

October 2023



* * * ANNOUNCEMENTS * * *

COOL SCIENCE ARTWORK COMPETITION

Cool Science is a free and public art competition held each fall for all K-12 artists. Cool Science is a collaboration between the UMass Lowell, UMass Boston, Massachusetts College of Art and Design, University of Kansas, and Kansas City Art Institute. Students from any location around the world are welcome to participate.

This year, young artists are being asked to answer one of the following challenge questions with a visual work of art:

- 1) Sunlight is the largest source of energy on the surface of the Earth. How does sunlight fuel extreme weather (e.g., extreme storms)?
- 2) Increases in carbon dioxide in the air lead to more extreme weather. Animal homes do not make carbon dioxide on average (they are Net Zero). What can we learn from animals to help us get our homes closer to Net Zero?
- 3) What simple thing could you do now to better prepare for extreme weather in the future?

During this winter, the best entries will be selected for display on public buses in Massachusetts and Kansas in 2024. The honorees will be recognized at our art exhibit celebrations next year.

For further information about the contest, please visit:

<https://www.coolsience.net/artwork-guidelines-rules>



7 REASONS NOT TO CLEAN UP YOUR FALL GARDEN

by Benjamin Vogt, author of *A New Garden Ethic: Cultivating Defiant Compassion for an Uncertain Future*

My belief in leaving the garden alone in fall was cemented on a December morning, when a robin landed on a garden chest where I keep my tools. It balanced on the edge where some snow was melting and dripping to the deck below. The robin arched its head downward and pecked at each droplet. Soon a bluebird landed right behind the robin on the edge of the chest. Then another bluebird. All three were now lined up, ready to take their turn at the melting snow.

I have little doubt that if I hadn't left the garden up, creating a welcoming space, I'd never have seen them. And I have little doubt that winter wouldn't have meant so much, or been easier to get through, without the living beauty outside my door in a "dead" season so many of us gardeners unnecessarily loathe. Here are seven of the many reasons to leave your fall garden standing.

1. Why Work When It's Cold?

Look, I'm tired; you're tired. So leave the garden alone. Plus it's getting cold out. Do you *really* want to be outside working? Isn't there a football game on or some pumpkin-spice latte to savor? Let the garden be for your own health and sanity.

2. Wildlife is Hibernating

Lots and lots of insects and frogs, and who knows what else, are out there in your garden overwintering in leaf litter, on twigs, even in the top layer of soil. What happens when you "clean up" the leaves and chop down the plants? You might be tossing out a black swallowtail chrysalis or a mantis egg case, or stepping on a mourning cloak butterfly.



3. Protect Your Plants

Leaving the perennials standing will help them gather snow. That snow in turn will insulate the roots when it gets really cold and also add moisture to the soil. That's a double win for low-maintenance gardening.

Photo by Anne Greene

4. Discover a New Dimension

You won't want to miss frosty mornings when every leaf, stem and seed head is accented with fascinating patterns of silvery shadows — halos of ice and snow that make the garden exquisite. And did you know that a snowflake is a fractal — a mathematical equation — just like coastlines, mountain ranges, trees, sunflowers and even the human circulatory system?

Everything in nature can be mapped out with math, and nowhere is that more obvious than with a winter frost. Take your kids outside and expose them to a healthy double groan — math and nature.

Photo by Ted Purcell

5. Enjoy New Neighbors

Leaving up your plants welcomes all sorts of wildlife you'd never see, even though they're quite common. One year a sharp-shinned hawk visited because juncos were taking refuge in the thick garden cover. The hawk did eventually nab a meal, but that's OK — the garden was helping everyone, doing what nature does best and right out the back door. What a cure for seasonal affective disorder.



6. Even Robins Will Stop by and Surprise You

Did you know there are robins around in winter? They tend to roost in groups, going about only when thirsty or hungry. A heated birdbath is great, but so are all of those fermenting berries on shrubs and trees. Lots of other songbirds will also be enjoying seeds from standing perennial cover, too.



Photo by Alan Rawle

7. Gardens Thrive in All Four Seasons

When the first spring blooms arise, you won't feel like you missed them (as much), because so much was going on in your garden all winter long — leaving the plants up makes winter seem shorter. Those first spring flowers won't seem as much like a relief as a confirmation that a garden never really sleeps, and you'll be seeing that firsthand in all four seasons.

WINTER FINCH FORECAST by Tyler Hoar

Excerpted from <https://finchnetwork.org/winter-finch-forecast-2023-2024>

This year there will be a mosaic of winter finch movements differing in intensity and area across all species. Forecasts apply mainly to Ontario and adjacent provinces and states.

The boreal forest has generally a poor to below average cone crop this year that is bookended with bumper cone crops in Alaska and Newfoundland. Coastal areas to the south on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts have above-average cone crops, which seem to quickly drop in quality as one progresses inland. Large areas of the boreal forest across interior Canada have a very poor to poor cone crop. Only the Alder crop appears to be above average across the boreal forest.

