CONNECTICUT Woodlands

ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISTS TALK ABOUT THEIR BEAT

ROTTING HOLES—HOME SWEET HOME. BLUE TRAILS MAP INSIDE.

The Magazine of the Connecticut Forest & Park Association FALL 2015 Volume 80 No 3

RUSS CHAREST

Building a bridge on the new trail in the Whitney Forest. *See page 22*

Connecting People to the Land

Our mission: The Connecticut Forest & Park Association protects forests, parks, walking trails and open spaces for future generations by connecting people to the land. CFPA directly involves individuals and families, educators, community leaders and volunteers to enhance and defend Connecticut's rich natural heritage. CFPA is a private, non-profit organization that relies on members and supporters to carry out its mission.

Our vision: We envision Connecticut as a place of scenic beauty whose cities, suburbs, and villages are linked by a network of parks, forests, and trails easily accessible for all people to challenge the body and refresh the spirit. We picture a state where clean water, timber, farm fresh foods, and other products of the land make a significant contribution to our economic and cultural well-being.

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CONNECTICUT Forest & Park ASSOCIATION

Thoughts on what the pope's climate encyclical means for the world

BY ERIC LUKINGBEAL

HE IS IN LOCKSTEP WITH THE OVERWHELMING SCIENTIFIC CONSENSUS THAT THE EARTH IS WARMING AND THAT HUMANS ARE CAUSING MOST OF IT. HE BELIEVES THAT IMMEDIATE ACTION IS NEEDED TO HEAD OFF DISASTER AND ALLOW A HABITABLE WORLD TO BE LEFT TO FUTURE GENERATIONS.

In late May, when Pope Francis issued an encyclical about climate change, I decided to read its English translation on the Vatican's website. Although mainstream media outlets wrote extensively about this document, I suspect the actual readership of the entire document, called "*Laudato Si*': On Care for Our Common Home," is quite small. I am not a Catholic, and I have never read an encyclical before, but I decided to read all 46,000 words, in two sessions over two days.

"*Laudato Si*'" took its title from Francis of Assisi's Canticle of the Creatures, which reads in full: "Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with flowers and herbs."

The early public reaction to the pope's powerful work was of two kinds. Environmentalists praised it, as it is not often that someone with the ear of 1.3 billion people speaks so clearly on the topic of climate. Some politicians and corporate interests suggested that the pope and his church ought to stick to improving society's moral standards and stay out of the science of climate change.

After I read the encyclical, I thought the critics had missed (or were blind to) Pope Francis's point. The point is that how we treat our "common home" is a deeply moral issue and, in one sense, the most important moral issue we humans face. Jean-Paul Sartre made a similar point: "Everything has been figured out except how to live." Francis has a lot to say on the morality of how we live.

Francis lays his case out in methodical fashion. Environmental deterioration (such as the loss of biodiversity, water resources, and forests) is described and linked to ethical degradation. He is in lockstep with the overwhelming scientific consensus that the Earth is warming and that humans are causing most of it. He believes that immediate action is needed to head off disaster and allow a habitable world to be left to future generations. "Dominion" over the earth is not the correct interpretation of the Scriptures; instead, "responsible stewardship" is correct. Nature should not be viewed as a source of profit and gain. Francis has no faith in the market as a solution to environmental problems; as he says, "Some circles maintain that correct economics and technology will solve all environmental problems yet by itself the market cannot guarantee integral human development and social inclusion." He also says this: "To seek only a technical remedy to each environmental problem . . . is to separate what is in reality interconnected and to mask the true and deepest problems of the global system." His language is blunt. "It [the idea that unlimited growth is possible] is based on the lie that there is an infinite supply of the earth's goods, and this leads to the planet being squeezed dry beyond any limit." The notion of progress itself comes in for heavy criticism. Consider this: "Technology, which linked to business interests is presented as the only way of solving these problems in fact proves incapable of seeking the mysterious network of relations between things and so sometimes solves one problem only to create others. . . . A technological and economic development which does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress."

The theme of connectedness is omnipresent. The late renowned ecologist Barry Commoner's first principle is that everything in the environment is connected. Francis uses the word, but in a different sense. He means that the health of the environment is connected both to human's spiritual happiness and to economic justice for the poor. The three are connected, and none can be achieved in isolation from the other two. Francis's view of modern civilization is bleak. "The accumulation of constant novelties exalts a superficiality which pulls in one direction. . . . Let us refuse to resign ourselves to this. . . . Otherwise we would simply legitimate the present situation and need new forms of escapism to endure the emptiness." The ecological crisis is just one small sign of the "ethical, cultural and spiritual crisis of modernity, and we cannot presume to heal our relationship with nature and the environment without healing all fundamental human relationships." He also says, "Many people today sense a profound imbalance which drives them to frenetic activity and makes them feel busy in a constant hurry which in turn leads them to ride rough-shod over everything around them. This too affects how they treat the environment."

Francis is skeptical too of political or purely legal-regulatory fixes: "We should not think that political efforts or the force of law will be sufficient to prevent actions which affect the environment because, when the culture itself is corrupt and objective truth and universally valid principles are no longer upheld, then laws can only be seen as arbitrary impositions or obstacles to be avoided." He is

definite that our lifestyle is "unsustainable," as it is a "self-centered culture of instant gratification." Some economists have criticized his position on carbon credits, which he says won't work because they will only lead to a new form of speculation and excessive consumption in some countries. But his position ought to inspire at least some reflection. It is grounded on the idea that "the environment is one of those goods that cannot be adequately safeguarded or promoted by market forces." Near the end, he says, "Where profits alone count, there can be nothing about the rhythms of nature, its phases of decay and regeneration, or the complexity of ecosystems which may be gravely upset by human intervention."

At bottom, and despite the very negative description of a consumerist society, Francis is positive. He refers to "this lengthy reflection which has been both joyful and troubling." He describes the source of his hopefulness in this way: "Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start." He also suggests that people "appreciate the small things."

I read the encyclical because I do not want to be someone who learns about such statements only through others' reporting. I went to the source. I believe that, through the world's Catholic bishops, this particular statement could result in a discussion among many millions of people who have not previously thought carefully about climate change's implications.

Eric Lukingbeal, a retired environmental trial lawyer, lives with his wife, Sally King, in Granby, where he serves on the town's land trust and planning and zoning commission.

Media and Connecticut's outdoors

BY ERIC HAMMERLING

If a tree falls in the forest and the media isn't there to cover it, did it really happen? Of course the answer is yes, and you also know that "Tree Falls in the Forest" is the kind of everyday happening you don't typically see reported in the media. Watch 30 minutes of any news broadcast on any station and at any time of the day, and you will mostly see reports on misstatements by politicians and celebrities, bizarre actions (sometimes pulled directly from an unverified source such as YouTube.com), and tragic occurrences.

Consumers of media who are not skeptical can take away a distorted view of reality and absorb an irrational fear of others and of the outdoors. As Richard Louv puts it in *Last Child in the Woods*,* "Fear is the most potent force that prevents parents from allowing their children the freedom they themselves enjoyed when they were young. Fear is the emotion that separates a developing child from the full, essential benefits of nature. Fear of traffic, of crime, of stranger-danger—and of nature itself." He adds, "In the oddest ways, many Americans' view of the woods has reverted to ancient irrationality, conjuring dread behind the branches."

* Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2005.

Because the media has, intentionally or not, fueled an increased fear of the outdoors, I challenge them to report more often on stories like the following:

- Person walks on a Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail, enjoys a beautiful vista, feels the cool calmness of the forest, hears birds, and returns home refreshed and invigorated.
- Volunteers join to build a bridge, clear vegetation, paint blazes, and work with private landowner to keep the trail open for the public to use for free.
- Educators learn how to talk about the outdoors with students and are inspired to use the trees and trails in their neighborhood as teaching tools.
- Children play outdoors without adult supervision—the parents encouraged this, and no one was kidnapped . . . again.
- Forestry professionals strive to make Connecticut's forests the best managed in the United States.
- The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection works with Connecticut Forest & Park Association, Connecticut Land Conservation Council, and land trusts to ensure recreational lands are both protected and stewarded far into the future.
- High School cross-country team uses trails to improve times and increase health, and no one is attacked by bears or ticks.

The environmental journalists featured in this issue do a much better job than most at publishing "good news stories" about the outdoors like these examples, and we thank them for their ongoing, outstanding efforts.

CFPA is committed to providing quality stories in Connecticut Woodlands and on our website ctwoodlands.org, and we encourage you to keep reading, stay involved, and don't let fear get in the way of your enjoyment of the outdoors.

Eric Hammerling has directed CFPA since 2008. He lives in West Hartford with his family.

This issue prints reflections on covering the environment in Connecticut and southern New England by six of us who do it.

THE ENVIRONMENT BEAT

SIX WHO COVER IT TALK ABOUT WHY

Environmental reporters are journalists who spend most of their work time reporting on the human imprint on the natural world. The beat spans science, anthropology, adventure, and political debate. Environmental reporters are not tree-huggers or lobbyists, although we interview members of those groups.

Environmental reporters follow the trends in climate change, air and water contamination, the breaking up of natural habitats, alienation of people from natural landscapes, waste disposal, and farm practices. Some of us report on state and federal government policies affecting the environment. The dedicated ones seek out scientists who can provide data over time that explains the problem at hand. Some of us hold science degrees. Some of us had specialized training. All of us are committed to improving public understanding.

Journalists have covered the natural world, and threats to its health, from the birth of the printing press. Their work wasn't called environmental reporting until perhaps the 1960s—Rachel Carson, Farley Mowat (*Never Cry Wolf*, Little, Brown, 1963), the federal Clean Air Act (1963), the first Earth Day (1970)—but in Connecticut, the beat dates earlier. Perhaps the first environmental journalist here wrote about the conditions and fears stemming from the disappearance of trees from most of the state's land in the 1890s (a time when the Connecticut Forest & Park Association, publisher of this magazine, formed).

Or perhaps the Connecticut environment beat dates to the 1920s, when the press reported on the conservation and backcountry trail-building movements, or to the 1950s, when journalists quoted scientists who warned about the effects of unchecked suburbia. In all those eras, you'll find stories. For just one example, New York Times reporter Bill Becker reported in 1957 that experts feared highways and suburban development threatened park and conservation land. He cited Yale professor Paul B. Sears, who said public literacy in science needed improvement and that most municipal planning was "not really planning but simply trouble-shooting." (No one called Mr. Becker an environmental reporter—yet.)

The reporters who reflect on these next pages have made the environment the greater part of their work.

