CONNECTICUT

Woodlands

FALL 2020

Into the Woods

A MAGAZINE OF THE CONNECTICUT FOREST & PARK ASSOCIATION

The Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) is a 501c3 nonprofit organization that protects forests, parks, walking trails, and open spaces for future generations by connecting people to the land. Since 1895, CFPA has enhanced and defended Connecticut's rich natural heritage through advocacy, conservation, recreation, and education, including maintaining the 825-mile Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails system. CFPA depends on the generous support of members to fulfill its mission. For more information and to donate, go to ctwoodlands.org

On the Cover: Lukah Brown explores the Blue-Blazed Regicides Trail on a perfect fall day.

For millennia, ceremonial stone landscapes have told stories of human culture, page 8.

CONTRIBUTOR'S *Spotlight*

Jay Levy is Archeology Field Supervisor for the Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut. He's also a CFPA Trail Manager for the Narragansett Trail, which, he says, has seen a lot more use during the pandemic. We caught up with Jay to learn more about his work to protect natural and cultural resources for the Tribe.

What drew you to archeology?

My first archaeological field school was excavating King Herod the Great's palace, a 2000-year-old site at Caesarea Maritima, Israel. This sparked my interest in other cultures. But the process of digging up Hellenistic graves disturbed me, so I decided to pursue anthropology instead. I later returned to archaeology after seeing the need to protect and honor those people that have been dug up.

DEEP Commissioner Katie Dykes works to help create a more resilient future, page 11.

Bridgeport community members unite to protect Remington Woods, page 13.

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In This Issue

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860-346-TREE
ctwoodlands.org
info@ctwoodlands.org

Tell us about your work with the Mohegan Tribe.

I have worked for the Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut for over 20 years in the Cultural Department overseen by the Council of Elders. Over the years, I have taught language, arts, culture, music, ceremony, and educational programs. For the past eight years, I have also monitored natural and cultural resources on federally funded projects to protect Tribal cultural sites on ancestral land. I conduct archaeological surveys, map stone features, and supervise the Archaeology Field School. In the winter, I analyze, process, catalog, and conserve artifacts.

As both an indigenous person and an archeologist, how do you balance native and scientific perspectives in your work?

As an indigenous person, there are things we are taught by Elders that have always been. I see the science support the oral history and traditional cultural values we are taught. It is tough when a federal or state project disturbs graves. I believe once someone has passed on, they return to the Earth. Indigenous people never thought our people would be unearthed. We never had a ceremony for reburying people. It's tough to ask for forgiveness for disturbing someone who was laid to rest thousands of years ago.

Is it okay for hikers to build rock cairns in the woods?

Building cairns above treeline can confuse hikers. Many trails use cairns to mark the route. If people build cairns in the alpine zone, someone can easily get lost. Many rocks when moved to build cairns also disturb homes for creatures. I think if it's the right environment and done with respect, it's okay to build a cairn. Afterward I would try to gently return it to its natural state. I think touching rock and playing with rock is important, just do it with respect. Respect for one another, respect for the animals, and respect for the natural world.

Editor's Note

On the morning of May 25, Christian Cooper, an African American author and avid birder, was involved in a racist confrontation while birdwatching in Central Park. The incident, captured on video and viewed by millions on social media, underscored the risks that Black people face when venturing outdoors. In an opinion piece in the Washington Post, Mr. Cooper wrote: "The important thing the incident highlights is the long-standing, deep-seated racial bias against us black and brown folk that permeates the United States."

It's no secret that America's conservation movement is rooted in the privileged perspective of wealthy, white men. Gifford Pinchot, the first chief of the U.S. Forest Service, was active in the eugenics movement; John Muir, who founded the Sierra Club, referred to African Americans as lazy "Sambos." Throughout the West, the vision of a pristine wilderness was used to justify the forced removal of American Indians from their traditional lands.

Perhaps the most insidious legacy of this troubled history is the racist—and deeply unscientific—notion that you can separate the welfare of nature from welfare of human communities. It's a fallacy that remains in wide circulation today.

In early June, CFPA released a statement on diversity that outlined some specific steps the Association is taking to address systemic racism, including building and enhancing urban school district partnership programs to ensure that Black and brown students have increased access to forests, parks, and trails; partnering with urban youth organizations and diverse outdoor groups; and recruiting people of color for our Summer Trail Crew, AmeriCorps, and trail internship programs.

We, at Connecticut Woodlands, recognize that we must do a better job of featuring diverse voices on our pages. As editor, I am committed to creating a more inclusive magazine that celebrates the unique backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of Connecticut's diverse communities.

If you, or someone you know, are interested in contributing to Connecticut Woodlands, or if you have story ideas, please let us know. We'd love to hear from you.

I'll see you outside,

Timothy Brown
Editor

Woodlands

Timothy Brown
Editor

Kolk Design
Graphic Design

David Leff
Poetry Editor

Thanks to photo contributions from: Jason Doucette, Katie Dykes, Daniel Gottfried, Doug Harris, Hanna Holcomb, Steve Kornfeld, Jay Levy, and Pete Vertefeuille.

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CFPA Updates

Animals, Everywhere!

Pete Vertefeuille

As people spend more time on our local trails or in their backyards these days, many are having close encounters with wildlife. This spring, CFPA offered a Backyard Naturalist webinar to folks who wanted to walk on the wild side. The webinar provided tips for observing, identifying, and learning about Connecticut's wildlife. Over 150 Backyard Naturalists practiced their new skills in their favorite Blue-Blazed Trails, parks, open spaces, or land trust properties. Discover 7 Steps to Becoming A Backyard Naturalist at ctwoodlands.org/environmental-education/7-steps-becoming-backyard-naturalist

CFPA is offering a daylong training for woodland landowners and managers on Friday, September 18, at Sessions Woods in Burlington. Participants will learn about forest management practices that support wildlife. This event, offered through a partnership between CFPA, UConn, and DEEP, is a safer alternative to our annual Coverts weekend, which was cancelled due to COVID-19. For more information about this event, contact Beth Bernard, CFPA Education Director, at bbernard@ctwoodlands.org

Summer Trail Work

CFPA's Summer Trail Team was small but mighty this year. While we were unable to host our traditional 5-member Summer Trail Crew due to the pandemic, Brennan Turner (Field Coordinator) and Ted Randich (Trail Technician) were able to accomplish some key projects. They cleared blowdowns, relocated trails, cut overgrowth, and built some beautiful trail structures, such as footbridges and crib steps. It was a hot summer but Ted and Brennan remained cool in their efforts and were undeterred by countless challenges.

We plan to build on their accomplishments by hosting a 9-member AmeriCorps National Civilian Conservation Corps (NCCC) team for a month in early fall. Crew members from across the country will assist us with key trail improvement projects on the New England Trail, Quinnipiac Trail, and other projects as needed. We're excited to host these young adults for a month of hard work and good times.

The trails took a significant hit from Hurricane Isaias. Big trees and branches came down, sometimes completely blocking a trail. CFPA's volunteers, Trail Managers, and certified sawyers stepped up to once again clear the damage and re-open the trails for the hiking public. The trails should be free of hurricane debris by the fall hiking season, which is always a glorious time to get outside.

Field Coordinator Brennan Turner clears a tree on the Narragansett Trail boardwalk.

From the Statehouse

By Eric Hammerling

Speak up for Your Forests and Climate at the GC3

The public participation phase of the Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3) is currently under way. Now is the time to let the GC3 know how you feel about recommendations that will be reported to Governor Lamont and the General Assembly early next year.

I have served as Chair of the GC3's Forests Sub-Group. Here are some highlights from our draft report:

Resilient forests provide many benefits to people and nature, such as reducing heat stress and lowering energy bills; improving air quality; providing physical and mental health benefits; supporting local jobs; storing and sequestering carbon; sustaining wildlife habitats; and creating more livable communities.

