

May 2021



## \* \* \* **ANNOUNCEMENTS** \* \* \*

### **BIRD MONITORING SEASON BEGINS**

Ware River Nature Club's current conservation projects include nestbox installation and monitoring at four sites and grassland bird monitoring at three main locations.

#### **NESTBOX PROJECTS**

John & Kathy Egan, Wendy Howes, and Alan Rawle, with support from Mass Wildlife and DCR Watershed staff, continued to clean, repair, and replace nestboxes for bluebirds, swallows, and wrens at High Ridge WMA in Westminster and Moore State Park in Paxton. This spring we added DCR Ware River Watershed's Prison Camp fields and Riis Hill property in Barre to our nestbox project, thanks especially to John's energy, ingenuity, and a truck well-equipped with the necessary tools, ladder, and hardware.

Many thanks to Jon Skinner of Leominster, an avid birder who often visits High Ridge WMA and is our new nestbox monitor there. He'll make regular observations of 50+ standard nestboxes as well as a kestrel box. Jon is a skilled web-site designer and wasted no time in creating a Google map of the nestbox trail, which he completed just as bluebirds were beginning to lay eggs in a couple of the boxes.

Moore State Park nestboxes that were restored last year held up well over the winter and have already started to attract bluebirds and swallows. Christy Barnes and Robert Bertin have volunteered to observe nestbox occupants and activities this season, and their help is much appreciated.

Doug Wipf of Rutland is coordinating this season's monitoring of the Prison Camp nestboxes and fields, and he'll have two more sets of eyes checking things out when Ted Purcell and Linda Mueller make visits to that location.

#### **GRASSLAND BIRDS INITIATIVE**

Bobolinks are fortunate if they can find any places where they can nest and not have to face the risk of nesting failure due to early mowing. The Club is trying to monitor Bobolinks and other grassland birds at a few locations where their habitat is protected. One of the most productive sites is Moore State Park, and we're grateful to Bill and Carol Platenik for their dedicated and detailed work here.

Given last summer's over-crowding and lack of enforcement of dog-leashing requirements at the Park, as well as the high rate of nesting failures caused by June mowing of almost all hayfields throughout the region, we're all concerned about the impact on the Park's population of these charismatic birds and what we'll find in 2021. Thanks to the Plateniks we'll have access to that information. While we hope for good numbers of Bobolinks to return to MSP this month, it's important to document population declines if they do occur. Meanwhile, the Club is trying to secure permission to place a small informational poster at the Park explaining Bobolink nesting practices and life history. It's unfortunate that we have thus far had no success contacting the appropriate authority.

Our nestbox observers at High Ridge WMA and Prison Camp fields will be able to keep a cursory eye on Bobolinks and, in some cases, Savannah Sparrows, but we could really use volunteer help to evaluate grassland bird numbers and nestings. Three other fields that are smaller and are observed intermittently are in Rutland, Hubbardston, and Barre. Anyone interested in helping watch one of these smaller sites or pitching in at the larger locations can write to [warerivernatureclub@yahoo.com](mailto:warerivernatureclub@yahoo.com) for details.

An easy way we can all help many bird species is to engage others in friendly conversation and spread the word about the great number of birds that nest on or near the ground, including Indigo Buntings, Song Sparrows, Black-and-White Warblers, Eastern Towhees, Ovenbirds, and, of course, Bobolinks.

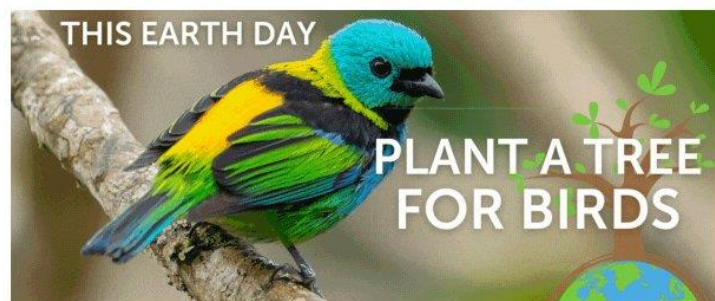
If you are aware of a hayfield owned by someone who might consider adopting a late (after July 10<sup>th</sup>) mowing schedule in order to protect Bobolinks, please let us know.