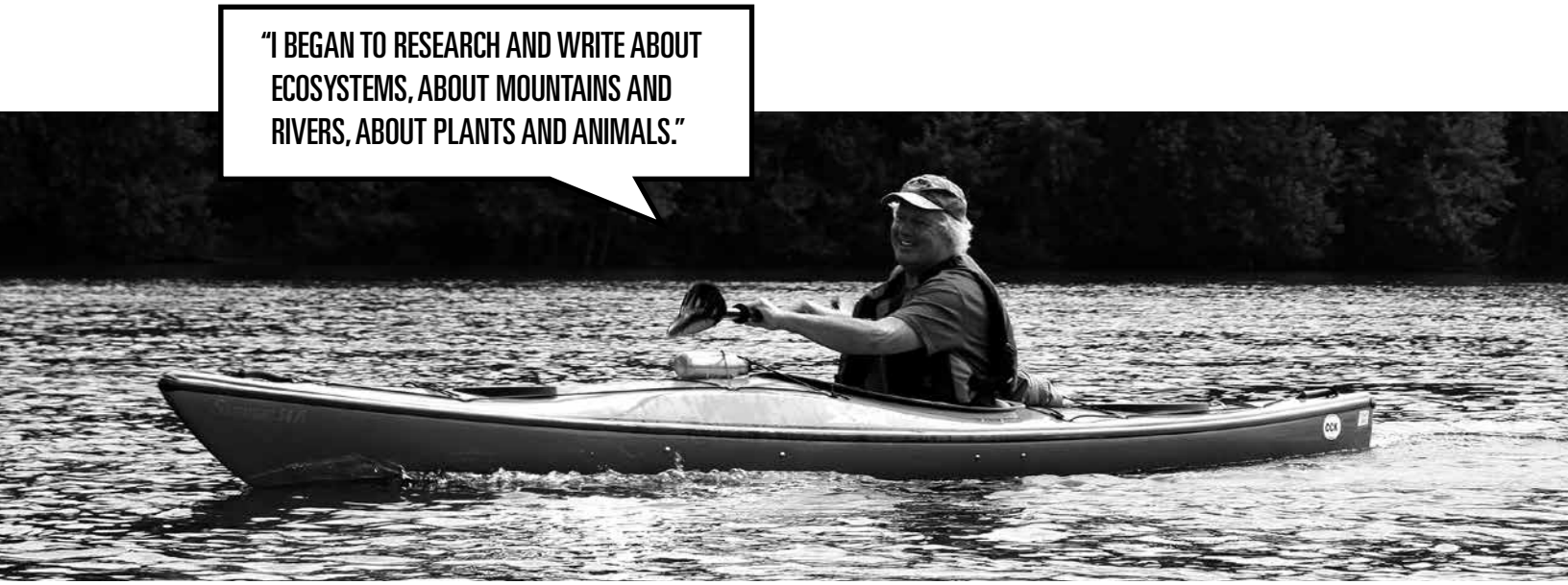
Today, environmental stories span most beats, and many journalists who cover business, science, health, municipal and federal government, and even sports seek specialized training and networking through such organizations as the Society of Environmental Journalists, the Metcalf Institute for Marine and Environmental Reporting, the National Association of Science Writers, the Institute for Journalism and Natural Resources, and science or environment-focused journalism graduate programs such as those at the University of Colorado at Boulder's Center for Environmental Journalism, Boston University's Center for Science and Medical Journalism, the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University's science journalism specialization offering, Michigan State's Knight Center for Environmental Journalism, and others.

So, thanks to the invitation of CFFA Executive Director Eric Hammerling, we talk about ourselves on these next pages. Many of us have interviewed (or, in my case, collaborated with) Mr. Hammerling as we cover stories related to CFPA's work advancing understanding of forestry and land conservation.

A note about affiliations: I, the editor of Connecticut Woodlands, am a paid contractor of CFPA, a private nonprofit. My duty is to produce the best magazine possible in the organization's mission to educate its members and the public. I am not a spokesperson for the Association; staff members fulfill that role. I also volunteer as a trail manager for CFPA. I do that as an individual, but my interests certainly overlap in journalism and trail maintenance. I report about the environment for other outlets, but here is the only place I report on CFPA.

My colleagues on these pages have at times covered CFPA. They maintain their autonomy; in no way does the inclusion of these stories imply their affiliation with CFPA or its members' opinions.

—Christine Woodside



COURTESY OF STEVE GRANT

Steve Grant kayaks on the Connecticut River in Windsor.

SOCIETY CANNOT GIVE A HOOT WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING

BY STEVE GRANT

In April 1971, for my second assignment ever as a journalist, I covered the first anniversary of Earth Day as it was observed in Stafford. One of the main events of the day was a litter pick-up patrol along Route 190, the main drag through town. It seems almost quaint today, given what we have come to know about our environmental problems. Issues such as climate change, acid rain, invasive species, and hazardous waste dumping had not yet even entered the public consciousness.

Back then, the sad condition of our rivers and the atmosphere were the priorities. And, as in Stafford, roadside litter was a problem everywhere. It would be years before the state mandated a deposit on bottles and cans as a way to ensure recycling and help reduce litter.

I came out of college interested in writing about politics and the environment. I am fortunate to say that I've never tired of those two subjects and that they have constituted the bulk of my writing for more than 40 years. But just as environmental issues and priorities evolved over the years, so did my reporting. By the mid-1980s, after years of writing about water and air pollution, and newer issues such as hazardous waste dumping and acid rain deposition, I thought it was time for me to look at the environment from a different perspective.

I realized, and continue to believe, that the best way to ensure society gives a hoot about restoring and preserving the environment is to first ensure that society understands the value of healthy rivers and forests; understands how nature works; understands, for example, how populations of colorful warblers can be knocked down by habitat destruction in Connecticut or even thousands of miles away.

Rather than focus on the regulatory structure, as I had, I began to research and write about ecosystems, about mountains and rivers, about plants and animals. I found scientists who studied river ecology, scientists researching the dynamics of our forests, scientists who studied bird conservation issues. It was less "here is another terrible environmental problem" and more "here is what is wonderful in nature that we must preserve."

I wrote in depth about efforts to restore salmon to the Connecticut River watershed, about the return of eagles and osprey. I spent nearly five weeks paddling the Connecticut River, camping on its banks each night. I wrote stories three times a week about life on the river, some of them looking at such issues as runoff pollution, to be sure, but many of them simply celebrating the experience of paddling a magnificent river.

Over the years, I wrote stories about research on bird species that use the Connecticut River as a flyway; stories about how an exotic species like monk parakeets became permanent residents of the state, pests at times; stories about the proliferation of deer, bear, wild turkey, even moose.

In the decades that I've covered the natural world in Connecticut, the flora and fauna have been constantly changing.

Sometimes there is good news on the environment beat; sometimes the news is bad. The bottom line, I long ago realized, is that environmental protection and environmental restoration require constant vigilance. Progress does not come easily in our complex, modern world.

Steve Grant covered the environment for the Hartford Courant for many years. He is now a freelance writer. Read his work at thestevegrantwebsite.com.

"I FOUND MYSELF WANTING A STRONGER BASE OF KNOWLEDGE IN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES."

TIM MARTIN

Judy Benson, reporting in the rain, Little Narragansett Bay.

NOT SIMPLY A JOB—A PUBLIC SERVICE

BY JUDY BENSON

On a perfect Wednesday afternoon in late June, I shut down my office computer early to paddle a section of the Pawcatuck River. My workday of news reporting hadn't ended, just shifted into experiential mode. Perhaps like no other topical beat in the world of journalism, covering the local environment requires savoring opportunities for firsthand connection to the subjects you're writing about, whether it's flooding rains, record snowstorms, hurricane-ravaged beaches, or a unique local waterway. It means climbing ridges, tracking storm water and sewage outfall, following scientists on field studies, exploring different habitats, and sometimes wading into the muck.

With the enormous unmet challenges from the increasingly intense human impact on our planet, I believe my responsibility as a journalist and good citizen is to convey the natural world and how humans relate to it as often and in as many different ways as possible. Since the start of my career as a journalist more than 25 years ago, I have viewed the profession as a public service, whether I was covering small-town government, business, city hall, or schools. Becoming the health and environment reporter for The Day of New London 12 years ago was a logical transition for me, growing out of my long-standing love of the outdoors. It gives me a chance to impart some of my enthusiasm for nature and communicate about environmental problems in need of attention.

As I settled into my job, I found myself wanting a stronger base of knowledge in environmental sciences. That led me to pursue a master of science degree in natural resources at the University of Connecticut, which I completed this spring. The process of earning this credential has deepened my understanding of how nature works as well as how humans affect nature and, in turn, are affected by it. I believe that knowledge enhances my coverage. Two projects this spring and summer represent a kind of culmination in the application of my studies. Combining what I have learned about watersheds, water resources, environmental history, and other areas of environmental science with my reporting skills, I have been working on five source-to-sea articles about the Pawcatuck River. The series examines the river's past industrial uses and current efforts to restore and protect the watershed as a natural resource while reducing flood risk to the built environment and addressing pollution problems. The second project takes me to the Connecticut Audubon Society's Trail Wood preserve in Hampton for a week this summer, where I will be an artist-in-residence with Roxanne Steed, a landscape painter and friend, in creating a collaborative project marrying environmental science and artistic expression that aims to foster greater understanding and appreciation for the natural world.

Judy Benson lives in New London with her husband. She covers health and science for The Day of New London. Read her stories at theday.com.

A JUMBLE OF PUZZLE PIECES FALLS INTO A PATTERN THAT ENGAGES

BY NANCY COHEN

As a person, nature is my good companion. I'd rather be outdoors than in. I like nothing more than taking in the pleasure of the shimmering stars in a dark night sky, recognizing an uncommon wildflower, or walking an expansive stretch of shore marked by the rhythm of the tide.

And yet, as a reporter, I am not an environmental advocate.

As a veteran journalist, I wall off my personal beliefs from my stories, adhering to the ethical guidelines of my profession that allow people to produce stories that don't reflect their viewpoints—stories that inform, not persuade; stories based on fairness that deliver multiple perspectives, raw data, and verifiable facts.

I report for all kinds of reasons such as the sheer adventure of experiencing worlds that are outside of my own—and the people that inhabit them; like the dairy farmer who gets warm milk for his morning coffee straight from the cow, the exuberant researcher, collecting samples from Long Island Sound, compares algae to jewels, and the tearful scientist surveying the oil-soaked marshes after the Gulf oil spill.

Journalism, for me, is almost like a free pass into unfamiliar worlds and landscapes. With this access comes responsibility, which I take very seriously: the responsibility to get the story right, to accurately represent multiple viewpoints, and to give my listeners the chance to "see" what I saw and to learn what I learned.

I focus on the environment because I believe *it matters* and because I have a depth of understanding about how ecosystems and species function and the economic and ecological challenges facing those who make a living from natural resources or who extract energy from the earth.

The tensions that arise at the intersection of the environment and the economy fascinate me. I want to understand them and present what I learn to the public so it both captivates and informs.

I strive to write fact-based stories that inspire my audience to stay with me. I take the interviews and the sounds that I record and the words that are my own and I find a shape that carries listeners along so they want to know more. I want to write a beginning that pulls the listener in, a middle that tells what happened next—and next. And a conclusion that somehow ties it together even when the issues are not yet resolved.

"JOURNALISM IS ALMOST LIKE A FREE PASS INTO UNFAMILIAR WORLDS AND LANDSCAPES."