Forest resiliency is threatened by various factors. Although forests are an important carbon sink, our forests may become less resilient and effective at mitigating climate change due to several factors, including invasive plants and forest pests; low age diversity; overbrowse by deer; forest conversion; air pollution; and more extreme weather events.

Forests are valuable for carbon storage. Connecticut's forests are the most "carbon dense," oldest, and have the highest annual net growth in forest biomass in the Northeast.

Climate change is impacting vulnerable people the hardest, and there are significant inequities in the locations where trees are not currently providing benefits to people. These inequities are most apparent in our cities where communities with the highest poverty rates and health inequities tend to also have the lowest tree canopy cover and fewer green spaces.

Large core forests—unfragmented forests of 500 or more acres—have been declining dramatically over time, and there are a number of specialized forest types, such as freshwater forested wetlands, pitch pine-scrub oak, riparian forests alongside cold water streams and headwaters, and lowland Atlantic white cedar, that require focused protection efforts.

Keep forests as forests. Avoiding the conversion of forestland to other uses is the most important thing we can do to allow forests to both adapt to and mitigate climate change. Our recommendations include setting goals for increasing Connecticut's forest cover, protecting more core forests, and dedicating more resources to work with private landowners.

Retain large trees in forests and residential areas. Large trees provide a significant amount of the carbon storage and other benefits in both urban and rural settings.

Energize a youth conservation corps as a "tree planting army" like the original Civilian Conservation Corps to provide outdoor jobs, build trust and cultural understanding of green spaces at the community level, and clean-up/plant-up open spaces to benefit both urban and rural environments.

Establish forest carbon baseline and goals for Connecticut. Under the Global Warming Solutions Act, Connecticut established significant goals for reducing emissions from the transportation, energy, and building sectors. We should add goals for "negative emissions" (e.g., carbon sinks) that forests, wetlands, soils, and other natural areas provide.

Adopt a "No Net Loss of Forest" policy for Connecticut that supports all of the recommendations above by:

1. KEEPING FORESTS AS FORESTS to retain the multiple benefits of carbon storage, biodiversity, public health, and green infrastructure;
2. PROTECTING HIGH QUALITY FORESTS to ensure that impacts on forests, sensitive habitats, and other natural climate solutions are considered at every level of planning;
3. OFFSETTING ALL PLANNED OR PERMITTED FOREST LOSSES through a combination of compensatory mitigation requirements and other tools;
4. PROVIDING FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR STEWARDSHIP, FOREST RETENTION, AND FOREST RESILIENCY on privately-owned forestlands; and
5. PROTECTING URBAN FORESTS, BUILDING MORE PARKS, AND PLANTING MORE TREES AND GARDENS to maximize the benefits to people of trees and green spaces.

We encourage you to take action to provide your input to the GC3. Go to CFPA's website more information for how to participate in this process, or you can contact me directly with your questions or suggestions at ehammerling@ctwoodlands.org

Eric Hammerling has served as the Executive Director at the Connecticut Forest & Park Association since 2008.

The Calm Voice in the Storm

CFPA mourns the loss of a fallen giant.

John Hibbard, who served as CFPA's executive director from 1963 to 2000, passed away on July 12. He was 84. A passionate advocate and steward of the Connecticut landscape, John lobbied the state legislature for passage of the Landowner Liability Law, served on state task forces for farmland preservation and dairy industry preservation, and was involved in creating Connecticut's Forest Practices act, as well as Connecticut's Environment 2000 plan. For his lifetime of service, John was presented with an Environmental Merit Award of Lifetime Achievement by the EPA, and recognized with proclamations by both the Town of Hebron and State of Connecticut. To read an interview with John Hibbard by Christine Woodside, former editor of Connecticut Woodlands, see our Winter 2012 issue in our online archives.

"John Hibbard was Connecticut's essential conservationist. He was the very voice of the landscape."

David Leff

We asked five of John's friends to share some reflections.

"I had known John Hibbard first through *Connecticut Woodlands* when I was a forestry graduate student in New Brunswick, Canada. Studying and working in the monotony of the spruce-fir forest, I got to return to my home state's more diverse trees and forests through the magazine. Then I began my career with UConn Extension in 1991. John was the person I was told to visit with right away. In our very first visit I knew John would not only become an important colleague, but a mentor and friend." **Bob Ricard**

"Wisdom is a word we all sometimes bandy about, but John was one of the few truly wise people I've had the privilege of knowing. Even-tempered in almost any situation, he had a unique ability to defuse tense situations with a wry smile and subtle sense of humor, while at the same time getting us all back on track and focusing on what mattered. As all who knew him are aware, perhaps the most remarkable thing about John was the sheer volume of data, on an enormous range of topics, that not only resided in his brain but that he could recall instantly." **Steve Broderick**

"I had known John for nearly a decade before I started to work with him on the Forest Practices Advisory Board. It wasn't until the board that I realized what a truly great advocate and visionary he was for Connecticut's forests and parks. For me personally, when John spoke during those sometime tumultuous board meetings, it was always a moment of pause and contemplation. He was always the calm voice in the storm." **Doug Emmerthal**

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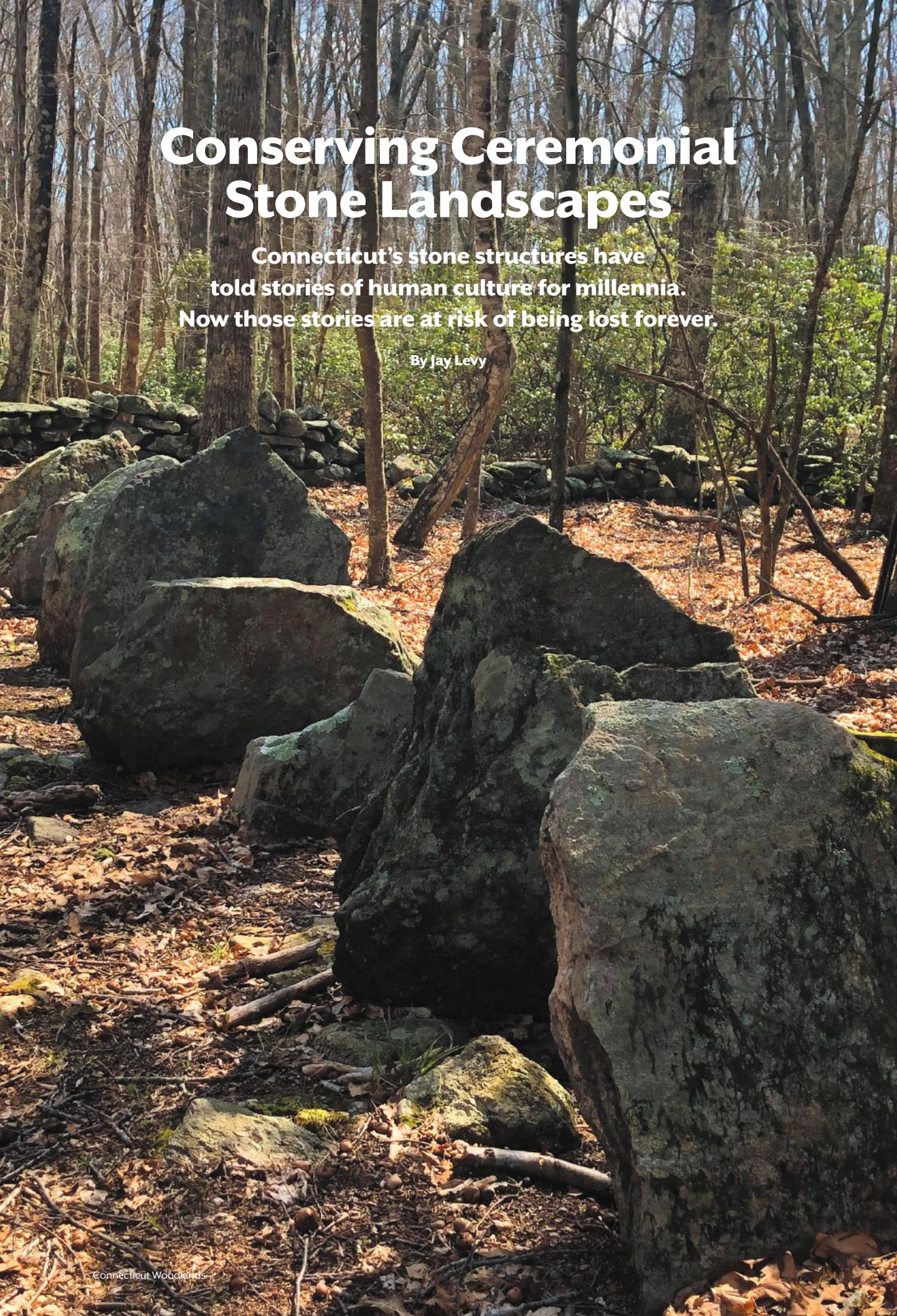
Conserving Ceremonial Stone Landscapes

Connecticut's stone structures have told stories of human culture for millennia. Now those stories are at risk of being lost forever.