## **DONATION TO AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY**

Habitat loss remains the most significant reason for declining bird populations —that's why tree planting is so essential in giving birds the habitat they need to survive. American Bird Conservancy has already planted more than 6 million trees and shrubs for birds. On Earth Day,

Ware River Nature Club made a gift of \$100 toward tree/shrub planting projects and protection of a portion of an acre of habitat to help birds in decline.

ABC plants trees and shrubs at international priority sites and plays a key role in the reforestation of habitat to help birds in decline.



## **AVOIDING AND RESOLVING WILDLIFE CONFLICTS**

Some wildlife species are drawn to residential areas because they offer food, shelter, and safety from natural predators. But in exchange, they risk running into trouble with their human neighbors. You can control the way you experience the wildlife around you – enjoying the wonder of watching animals move through their habitats, not yours. To do so, you just need to understand why animals might be attracted to your property, and then take some preventive steps.

Thanks to Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife for this summary!

### **KEEP WILDLIFE WILD**

- Watch wildlife from a distance
- Never approach, handle, feed, or attempt to move a wild animal

### **ELIMINATE ACCESS TO SHELTER**

- Seal potential entry points in attics or chimneys and under buildings, decks, and crawl spaces with 1/4-inch mesh hardware cloth, boards, or metal flashing.
- Trim tree limbs near rooftops and attach sheets of metal flashing around building corners

### **BE SMART ABOUT THE GARBAGE**

- Store garbage in a building
- Use garbage cans with latching lids that do not open if pushed over
- If you have curbside pickup, wait until that morning to take out the trash
- Keep dumpster lids closed and latched

### **COMPOST RESPONSIBLY**

- Secure your compost to keep wildlife out
- Never compost animal matter, which can become smelly and attract wildlife

### **FEED BIRDS THE NATURAL WAY**

- Plant native plants in your yard that provide food and shelter for birds and other species without attracting rodents and other animals

### **PROTECT POULTRY AND LIVESTOCK**

- Secure your poultry and livestock in a predator-proof pen, protected by electric fencing or guard animals
- Store food indoors or in an animal-proof container

### **BE A RESPONSIBLE PET OWNER**

- Keep your pet's vaccinations up to date
- Keep your pet on a leash and under control at all times
- Don't feed pets outside unless you must; if that's the case, clean up after.
- Don't feed feral cats
- At night (dusk until dawn), bring your pets inside and lock pet doors to keep other animals out

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

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### ATHOL BIRD & NATURE CLUB



## EARLY BIRD BIRDING WITH JEFF JOHNSTONE

Fridays at 7 a.m.:

May 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, & 21<sup>st</sup> Sunday, May 9<sup>th</sup>

Meet at Miller's River Environmental Center, 100 Main Street, Athol before heading out to explore the North Quabbin area for spring migrant birds. These are great opportunities for the novice birder to learn from one of our best field naturalists.

Come for as long as your schedule allows. Severe weather cancels.

Info: Jeff Johnstone, 978-249-9052.

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### PRINCETON OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE--PRINCETON HIKES!

## FIRST HIKE OF 2021

Saturday, May 8<sup>th</sup>

From Krashes Field across several Princeton Land Trust properties to the beaver pond off Route 62. It is a 3.5 mile hike, rated easy-moderate.

Limited to 20 participants.

To register for this hike and get details:

[TrailAroundPrincetonMA@GMail.com](mailto:TrailAroundPrincetonMA@GMail.com)

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



Muskrat

Photo by Alan Rawle



MASS AUDUBON

Online program—

# THE NATURE OF SPRING

Tuesday May 11<sup>th</sup> 7 – 8:30 p.m.