CHRISTINE WOODSIDE

Nancy Cohen interviews a voter in Bridgeport.

Initially, I am often faced with a jumble of puzzle pieces; the clever, informative, opinionated bits of interviews from policy makers, environmental advocates, and scientists; the natural sound that pulls the listener into the journey and the words that I write to bring it together. To be honest, writing the first draft sometimes feels like hell. But then, one hopes, clarity arrives and these disparate bits can be dovetailed one to the other in a pattern that engages, while it informs. Getting to this point can feel great—or at least a great relief.

I report not only on the environment, but lots of other things such as the shootings in Newtown, Connecticut; programs to reduce sexual assault on college campuses; mobile farmers' markets that bring fresh produce to the elderly, the poor, and the disabled; the challenges faced by locomotive engineers whose trains, through no fault of their own, have killed people.

I not only report, but I also teach. I'm a visiting assistant professor of journalism at the University of Hartford and have taught previously at the University of Massachusetts, Smith College, and the School of the Museum of Fine Arts.

One of my students once said, "I love journalism because I love learning. Every story is a chance to learn." She could not have put it better.

If I share what I learn with accuracy, fairness, and grace, and it contributes to a public debate, then I've done my job well. If policies change as a result of my reporting, then so be it. If just one person learns something that speaks to them, then that's just as good.

Nancy Cohen, a former Connecticut Public Radio environment reporter, lives in Massachusetts, where she covers environmental issues for radio and print outlets. She also teaches undergraduates at the University of Hartford. Listen to her stories at nepr.net and vpr.net.

FROM MUSHROOM FARMS TO THE STATE CAPITOL

BY PATRICK SKAHILL

At first glance, Connecticut might not seem like a hotbed for environmental debate—national headlines are dominated by things like California's water crisis and debates about fracking, energy policy, and our nation's aging infrastructure—but one part of my job at WNPR is to highlight for our listeners how these national debates play out locally.

For years, natural gas has been a hallmark of the energy policy of Governor Dannel P. Malloy. A lot of my reporting at the state capitol has centered around how Connecticut residents define ourselves as consumers of energy extracted in a controversial process. If we're buying natural gas produced outside our borders, will we share some of the responsibility for how this energy is produced? Will Connecticut, for example, agree to treat the waste products created by the fracking process? That question was at the heart of a bill I reported on in 2014. Ultimately, the legislature decided to put a temporary ban on accepting fracking waste. That could change in the future.

Also in the future: improving how Connecticut recycles. Here, the legislature has decided to tackle the issue of what Nutmeggers do with the food they throw away. Tons and tons of food from supermarkets and restaurants are tossed into the trash every day—food waste that generates harmful methane emissions. We've reported on a new law that will require large-scale generators of food waste to source-separate and recycle it at nearby facilities, if they are within a 20-mile radius of one. This law is attracting several new recycling companies to Connecticut—which, in the coming months, will begin construction on large-scale anaerobic digesters (think of them as giant cow stomachs) that compost food waste, capture the methane it releases and turn the methane into renewable energy that can be sold for use in the electricity grid.

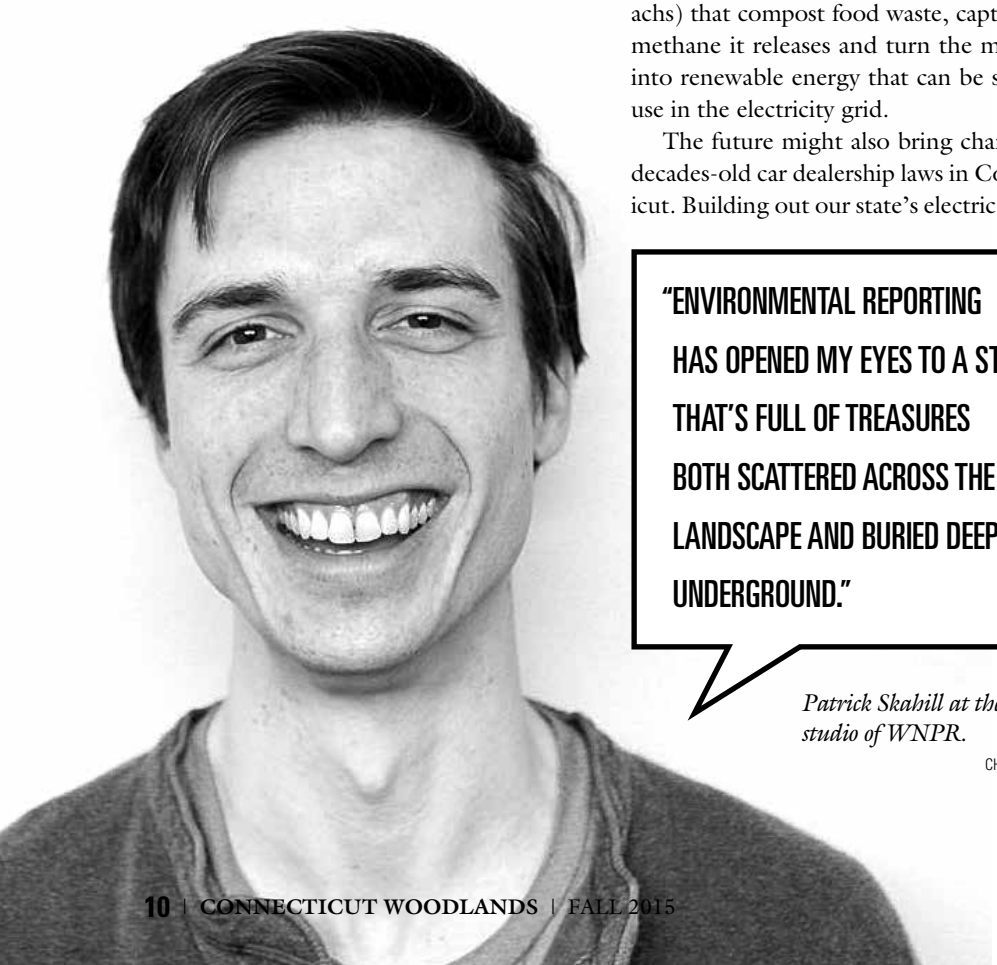
The future might also bring changes to decades-old car dealership laws in Connecticut. Building out our state's electric vehicle infrastructure has been a big push of the Malloy administration, but electric-auto dealers like Tesla say that they're at an unfair market advantage. That's because state car-dealership laws prevent Tesla from selling its products directly to consumers. This legislative session, Tesla dumped tens of thousands of dollars in lobbying cash toward overturning that law. Although a bill passed the House of Representatives, it was never taken up in the Senate—and the idea died. Tesla intends to try again next session, and WNPR will continue to cover that story.

A lot of my job—thankfully—takes me away from the state capitol and into the woods. I've been reporting at WNPR for less than two years, but in that time I've visited mushroom farms and walked through the forest with ecologists and botanists to learn about the ways trees sway in the breeze (crucial knowledge for making our electrical power line infrastructure more resilient). I've covered stories about wolf dogs and the amazing ways Connecticut's cicadas sing (and have sex once every 17 years). I've spoken with landowners about the emotional process of donating their properties to land trusts.

I've even taken some trips back in time with geologists to learn more about the history of Connecticut's rocks—imagining a time 300 million years ago, when mountains as high and as sharp as the Himalayas crossed the state's landscape and gave birth to the fault systems running along the I-395 corridor that are responsible for some of the minor earthquakes we still feel here to this day.

Environmental reporting has opened my eyes to a state that's full of treasures both scattered across the landscape and buried deep underground. WNPR truly is a fantastic place to work. I feel like the luckiest person around to be able to bring stories of our environment to our listeners every day.

Patrick Skahill started out as a reporter for Stonebridge Press in Massachusetts, covering crime and education. He was the founding producer of WNPR's "The Colin McEnroe Show," which began airing in 2009. He earned his bachelor's degree in Arab and Islamic studies from Villanova University and a master's degree in social sciences from the University of Chicago. Listen to his stories at wnpr.org.



"ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING HAS OPENED MY EYES TO A STATE THAT'S FULL OF TREASURES BOTH SCATTERED ACROSS THE LANDSCAPE AND BURIED DEEP UNDERGROUND."

Patrick Skahill at the studio of WNPR.

CHION WOLF

ON FOOT, EYES DOWN

SKIP WEISENBURGER

Chris Woodside in Canfield Woods, Deep River.

BY CHRISTINE WOODSIDE

At age 28, six years into my journalism career and burned out from a managing editor's job at a hectic Westchester County, New York, newspaper, I fled. Not to another media outlet, but to the wilds of the Appalachian Trail. With my husband and two friends, I walked 2,100 miles from Springer Mountain in Georgia to Katahdin in Maine. We left on April 16 and finished on September 2. For all that time, we lived in the woods. We collected our water from streams and springs, watched animals scoot, fly, or skitter around us. I'd left as an earnest reporter with no focus. I returned drawn to the stories about how people interact with the natural world. I especially like covering the forgotten stories about ordinary people living what might seem ordinary lives.

My first job after the trail brought me to Connecticut, first as an editor, and, soon enough, a reporter at The Day of New London. Getting to the environment beat took some time. I had to cover towns and police logs for about a decade or so, there. By 1997, in my late 30s, my bosses at The Day let me start an environment beat. The stories I covered included the Connecticut River's metamorphosis into a significant wetland after a hundred years of neglect, home heating oil that sat around in leaking underground tanks, and development that was breaking up big forest tracts. In 1999, the lobster population of Long Island Sound crashed (and hasn't done so well since).

With the help of my patient editors at The Day (especially Tim Cotter, Elissa Bass, and David Collins) and Peter Lord, the Providence Journal environment reporter who became a mentor for 15 years, I learned that stories lurked as close by as my kitchen trashcan. I was accepted into the first class of fellows at the Metcalf Institute for Marine and Environmental Reporting, in 1999. There, I learned how to get answers from the scientists.

I became an independent contractor in 2000, when I left The Day. In the years since, I've grown far more than I could have in the confines of short articles.

I have worked for dozens of outlets, edited three books, and written one, and as I write this, I'm finishing my book about the pioneer myth and Laura Ingalls Wilder. I've reported on the coast, the climate, insects, animals, forests, energy, and how people deal with all of this, for the New York Times, Yale Climate Connections, Nature Climate Change, the Connecticut Mirror, Appalachia journal, and this magazine, which I've edited for 15 years.

In the early years on the beat, I covered the environment and American society from the top down—that is, I got ideas from policy agendas, proposed laws, and, occasionally, activists who showed me a situation I hadn't known about. Over time, I learned that any story on the political radar probably was news a decade ago. And so these days, I look everywhere for stories. My job as a journalist requires standing back from politics and opinions—even and especially those of the nonprofit that publishes this magazine. I sometimes write essays that express my own views.

I have realized that the better way to cover the environment is from the bottom up—I start with ordinary people and situations, then I start my research. I think of myself as much as an anthropologist as a writer. I'm obsessed with Americans' way of life and its connection to natural resources, attitudes, and survival.