By Jay Levy



As you follow the blue blazes on the Narragansett Trail in southeastern Connecticut, you may notice piles of rocks to the side of the trail. This section of the Green Falls ravine holds cairns, or rock piles, that once supported sluices to carry water from the river to a mill. Today all that remains are the stone piles. Throughout New England, there is evidence of colonial history from stone walls, foundations, wells, and quarries. All these stones have a story to tell.

But stone structures existed for hundreds of years before colonial contact. Historically, indigenous people in Connecticut constructed stone groupings, stone effigies, modified boulders, stone rows, and stone chambers. Collectively, these are known as ceremonial stone landscapes (CSL). Indigenous people believe that stones are Grandfathers and hold a spiritual connection to the land. They carry energy, and only certain types of stones are used in the construction of a particular grouping. A CSL may represent a significant event, be an offering of prayer, offer protection, align with celestial bodies, mark trails, point to water sources or medicines, or tell stories filled with cultural meaning.

"These are their shrines, their offerings, their sacred sites," writes Markham Starr in *Ceremonial Stonework*. "It is important for us to understand that these structures are as sacred to them as wooden church altars were to the colonists who displaced them. Because of this, these objects deserve the same respect." In 2008, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places recognized ceremonial stone landscapes as culturally significant.

We have names for many CSL throughout Connecticut. On the Mohegan reservation, "Cochegan Rock" is one of the largest glacial erratics in New England and is considered culturally significant to the people. "Council Rock" on the Pequot reservation also holds great meaning. The tribes have used these stone formations for centuries. These are meeting locations where important decisions are made. In Groton, a site called Gungywamp contains both pre-contact and contact period structures. Interpretations of the stone groupings vary, but indigenous people consider the area important and continue to use it for ceremony today.

Some rock structures are constructed by cultural figures and others hold the memory of creation. Often archaeologists without tribal knowledge, and without consulting tribes, overlook these important rock structures. The archaeological work I perform verifies what is often already known through tribal oral history.

Stone features created by Native people to represent animals with spiritual significance can still be found in the woodlands. One of our creation stories talks of North America being formed on the carapace of a turtle. Doug Harris, retired Deputy Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Narragansett Tribe, describes a stone turtle effigy as a reminder "of our responsibilities as a cooperative resident of this continent, turtle island."

Unfortunately, many stone groupings have been lost due to development or vandalism. Other groupings thought to be farm-clearing piles have been unintentionally destroyed. Recently I worked on a project to protect ceremonial stones within the Appalachian Trail corridor. The trail, established in 1939, runs through culturally sensitive areas of the Schaghticoke Indian Reservation in Kent and has been of concern for the Schaghticoke people. In 2013, the National Park Service (NPS) purchased tracts adjacent to the reservation and made plans to relocate a mile-long section of the trail. As a Native American tribal representative for the Mohegan Tribe, and

Indigenous people believe that stones are Grandfathers and hold a spiritual connection to the land.

Above: Many of Connecticut's ceremonial stone landscapes are not as easily recognizable as this turtle effigy. For indigenous people, the turtle is the effigy totem of the teacher. Photo by Doug Harris. Left: Although archeologists are uncertain as to the precise origin of these standing stones, similar Manitou or spirit stones are considered sacred by some local indigenous peoples. Photo by Jay Levy.

To the untrained eye, identifying ceremonial stone landscapes can be challenging. Is this a colonial circle of used to extract tannins from tree bark to tan leather, or is it a celestial calendar? Photo by Jay Levy.

an experienced Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) Ridgerunner familiar with this area, I was chosen to walk the relocation route.

Botanical and archaeological surveys were conducted from 2014 to 2016 for the proposed relocation. In late 2019, the NPS invited Connecticut's federally recognized tribes to participate as a consulting party, beginning with the Schaghticoke Summit. The meeting included members of the NPS, AMC, and Appalachian Trail Conservancy, as well as Schaghticoke and Mohegan representatives. I kept the Chief of the Schaghticoke Tribe updated on our progress. We surveyed the area to ensure that the relocation didn't disrupt any ceremonial stone landscapes. Many CSL are still used by the Tribe today.

As a Ridgerunner, one of my duties is to break-up fire rings. Campfires on the Appalachian Trail in Connecticut are prohibited due to their close proximity to homes and the potential for wildfire. Campfire rings end up being used as trash receptors for glass bottles, aluminum cans, cigarette butts, and bottle caps. Often this trash is left behind once the campers leave. Sometimes campfire rings are built with stones unintentionally repurposed from a colonial stone wall, or taken from an indigenous stone structure. This destroys the history and function of the ceremonial structure. We encourage hikers to only use existing fire rings in areas where fires are permitted.

Often archaeologists without tribal knowledge, and without consulting tribes, overlook these important rock structures.

Just as some campfire rings have been repurposed from farm stone walls, some farm stone walls have been repurposed from an older ceremonial stone row. It is important to recognize our common past on the land, and to respect and protect it for future generations. When we learn to respect the natural world as living, we will understand we are equal to stones, water, and trees, not better than or above nature. We share a vital connection to the Earth. This is when we will begin to protect the natural world so we may survive.

Today as I manage the Narragansett Trail for the Connecticut Forest & Park Association, I interact with hikers on the beach at Green Falls pond. I sit and reflect on the trail; its open space. The old quarry that once stood here is now a pond. I think about the destruction caused by development projects. I speak with my friend and Schaghticoke Elder Trudie Lamb-Richmond, who told me: "The land does not belong to the people, but rather the people belong to the land."

Jay Levy is the Archeology Field Supervisor for the Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut and CFPA Trail Manager for the Narragansett Trail.

Seeing the Forest for the Trees

Commissioner Katie Dykes sees today's challenges as opportunities to create a better, more responsive, more equitable DEEP.

By Timothy Brown

Commissioner Dykes and her family at Penwood State Park.

Katie Dykes is the Commissioner of Connecticut's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). An expert on energy policy, she previously served as Chair of the Connecticut Public Utilities Regulatory Authority and before that as Deputy Commissioner for Energy at DEEP. She was also Chair of the Board of Directors of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative from 2014 to 2017. A graduate of Yale Law School, she previously held positions as Deputy General Counsel for the White House Council on Environmental Quality and as a Legal Advisor to the General Counsel for the U.S. Department of Energy.

We spoke with Commissioner Dykes to learn more about how she is balancing policy priorities in the face of a global pandemic and climate change, and how DEEP is helping to create a more resilient future for Connecticut. This interview has been edited and condensed.

Connecticut Woodlands: First, how are you doing in the midst of this pandemic? As a working mother, how are you juggling the needs of your family and a demanding work schedule?

Katie Dykes: Like many working parents, this has been a wild time for us. I have three kids, aged 3 through 7, and life is busy and hectic. But it's been a privilege for my kids to learn more about my work and what our agency does. Of course, from their perspective, I'm just constantly on Zoom calls *(laughs)*. We've been able to get out to parks and to go for hikes. Many other families are reconnecting with parks and trails throughout the state and expressing a real appreciation that Connecticut had the foresight to protect and preserve these places. This is why those commitments are so important.

