



April 2026

**\* \* \* NATURE NEWS \* \* \***

### HELPING CLIFF SWALLOWS

Mara Silver of Swallow Conservation.org has been given permission to install a free-standing Cliff Swallow nesting structure about 50 yards from the Rowe (Franklin County) Town Hall. This follows her major effort over the past year to convince the Town Hall employees to leave the existing, very successful swallow colony on the building where it has been for many years. Some employees are objecting to the birds flying around them outside, as well as the presence of bird droppings during the breeding season.



*Mike Lentz photo*

The mitigation structure is a last desperate effort by Mara to save this colony. The Town officials would not budge, even after receiving letters from all over the state, and even after Mara and other volunteers were present during the 2025 nesting season to monitor the colony and even clean up after the birds. There is a law preventing removal of active nests, eggs, and/or nesting birds, so Town officials are refusing to let Mara put up her special clay half-nests and said they would hose down any efforts by the birds to build under the eaves on the Town Hall.

The mitigation structure will face the pond that the swallows feed over. Mara is collaborating with the Rowe Park Department on this project, and they are supportive of the swallows. The cost to have the structure built is \$2,400, and donations for the project are welcome. WRNC's Advisory Group recently approved a donation of \$200 to the project. See [swallowconservation.org](http://swallowconservation.org) to learn more.

## ***MOTHS ARE FLYING!***

Except for some species that can remain active in winter, moths generally start emerging as soon as spring temperatures rise above freezing. When we experienced a brief period of unseasonable warmth in early March, early-emerging species were out and coming to lights.



←  
*The half-wing (Phigalia titea)*



→  
*Ashen pinion (Lithophane antennata)*

How many types of moths have been found in Massachusetts? Currently there are 3,026 species of moth on the Massachusetts list, based on the >341,000 records in the Mass Moths database.



*Morrison's sallow (Eupsilia morrisoni)*



The data in the Mass Moths database has been taken from several sources, including public and private collections, notebooks, literature and online databases. By far the largest source has been from the professional moth survey work performed by Mark Mello for the Lloyd Center for the Environment, South Dartmouth, MA. The more important online databases include [digbio.com](http://digbio.com), [scan-bugs.org](http://scan-bugs.org), [bugguide.net](http://bugguide.net), [butterfliesandmoths.org](http://butterfliesandmoths.org), and [inaturalist.org](http://inaturalist.org).

A gallery of moth photographs from the 2025 season may be viewed on our website. Go to <https://www.warerrivernatureclub.org/from-the-field> to see the wide range of species found in our own backyard.

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

## **ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE**

As spring gradually makes itself known, Club volunteers are working the nuts and bolts that keep the Club running. The Advisory Group has been meeting virtually over the past few weeks, engaged in discussions about possible initiatives.

We're gathering information on special natural history education opportunities in the region, intending to eventually offer a scholarship. Many conservation and natural sciences organizations offer classes, seminars, and other opportunities for learning more about the natural world.

We would like to revisit our Grassland Bird Initiatives project and develop educational outreach materials. Grassland birds are declining faster and in greater numbers than any other suite of birds. Locally, Bobolinks are imperiled, and Eastern Meadowlarks are disappearing. We'd like to publicize concerns and point out helpful strategies for protecting these species.

Meanwhile, bluebird trail volunteers have hit the ground running. John and Kathy Egan have been out inspecting and cleaning nestboxes at High Ridge WMA in Gardner/Westminster and other locations. Doug Wipf will be starting his monitoring duties as bluebirds begin nesting at DCR Watershed's Prison Camp area in Rutland. Jon Skinner will team up with John Egan to replace nestboxes that vanished from High Ridge WMA last season, after which Jon, Wendy, and other birders will do their best to keep tabs on the Tree Swallows, Eastern Bluebirds, and House Wrens that take up residence.

We are pleased to introduce Christine Lessore of Oakham, our newest Advisory Group volunteer member. Christine teaches 8<sup>th</sup> grade science at Ware Junior Senior High School and has past experience in special education. She's had a lifelong love of the outdoors and the flora and fauna that live there. When she has time she enjoys hiking, connecting with nature, and learning about conservation. Welcome, Christine!