Chris Woodside grew up in New Jersey and earned a bachelor's degree in American civilization from the University of Pennsylvania in 1981. She has spent the last quarter-century in Connecticut (she lives in Deep River, with her husband, Nat Eddy). She has written about environmental topics since the mid-1990s. Visit her at chriswoodside.com.

THIRTEEN YEARS AFTER HE THOUGHT HE'D RUN OUT OF IDEAS . . .

BY PETER MARTEKA

Connecticut's backyard is a pretty amazing place. At 5,543 square miles and the fourth most densely populated state, it's hard to believe one can craft a hiking column each week for the past 18 years—and still have plenty of places to write about. Welcome to my world each Sunday in the Connecticut section of the Hartford Courant.

My first column "The Path Less Traveled" began, "Trails through the forests aren't just about nature. Intertwined within the trees and mountain laurel of Connecticut are forgotten stone walls, broken foundations that once held a factory, and lost mines that helped to power the economy of the region. Over the coming weeks, I'll be climbing hills, canoeing rivers, walking along hidden trails, hiking the woodlands, and exploring the fields of Connecticut looking at both the natural and human history of the area."

That was November 26, 1997. I envisioned the column running for four or five years. Then I would run out of places to explore. Connecticut is a small state. And then I discovered the joys of the 825-mile Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails (managed by Connecticut Forest & Park Association volunteers). Besides these trails, thousands of acres preserved by dozens of land trusts remain open to the public. Town and cities were protecting their open spaces as parks and nature preserves. There were state parks. There were Nature Conservancy preserves. The "to hike" list went on and on.

One of my all-time favorite quotes is from "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost. "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference." My favorite columns blend in a history of the area along with its natural beauty. A trail within Washington's Steep Rock Preserve includes a path through an abandoned train tunnel that once served the "crookedest railroad east of California." Visitors discover a hike to the top of Lantern Hill and find it was a place where great barrels of tar were once burned to warn the citizens of Stonington the British were about to attack. Another path takes visitors to a solitary gravestone in the middle of a state forest where a Revolutionary War hero who died of smallpox lies.

The state has a compelling variety of natural and human history yearning to be explored. Every town in the state has a trail, preserve, or open space parcel to explore. Wonderful resources online include town websites, land trusts, and hiking groups. Most towns and land trusts along with the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection have great online maps.

The greatest goal and most rewarding part of writing the column comes from my readers. I love getting e-mails from couples and families who follow in my footsteps and explore the places I write about. In the days of smartphones and other electronic devices, it's imperative that children get out and explore the natural world. In a world of busy schedules, we must find the time to escape into the natural world—if only for a few hours.

"Of course, it is no pleasure to walk on a highway anymore," a writer like me wrote in the pages of the Courant nearly a century ago. "The pleasure of walking—or let us call it hiking—comes from getting away from cities, away from highways, away from your six-day-a-week job in office or factory or schoolroom out into the wild places, the woods, the mountains."

Connecticut is an amazing state if you take the time to find it.

Peter Marteka was born in Middletown and raised in Portland, Connecticut. A graduate of Muhlenberg College, he began his career at the Hartford Courant in January 1996 after five years at the Middletown Press. Marteka writes his nature column and covers Glastonbury. He lives in Middlefield with his family. Read his stories at courant.com.

Peter Marteka explores traprock.

COURTESY OF PETER MARTEKA

CONNECTICUT FOREST & PARK ASSOCIATION HISTORIC MILESTONES

1895 Connecticut Forestry Association founded in the Weatogue section of Simsbury, Connecticut, on December 30, 1895, at the residence of Reverend Horace Winslow.

1901 Facilitated establishment of the first state forester position in the nation.

1901 Initiated a state forest acquisition policy, making Connecticut the first state in the nation able to acquire land for state forests.

1903 Encouraged the acquisition of the Portland (now Meshomasic) State Forest, the first state forest in New England.

1905 Secured enactment of the Connecticut Forest Fire Law, the first such law in New England.

1913 Secured enactment of the 10-Mill Law, the first reducing taxation on land committed to forestry.

1920 Envisioned, acquired, and donated Peoples State Forest to the state of Connecticut.

1921 Secured enactment of a bill authorizing state purchase of the first 100,000 acres of forest.

1923 Secured enactment of a bill requiring spark arrestors on railroad locomotives.

1928 Became incorporated as Connecticut Forest & Park Association.

1929 Established the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System. The Quinnipiac Trail was the first.

1930 Established the prototype for the Civilian Conservation Corps at Peoples State Forest.

1936 Published the first issue of Connecticut Woodlands magazine.

1937 Published the first volume of the *Connecticut Walk Book*.

1963 Secured enactment of Public Act 490, the first law in the nation to allow forests, farms, and open space to be taxed based upon use rather than development value.

1971 Secured enactment of the Landowner Liability Law to protect landowners hosting trails.

1986 Established the James L. Goodwin Forest & Park Center in Middlefield.

1986 Coordinated Project Learning Tree in Connecticut.

1991 Secured enactment of the Connecticut Forest Practices Act.

1993 Began as Connecticut coordinator of National Trails Day, the American Hiking Society's initiative. Connecticut Trails Day features more hikes than any other state.

2002 Secured enactment of the Metacomet-Monadnock-Mattabesett Trail Study Act of 2002, directing the National Park Service to study the feasibility of making these trails a National Scenic Trail.

2009 The federal government designated the 220-mile-long MMM Trail in Connecticut and Massachusetts as a National Scenic Trail, called the New England Trail.

2011 Led efforts to amend the state Landowner Liability Law to restore liability protection to municipalities on recreational lands.

CFPA CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

CONSERVATION ADVOCACY

Every year since 1897, CFPA has provided legislators with an Agenda for Connecticut's Land and People. CFPA's advocacy priorities have included securing adequate resources for the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to manage state parks and forests; support the preservation of working forests and agricultural lands; and lead efforts to secure National Scenic Trail designation and ongoing support for the New England Trail.

BLUE-BLAZED HIKING TRAILS

The Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System, established in 1929, is one of CFPA's most visible and lasting contributions to recreation. The Blue Trails total more than 825 miles in 96 towns. The infrastructure for managing this massive area consists of CFPA's trail stewardship director, the CFPA Trails Committee, and more than 100 volunteer trail managers who through work parties and ongoing maintenance activities donate more than 15,000 hours of volunteer time each year.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Since its original statement of purpose to bring forestry and related topics into schools, CFPA has been a leader in environmental education. To engage in a natural learning experience, CFPA offers teachers, landowners, adults, natural resource professionals, youth, students, families, and seniors myriad programs that provide inspiration for science, art, history, math, literature, and conservation topics. Together, we demystify the wild, explore trails, and discover hidden gems of Connecticut's forests.

From its headquarters in Middlefield to its partnership program at the Goodwin Forest Conservation Education Center in Hampton, and the forests and trails across the state, CFPA connects people to the land to create and support lifelong learners as Connecticut's stewards of the woods.

LAND CONSERVATION

Over the past 100 years, CFPA has been instrumental in the acquisition of more than 100 state parks and forests for public use and enjoyment. CFPA owns properties or holds conservation restrictions on approximately 2,000 acres. The conservation priorities for the program are in lands associated with working forests and/or hiking trails.

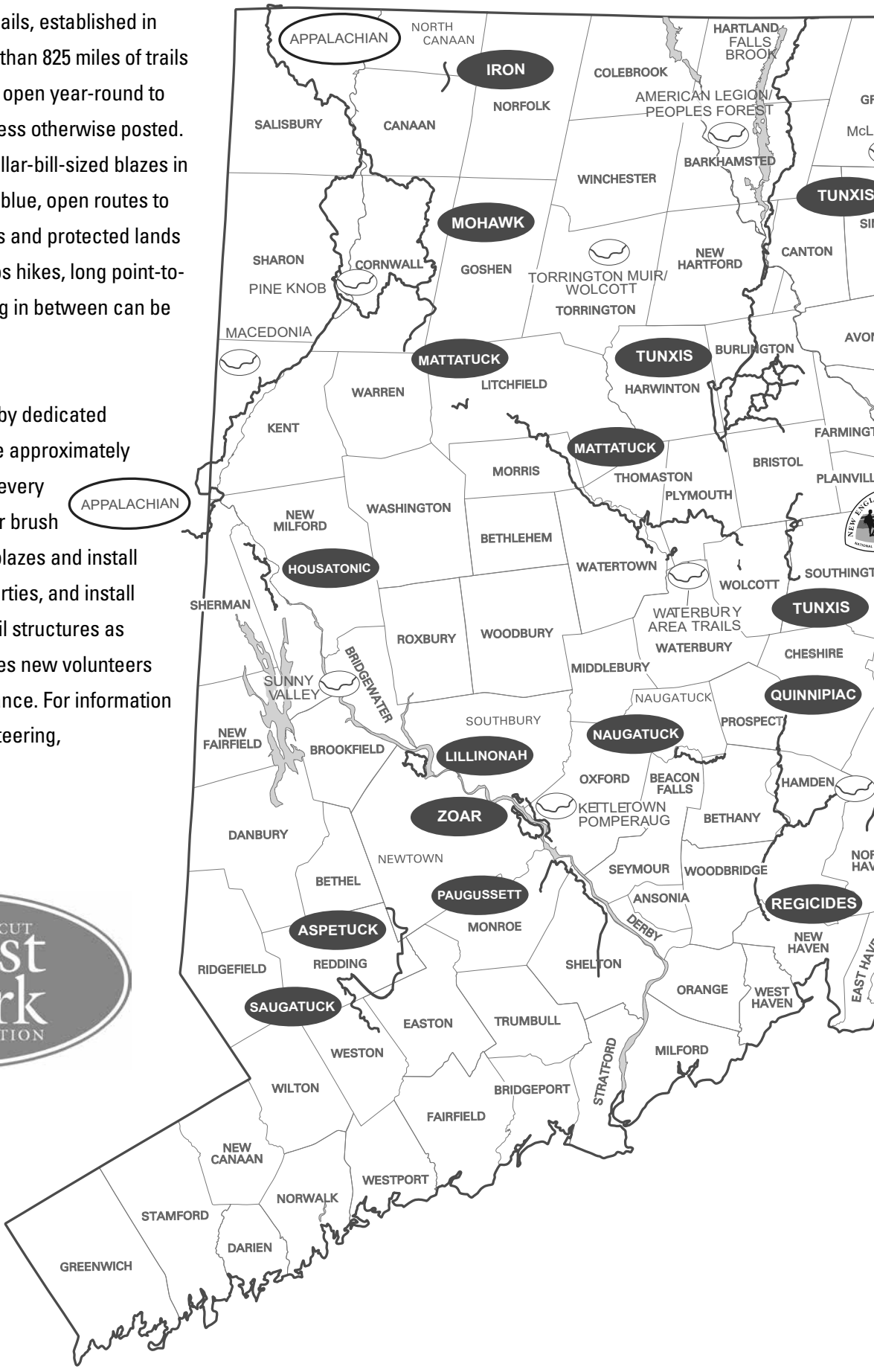
WalkCT

Describing 130 walks and growing, CFPA's WalkCT.org web pages provide information on places to walk throughout Connecticut. Our goal is to foster Connecticut as a state where sidewalks meet trails, cities are linked to towns, and no resident is further than 15 minutes away from a great outdoor walk.