Has the pandemic changed your policy priorities at DEEP?

KD: COVID-19 has taken things that have been priorities all along and reinforced why they're so important. For example, one of our big priorities has been to ensure that we have continued commitment to Passport to the Parks. We've seen a very significant increase in the number of visitors coming to our parks through the spring and summer. Passport has been critical to our ability to provide a safe experience and for continued access to the parks during this time.

Across all of our programs, a commitment to equity and environmental justice has been important to me. In this moment, we see organizations making strong commitments to address racial injustice. That's a critical priority for DEEP as well, from protecting vulnerable communities who are at-risk and disproportionately impacted by such things as air pollution, to ensuring equitable access to our parks and outdoor recreation facilities. This time has thrown into sharper relief not just the opportunities for us to make more progress in these areas, but the urgent need for us to do more and do better.

How do you see the role of women changing in terms of environmental policymaking?

KD: I got my start in the energy field, a field that has traditionally been male-dominated. It's great to see

a trend starting to shift. We're also anticipating a significant percentage of our workforce (at DEEP) will be retiring by 2022. That's a real challenge—losing 40% of our veteran staff, and their knowledge and experience. But it also presents an important opportunity to ensure that as we recruit new scientists and policy makers, economists and biologists to come and refill their ranks, we're building a workforce that's diverse, both from the standpoint of gender and also racial and ethnic diversity. I feel a real obligation as commissioner to ensure that the DEEP of the future is going to better reflect the communities that we serve.

> **"I feel a real obligation as commissioner to ensure that the DEEP of the future is going to better reflect the communities that we serve."** DEEP Commissioner Katie Dykes

As a young kid, I was interested in outdoor recreation and hiking. I was also very aware of all the warnings that young women hear about the dangers of going out in the woods. When I was in college, I took a semester off to thru-hike the Appalachian Trail alone. I didn't make it all the way; I had an injury at the North Carolina border and couldn't go further. Later that summer, I ended up hiking the last 100 miles of the AT in Maine. Wanting to push the boundaries a little bit is something that's always been part of who I am. I think about that a lot in terms of making sure that those opportunities to explore the outdoors and follow careers that take you outside are things that women feel safe and comfortable doing.

You talk about a "21st century approach to regulation." What does that mean, and how are state government and the private sector working together to fight climate change?

KD: The Global Warming Solutions Act commits our state to an 80% reduction in carbon emissions, economy wide, by 2050. We have made great strides in reducing emissions in our electric grid by having a strong regulatory commitment. We have built innovative programs to leverage competition and market forces to help drive down emissions and boost new technologies. Some of those same approaches in our regulatory structure are going to be needed as we tackle carbon emissions in our transportation sector and in the ways we heat and cool buildings.

Nature-based solutions can also play an important role in reducing emissions by sequestering carbon. A lot of carbon is locked up in our forests, but a lot of those forests are in private hands. It's important to look at these things from the perspective of private forest owners to think about what economic incentives will help drive their decision making.

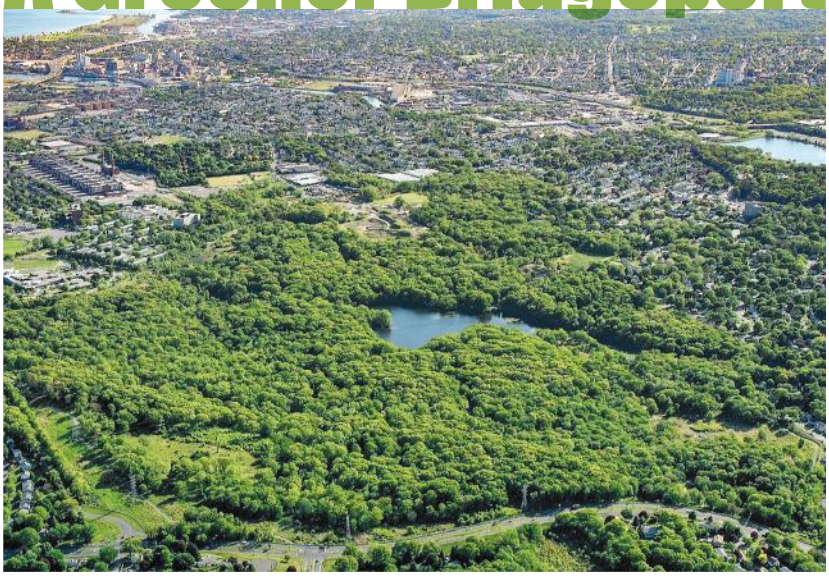
How is DEEP partnering with other states to fight climate change?

KD: There's not a day that goes by that I don't talk with a commissioner in one of our neighboring states. We share markets, we share industries, and we share best practices. We participate in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, a market-based carbon cap and divestment program, along with nine other states. Working together regionally just makes so much sense. We can achieve economies of scale and predictability for businesses and citizens. Governor Lamont deserves a lot of credit for his eagerness to pick up the phone, talk to his neighboring governors, and look for ways we can work together. And there is an open invitation for us at the commissioner level to build similarly strong partnerships and opportunities for collaboration.

Several of our neighboring states, are getting into offshore wind. What role will offshore wind play in Connecticut's energy future?

KD: Offshore wind is going to be transformative for our state. As commissioner, I oversaw a competitive RFP to procure significant amounts of electricity for Connecticut from new, offshore facilities. Last December, we announced an 804-megawatt project that Vineyard Wind will develop off the coast of Martha's Vineyard. It will supply up to 14% of the energy demand of our entire state, which gives you a sense of the scale and the potential for offshore wind to provide clean, zero-carbon electricity. It will also generate thousands of good paying jobs throughout the supply chain. A manufacturer in Seymour, for example, will supply cables to connect the various turbines for this project. Of course, as we deploy these turbines to meet our climate goals, it's important that we minimize any unintended impacts on our sensitive marine environments and our commercial fishers. As part of this process, DEEP was informed by a commission on environmental standards who advised us on the types of criteria to include in this RFP. We'll continue to meet with them to ensure that the various commitments that Vineyard Wind included in their bid around mitigating environmental impacts and fisheries impacts will be meaningful for the years to come.

A Greener Bridgeport



The campaign to save Remington Woods is rooted in community-led conservation.

By Ofonime Udo-Okon

For the past couple of years, I have been studying what communities look like when they assume they are powerful, rather than powerless. The last couple of months have been incredible. All over the country, people have occupied streets, demanding justice and bringing to light the myriad of injustices perpetuated by white supremacy. It should not be surprising that, as in other fields, themes of justice and power are entwined in conversations about the environment. From an environmental justice perspective, too often both development and conservation come at the expense of the wellbeing of marginalized communities.

For more than three decades, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) folx have been shaping the way we think about who benefits from a clean environment, and who shoulders the burdens of a polluted one. If there is anything that the current movement for racial justice has shown, it's that the voices of BIPOC communities will be heard. Most importantly, BIPOC communities are taking action, including in Bridgeport, Connecticut's largest city.

Remington Woods is a 422-acre urban forest in the neighboring cities of Bridgeport and Stratford. The Woods includes a 23-acre lake, hardwood forest, meadows, and wetlands. It is home to dozens of plant and animal species, including over 70 species of birds. DuPont owns the property, which is closed to the public. An environmental cleanup of a former munitions factory is due to be completed later this year at which point the fate of the Woods will be decided. DuPont currently plans to deforest the property and construct industrial buildings. The Sierra Club, in partnership with the Bridgeport community, is fighting to protect this unique landscape.

Coming into this conversation, I knew that my work would demand an intersectional approach, with marginalized community members at the forefront of the conversation.

The preservation of Remington Woods can become the standard for how all our communities and green spaces are transformed.

