present but not obvious during the observation period. The majority of nesting birds are in the large Saw Mill Road field, but 1-3 pairs nest annually in the smaller Davis Hill Road on the east side of the Park.

We're pleased that signs have been posted alerting patrons about the Bobolinks.

Hidden From Sight
Moore State Park

dcrc
Dorchester County
Maryland

⚠ Sensitive Species – Ground nesting birds – Keep dogs on leash



Not All Birds Nest In Trees!
Hidden in the grass of this field are nests of both Bobolinks and Savannah Sparrows. Unlike birds that make their homes in trees, they only nest on the ground in fields like this one. Instead of being high above most predators, they rely on camouflage to hide on the ground.

Please Help Protect Them:

- Stay on designated footpaths and trails.
- Keep pets on leash.



We appreciate your help in protecting these birds!

Bobolink (above) by Andrea Westmoreland
Savannah Sparrow nest (below) by Kati Fleming.
This photograph is from a monitoring project and was taken by a professional trained in viewing sensitive nests and minimizing the disturbance to the birds. Photographing nests simply to "snap a cute pic" can expose them to predators and disrupt the feeding and care of nestlings!



The Prison Camp fields are hosting 6 or 7 male Bobolinks this season, and one female was noted on one monitoring visit. Keep in mind that Bobolink breeding habits are different from some other nesting birds. As Cornell's All About Birds explains: "Bobolinks are polygynous, meaning each male mates with several females per breeding season. But they are also polyandrous, with each clutch of eggs laid by a single female often representing multiple fathers." Nevertheless, probably more than one female is present at these fields.

A single Bobolink observation visit was made to Hubbardston's Mt. Jefferson Conservation Area on July 1st. Thirteen males and 10 females were present in two separate fields. In the Malone Road field, the most popular site, 9 males and 7 females were moving together around the field as though following fledglings. In the large northeastern field, four males and three females instead seemed to still be tending nests. These fields were as yet unmowed but could be subject to mowing soon, so it was encouraging to know that the weather pattern for the next week or more was going to bring wet and humid conditions, thereby delaying mowing. This year's breeders will have a better chance of success.

It was hoped that the field adjacent to Glenwood School in Rutland, which hosted Bobolinks and Savannah Sparrows a few years ago, would be an easy site for the Town of Rutland to set aside for late mowing. The field is so small it can hardly be seen as essential for the Town from an economic point of view. There have been efforts to develop the sloping grassland into a recreational field, but that hasn't materialized. Nevertheless, in spite of efforts by the Club to get the Town to adopt a first late-mowing date—which was agreed upon by a former administration—the current administration hasn't protected the site. Bobolinks trying to nest there were pushed out while in the midst of nesting in 2020, and the field was mowed before Memorial Day this year.

There has been no monitoring of DCR's Riis Hill (nestboxes and fields) in Barre by the Club this season thus far.



Photo by Bill Platenik



Photo by Ted Purcell

SANDHILL CRANES NEST AGAIN IN HARDWICK

In 2020 a pair of Sandhill Cranes nested in Hardwick, the first known nesting attempt in Worcester County by this species. Two young were seen with the adults for nearly a month



before vanishing, likely lost to one of myriad predators in the area. This spring brought a few intriguing reports of one or more adults back in the west section of Hardwick, leading to speculation that the same pair might try nesting again. In May there were no reports of cranes here. On June 2nd two adult Sandhill Cranes with two colts approximately 3 weeks of age suddenly materialized in a shaded backyard on Old Greenwich Plains Road.

Word eventually got around to interested parties in the neighborhood, but except for that first sighting (and photos to Facebook) observation and photo documentation of this second nesting didn't take place until June 21st.

The crane family has since then stayed and foraged in a 50 +-acre portion of the neighborhood with ideal habitat featuring mowed fields/lawns and extensive marsh along a shallow beaver pond.