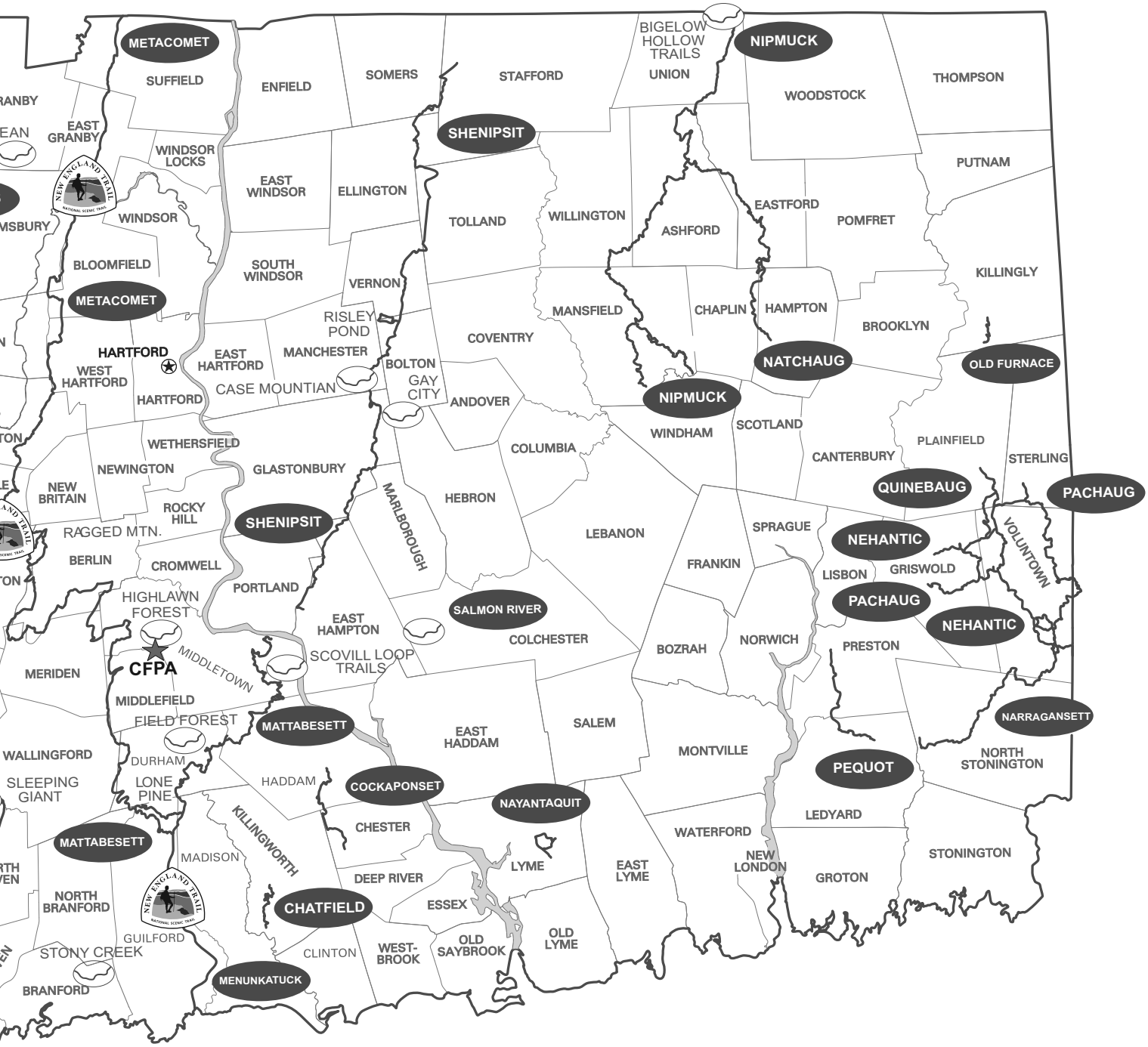
Visit ctwoodlands.org for more information on CFPA programs and activities.

The Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails, established in 1929, currently total more than 825 miles of trails in 88 towns. The trails are open year-round to all forms of foot travel unless otherwise posted. The trails, marked with dollar-bill-sized blazes in a signature shade of light blue, open routes to exploring the open spaces and protected lands of Connecticut. Short loops hikes, long point-to-point hikes, and everything in between can be found on the Blue Trails.

The trails are maintained by dedicated volunteers who contribute approximately 20,000 hours of trail work every year. Trail volunteers clear brush and downed trees, paint blazes and install signs, coordinate work parties, and install bridges and additional trail structures as necessary. CFPA welcomes new volunteers to help with trail maintenance. For information about the trails and volunteering, see ctwoodlands.org.



CONNECTICUT Forest & Park ASSOCIATION



CONNECTICUT'S BLUE-BLAZED HIKING TRAILS

INTERACTIVE BLUE TRAILS MAP ONLINE

http://www.ctwoodlands.org/BlueTrailsMap

Whether you're a devout hiker of the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails or a walker looking for a local escape, the Connecticut Forest & Park Association's new online trails map will help you plan your outing before your boots hit the ground. As a companion tool to the *Connecticut Walk Book,* this map will allow you to zoom in and see the latest trail locations, learn trail names and distances, and fully discover all that Connecticut hiking has to offer.

NOTES ON NAMING BENEFICIARIES

Tom Degnan said those words when he notified Connecticut Forest & Park Association that he had named CFPA as the new beneficiary of one of his IRAs. He explained that the process was simple, an online change form, and he did so because of his commitment to CFPA's mission. Mr. Degnan is an experienced forester, arborist, and municipal tree warden (the forest world's "trifecta") who works at Burns & McDonnell and has firsthand experience of the impact that CFPA has had on Connecticut's forests. He also is a member of CFPA's Board of Directors, the CFPA's Winslow Society and, now, its Heritage Society.

CFPA is such an important organization and this is an easy way to provide support. No attorneys, no fees, and it only took 15 minutes. While giving for now is important, planned giving for the future is critical for the long-term success of the organization. I was happy to do it, but hope they do not see this money for a long time.

—Tom Degnan

An interesting shift has happened during the past decade as investing with IRAs and 401K plans has become the rule and pension plans have become the exception. These portable retirement plans funded by individuals have allowed people to accumulate significant assets in their retirement accounts. Often these accounts represent people's largest pools of assets beyond their primary residences. Company matches and the fear of Social Security's demise have also spurred some people to save for the future. This shift to IRAs and 401Ks has actually made designating assets to heirs or beneficiaries much simpler.

It has also gotten easier to designate an organization as the beneficiary of your paid-up life insurance policy. The benefit of life insurance in general is that annual premiums convert to lump-sum payments at the owner's death. The payments can both support surviving family members and your philanthropic priorities. A simple beneficiary change can leave a great legacy through a significant gift to support the forests, parks, and trails you love.

If you want to follow Mr. Degnan's lead, you can take one of these simple but meaningful steps. The only information you really need to take action is CFPA's full legal name: "Connecticut Forest and Park Association, Incorporated," and our federal tax ID #: 06-0613430.

Thank you for your support.

CONNECTICUT Forest & Park ASSOCIATION

HOLEY HABITATS

Development and land patterns diminish numbers of available cavities for wildlife needs

BY DIANE FRIEND EDWARDS

Whenever I come across a hole in a tree trunk, a cavity at the base of a tree, or a hollow log, I can't help but wonder, "Does a bird or animal live here?" Sometimes I peer inside to satisfy my curiosity, but holes high up on a tree usually keep their denizens' identities hidden. Occasionally I glimpse a bird, with an insect in its beak, fly into a hole to feed its young. One day I watched a tree swallow exit a hole in a standing dead tree carrying a fecal sac containing feces deposited by one of its chicks. And once, I looked up in time to see a red squirrel poke its head out of a hole in a tall tree.

Many species of wildlife use holes, or cavities, in trees. Some species rely on them for their survival. Snags (dead or dying standing trees), den trees (living trees containing a cavity), and hollow logs provide sheltered places for wildlife to give birth, feed their young, escape predators, find refuge from storms, forage for insects, and store food. Dozens of bird species as well as some mammals, amphibians, and reptiles take advantage of these holey habitats. Kestrels, bluebirds, and tree swallows, for instance, nest only in tree cavities (natural or artificial). Black bears, gray foxes, raccoons, and fishers often den in hollow trees. Bats sometimes roost during the day behind the loose bark of a decaying tree.

With a forest cover of about 60 percent, Connecticut has a lot of trees, both living and dead. Nevertheless, wildlife experts worry that, without help, some of our cavity-dependent species might not be able to find enough suitable snags where they need them. Several land-use patterns cause wildlife experts to worry.

Development Diminishes Dead Wood

Humans tend to clear properties of dead wood, whether standing or fallen, because either it poses a safety hazard—in which case removal, or at least partial removal, is necessary—or we simply don't like the way it looks. The more developed areas interrupt forests, "the more removal of snags occurs," says Peter Picone, a wildlife biologist specializing in habitat management who works for the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. Connecticut lost an estimated 191,000 acres of forestland between 1952 and 2013, "presumably due to increased development," states a U.S. Forest Service report called, Forests of Connecticut, 2013. Forestland did not decrease significantly between 2007 and 2013, possibly because of the economic recession at the time, the report notes. With economic recovery, the state's forestland again could shrink.

Humans see a hole. Birds and mammals see home.

DIANE FRIEND EDWARDS

Snags Not Evenly Distributed

An estimated 23.4 million dead trees remain standing in Connecticut, according to a U.S. Forest Service report, *Forests of Southern New England, 2007* (published in 2011). But dead trees aren't necessarily evenly distributed throughout the forests, notes DEEP forester Emery Gluck. Nor are our forests evenly distributed across the state. As a result, snags suitable for wildlife, sometimes called "wildlife trees," might not be available where particular bird or animal species need them. The American kestrel, for example, lives near open fields with low ground vegetation and few trees where it can easily hunt for small prey animals. But the kestrel nests only in cavities. If it can't find an unoccupied cavity, it won't be able to breed. Loss of its hunting and breeding habitat is suspected as one of the reasons kestrel populations here and around the country are shrinking. Kestrel populations have declined in Connecticut to the point where the bird is now classified as "most important" on the state's list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Alien Invaders

Southern New England's native cavity-nesters compete for cavities with nonnative birds such as the house sparrow and the European starling. For species whose populations are already stressed—such as the increasingly scarce kestrel—that competition could be devastating.

A woodpecker hole.