Conservation, particularly in white spaces, is often focused on protecting wildlife habitat. However, to truly address environmental injustice, we must confront the dirty "r" word—racism. While Remington Woods straddles both Bridgeport and Stratford, it is not a coincidence that the parcel being considered for development is located in Bridgeport. Let's consider the human landscape.

- More than 72% of Bridgeport's population is BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color). The median age is 33.
- Asthma hospitalizations among Bridgeport children under the age of 14 are more than twice the state rate.
- The global pandemic is ravaging BIPOC communities. Pre-existing health disparities (for example, high rates of asthma and diabetes) and other structural inequities have made BIPOC communities highly susceptible to COVID-19.

Our #SaveRemingtonWoods campaign is rooted in compassion. It is an opportunity for us to empower the Bridgeport community. This process began by listening to the voices of those who often don't have a seat at the table. On a Zoom call this past Juneteenth, the holiday that celebrates the end of slavery in the United States, I had the chance to hear directly from local residents why protecting Remington Woods is so important to the people of Bridgeport.

Bridgeport envisions a Remington Woods reclaimed, renamed, and reconciled back to the community; a community of life that is welcomed and adopted as a central part of Bridgeport's identity. A green space where children can explore an Earth connection; a space where education can be rooted in nature. Bridgeport envisions a Woods where youth have the opportunity to engage in new extracurricular activities. A free park where the community can walk and bike. A Woods where art becomes alive. A Woods that is saved by the power of the entire community and the voices of the East Side Neighborhood Revitalization Zone. Bridgeport envisions a Woods that gives birth to horticulturists, landscapers, farmers, botanists, park rangers, forest managers, organizers, and leaders. Bridgeport envisions community forest gardens in a Woods that addresses the food apartheid on the East Side. Bridgeport envisions a Woods that will encourage youth programming and job opportunities for a greener future.

At this point in the call, I asked folx what they valued, what their families valued, what their community valued, and what they felt Bridgeport valued. They told me that the community values their physical and mental health. They values their relationships with friends and family. They value art, and safe spaces. And equally as important, they value sustainability.

The barriers that they identified were not surprising. Bridgeport's vision and values are obstructed by unchecked capitalism and corruption, a lack of public awareness, a perceived lack of resources, and the philosophy that we humans are separate from the rest of nature.

Often, the conversation stops at visions, values, and barriers. By then we have enough information to justify our work. However, it has been important for us to ground this campaign in what the community wants.

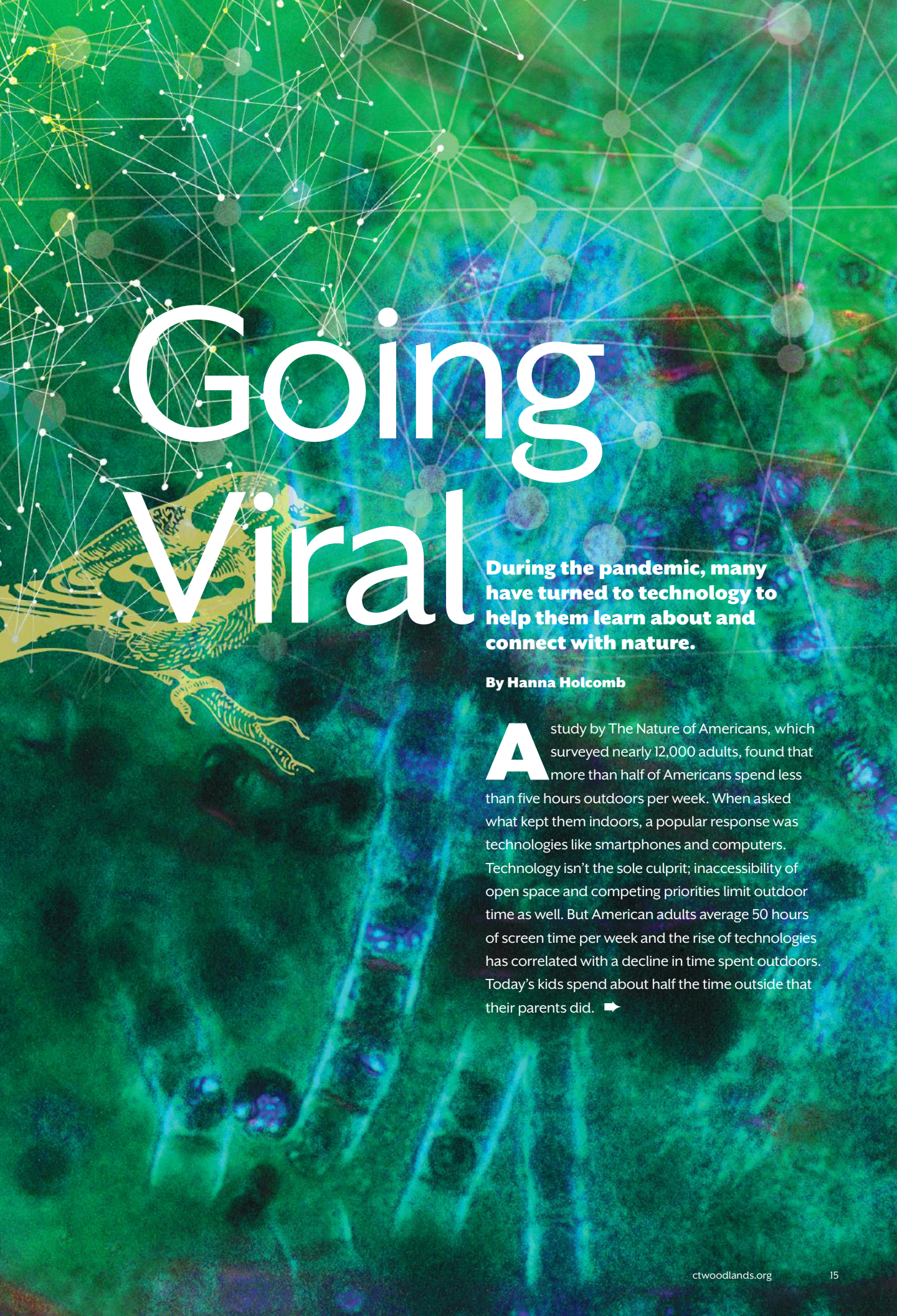
People on the call said they want preservation to be grounded in the conversation of reparations. The community must be involved in the restoration and the remediation of the Woods. There should be open meetings where residents can learn more and contribute to the conversation.

The decision to destroy and develop an intact forest does not just affect asthmatic and diabetic folx in Bridgeport; it becomes the baseline for how all our communities and green spaces are treated. Similarly, the preservation of Remington Woods can become the standard for how all our communities and green spaces are transformed.

Here at Sierra Club, we believe that our power is rooted in our language. We are not just fighting development. We are fighting for a Woods reclaimed, renamed, and reconciled back to its community. We are grounding our fight in the conversation of reparations. We envision what Bridgeport envisions; we value what Bridgeport values. We stand as allies with the Bridgeport community.

But this fight is bigger than Sierra Club's Connecticut Chapter. This fight includes your families, your neighbors, your coworkers. And most importantly, this fight includes you.

Ofonime Udo-Okon is Community Outreach Coordinator for Sierra Club Connecticut.