## **IT'S MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME**

Our membership year runs from February 1<sup>st</sup> – January 31<sup>st</sup>. It's not too late to submit your 2026 dues. Mail a check (\$20) to Ware River Nature Club, P.O. Box 76, Hardwick MA 01037 or submit payment to our PayPal account:

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

THANK YOU for contributing to our projects and educational initiatives!

# \* \* \* UPCOMING EVENTS \* \* \*

ATHOL BIRD & NATURE CLUB

## SPRING HAWK WATCH AT ADAMS FARM, ATHOL April, daily (weather permitting) - Saturday, May 9th 8 a.m. - 3 p.m.



Lead counter Mark Morris reports that this hawk watch has become the second largest spring site in New England!! This is a credit to the interest of the observers who dedicated many hours of their time in the past four years.

Adams Farm and retail store is located on 854 Bearsden Rd. in Athol. The observation site has been between 2 power poles sandwiched between the curb and the fence, looking west, on the delivery road. The electric fence is not active. Parking is a little more involved as we have 2-3 spots adjacent to the observation area. At the request of the Adams Farm owners, observers should plan to park in the employee parking lot directly across the street from the store. This arrangement prioritizes parking for customers and patrons of the Farm. OK to pull up to the observation site and drop off your gear,

All are welcome regardless of experience.  
Bring some binoculars and come count with us.

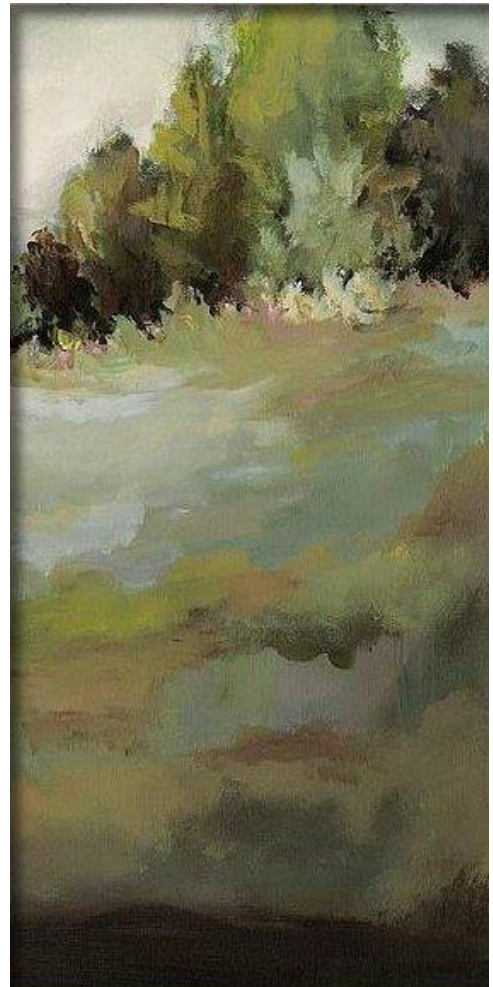
# PRINCETON OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE - PRINCETON HIKES!

## Senior Hike- CROW HILL PONDS TO PARADISE ALLEY PRINCETON

Wednesday April 8<sup>th</sup> 10 a.m.

This is a relatively flat 3-mile hike beginning at the Ponds, going behind Paradise Alley, and returning via loop next to Paradise Pond. Easy - moderate.

For more information or to register:  
[TrailaroundprincetonMA@gmail.com](mailto:TrailaroundprincetonMA@gmail.com)



*Christina Long*



*Photos by Alan Rawle*



## ATHOL BIRD & NATURE CLUB



### EARLY BIRD BIRDING WITH JEFF JOHNSTONE

Fridays:  
April 10<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, & 24<sup>th</sup>  
7 a.m.