Instructors:

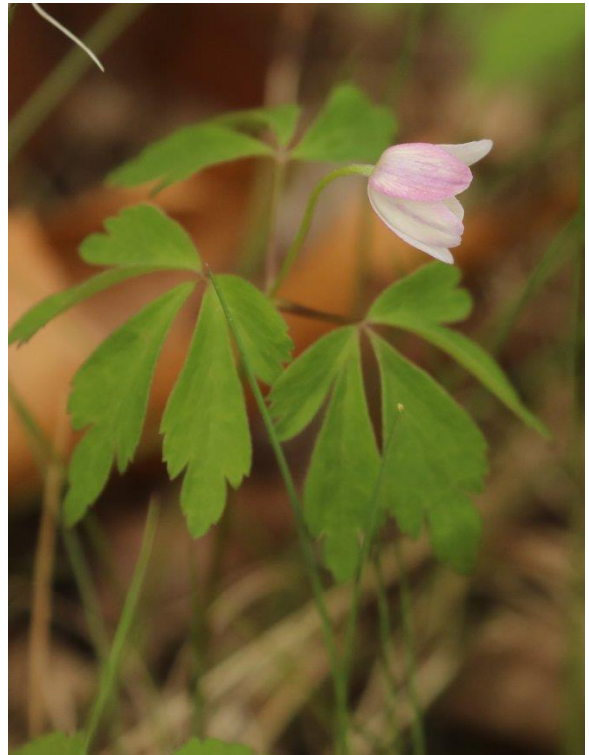
Patti Steinman - Education Coordinator, Arcadia

Doug Lowry - Adult Learning Specialist - Southeast Region

Lucy Gertz - Statewide Adult Education Manager

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

Springtime in Massachusetts is filled with unique seasonal wonders and mysteries. What animals are making noises in the evenings and why? Who is migrating back or waking from their winter slumbers? What kind of wildflowers are popping up near the sidewalks and woodland trails? This online program will introduce the seasonal dynamics of nature in spring, and provide ideas and resources for observing, appreciating, and supporting wildlife near home during this season.



Registration is required:

<https://www.massaudubon.org/program-catalog/mass-audubon-education/78359-the-nature-of-spring-online>

ATHOL BIRD & NATURE CLUB

ZOOM Program—

# WHAT THE CAMERA SEES

with Ernie Leblanc

Wednesday May 12th 7:00 p.m.

Have you ever taken a picture, viewed it on the computer screen, and found some unexpected results? Several years ago, Club member Ernie LeBlanc purchased a camera to carry along during birding trips and other outdoor excursions. Join him in this presentation and see what images the camera captured – some surprising, some artistic, and some even in focus!!

Register in advance for this webinar:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_\\_3YAJ0\\_cQz2Oh9GoYJ15pg](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN__3YAJ0_cQz2Oh9GoYJ15pg)

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FORBUSH BIRD CLUB

## BIRDING DCR KRISTOFF FARM, STERLING

Saturday, May 15<sup>th</sup> 8 a.m. – mid-day

Leader: Wendy Howes [warerivernatureclub@yahoo.com](mailto:warerivernatureclub@yahoo.com)



From the late -1940s to the mid-1960s, this 600-acre property was a major agricultural venture primarily operating as a pig farm. A variety of habitats are represented, making this an interesting birding location. Gated entrance at the end of Merrill Road off Route 140 in Sterling. To register, get more details, and keep in touch about changes, contact the leader.

FORBUSH BIRD CLUB

## BIRDING BOLTON FLATS & PINE HILL WMA, LANCASTER

Thursday May 20<sup>th</sup> 6- 9 p.m. [Rain date: Friday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>]

Leader: Bart Kamp (508-753-7463) [bartdk@charter.net](mailto:bartdk@charter.net)



Virginia Rail

Photo by Tom Murray

The first part of this field trip will take place at Bolton Flats. Participants will meet at the parking lot on Route 117 at 6 p.m. We'll be searching for rails, bitterns, and shorebirds. The Pine Hill WMA parking area is on Pine Hill Road, off Harvard Road, in Lancaster, 1 ½ miles west of the junction of Routes 110 and 117, and meet-up will be at 7:30 p.m. Target species here are Whip-poor-will and American Woodcock. Please register in advance by contacting the leader.