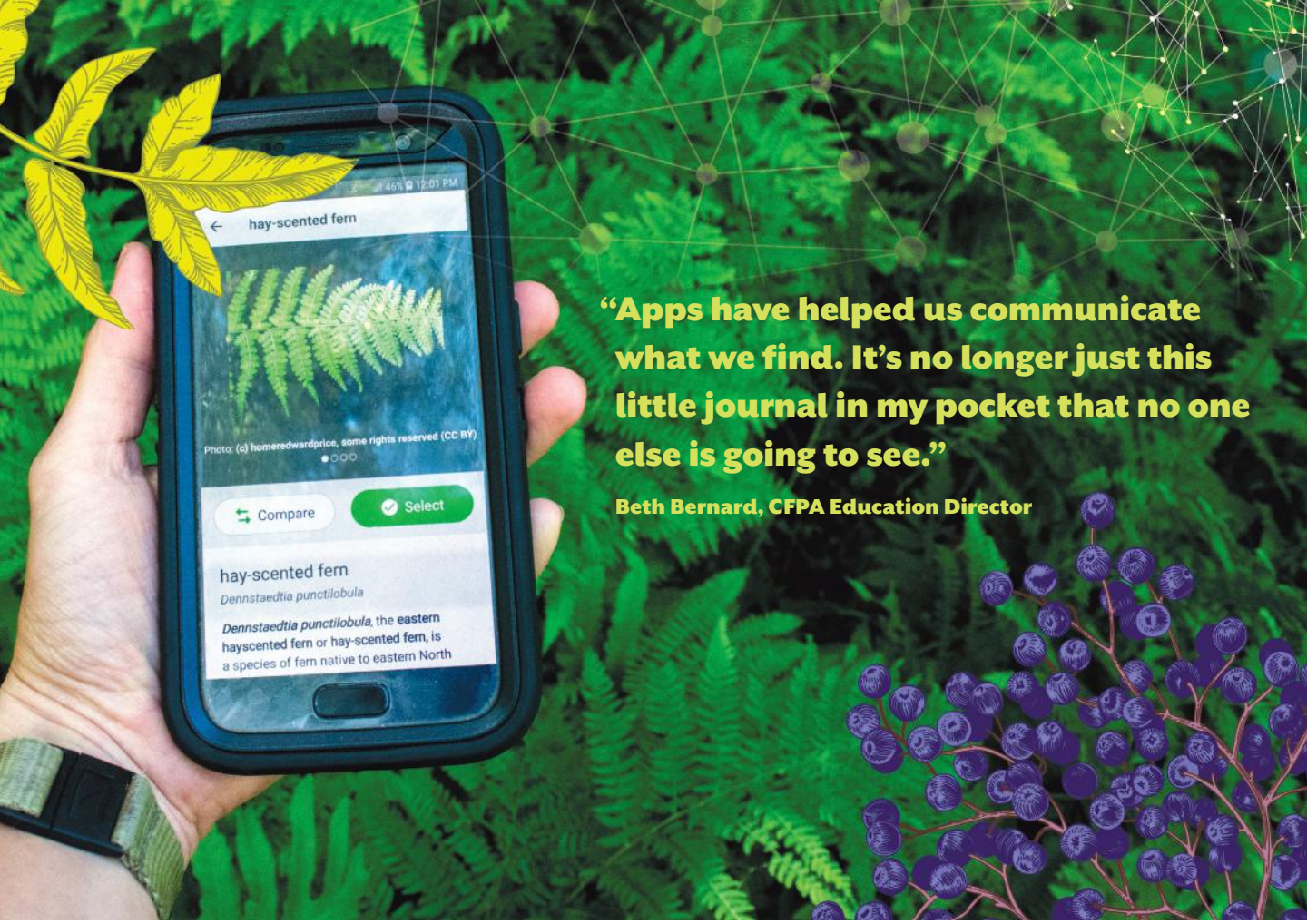


Going Viral

During the pandemic, many have turned to technology to help them learn about and connect with nature.

By Hanna Holcomb

A study by The Nature of Americans, which surveyed nearly 12,000 adults, found that more than half of Americans spend less than five hours outdoors per week. When asked what kept them indoors, a popular response was technologies like smartphones and computers. Technology isn't the sole culprit; inaccessibility of open space and competing priorities limit outdoor time as well. But American adults average 50 hours of screen time per week and the rise of technologies has correlated with a decline in time spent outdoors. Today's kids spend about half the time outside that their parents did. ➡



"Apps have helped us communicate what we find. It's no longer just this little journal in my pocket that no one else is going to see."

Beth Bernard, CFPA Education Director

Though technology is often blamed for people spending less time outdoors, it may help to bridge a gap between people and their local environment. Apps and webinars yield ecological information at someone's fingertips and take away the barriers of formal education and guide books.

This spring, when Governor Ned Lamont's "Stay Safe, Stay Home," executive order suspended in-person activities at non-essential businesses and canceled community gatherings to curb the spread of COVID-19, residents became more reliant on technology to overcome the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. According to the Pew Research Center, nearly 90% of adults say the Internet has been important for them during the pandemic, including 50% who say it has been essential. Telecommunication websites, like Zoom, had daily sessions increase by the millions, and time spent on YouTube and Facebook increased by about 20%. Historically, a rise in technology coincides with a drop in outdoor time, but Connecticut trails saw just the opposite.

This March, more than half of the multi-use trails monitored by the Connecticut Trail Census recorded a more than 100% increase in use compared with this same time a year ago. The Hop River Trail in Bolton, which recorded the highest increase, had 216% more use than last year. The trend continued into the summer with trails reporting about 50% higher use than in 2019.

"In these emergencies or big events, people go to nature, almost instinctively," said Charles Tracy, former coordinator for the Connecticut Trail Census at UConn."

And though technology and nature have often been seen as adversaries, technology may actually be helping more people connect with nature.

In March and April, the Merlin Bird ID, a free app developed by The Cornell Lab of Ornithology which helps users identify birds with a simple description or a photo, had 100% more downloads compared to these same months last year. iNaturalist, another free app that helps people identify species with an uploaded photo, also recorded increased use over 2019. Apps like these make it easier for novice naturalists to learn about their surroundings and to contribute to citizen science projects. Instead of carrying a backpack of field guides or having formal naturalist training, all users need is curiosity and their phone.

In April, on the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, Connecticut Audubon used iNaturalist to host a Backyard BioBlitz, a day of surveying as many species as possible. More than 200 people across the state participated in the BioBlitz, recording more than 2,500 observations of nearly 700 species.

"It was a fun way to get parents and kids who are home from school involved and outdoors to see what plants and animals were around," said Tom Anderson, Director of Communications at Connecticut Audubon.

The observations on iNaturalist are also useful for community members and researchers. iNaturalist works similar to a social media site; uploaded observations are shared with others, and the collective data gives a snapshot of the biodiversity in an area. "These apps have helped us communicate what we find," said Beth Bernard, Education Director at CFPA. "It's no longer just this little journal in my pocket that no one else is going to see."

Using apps to collect observations has been particularly useful during the pandemic, especially for researchers who typically work in close quarters,

"Most of our cyanobacteria monitoring had been conducted from a boat," said Jean Pillo, Watershed Conservation Project Manager at Eastern Connecticut Conservation District and The Last Green Valley Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Coordinator. "You can't socially distance on a boat so we can't go on the water. Monitoring has to be shoreline based." Volunteers started using the BloomWatch app, a free app developed by the EPA Cyanobacteria Monitoring Collaborative. When citizen scientists see a bloom, they take a picture of it from the shore and upload the image with a time and date. The data is kept in the BloomWatch database.

"The best thing to do to prevent degradation is to document the conditions," said Pillo. "Baseline data in any lake or pond is really important."

Besides apps, webinars have been useful educational tools during the pandemic. With social distancing limiting in-person events, connecting through video conferencing has been a great way to learn. Connecticut Audubon has hosted several webinars, covering topics like bird identification and landscaping for birds. Anderson said online platforms have helped them to reach a larger audience.

"People can log in from anywhere, it doesn't even have to be in Connecticut," said Anderson. "It's a way of reaching more people in a broader geographic area."

CFPA has hosted webinars as well, including Becoming a Backyard Naturalist. "It was a good way to help keep people engaged with the nature at their homes or at their local park or land trust property," said Bernard.

CFPA also hosted a virtual Tree School, a weekly program with nature-based lessons and activities that could be done in backyards or at local parks. In a follow-up survey of participants, more than half of the parents or caregivers said the program got them outdoors more often with their kids.

