



June-July 2022

* * * **ANNOUNCEMENTS** * * *

BIRD MONITORING EFFORTS IN PROGRESS

The Club's 2022 nestbox and grassland bird conservation projects are now in full swing. Volunteers John Egan and Jon Skinner hit the ground running at High Ridge Wildlife Management Area in April, repairing and re-siting 49 nestboxes while bluebirds and early-arriving Tree Swallows flew around excitedly, ready to claim a box. An attempt is being made to make the boxes less attractive to House Wrens (nestbox competition) and Black Bears (predation). Avid birder Jon is being assisted by Will Durkin in observing and monitoring this season. We're still lacking a volunteer to observe and count Bobolinks at High Ridge WMA, but Jon and Will are counting any Bobolinks detected. This area deserves more attention to the grassland species, which are in decline throughout Worcester County. Please contact warerivernatureclub@yahoo.com if you would like to help.

Many thanks to Doug Wipf who is once again monitoring the nestboxes and open fields at the DCR Watershed Prison Camp area in Rutland, with Ted Purcell backing him up. It was John Egan, handyman extraordinaire, to the rescue again at this location in early May, since many boxes needed to be stabilized. By the end of the month the majority of the 13 nestboxes were filled with pairs of bluebirds and Tree Swallows.

We're very grateful for consistent and thorough Bobolink monitoring by Bill Platenik at Moore State Park, in spite of discouraging observations over the past couple of years. The field mowing schedule, particularly of the two main hayfields where Bobolinks have previously nested in high numbers, has been erratic and disorganized, resulting in poorer quality grassland suitable for nesting. Numbers are low this year, perhaps a combination of poor habitat and overall species decline.

Informal observations of the nestboxes placed by WRNC are being made by Christy Barnes and Bill, and we appreciate this work. So far only Tree Swallows are using the boxes. Bill has noted that someone has placed additional nestboxes *with perches* at the Park. It's recommended that perches NOT be attached to boxes as they are unnecessary and may make it easier for predators to access eggs and nestlings. We've written to the Park to ask that they remove the perches, but there has been no response. Unfortunately, our attempts to communicate and cooperate with DCR Parks regarding field mowing, nesting birds, and general nestbox upkeep (by WRNC) have also been ignored.

Another big THANK YOU goes out to Mike Perkins who answered the call for monitoring help at DCR Watershed's Riis Hill property in Barre. Mike is keeping an eye on many kestrel boxes placed by East Quabbin Land Trust and has added the kestrel box at Riis Hill to his route. A pair of kestrels has been present there since early spring and appears to be nesting; the male is consistently present around the property, and the female was/is presumably in the box incubating eggs. In addition to the kestrel box, there are several traditional nestboxes that were installed/restored by John Egan in 2021. One of Mike's first jobs was to re-install one of the boxes that had fallen down. The swallows were grateful because the ratio of birds to boxes was lopsided, and a couple of pairs were tussling for territory. All boxes are now inhabited by swallows and bluebirds this season. Near the end of May a male Bobolink was present and singing at the hilltop field. Although not a high-quality grassland due to many past years unmown, the field is now being cut regularly late in the season by DCR and is a bit more suitable for Bobolinks. Kudos to Mike and John for their work on this property!

WANTED: YOUR SPRING WILDFLOWER PHOTOGRAPHS

Conditions this spring were beneficial for our beautiful spring wildflowers, some of them ephemeral and glimpsed for only a short period. Were you one of the many people who were struck by the bountiful Lady's Slippers and other wildflowers this May/early-June? We're compiling images for the next installment on our web page's *FROM THE FIELD*, and we welcome your photos of Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), Indian Cucumber Root (*Medeola virginiana*), Trout Lily (*Erythronium Americanum*), One-flowered Cancer Root (*Orobancha uniflora*), and lots more. Send your photos, with locations noted, to warerivernatureclub@yahoo.com and let us know if we may use your name for credit.

NATURE-JOURNALING CLUB

Athol Bird & Nature Club member Katrina Walton would like to start a nature journal club for central Massachusetts. What a wonderful idea! To learn more about nature journaling visit <https://johnmuirlaws.com/>

Anyone interested in working with her to get this club started may contact her via text (1.978.424.1445) or email thewaltons@gardnerale.com . The ABNC/Millers River Environmental Center, 100 Main Street, Athol, supports this effort and invites everyone to its July 31st Sunday open house (1:00 to 4:00 PM) hosted by Clare Green and Katrina Walton to explore nature journaling. You do not need to be an artist or writer to enjoy this activity. All are welcome!