DIANE FRIEND EDWARDS

Most Forestland Privately Owned

An estimated 73 percent of Connecticut's forestland is privately owned, 51 percent of that by families and individuals, according to the U.S. Forest Service's 2013 Forest Inventory and Analysis. Private forestland owners might not know that they should leave some snags or den trees when they cut their woodlands for timber or firewood. "These activities tend to accelerate the removal of existing snags and diminish the probability of trees ever becoming large enough to serve as possible snag or den trees," states a DEEP fact sheet, "Snags for Wildlife" (available online at ct.gov/deep). "A healthy forest has a balance of live and dead wood," notes Mr. Picone.

How to Provide Cavities for Wildlife

For years landowners, conservation organizations, and wildlife professionals have been putting nest boxes in backyards, farm fields, wetlands, and other areas to supplement or substitute for natural tree cavities. According to DEEP, human-made platforms or nest boxes have helped the eastern bluebird, wood duck, and osprey populations.

If you want to put up a nest box, find out which species might be attracted to the type of habitat where you will put it. Kestrels or bluebirds won't nest in a forest, for example. Build a box with the right features for the intended species. Bluebird boxes need a round opening about 1.5 inches in diameter and no perch. The DEEP website fact sheet, "Nest Structures for Wildlife" gives nest-box dimensions for more than 20 species, including bluebirds, kestrels, barn owls, chickadees, titmice, woodpeckers, and others.

To help bats—now classified as "most important" on Connecticut's list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need—check the DEEP bat fact sheet for information on building a bat house.

Perhaps the best way to help cavity-using wildlife is to leave snags on your property. DEEP advises that a snag should measure at least 3 inches dbh, which stands for inches in diameter at breast height—and at least 6 feet tall. To meet the minimum requirements of most wildlife species in an area, DEEP recommends leaving at least three snags of 12 inches dbh or greater per acre. There should also be at least one snag of 15 inches dbh or more.

DIANE FRIEND EDWARDS

This snag—meaning standing dead tree—provides shelter for insects and the birds that eat them.

Be sure the snags pose no danger to people, buildings, power lines, and so on. "Human safety is paramount," Mr. Picone says. It might be possible to remove only the dangerous part of the tree—say, the top or dead branches—and leave a section of the trunk standing so that it can become a snag.

I thought that a dying pine tree on the edge of my property should be cut down because I don't like the look of the dead branches against the otherwise lush greenery of nearby trees. But the tree is nowhere near a building, a road, or a utility line. It's not even visible from my house or my neighbors'. I have decided to leave it standing in the hope that it will become a holey habitat. Perhaps I should put out a sign saying, "Wildlife Welcome."

Diane Friend Edwards is a freelance writer, nature photographer, and lifelong lover of the outdoors. She lives in Harwinton with her husband, Paul. She assists with proofreading and editing of this magazine.

TOM TELLA

Above, Walt Whitman's "The Song of the Open Road" greets hikers at the start of the Finch Brook Trail in Wolcott. Below, also on that trail, "The Gift Outright" by Robert Frost and Edna St Vincent Millay's "Renascence" hang on trees.

POETRY ON THE TRAILS: A PILOT PROJECT

BY TOM TELLA

Last year, Connecticut Forest & Park Association Trails Stewardship Director Clare Cain said we should consider taking art to the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails. She brought it up at the winter trails workshop, and I immediately thought of the poetry I'd read on the Robert Frost Trail and the Hespera Stones display on the Metacomet–Monadnock section of the New England Trail. This began my pilot project to post poems on the Mattatuck and Finch Brook trails.

I am certainly no poet, and I do know it, but I have liked poetry for years. It seemed to me that the most obvious selections might come from great American naturalists such as Robert Frost, Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, and Emily Dickinson, and so I went digging. I looked for poems that would evoke the trails. What better way to greet hikers shortly after starting the Finch Brook Trail than with Mr. Whitman's "Song of the Open Road"?

On the Mattatuck Trail, I placed a sign with Mr. Frost's "The Road Less Traveled." Deep in a pine grove on the Finch Brook Trail, I posted Miss Dickinson's "Nature Is What We See," and high atop a scenic ledge on the Mattatuck Trail stands a copy of Maya Angelou's "A Brave and Startling Truth." The Mattatuck Trail crosses over an old abandoned fieldstone watering pond—there I posted Mr. Frost's "Pasture Spring."

A dozen poems stand along the Mattatuck Trail's section 4 and along the Finch Brook Trail—and we plan more. We are thinking about reaching out to an assortment of local students and poetry lovers for further additions. Might there be an aspiring local poet-hiker out there who would like to contribute?

Tom Tella of Wolcott is a volunteer trail manager for the CFPA and vice president of the Wolcott Land Trust. Five years ago, he hiked the whole route of the New England Trail from Long Island Sound to New Hampshire.

WHY I DO TRAIL WORK

BY TOM EBERSOLD

DAVID REIK

Tom Ebersold paints double blazes, marking a trail turn.

For many years, I had various excuses for not doing trail work, even though I talked about needing to get involved. Mostly my excuses related to the fact that I thought trail work would interfere with my hiking and bicycling. I finally got involved on a regular basis in 2007 after I became lost one day on the Red Trail at West Rock Ridge State Park where the trail blazes had faded away. I contacted the state park supervisor and asked if I could reblaze the Red Trail. She readily agreed, and that gradually led to my taking care of all the trails at the state park. I jokingly say that next time I agree to help out a state park, I should pick a smaller one, as West Rock has 1,688 acres and is about 6 miles long and nearly half a mile wide.

As a hiker, I believe it is important for people to give back by helping out with trail maintenance, even if only once a year. Volunteers are almost always the ones who maintain hiking trails because paid staff is nonexistent for this in state parks and a rarity in town parks and land trusts.

When I try to get others involved, many sound like I did, thanking me for what I do but responding, "That's not my thing." I tell them that there is little difference between a hike and trail maintenance. Instead of simply walking through the woods, as you would on a hike, you stop to improve the trail, which typically involves nipping off an overhanging branch, tossing a dead branch off the trail (which I have always done anyway), or painting a blaze.

I derive many benefits from doing trail work. One is keeping physically fit, which is important for everyone at a time when so many people suffer from obesity, diabetes, and heart disease related to inactivity. Trail maintenance is a full-body workout, as I am walking, cutting trees and shrubs, and pulling out vines and other invasive plants. A 30- to 60-minute workout at the gym is no match for three hours out on the trail.

Staying calm is another important component of a healthy life. Trail maintenance relieves stress because, as I am working, I am fully focused on what I am doing, which clears my mind of anything that might be distracting or distressing. Trail work is also a creative process as I determine the best way to keep a trail in good condition through blazing, pruning, and erosion control. I have built wooden bridges and boardwalks, installed rock steps and water bars, and rerouted eroded trails.

When I finish a bicycle ride or a hike, I look back at the day, when I enjoyed the scenery and the companionship of those who joined me. Likewise, trail maintenance is emotionally satisfying because when I am done, I can appreciate the benefits of what I improved. As I head for home, I leave the woods knowing that over time all these conditions are true: The trails are marked more clearly. People can walk without encountering trees blocking the trail. Footing is safer and more secure. Native plants can grow without competition from aggressive, invasive species. Trails are cleaner without trash. I also get many compliments from passing hikers who see me working.

I do feel sore at times after doing trail work, but the soreness fades in a couple of days. I often get scratched by thorns and branches as I dive under invasive multiflora rose bushes to cut them at their base. If I wear long pants and use geranium essential oil as a repellent, ticks are not an issue. I can also avoid ticks by staying out of the brush and leaves and working in colder weather. Mosquitoes can be a problem in the summer, particularly wet summers, but they can be handled by using a good natural repellent made from essential oils, avoiding working at dusk, and working in colder weather. Poison ivy can usually be avoided, but again, I often encounter it when I am pulling out invasive plants. If I feel the itch coming on, I use Hyland's Poison Ivy/Oak Remedy and that usually does the trick.

The health consequences of inactivity are far greater than minor aches, scratches, and the occasional mosquito bite.

Now it's your turn to help out on the trails, even if it is only for a few hours once a year.

Tom Ebersold has been volunteering on the trails at West Rock Ridge State Park since 2007, and he volunteers for Connecticut Forest & Park Association as the trail manager of the Regicides Trail, Sanford Feeder Trail, and Westville Feeder Trail. He teaches English at Salem Middle School. He loves bicycling, hiking, and kayaking.

CFPA BUILDING NEW HIKING TRAIL AT WHITNEY FOREST

BY CLARE CAIN

The Whitney Forest, an 84-acre gem of protected woodland, is nestled in the heart of Lebanon. Just 2 miles from the state's largest town green, the Whitney Forest was donated to Connecticut Forest & Park Association in 1998 by Dorothy D. Whitney of Avon. It was the desire of the Whitney family that the property be managed as a working forest in perpetuity. To better showcase this special place and open it to the public, CFPA's trails program has begun to develop a loop trail around the property. CFPA's annual Spring Trails Workshop kicked off the trail building effort in May.

More than 50 volunteers marked and stabilized the trail during at least 10 workdays—a total of more than 600 hours. It hasn't been easy work. Because of the seasonally wet nature of the forest, trail development has included the construction of 200 feet of raised bog bridging. CFPA's fledgling rock crew positioned huge rocks to create stable steps across streams and wet areas. Volunteers also dug in. They shoveled new trail sections, clipped back brush, painted trail blazes, hauled wood, raked duff, and chopped roots out of the trail tread. Thanks to hours of planning, problem solving, and scouting, followed by the sweat and hard work of CFPA volunteers, the 1.5-mile loop trail is nearly a reality.

MORE THAN 50 VOLUNTEERS MARKED AND STABILIZED THE TRAIL DURING AT LEAST 10 WORKDAYS—A TOTAL OF MORE THAN 600 HOURS. IT HASN'T BEEN EASY WORK.

In July, CFPA began a selective timber harvest on the property. This is intended to open up sections of the forest canopy for oak and pitch pine regeneration and increase the viability of wildlife habitats. Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection forester and CFPA volunteer Emery Gluck is guiding these projects. Whitney Forest will also serve as an educational site for sustainable forestry practices. Most of the logs will be sold to cover the cost of the harvest operation, but some will be saved for use as trail bridge material on the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails.

An official trail dedication and opening is anticipated for this fall. Keep an eye on the interactive trail map at ctwoodlands.org for updates on the Whitney Forest Trail and parking location.

Clare Cain is the trails stewardship director for CFPA.

Top, Vegetation in Whitney Forest.

Middle and bottom, Volunteers build bog bridges through a damp section.

PHOTOS BY BILL FLOOD (TOP AND MIDDLE) AND CLARE CAIN (BOTTOM).

BRUCE NICHOLS

Philip Jones, working at his beloved sawmill, remained an avid sawyer into his 90s.

PHILIP JONES, 96, SHELTON FARMER, TREE GROWER, AND COMMUNITY LEADER

Philip Hubbell Jones, Jr., age 96, of Shelton, a former influential member of the Connecticut Forest & Park Association Board of Directors and two-term Connecticut state legislator, died peacefully August 10, surrounded by family, in a part of his house he'd built with wood he harvested from the Jones Family Farms.