Though online learning activities are useful, they can't fully replace place-based education. "The hands-on part of it is hard because you can't be there to guide participants outside," said Bernard. "You just give them information or motivation and hope that they have a good time." In addition, e-learning isn't a realistic option for many people. Low income and rural communities are the most likely to have limited access to high speed wi-fi. And technology alone won't make trails and parks more accessible or necessarily shift trail use patterns to better reflect the communities in our state. Connecticut Trail Census data from 2019, for example, showed that nearly 90% of trail users were white, and more than 50% reported a household income of more than $100,000. Both the pandemic and the current movement for racial justice have forced organizations to reimagine their education programs and outreach initiatives to make the outdoors safer and more welcoming for all.

Despite the challenges, both CFPA and Connecticut Audubon plan to continue to offer e-learning programs even after social distancing restrictions are lifted.

"I can't believe I hadn't been doing them before," said Bernard. "I don't want to say that there's a silver lining to the coronavirus, but if we want to find one, it's that we've been able to adapt a lot and I see the benefits of it."

Hanna Holcomb, a native of Woodstock, Conn., has written for Woodlands since 2017.

For many people, hiking has become the ultimate social distancing activity during the global pandemic. Some families have set ambitious goals, such as completing an entire Blue-Blazed Trail this season. We wanted to celebrate the accomplishments of two such families.

family time

Daniel Gottfried and his family, including their new puppy, Mac, recently completed the Metacomet Trail, a 62.2-mile trail that extends from the Hanging Hills of Meriden to the Massachusetts border. Known for its spectacular scenery and breathtaking views, the Metacomet Trail follows central Connecticut's trap rock ridge, passing such iconic landmarks as Ragged Mountain, Tariffville Gorge, and Suffield Mountain. Established in 1929, the Metacomet is part of the 215-mile-long New England National Scenic Trail, or NET, a federally-designated

The Gottfrieds—Daniel, Michele, Davyn, and Avi—recently completed the 62.2-mile Metacomet Trail.

scenic trail administered by the National Park Service and co-managed by CFPA and the Appalachian Mountain Club.

"The Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System really is a choose-your-own adventure. Whether you aspire to hike long miles or you want to get the kids out for some fresh air, there really is something for everyone," said Clare Cain, CFPA Trail Stewardship Director.

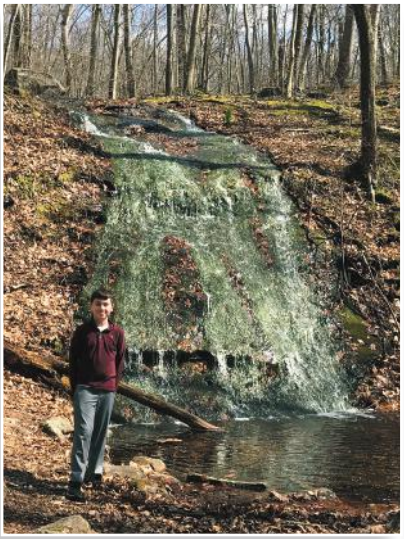
The Gottfrieds are experienced hikers. In addition to hiking the Blue-Blazed Trails, they have a goal of summiting the tallest peak in every state. So far, they have stood atop the highest mountains in six states, including North Carolina's 6,684-foot Mt. Mitchell, when their daughter, Davyn, was only six years old. "I love the wilderness," said his son, Avi.

The family has focused on exercise and the outdoors during the pandemic. "Hitting the trails provided a sense of normalcy and gave us good time together, exercise, and, of course, camaraderie with other people out on the trails," he said.

Hiking also provided space for the kids to explore deeper issues. While hiking, Davyn and Avi, aged 13 and 8 respectively, often talked about their dreams, goals, and visions for the future. "I thought that by the time we finished the trail, this COVID thing would be over," Davyn said.

on the trail

State Representative Jason Doucette and his family completed the 50-mile Shenipsit Trail this season. The trail, which, like the Metacomet runs north-south, traverses the Meshomasic and Shenipsit State Forests, offering spectacular views of the Great Hill Pond and Connecticut River. Although the Doucettes have done many shorter hikes as a family, particularly at Case Mountain in Manchester, hiking the entire Shenipsit was both challenging and also a welcome break from quarantining and online schooling.



The Doucettes—Jason, Heather, Edward, and Charlie, along with their dogs, Forrest and Bubba, hiked the entire 50-mile Shenipsit Trail.

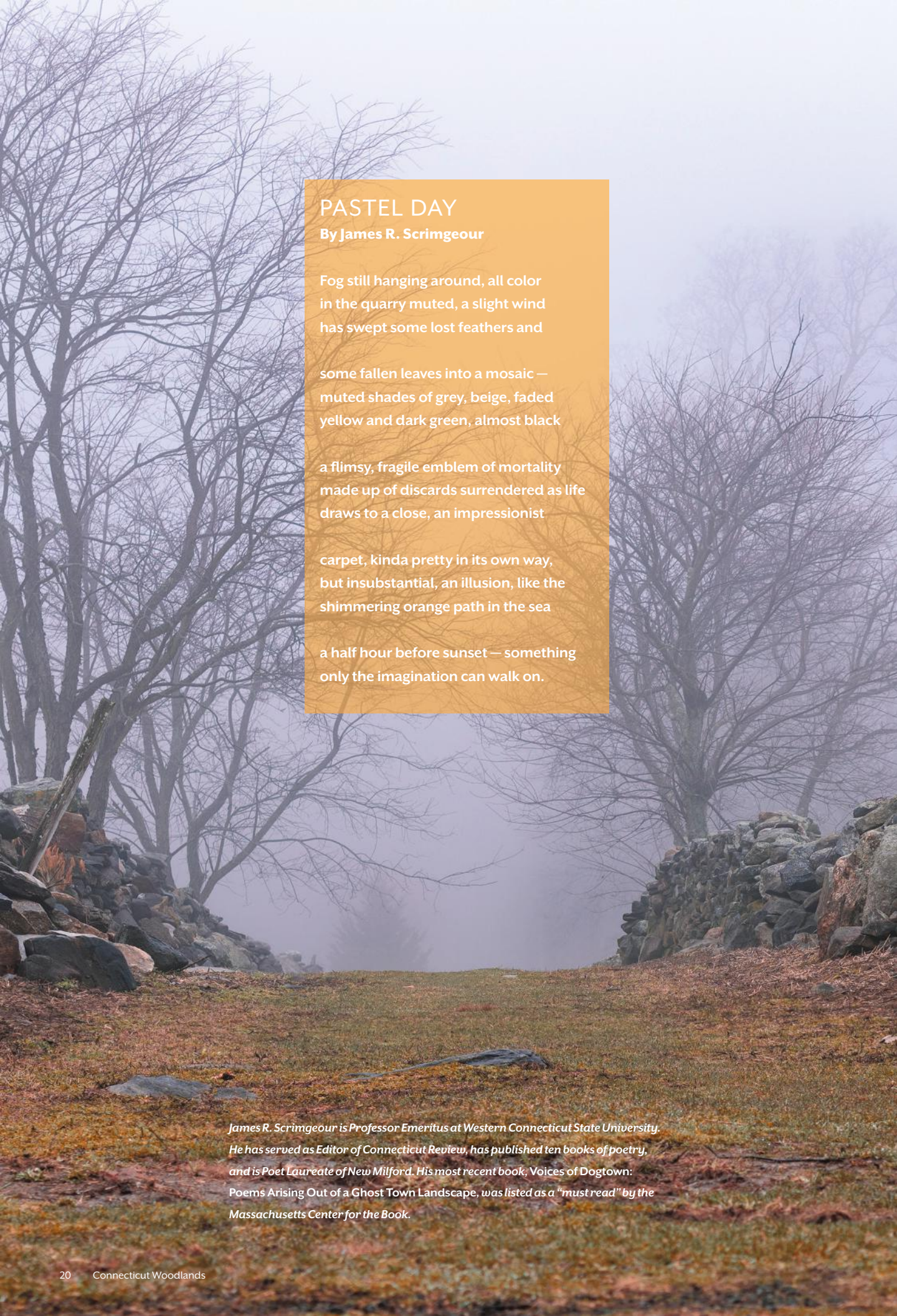
"It was a great opportunity to get out and hike other areas nearby that were new to us, like Meshomasic State Forest and the Belding Wildlife Preserve," Jason said. "Our home and my legislative district is smack dab in the middle of Shenipsit, so we started at the south end in Cobalt and headed north, averaging about four-to-five miles per leg."