SANDHILL CRANES NEST FOR THIRD SEASON IN HARDWICK

A pair of Sandhill Cranes nested for the third time in a secluded marsh in Hardwick in May and produced two young, both of which have so far survived. (In this species it's common for only one chick to survive to fledging.) It's presumed that this has been the same pair each year, although one of the pair could be new individual. They have chosen the same nesting location every year in early spring and followed a remarkably habitual pattern of slow, hidden movement of the family from the original nesting site to the preferred summering patch in June. While two very young chicks were lost in 2020, the pair successfully raised two young that fledged and survived until at least November in 2021. The family will be under scrutiny in the coming months, and it's hoped the two new colts will grow and thrive.



Sandhill Cranes in Hardwick, June 9, 2022 by Alan Rawle.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

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MASSACHUSETTS BUTTERFLY CLUB

BUTTERFLY WALK AT MASS AUDUBON'S BROAD MEADOW BROOK SANCTUARY WORCESTER

Sunday June 12th, 10 a.m.

Leader: Martha Gach



Hoary Edge by Tom Murray

In addition to other more common species, participants will be on the lookout for Hoary Edge Skipper and possibly Harris' Checkerspot. This will be a slow-paced but fairly long hike along the Cardinal and Powerline Trails. For meeting location, contact the leader at mgach@massaudubon.org or (508) 981-8833. Postponed or cancelled if it rains.

MASS AUDUBON

FERNS FOR BEGINNERS

Wachusett Meadow
Wildlife Sanctuary
Princeton

Sunday June 12th 1-3 p.m.

Leader: Alison O'Hare

Members \$15 Non-Members \$20

Massachusetts is home to more than 50 species of ferns that create a lush ground layer in woods and other habitats. Learn how to look for the characteristics that make each one unique, using the ferns we encounter on this gentle stroll to the Fern Forest Trail.



By the end of the program, you'll have a better understanding of how ferns differ from other plants and from one another, an appreciation of fern structures and how to observe them, and the ability to identify at least 6 different species of fern.

Registration is required.

[REGISTER](#)



WACHUSETT GREENWAYS ANNUAL GATHERING

Thursday, June 16th 5 p.m.

**Trout Brook Reservation
Manning Street, Holden**



Let's celebrate in person, starting with a picnic at 5 p.m. Following our annual review, we'll enjoy a gentle walk on the Mass Central Rail Trail at 6:15.

Bring your picnic supper, and we'll provide dessert and beverages. Meet at the picnic pavilion sunshine or rain to share trail tales and mark Greenways' 27 years of connecting our communities with trails and greenways.

**[Trout Brook Recreation Area - Google Maps](#)
wachusettgreenways@gmail.com**

PRINCETON OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE – PRINCETON HIKES!



*North Beaver Pond at Cobb Brook, early spring.
Photo by Princeton Open Space Committee.*

HIKE AT COBB BROOK TRAIL, PRINCETON Saturday June 18th 9 a.m.

We'll hike an easy-to-moderate 3-mile loop on this new trail.

HIKE AT THOMAS PRINCE SCHOOL NATURE TRAILS PRINCETON Wednesday, June 22nd 1 p.m.

This will be an easy 2.5 -mile hike.



For more information or to register:
TrilaroundprincetonMA@gmail.com

MASS AUDUBON

Online program—

THE WONDER OF SPRING: FIREFLIES

Tuesday June 21st 7 – 8 p.m.

Instructors:

Doug Lowry: Adult Learning Specialist, Southeast Region

Don Salvatore: Firefly expert and science educator

Members: \$15 Non-Members: \$20



Black firefly (Lucida atra) by Tom Murray.

Watching fireflies brighten up fields and meadows is a summertime favorite, but did you know these dancing beetle lights are species-specific and that you can learn to read their flash patterns? Learn why fireflies light up and how to identify them by their flash patterns. You'll also learn more about a wide array of environmental issues these lightning bugs indicate, including climate change, habitat loss, light pollution, and pollinator protection. Familiarize yourself with our nationwide Mass Audubon community science project, and local opportunities to get involved.

Registration is required.

[REGISTER](#)

MASS AUDUBON



Chestnut-sided Warbler by Doug Wipf

Online program—

BREEDING BIRDS

Tuesday June 28th

7– 8:30 p.m.

Instructors:

Kathy Seymour & Jane Sender

Members \$20 Non-members \$24

Summer is the perfect time to watch Massachusetts birds pair up, build nests, and fledge their young. In this course, you will explore the elaborate displays and songs male birds use to attract a mate and defend territory and the subsequent 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.

[REGISTER](#)

MASSACHUSETTS BUTTERFLY CLUB & FORBUSH BIRD CLUB

BIRDS AND BUTTERFLIES WALK

Leicester

Sunday July 17th 9 a.m.

Leader: Dolores Price



Viceroy by Alan Rawle

Meet at the Route 56 overlook to Worcester Airport in Leicester where the walk will begin. We'll also explore the wooded trail from Mulberry Street to Kettle Brook/Manville Street. Bring binoculars.

It's helpful, but not necessary, if you have binoculars that can focus on close subjects (8-10 feet).

Contact the leader at 508-839-2299 if you need more information.