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PRINCETON OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE-PRINCETON HIKES!

## CALAMINT HILL TRAILS HIKE

Saturday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>

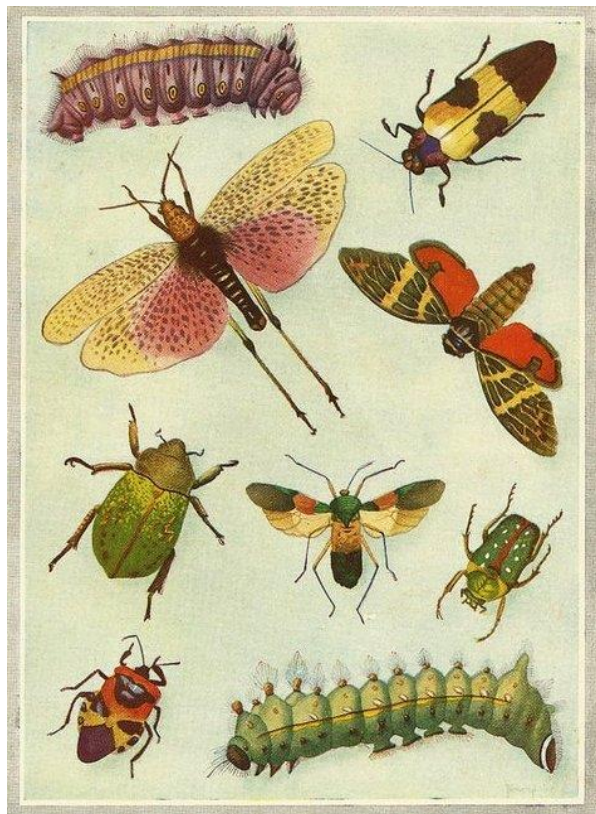
Easy-to-moderate 3-mile hike. Limited to 20 participants.

To register for this hike and get details:

[TrailAroundPrincetonMA@GMail.com](mailto:TrailAroundPrincetonMA@GMail.com)

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

## WARE RIVER NATURE CLUB



### BUGS FOR BEGINNERS STONE BRIDGE POND, TEMPLETON [DCR Ware River Watershed]

Wednesday May 26<sup>th</sup> 5:30 p.m.  
Leader: Tom Murray

Our monthly educational program will take place outdoors, a hands-on learning experience along with a talk by naturalist, photographer and insect identification master Tom Murray. While we're exploring pond-side and along a small portion of trail, Tom will teach us how to tell an insect from

a true bug, spiders, millipedes etc. then explain the basics of taxonomy and all the different families of insects. He'll also demonstrate how and where to find insects and some live-collecting methods for observing and photographing these creatures.

Besides being interested in all kinds of wildlife, Tom is the author of and major contributing photographer for the field guide *Insects of New England & New York*. He is a regular contributor/editor for BugGuide.net. With the assistance of other amateur and professional entomologists, he has documented previously-unknown distribution ranges for numerous insects as well as new county, state and North American records.

Pre-registration is required.

Contact [warerivernatureclub@yahoo.com](mailto:warerivernatureclub@yahoo.com)





## FORBUSH BIRD CLUB



Song Sparrow

Photo by Doug Wipf

**BIRDING**  
**RAUSCHER FARM,**  
**CLINTON**  
**Saturday May 29<sup>th</sup> 7 -11 a.m.**  
**Leader: David Ammerman**  
**(508-930-0356)**  
**[ammsus@comcast.net](mailto:ammsus@comcast.net)**

Explore Rauscher Farm in late May! The pond, meadows, marsh, and forest attract migrants passing through and an abundance of our native breeding birds.

Please wear footwear appropriate for hiking over rocks  
and a couple of wet areas.

Meet at 7 a.m. at the parking area, 29 Clamshell Road, Clinton.

[GPS: 42.402529, -71.677860]

Please register in advance by contacting the leader.