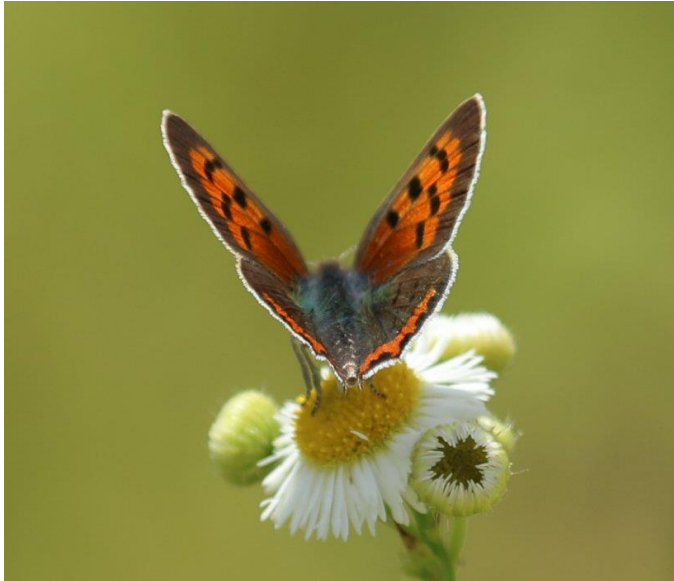
Photos by Alan Rawle.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

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MASSACHUSETTS BUTTERFLY CLUB



BUTTERFLY WALK

MASS AUDUBON
LAKE WAMPANOAG
SANCTUARY
GARDNER

Wednesday July 14th

10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Leader: Wendy Howes

This property features a large expanse of open wildflower fields with mowed pathways as well as a small pond and adjacent forest with red spruce and balsam fir. We can usually find a good assortment of butterflies here. Meet at the Sanctuary at the end of Raymond Street. Bring snacks/lunch/beverage and binoculars/camera if you wish.

To register, contact warerivernatureclub@yahoo.com

Massachusetts Butterfly Club

A Chapter of the
North American Butterfly Association



If you love butterflies, join the club...

The Massachusetts Butterfly Club!

For a list of all the wonderful benefits:

<https://www.naba.org/chapters/nabambc/club-membership.asp>

To join: <https://membership.naba.org/page-1075240>

AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY

LET'S TALK TRASH: PLASTIC POLLUTION, BIRDS, AND OUR OCEANS



Speakers: Kelly Martin, Texas Coastal Outreach Coordinator
Hillary Burgess, Coordinator, NOAA Marine Debris Monitoring and Assessment Project
Catherine Uden, Field Representative, South Florida, Oceana
Sea McKeon, Marine Program Director, American Bird Conservancy

Wednesday, July 14th 4- 5 p.m.

Plastic is everywhere. It has been found in the stomachs of seabirds thousands of miles from land and microscopic fragments have been recorded as literally raining down in protected areas in the western U.S.

Use of plastics, including single-use items and packaging, has grown so much that every year 17 billion pounds of plastic enter the marine environment.

But it doesn't need to be this way.

Join American Bird Conservancy for a webinar about the effect of plastic on birds and oceans, what we're doing about it, and what you can do to help.

To register:

https://act.abcbirds.org/a/webinar-plastic-pollution-birds?utm_medium=email&utm_source=emailblast&utm_campaign=webinar_plastics_july2021&contactdata=eiyq61ddeCVvBjPEvuncfqD6%2f%2bixPY2rgwfl8HPpGhpno6psXshq4p5dGM%2fBgImrRDHMw9fpE%2bm5Zo8oOkWPPg%3d%3d&ms=webinar_plastics_july2021_email&emci=5455ebe9-ddd9-eb11-a7ad-501ac57b8fa7&emdi=eb299f1f-20dc-eb11-a7ad-501ac57b8fa7&ceid=177246

MASS AUDUBON

Online program—
BREEDING BIRDS

Presented by Kathy Seymour and Jane Sender

Friday July 16th 7 -8:30 p.m.

Members: \$20.00 Non-members: \$24.00



Photo by Doug Wipf

Summer is the perfect time to watch our common birds pair up, build nests, and fledge their young. In this course we will explore the elaborate displays and songs male birds use to attract a mate and defend territory, the intricacies of nest building, incubation, parental care, and fledging. You will learn how to find breeding birds near you, how to observe without disturbing them, and how to understand the fascinating behaviors you see.

Registration is required:

<https://www.massaudubon.org/program-catalog/mass-audubon-education/79209-breeding-birds-online>

FORBUSH BIRD CLUB
MASSACHUSETTS BUTTERFLY CLUB

BIRDS & BUTTERFLIES WALK LEICESTER

Sunday July 18th 9 a.m.

Leader: Dolores Price



Join us to look for butterflies AND birds. Last summer's trip yielded 17 butterfly species, with the usual summer beauties such as swallowtails, anglewings, azures, and admirals. Prior years' highlights have included surprises such as a common sootywing, Appalachian brown, and silver-bordered fritillary. Bird species, including such notables as bobolinks, veery, chestnut-sided warbler, and American kestrel, always outnumber the butterflies. For meeting location, contact leader:
508 887-3928 or price.dolores884@gmail.com

PRINCETON OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE--PRINCETON HIKES!