Meet Jeff at Millers River Environmental Center, 100 Main Street, Athol. The group will then head out to explore the North Quabbin area for spring migrant birds. These outings are great opportunities for novice birders to learn from one of our best field naturalists.

Come for as long as your schedule allows. Severe weather cancels.  
For more info, call or text Jeff Johnstone: 978-249-9052.



## FORBUSH BIRD CLUB

### BIRDING AT HODGES VILLAGE DAM, OXFORD

Saturday April 11<sup>th</sup> 7 a.m. – late morning

Leader: Mary Baker Caulway [onesadiedog@gmail.com](mailto:onesadiedog@gmail.com) 508-612-5130

Join us for our early spring walk in Southern Worcester County! Resident birds are adorned in their breeding plumage and early migrants are returning. We will walk 2 to 3 miles on a cart road with relatively flat terrain.

*Directions: From Worcester, drive south on I-395 to Exit 7B (Sutton Ave.). Merge onto Sutton Ave., and continue through the traffic light onto Charlton St. In 0.5 mile, turn right on Howarth Rd., and turn right to the entrance of the Dam. Meet at the main parking area, 30 Howarth Rd., Oxford.*



PRINCETON OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE - PRINCETON HIKES!



*Laura Horn*

WARE RIVER  
RAIL TRAIL HIKE  
HUBBARDSTON

Saturday, April 11<sup>th</sup>  
9 a.m. – noon

Starting at Route 122 in Barre, this walk will take us along the Burnshirt River to Route 62 in Hubbardston. Return will be along a gravel road.

For more information or to register: [TrailaroundprincetonMA@gmail.com](mailto:TrailaroundprincetonMA@gmail.com)



*A mink in Hardwick showing its characteristic white chin and whiskers 3.28.26 Photo by Alan Rawle*

HARVARD FOREST SEMINARS

SHINGLE SHANTY: RESEARCH, MONITORING,  
AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN A BOREAL  
PEATLAND COMPLEX IN THE ADIRONDACKS

by Steve Langdon, Managing Director Shingle Shanty Preserve  
and Research Station

Wednesday April 15th 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Harvard Forest, Petersham



Seminars are presented in hybrid format; in-person attendance is welcome and a livestream option is available via Zoom. Free and open to the public.

For Zoom link and password, please contact [Joshua Plisinski](#).

Boreal peatlands of the Adirondacks are at the southern limit of this carbon-rich ecosystem's global distribution. Boreal peatlands are the nexus of climate, biodiversity and carbon sequestration, accounting for approximately one third of terrestrial global



carbon. Studying these ecosystems in the Adirondacks provides tools that protect peatland carbon and biodiversity, ultimately contributing to natural solutions to climate change. Through over a decade of work at Shingle Shanty Preserve and Research Station and Borealis Consulting, Ecologist Stephen Langdon has been conducting long-term monitoring of peatland microclimates and biodiversity in the Adirondacks. He will share broad perspectives on peatland conservation and discuss current research efforts in the region.

## CENTRAL MASS WILDLIFE TRACKING CLUB



# EXPLORING WILDLIFE TRACKS & SIGN IN THE QUABBIN REGION

Exact location TBA

Sunday April 19<sup>th</sup>

9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Leader: Bryan DiFabio [bryan@dfabio.com](mailto:bryan@dfabio.com)

Tracking enthusiasts of all experience levels welcome!  
Contact Bryan for more information/sign-up.



*Old regurgitated ~ 3-inch pellet full of fur and bones.  
Found on March 29<sup>th</sup> tracking outing in Petersham.  
Possibly deposited by an owl, raven, or crow. Photo by Alan Rawle.*

PRINCETON OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE - PRINCETON HIKES!

## HIKING OLD MILL ROAD TO RUTLAND

Wednesday April 22<sup>nd</sup> 9 – 11 a.m.

This will be a short, casual hike starting on Lovers Lane, going down to the Quinapoxet Reservoir, finishing via Old Mill Road to the Rutland town line. A 2-mile, easy-moderate hike.