The southern edge of the eastern boreal forest from Lake Superior eastward to the Atlantic coast and southward to the northeastern states has extensive areas of bumper Eastern White Pine crop. This area also contains an above-average deciduous tree seed crop and excellent fruiting crop.

Most **Pine Grosbeaks** should remain in the eastern boreal forest with some flight into their traditional wintering areas in southeastern Canada and northern New England states.

In the east, many **Purple Finches** are expected to overwinter in southern Canada and the northeastern United States. Meanwhile from the upper Midwest states westward, there should be a stronger flight southward through the middle of the United States. Don't be surprised if, as winter progresses, a late movement in January and February occurs into the Carolinas as eastern crops are depleted.



For **Common and Hoary Redpolls**, expect a moderate flight south out of the boreal forest.

With the poor White Spruce crop in much of the boreal forest, there should be a moderate to possibly strong flight of **Pine Siskins** southward this fall.

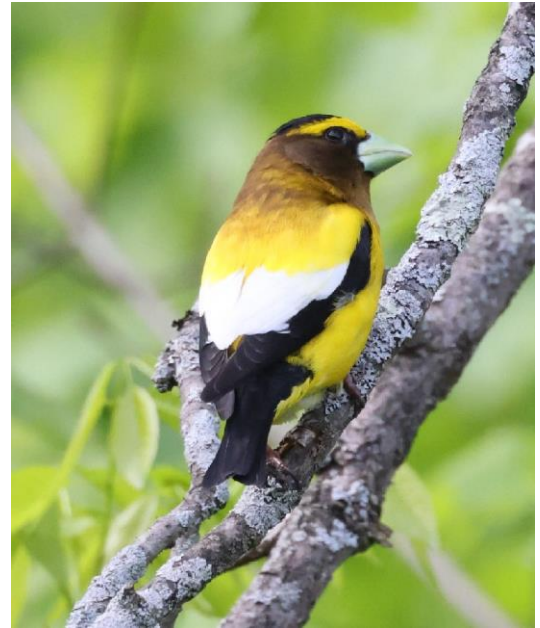
As noted above there is an excellent and widespread Eastern White Pine cone crop in place, and **Red Crossbills** Type 12 have been around in their usual areas in the northeastern states since June-July.

In the middle of July, however, Types 2 and 4 started invading the Great Lakes area, Ontario, Maritime provinces, and the northeastern states from across the continent, and there are growing subtle signs that Type 3 might be coming eastward as well. These types will all be hitting the bumper Eastern White Pine crop until it is exhausted. The **White-winged Crossbills** will probably hit it too.

The Red Crossbill types are usually impossible to identify without recordings of their flight calls. Recordings can be made with a smartphone and identified to type. Matt Young (info@finchnetwork.org) will identify types if you email him your recordings or upload them to an eBird checklist.

Eastward from Lake Superior is a bumper crop of fruit on Chokecherry, and above-average berry and deciduous seed crops. With this diverse and widespread food source available in the east, expect most **Evening Grosbeaks** to remain in the boreal forest and adjacent areas of Central Ontario, southern Quebec, the Maritime provinces, New England states, and New York this winter.

Red-breasted Nuthatch populations in the boreal forest should have small flights this year. Balsam Fir in the boreal forest, which is not infested with Spruce Budworms, has a good cone crop. This crop should hold many nuthatches closer to home this winter.



Evening Grosbeak

Photo by Alan Rawle



Red-breasted Nuthatch

Photo by Anne Greene



CONFERENCE REGISTRATION HERE!

Registration closes **October 8**

**TIME TO SIGN UP FOR A WEEKEND OF LEARNING,
TRACKING, NETWORKING**

October 20- 22

Prindle Pond Conference Center, Charlton, MA



PRESENTERS

Keynote- Dr. Kersey Lawrence
Trailing is a Love Song to Tracking

Raymond Hardy- Gleanings from a life with White-tail Deer

Daniel Hansche- Seeking Balance of Body & Mind in Wildlife Tracking

Ana Maria Arroyo- Tracking & Camera Trapping at Ithaca College

Connie Studer- Processing Wildlife Skulls

Amy Martinez Beal- Wildlife Track Casting 101

Bob Etzweiler- Wild Turkeys: A Lifelong Obsession

Marisa Cyr- Wildlife Tracking with Tiny Humans

Kelly Klingler- Teaching the Next Generation of Conservation Biologists

Will Close- Intro to Nature Journaling

Annika Baldwin- Bringing Mass Mammals to the Community

Plus: Used Book Sale, Camp Fires, Night Hike, Field Sessions

northeastwildlifetrackers.org

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UPCOMING EVENTS

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ATHOL BIRD & NATURE CLUB



Swamp Sparrow

Photo by Alan Rawle

EARLY BIRD BIRDING

with Jeff Johnstone

Fridays: October 6th & 13th

7:30 a.m.

Join Jeff for one of his traditional fall migration field trips. Meet at the Millers River Environmental Center 100 Main Street, Athol
Call him at 978 249-9052 to reserve your spot.