Senior hike—
ROUND-TRIP WACHUSETT MOUNTAIN
TO REDEMPTION ROCK
Wednesday July 21st 10 a.m.

Leader: Rick Gardner

Easy-to-moderate 3-4 mile hike. There is a lot of history to talk about—Walt Whitman, Lucy Keyes, Mary Rowlandson, the Underground Railway, and others! Some of us might gather at the Prince Cafe after the hike for lunch. Everyone is welcome to join. Dogs are welcome.

To register for these hikes, or to join the Hikes mailing list, and get early information about each hike, write to TrailAroundPrincetonMA@GMail.com.

To register for this hike and get details:

TrailAroundPrincetonMA@GMail.com

This hike is open to all, but please indicate if you are a resident of Princeton.



South end of Paradise Pond, on June 26th hike

Photo by R. Gardner

FORBUSH BIRD CLUB

WACHUSETT RESERVOIR ANNUAL BREEDING BIRD CENSUS

Saturday, July 24th 7 a.m. - noon

Leader: Kevin Bourinot
(978-376-1498) [kevin.bourinot@gmail.com]



Photo by Alan Rawle

Forbush Bird Club's annual census of the Wachusett Reservoir Important Bird Area focuses on birds that nest and raise young here, including Common Loons. We will hike shady trails to the Wood Island overlook, then drive to various gates to view the water. Meet at the intersection of Route 110 and Chace Road (Gate 35), Sterling, at 7:00 a.m.

ATHOL BIRD & NATURE CLUB

GUIDED FERN WALK

with Randy Stone

Pioneer Valley Fern Society

QUABBIN GATE 30 -

KEYSTONE BRIDGE

NEW SALEM

SUNDAY July 25th 2-4 p.m.

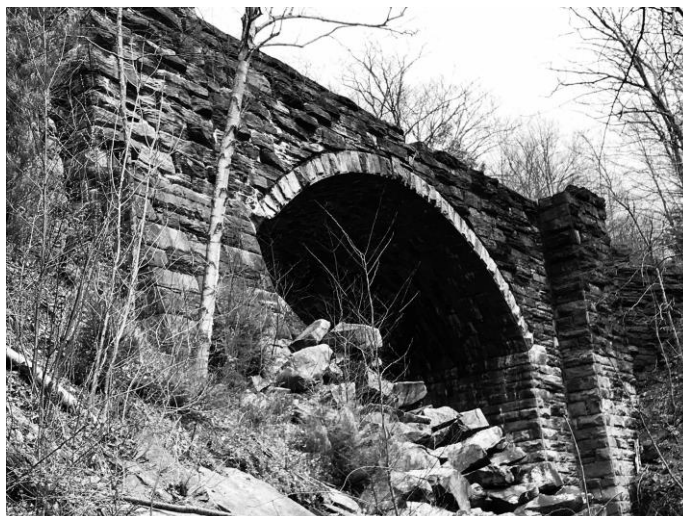
Join us for a moderate-level hike to explore this well-known site. The focus will be on how to easily identify a dozen of our common local ferns.

We suggest you wear clothing appropriate for poison ivy, insects including ticks, and muddy ground in some areas.

Meet at the parking lot for Quabbin Gate 30, on Route 122. Pre-registration not required. We are fully vaccinated & hope our participants will be as well. If not, please wear a mask. Sorry, cancelled if it rains.



Photo by Doug Wipf



MASS AUDUBON

ONLINE PROGRAM—

THE NATURE OF SUMMER

Patti Steinman - Education Coordinator, Arcadia

Doug Lowry - Adult Learning Specialist - South East Region

Lucy Gertz - Statewide Adult Education Manager

Thursday July 29th 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Members: \$10.00 Non-members: \$10.00

Summertime in Massachusetts is filled with unique seasonal wonders and mysteries. What insects can you hear, and do you know how to tell the temperature by crickets chirping? Why do we see turtles sitting on top of logs on sunny summer days? What animals are raising their young and how do different wildlife species survive in summer conditions?

Learn the how and why of summer phenomena,
as well as ways to explore, enjoy, and protect nature close to home.

Registration is required:

<https://www.massaudubon.org/program-catalog/mass-audubon-education/79208-nature-of-summer-online>