## HIKE MIDSTATE TRAIL – WESTMINSTER ROAD TO FOUR CORNERS

Saturday April 25<sup>th</sup>  
9 a.m. – noon

*Olga Tchefranov*

This is a 4.5 mile moderate hike starting at Westminster Road in Princeton and following the Midstate Trail through Wachusett Meadow Sanctuary and Four Corners to the East Branch of the Ware River. It is mostly level but will be wet in places. We will drop some cars at the end for the ride back to the start.

For more information or to register: [TrailaroundprincetonMA@gmail.com](mailto:TrailaroundprincetonMA@gmail.com)

## FORBUSH BIRD CLUB



# BIRDING MASS AUDUBON'S WACHUSETT MEADOW SANCTUARY

Saturday, April 25th 7 a.m.

Leaders: Jay and Gail Cormier  
[energynurse@hotmail.com](mailto:energynurse@hotmail.com)

Wachusett Meadow is a former farmstead that supports birds of the woodlands, wetlands, and meadows. This morning walk will be on easy trails. We'll be looking for newly-arrived warblers and sparrows, along with year-round species in handsome spring plumage. Migrating Broad-winged Hawks and Osprey may be seen soaring over the open meadows.

*Directions: From Rt. 62 in Princeton, turn onto Goodnow Road (please obey the 20-mph speed limit). The Sanctuary's parking lot is 1 mile ahead on the left.*



*Female Red-winged Blackbird*

*Photo by Doug Wipf*

## FORBUSH BIRD CLUB

# BIRDING HIGH RIDGE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA EAST GARDNER ROAD ENTRANCE

Sunday April 26<sup>th</sup> 7 a.m.

Leader: Tom Pirro

[tpirro2010@gmail.com](mailto:tpirro2010@gmail.com)

978-790-0861

This large, historic property includes old fields, mature woods, wetlands, and a heron rookery. Late April brings new arrivals such as Blue-headed Vireo, Brown Thrasher, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Palm Warbler.



*Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the gated end of East Gardner Road, 3 miles north of the Route 2 /Route 140 intersection (Exit 92) via Town Farm Road/North Common Road. Turn left onto East Gardner Road, Westminister. We will walk about 3.5 miles over paved and unpaved roads.*



## HARVARD FOREST SEMINARS

# FROM SEEDS TO STANDS: MODELLING REGENERATION PROCESSES IN FOREST ECOSYSTEMS



by Rebecca Snell

Harvard Forest, Petersham

Wednesday, April 29th 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Seminars are presented in hybrid format; in-person attendance is welcome and a livestream option is available via Zoom. Free and open to the public. For Zoom link and password, please contact [Joshua Plisinski](#).

Rebecca Snell is an Associate Professor in the Department of Environmental and Plant Biology at Ohio University.



“My research aims to improve our understanding of how plants respond to climate change, at the landscape to regional scale. I am interested in improving our knowledge about the processes which determine species composition, community dynamics and landscape patterns. More specifically, I focus on the earliest stages (i.e., seed production, seed dispersal and seedling survival). Taking a process-based approach will improve our ability to predict how species and ecological systems may respond to future climate change, disturbances and other anthropogenic impacts.”

## WARE RIVER NATURE CLUB

# DIGGING IN: EXPLORING SOIL HEALTH

with Bethany Nichols, Program Manager Healthy Soils Action Plan  
Worcester County Conservation District  
Wednesday April 29<sup>th</sup> 7 p.m.  
Rutland Public Library, 280 Main Street (Rte. 122A), Rutland