Red-bellied Woodpecker and Brown-headed Cowbird

Photo by Anne Greene

FORBUSH BIRD CLUB

BIRDING at RAUSCHER FARM CLINTON

Saturday October 7th

7 – 11 a.m.

Leader: David Ammerman

ammsus@comcast.net

508-930-0356



The diverse habitat of Rauscher Farm and adjacent DCR property includes Clamshell Pond, meadows, a small marsh, power-line cut, and mature oak and hemlock forests. It is an eBird hotspot, with 152 species recorded to date! Please wear footwear appropriate for hiking over rocks and a couple of wet areas. Meet at the parking area, 29 Clamshell Road, Clinton.

[GPS: 42.402529, -71.677860]



FORBUSH BIRD CLUB

BIRDING at HIGH RIDGE
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA
WESTMINSTER/GARDNER
Sunday October 8th 8:30 a.m.
Leader: Wendy Howes



Join us to look for fall sparrows, thrushes, and other short-distance migrants as well as arriving species that may stay the winter. This richly diverse habitat includes old fields, mature woods, and wetland areas. Meet at the Overlook Road entrance. Directions: From Westminster Center, turn right onto Bacon St. Drive 0.6 mile and bear left at the fork onto Overlook Rd. Continue to the parking area before the gate.

Please pre-register for this trip by Friday, October 6th: warerivernatureclub@yahoo.com

NORTH CENTRAL MASS NATURE JOURNAL CLUB

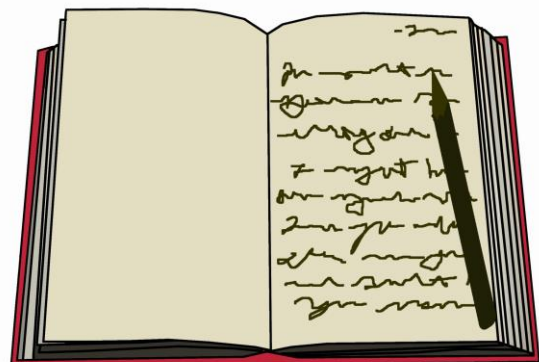
MOCCASIN BROOK BROOKS WOODLAND PRESERVE PETERSHAM

Tuesday October 10th 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.



Join us for a relaxing stroll in lovely woodland and some stream-side nature journaling. We will be walking along Moccasin Brook with notebooks and writing instruments in hand. All are welcome!

For directions and more information,
email Katrina at
thewaltons@gardnerale.com





WACHUSETT
MOUNTAIN
HALFWAY HIKE
Saturday October 14th
9 a.m.

This will be a moderate 4-mile route, planned to avoid the crowds!

HIKING THE
FOUR CORNERS
LOOP,
PRINCETON
Wednesday
October 18th 2 p.m.



This is an easy-to-moderate 3-mile loop. The route includes open fields, woodland, road walking and a lovely view of the Ware River and watershed area.

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

FORBUSH BIRD CLUB



BIRDING LAKE QUABOAG AND VICINITY

Sunday October 22nd 7:30 a.m.

Leader: Rodney Jenkins (508-757-5010)

Lake Quaboag can be an excellent spot for waterfowl not usually seen inland.

We will also visit other spots around the Brookfields looking for mid-fall migrants and new arrivals. Meet at the Lake Quaboag parking lot on Shore Road in Brookfield.



Common Goldeneye

Photo by Bill Platenik

WARE RIVER NATURE CLUB

HIKING QUABBIN RESERVOIR RESERVATION: 5,000 MILES

with Jim Morelly

Wednesday October 25th 7 p.m.

Rutland Public Library 280 Main Street (Route 122A)



What started out as casual hiking around the Quabbin Reservoir Reservation turned into Jim's quest to log 5,000 miles on foot while observing wildlife and taking photographs. He has set out numerous non-intrusive trail cameras enabling him to study wildlife behaviors, populations, and movement. This twelve-year journey has resulted in a wealth of unique wildlife experiences. Please join us as Jim shares his stories about these wildlife encounters.

To follow Jim's terrific blog
go to:

hikingcamera.blogspot.com/



PRINCETON OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE - PRINCETON HIKES!

HIKE at MOUNT JEFFERSON CONSERVATION AREA HUBBARDSTON

Saturday October 28th 9 a.m.



This will be an easy-to-moderate hike of 4 miles,
through woodland and along field edges.

For more information or to register:

TrailaroundprincetonMA@gmail.com

WARE RIVER NATURE CLUB



Dark-eyed Junco

Photo by Doug Wipf

BIRDING & NATURE HIKE HARVARD POND PETERSHAM

Sunday October 29th 9 a.m. - noon

Join us for a walk around this scenic pond to look for ducks, fall sparrows, and resident woodland species. We'll also be on the lookout for interesting fungi, animal sign, and other natural features.

This is an easy and easy-going hike of about 3 miles.

To sign up, contact warerivernatureclub@yahoo.com.



Royal Fern

Photo by Doug Wipf

Mid-September Monarchs

Photos by Bill Platenik