"Our trails are incredibly diverse," said Cain. "The terrain varies, the highlights and views on each trail are unique, and the trails can feel different from season to season."

Starting in the spring, before trees leafed out, the Doucette family had some great views along the way. And like the Gottfrieds, the Doucettes also had their canine companions with them for the journey.

"Our dogs, Forrest and Bubba, loved the streams and rivers. They would stop to lay in them to cool off," Jason said.

Looking for your own hike challenge? Learn more about the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail & New England Trail Challenges at our website.



PASTEL DAY

By James R. Scrimgeour

Fog still hanging around, all color
in the quarry muted, a slight wind
has swept some lost feathers and

some fallen leaves into a mosaic —
muted shades of grey, beige, faded
yellow and dark green, almost black

a flimsy, fragile emblem of mortality
made up of discards surrendered as life
draws to a close, an impressionist

carpet, kinda pretty in its own way,
but insubstantial, an illusion, like the
shimmering orange path in the sea

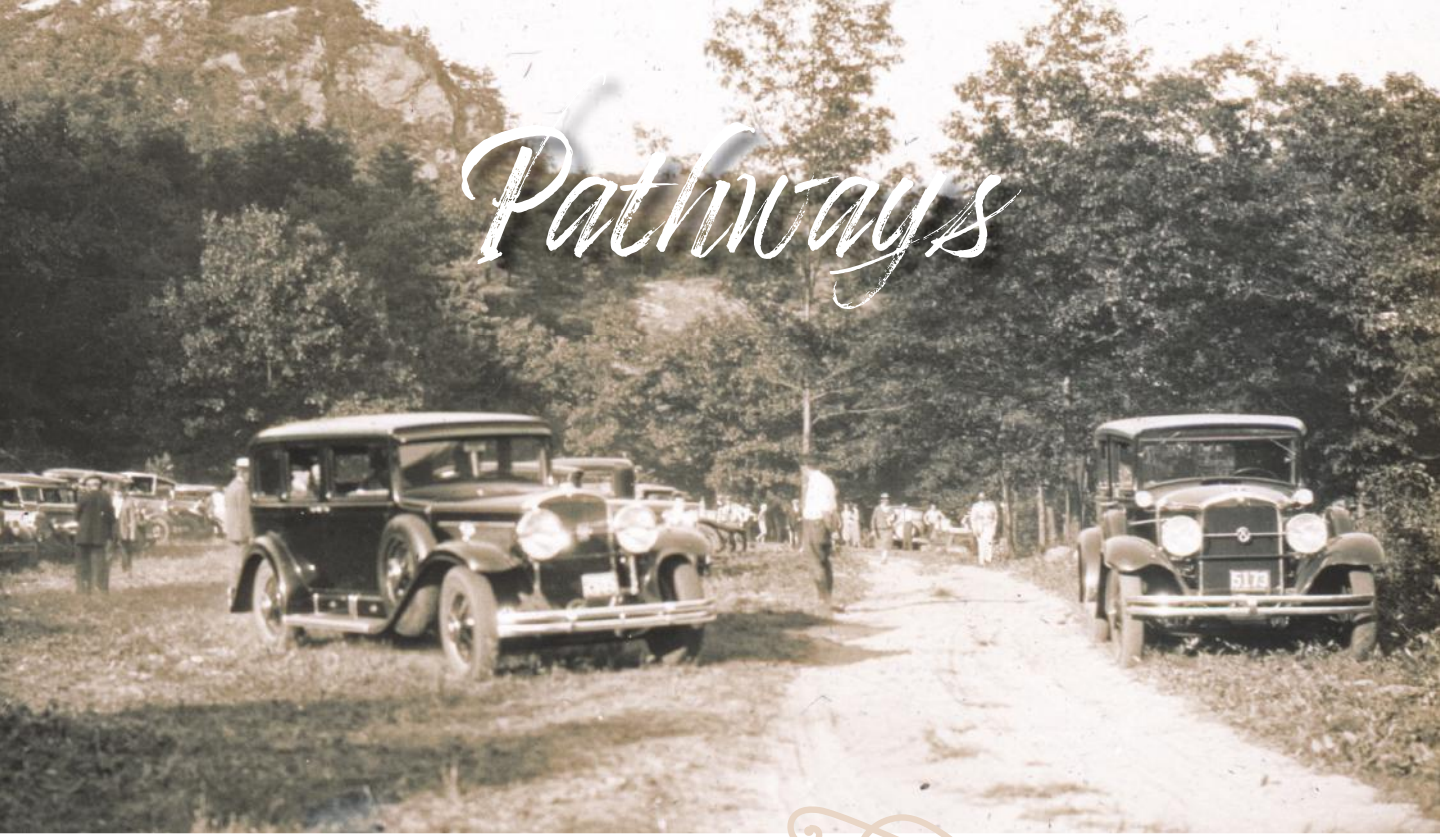
a half hour before sunset — something
only the imagination can walk on.

James R. Scrimgeour is Professor Emeritus at Western Connecticut State University. He has served as Editor of Connecticut Review, has published ten books of poetry, and is Poet Laureate of New Milford. His most recent book, Voices of Dogtown: Poems Arising Out of a Ghost Town Landscape, *was listed as a "must read" by the Massachusetts Center for the Book.*

The Calm Voice in the Storm, *continued from page 7*

"For many years at CFPA, John was the proverbial one-armed paper hanger, administrator, editor of the Woodlands magazine, coordinator of the Blue Trail Hiking System, as well as lobbyist at the General Assembly. The 1960s and 1970s in particular became a very active period in Connecticut. Large scale land development called for conservation and associated environmental reaction to protect the state's physical character. John played a very key role in all these issues during his long tenure at CFPA, largely because of his personal credibility, a quality all too rare in public life." **Joe Hickey**

"I met John in the late 1970s as a young legislative staffer with the Environment Committee. A big bear of a man, he was surprisingly soft spoken with a homespun way of describing even the most complex environmental conundrums. In the halls of lawmaking where posturing is a high art, his plain, heartfelt approach stood out. John was the most trusted person under the capitol's gold dome. John Hibbard was Connecticut's essential conservationist. He was the very voice of the landscape. The only worthwhile thanks we can give for a life well lived is to continue his work." **David Leff**



Pathways

In 1921, Harris Whittemore, a Connecticut State Forest and Park Commissioner and iron magnate, began to purchase land in the Naugatuck Valley with the intention of donating the parcels to the state. But he passed away in 1927 before he was able to realize this dream. His family continued to acquire land after his death, however, and in 1931, they donated nearly 2,000 acres for what would become the Naugatuck State Forest. Today, the 5,000-acre forest is managed for timber and other forest products, as well as a variety of outdoors recreation activities, such as hiking, bird-watching, snowshoeing, and Nordic skiing.

Mr. Whittemore, like his father before him, believed that wealth should be used for the betterment of their community. Together they built libraries, churches, and schools, and helped to establish new housing, hospitals, parks, and playgrounds. They hired some of the country's best architects to transform Naugatuck into their idealized vision for a New England town centered around a colonial-style green. In addition to the forest parcels in Connecticut, Harris donated a family forest preserve in California's redwoods to the public.

The Whittemores were also passionate art collectors, and especially loved the French Impressionists. Harris, who spent several years in Europe, acquired more than 1,000 paintings, including several by Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, Mary Cassatt, and James Whistler. Their art collection is the subject of Ann Y. Smith's book, Hidden in Plain Sight: The Whittemore Collection and the French Impressionists.

The above photo was taken at a CFPA meeting in the Naugatuck State Forest in 1931.

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