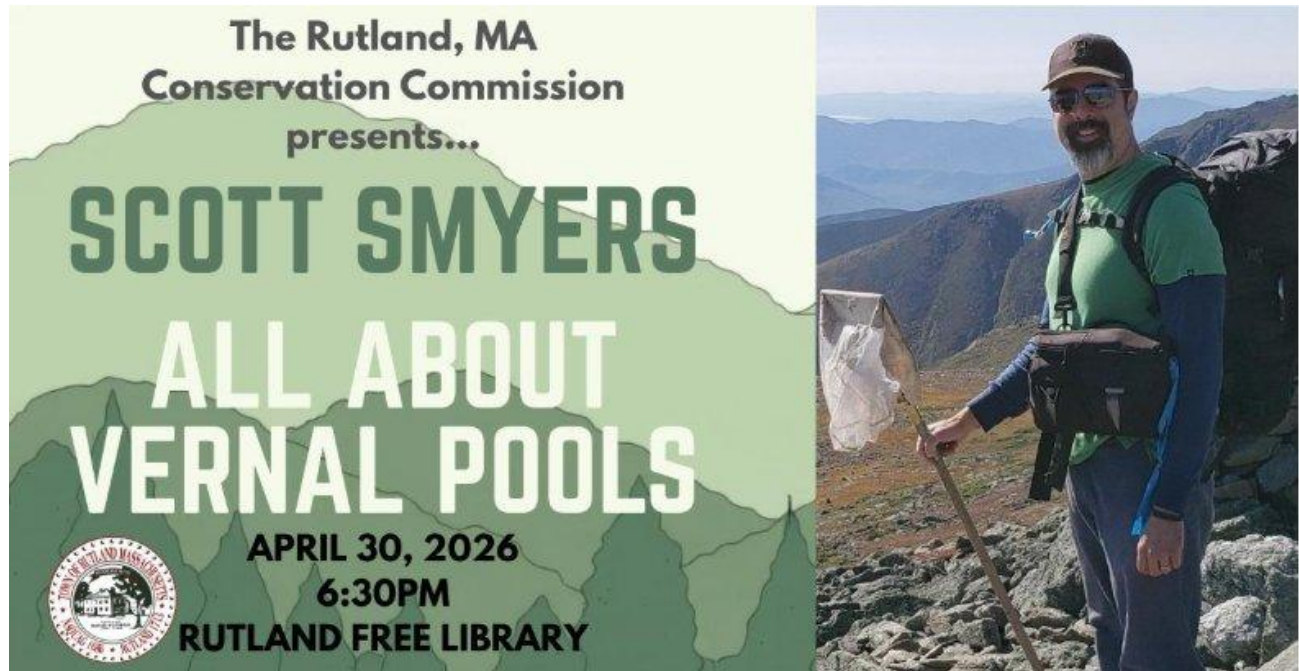


Come get your hands dirty and explore the world of soil with educator Bethany Nichols. In this hands-on workshop we will cover soil basics and learn about creating healthy soil in your back yard and community. Learn what to look for and how to provide your soil with a great start for spring!

Soil health is defined as the continued capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans. Soils are best seen as ecosystems, defined as “a dynamic complex of plant, animal and microorganism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit.”

*Bethany runs the Healthy Soil program at Worcester County Conservation District where she teaches people about the wonders of soil. An environmental educator who loves working outdoors and connecting people with nature, she earned her MS in Outdoor and Environmental Education from Alaska Pacific University. After working in various conservation and education positions both abroad and in Alaska, Bethany returned to Massachusetts to be closer to family. She loves going on adventures with her dog, reading about them with her cat, and exploring with her loved ones.*

RUTLAND CONSERVATION COMMISSION ~ TOWN OF RUTLAND ~  
FRIENDS OF WACHUSETT MOUNTAIN



Are you interested in vernal pools? Have you ever heard of vernal pools? Just exactly what are vernal pools, and why are they important? Would you like to certify a vernal pool on your property?

Join the Rutland Conservation Commission as we welcome wetland scientist and wildlife biologist Scott Smyers. He'll be talking about vernal pools and his research on these unique ecosystems. We'll learn how citizen scientists can certify these sensitive habitats with the state.

*Scott is an active member of friends of Wachusett Mountain and President of Oxbow Associates, Inc. Besides providing a full range of wetland delineation and permitting services, Oxbow Associates specializes in permitting and field studies of herpetozoan species - turtles, snakes and amphibians native to New England - botanical surveys of rare plants and communities and invertebrate investigations.*



*Photo courtesy of Virginia Herpetological Society*