Born October 16, 1918, at Griffin Hospital in Derby, he lived his entire life on the farm that his great-grandfather had founded. He walked two miles to the White Hills School until the advent of the horse-drawn school bus. Because the country needed food during World War II, he was asked to stay on the farm. With encouragement from his grandfather he had begun planting evergreen trees in the late 1930s. By the late 1940s he realized people were eager to cut their own Christmas trees and with his wife Elisabeth created a beloved tradition for generations of families to harvest their own trees at the Jones Tree Farm.

He never retired, inspiring and mentoring his children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and a wide circle of family and friends with his interest in trees, history, stamp and document collecting and land stewardship. He lived his life with intention, wanting to leave a legacy of improving the lives of family, land, and community.

Mr. Jones served on the CFPA board from 1962 through 1987, and he told his family that the most important act he helped with was hiring former Executive Director John E. Hibbard in 1963. He volunteered for and helped found many location organizations. He served two terms (1948-1952) in the Connecticut House of Representatives.

Into his early 90s he could often be found at his sawmill sawing lumber from trees he'd planted in his youth.

His wife of 61 years, Elisabeth, died in 2005. He also was predeceased by his brother, Newell, and sister, Carol. He is survived by his sister, Barbara Foote; two sons, Terry Hubbell Jones and his wife Jean Crum Jones of Shelton, and Daniel Philip Jones of Taos, New Mexico; his daughter, Dr. Sandra Lee Jones of West Suffield; and four grandchildren, Philip "Jamie" Jones and his wife, Christiana, Gwyn Jones and her husband, Terry Eagle, of Shelton, Jeremy Philip Jones Pollack and his wife, Crista Grasso, of Tolland, and Carolyn Elisabeth Lehman and her husband, Derek, of Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania. He also leaves six great-grandchildren.

A memorial service will take place on Saturday November 14 at 2 p.m. at Shelton Intermediate School, 675 Constitution Boulevard North, in Shelton. Mr. Jones helped plan the mural showing the history of the land, painted by artist David Merrill and visible in the school's atrium. Riverview Funeral Home of Shelton is in charge of arrangements. There will be no calling hours, and the burial will be private.

Donations in his memory may be made to the Valley Community Foundation (valleyfoundation.org), 253 A Elizabeth Street, Derby, CT 06418. The foundation will transfer donations through its Jones Family Farms Fund to one of three non-profits as directed by each donor: the Connecticut Forest & Park Association, Philip Jones Fellowship Fund at the Ephemera Society of America, or Griffin Hospital.

Mr. Jones's son, Terry, said the following in a tribute to his father:

> *Thank you for bestowing a most-cherished gift - love and respect for the land - as you've set an inspiring example in the fields and in the woods of our farm. Thank you for the gift of time spent, lessons learned, and a legacy of dreaming up ideas – "brain waves" as you enthusiastically call them."*
>
> *I can stand anyplace on the farm and happy memories of projects we shared there come to mind. Clearing land, building roads, cutting trees, planting trees, building stone walls, digging ponds, building parking lots, planning barns, building barns. Reacquiring our beloved hilltop from the U.S. government – realizing our dreams. It's been a lot of work, but haven't we had fun!*
>
> *And see what has grown from your example of setting high standards to give back to our society and community. Your favorite commentary for pubic service: "Persistence, thou art a jewel!"*

continued on page 24

ROBERT BROWN

Robert D. Brown, a strong leader in the movement to acquire Talcott Mountain State Park in Bloomfield, died on June 13 at his home in Needham, Massachusetts, after a brief illness. He was 92.

Mr. Brown was an engineer and city planner who served as the first director of the Capital Region Planning Agency in Hartford. Later, he directed the New England River Basins Commission.

He is survived by his wife, Carol; his three sons, Doug, Steve, and Nat; and six grandchildren. A memorial service took place June 17 in Weston, Massachusetts.

—From death notices

CRISTINE STAUBACH

Cristine Staubach, 66, of Black Point Road, Niantic, who enthusiastically volunteered as a leader for the teachers' environmental training program, Project Learning Tree Connecticut, died on April 4.

Ms. Staubach was a retired librarian who had worked mostly in children's services. After her retirement, she embraced a passion for wildlife preservation when she earned a certificate in environmental citizenship from the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada. She was the vice president of the East Lyme Land Conservation Trust. She wrote poetry and articles for Tidal Basin Review, Grandmother Earth, Mobius, Voices along the River, Off the Coast, About Place Journal, Seven Hills Review, and other publications.

Her survivors include her daughter, Corinna R. Schott of Niantic; two sisters, Suzanne Staubach Ashford and Gini Staubach of Vernon; and two brothers, R. David Staubach of Glastonbury and J. Brent Staubach of Colchester.

A memorial service was held April 12 in Niantic.

—From death notices

MARTHA VERNLUND

Martha Shepard Vernlund, who worked for the Connecticut Forest & Park Association in the 1980s and 1990s, died July 23 near Sunapee, New Hampshire, where she had been living in recent years. She was 92. Mrs. Vernlund lived for many years on a horse farm in Middletown.

Mrs. Vernlund was born in Berlin, Connecticut, on November 15, 1922. She graduated from Vassar College in 1943. She was a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of West Hartford and a charter member of the Berlin Land Trust. She served on the land trust's board of directors until June 2014.

Among her many surviving family members are her children, Emily DelConte, Trina Hill, Alice Ford, Sarah Vernlund, Carl Vernlund, and Robert Vernlund. Her husband Robert James Vernlund, MD, predeceased her.

A memorial service was held on August 1 in Burkehaven, New Hampshire. Memorial donations may be directed to the Berlin Land Trust.

KEITH PADIN

Philip Jones, left, poses by a log from a white pine he planted in the late 1930s. With him are members of the next three generations of his family: Jackson, Sam, Terry, and Jamie Jones.

PHILIP JONES *continued from page 23*

The Connecticut Forest and Park Association has become a most-respected advocate for conservation and the working forests of our state. You helped the organization grow for more than 50 years. Along the way, you also grew the friendship and respect of a cadre of world-class educators at the Yale School of Forestry.

The inscribed granite bench amongst our hillside Colorado Blue Spruce reminds us of your vision in 1960 to create the Connecticut Christmas Tree Growers Association. Recently, we received a note of appreciation from a Christmas tree grower in South Carolina. It reminds us of the literally hundreds of folks you inspired to grow trees, which in turn brings Christmas joy to countless families across America.

I'm in the realm now of being beyond ability to put to words my fondness and appreciation for all you've meant to me and for all you will continue to mean as long as I live.

Perhaps, it is most helpful to tap the wisdom of William Sloane Coffin in his advice:

> *The one true freedom in life is to come to terms with death, and as early as possible, for death is an event that embraces all our lives. And the only way to have a good death is to lead a good life. Lead a good one, full of curiosity, generosity, and compassion, and there's no need at the close of the day to rage against the dying of the light. We can go gentle into that good night.*

FIND FABULOUS FOLIAGE VIEWS ON THE METACOMET TRAIL

Hiking from Peak Mountain to West Suffield Mountain

BY DIANE FRIEND EDWARDS

Miles of leafy views delighted me, my husband, and two friends at several outlooks along the Metacomet Trail between East Granby and Suffield. Okay, so we hiked the trail in July, when the vistas were green. But my mind's eye saw brilliant orange, red, and yellow punctuated with occasional green splashes. "We *have* to come back here in October," I thought. The views of fall foliage alone would make this hike worth repeating, but the 5.2-mile hike itself is fun. With a few steep sections, it's challenging enough to burn off calories (and justify eating ice cream afterward, which I'm proud to say I did not do—this time).

The Blue-Blazed Metacomet Trail, part of the New England National Scenic Trail, follows the spine of the traprock Metacomet Ridge. Here and there along the trail, fascinating rock formations—hexagonal or pentagonal columns of traprock (basalt)—jut out of the earth at sharp angles. At some of the outlooks, you can see slopes of traprock scree below you. In October, you're also likely to see migrating raptors soaring southward above the ridge (another reason I want to go back). The trail keeps you entertained with varied terrain—sometimes leaf-covered, occasionally rocky, twice crossing narrow brooks. The forest flora includes broadleaf and evergreen trees, ferns, mosses, and mushrooms (some the size of dinner plates).

PAUL EDWARDS

The view from the cliff.

The Hike

Following the advice of the *Connecticut Walk Book: West*, we hiked the trail from south to north. But we met our friends where we would end the hike: at the intersection of Phelps Road and Route 168 in

Hikers enjoy the view.
DIANE FRIEND EDWARDS

Suffield. Leaving one car there, the four of us drove south to the trailhead at the junction of Newgate Road and Route 20 in East Granby.

The trail begins on the east side of Newgate Road. (Note that the Walk Book specifies the west side, in error.) Almost immediately, the trail climbs fairly steeply up a rocky slope. The trail levels off and takes you through a mixed hardwood and softwood forest that includes some not-very-healthy-looking hemlocks (perhaps victims of the hemlock wooly adelgid). After passing a red-blazed trail on your right and going under a power line, ascend a short, steep hill to the top of 672-foot-high Peak Mountain (also known as Copper Mountain). Enjoy the view! Looking south, you can see the Heublein Tower atop the Metacomet Ridge. To the west, you will see nearby hills and, on a clear day, the distant Litchfield Hills.

THE BLUE-BLAZED METACOMET TRAIL, PART OF THE NEW ENGLAND NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL, FOLLOWS THE SPINE OF THE TRAPROCK METACOMET RIDGE.

More viewpoints—including one overlooking the crumbling walls of Old New-Gate Prison—will reward you at other points as you continue hiking north. Along the way, you will cross several rocky ledges and pass the bases of three aircraft warning-light towers. The trail will descend gradually into a ravine and then climb back up, cross through a stone wall, and bring you to another viewpoint where the Connecticut Forest & Park Association has placed a trail log-book in a wooden box nailed to a tree. Nearby, a small granite slab marks the East Granby–Suffield town line. At this point, you will have hiked 4 miles—only another 1.2 to go.

Continue northward, passing more views and reaching the top of 691-foot-high West Suffield Mountain. Begin heading downhill. Shortly you will come across two signs: one indicating the George A. Harmon Woodlot and the other marking the Dear Run Trail, both on property of the Suffield Land Conservancy. Keep following the Blue Trail downhill, cross two small streams, and then pause to check out an impressive stone chimney and fireplace—the remains of an old summer cottage. Back on the trail, switchback downhill to the trail's end at Phelps Road.

Directions

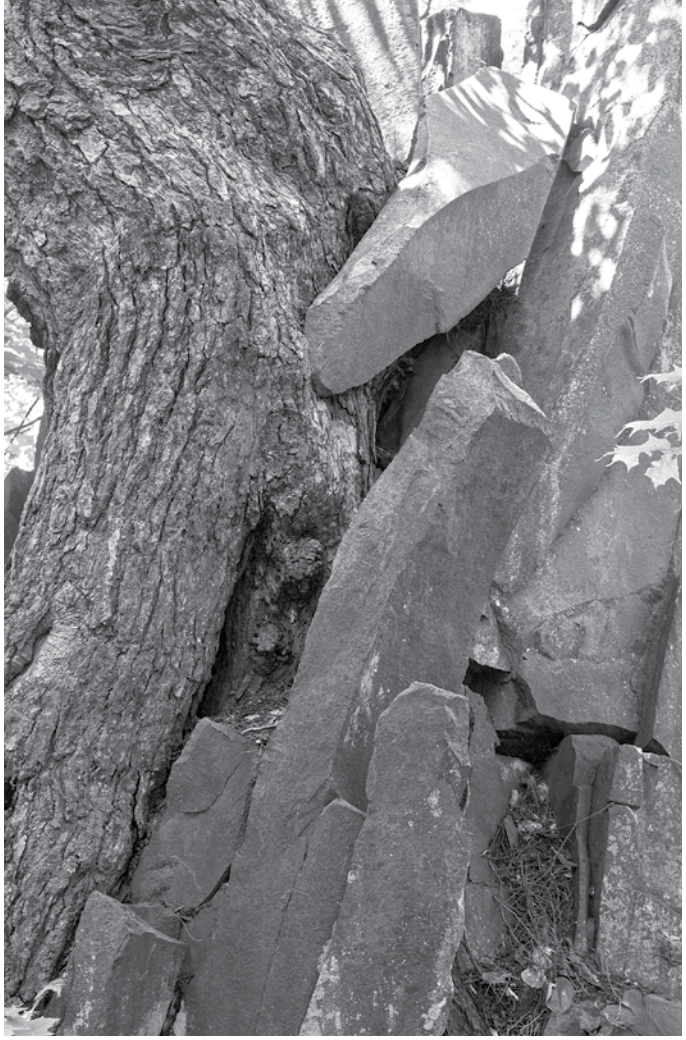
To Route 20/Newgate Road Trailhead and Parking

From East Granby center, drive 0.7 mile west on Route 20 (Turkey Hill Road), then turn right (north) onto Newgate Road. The trailhead and parking will be on your right, on the east side of Newgate Road.

To Phelps Road/Route 168 Parking

The hike ends on Phelps Road in Suffield, at the intersection with Route 168 (Mountain Road).

Diane Friend Edwards is a freelance writer, nature photographer, and lifelong lover of the outdoors. She lives in Harwinton with her husband, Paul. She assists with proofreading and editing of this magazine.

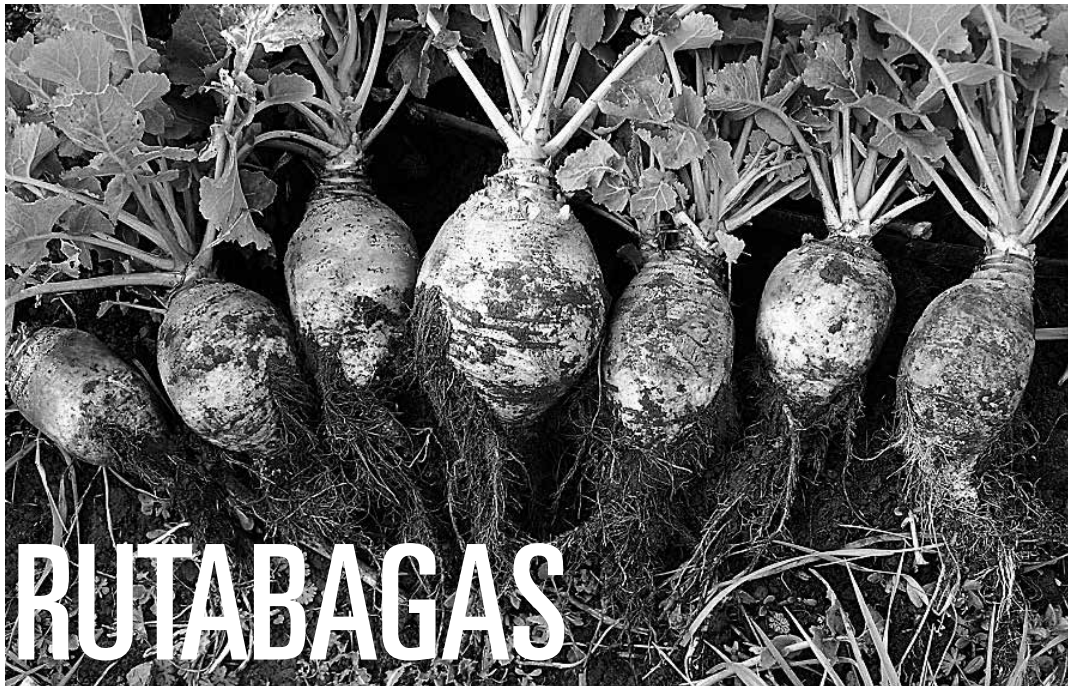


Top right, a tree grows around rocks.

Bottom right, hikers sign the register.

DIANE FRIEND EDWARDS, TOP; PAUL EDWARDS, BOTTOM.

ROOTING FOR RUTABAGAS



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Rutabagas resemble turnips but are larger and sweeter. Above, the nadmorska variety.

BY JEAN CRUM JONES

RUTABAGAS HAVE BEEN GROWN IN CONNECTICUT FOR AT LEAST 200 YEARS, YET THEY ARE RELATIVELY UNFAMILIAR BECAUSE OF THE CONFUSION WITH TURNIPS AND BECAUSE THEY WERE PRODUCED PRIMARILY FOR ANIMAL FEED.

The lima bean incident almost canI am particularly fond of an underappreciated—if not, unknown—autumn vegetable, the rutabaga. My husband, Terry, grows them in our family garden. It is not pretty—a grapefruit-sized ball with a rough skin. The purple color at its crown varies depending on the variety, ranging from a light to a very dark shade. In general, the rutabaga suffers from an identity crisis because it is often confused with a turnip, a distant cousin. Many people dismiss it because they dislike the texture and bitter, spicy taste of turnips.

Rutabaga, however, tastes sweeter than turnips. A good source of potassium, vitamins C and A, and fiber, it is also very nutritious. Perhaps it is worth a try.

Rutabagas have been grown in Connecticut for at least 200 years, yet they are relatively unfamiliar because of the confusion with turnips and because they were produced primarily for animal feed. Many livestock farmers in the 1800s grew rutabagas, turnips, beets, and carrots to supplement the stored silage; the roots of these vegetables were shredded by a farm root chopper to mix in with the feed in the fall and winter. (One of these vintage machines still resides in a corner of an old barn of ours.) Food grown for animals is often considered "coarse" or "unfit" for human consumption, so rutabagas developed a lowly reputation in America. (As an example, my husband's grandfather would never eat carrots because he felt that they were horse food.)

However, rutabagas are a favored food of many folks from northern European lands—Russians, Danes, Swedes, Finns, Norwegians, Scots, the English, the Irish, and the Welsh enjoy them immensely. Most of their traditional food preparations involve boiling and mashing the rutabaga and adding cream and butter to the mash. Despite its off-putting outside appearance, what hides under its tough skin is a creamy, yellow flesh that becomes quite sweet when cooked. Some food writers refer to the rutabaga as a "yellow turnip," but it is milder and sweeter than a turnip and has a more complex flavor profile. Some people, however, who have a sensitivity to a particular compound in rutabaga find it very bitter. But, not me!

Rutabaga is not an ancient vegetable, like turnips. Rutabagas are believed to be an accidental cross between a wild turnip and a wild cabbage that happened a long time ago but possibly as recently as the seventeenth century. The cabbage has 18 chromosomes and the turnip 20, but the rutabaga incorporates all of them and has 38 chromosomes. The first written mention of rutabagas occurred in 1620 when a Swiss botanist described them after he found them growing in Sweden. Scandinavians embraced the rutabaga because the plants grew so easily there and because the cool climate enhanced the sweetness of the vegetable. Many people of British heritage call the vegetable a "swede" or "Swedish turnip." The word *rutabaga* derives from the Swedish *rotabagge* and can be roughly translated "root bag." In Sweden, rutabagas were discovered to be a very productive crop for animal feed—and that they also tasted good to humans.

Rutabagas first attracted attention in England in the 18th century when agricultural reformers trying to improve animal husbandry in Great Britain encouraged their use. Soon, antebellum farmers in America became interested in improving the quality

of farming in this country. In the 1855 Report of the Connecticut Board of Agriculture, a Litchfield farmer glowingly describes his success with growing rutabagas despite his thin, rocky soils.

As for the culinary uses of rutabagas, recipes for them were printed in early American cookbooks, and farm housewives adopted their use. The most popular preparations were as a vegetable ingredient in New England boiled dinners, in creamed white sauces, and as a mashed vegetable. Later immigrants brought their favorite rutabaga recipes—the Swedes mixed mashed carrots with mashed rutabaga, Scots settlers liked neeps and tatties (mashed rutabaga and potatoes), and the Welsh incorporated them into their meat hand pies called pasties. For Christmas, the Finns prepare *Lanttulaatikko*, a rutabaga casserole with milk, eggs, nutmeg, molasses, and bread crumbs.

As our American population became more urbanized in the 20th century, rutabagas fell in popularity as a vegetable, except briefly when they were grown widely in victory gardens during World War II—when seeds for more desirable vegetables were not available. I became susceptible to the charms of rutabaga after I married because my Swedish mother-in-law encouraged us to grow them in our farm garden and showed me how to cook them.

I think rutabagas are beginning to make a comeback in our state. As current Connecticut consumers enjoy farmers' markets and consumer-supported agriculture (CSA) baskets into the late fall, fresh rutabagas are becoming readily available. Before it became easy to get rutabagas straight from a farmer, one had to buy rutabagas at supermarket produce aisles where they were coated with paraffin as a preservative. Nevertheless, these rutabagas imported from Canada and the Northwest United States tended to be flavorless and dried out. Today, farm-to-table chefs seem to be embracing the rutabaga and are coming up with many innovative ways of cooking them. Recipes I look forward to trying soon include one for smashed rutabagas with ginger-roasted pears and another one with rutabaga chunks mixed with caramelized onions and apples. I am seeing many recipe suggestions for rutabaga oven fries, which must be delicious. Tender young rutabaga can even be shredded into a salad.

Rutabagas are historically noteworthy for an important non-food use, too. In Ireland, the rutabaga was the first jack-o-lantern, as the roots were hollowed out and carried with glowing coals on All Hallows' Eve. Irish who immigrated to this country adopted the pumpkin for the lantern. Thus began our craze with the holiday of Halloween. Another recent imaginative use for rutabagas was developed at the Ithaca Farmers' Market in 1998—the Annual Rutabaga Curling World Championship. We might consider extending the rutabaga curl to our state. Readers who want to hear the Vociferous Cruciferous Choir perform Handel's Rutabaga Chorus and see past events can check out the website rutabagacurl.com for a good laugh. Not only delectable and nutritious, there's something just plain fun about rutabagas.

Jean Crum Jones is a registered dietician who helps run the Jones Family Farms in Shelton with her family.

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