



CONNECTICUT

Woodlands

SPRING 2018

Once threatened,
vernal pools are
**Springing
Back to Life**

A MAGAZINE OF THE CONNECTICUT FOREST & PARK ASSOCIATION



On the Cover: A wood frog near a vernal pool in Madison, page 8



Steve Broderick lives out his dream at Town Line Tree Farm, page 14

CONTRIBUTOR'S *Spotlight*



Geoffrey Giller, who shot our cover photo and contributed to *Springing Back to Life*, is a freelance science writer and photographer currently based in Ithaca, N.Y. but originally from the Connecticut shoreline. He has a special love for amphibians and hopes to someday meet a hellbender in the wild. His writing and photography have appeared in *Scientific American*, *High Country News*, *Audubon*, *bioGraphic*, and the *Yale Alumni Magazine*, among other outlets.

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



Connecticut runners take to our trails, page 17



Hamden citizens save Rocky Top, page 20

Spring 2018 Volume 83/No. 2

We are changing our numeration system at Woodlands to align with the calendar year. The Winter 2018 issue should be cataloged as Volume 83, No. 1.

In this Issue

Hanna Holcomb caught up with Geoffrey to learn more about his photography and his passion for amphibians.

Q: Are amphibians your preferred photographic subject?

A: “I would say that they’re my preferred thing to seek out in the natural world, and when I’m seeking out natural things I tend to be photographing as well. I’ve taken photos of African wildlife that are probably more visually stunning than the pictures of amphibians that I’ve taken, but they’re definitely my most common wildlife subject.”

Q: What draws you to amphibians?

A: “There’s something just cool about amphibians. They seem very prehistoric to me. I think that they look really cool and they’re so ubiquitous and so common in the U.S. It’s nice to be able to go out to any forest in a large part of the United States and flip over a log or a rock and find one. But maybe it’s just something deep within my soul.”

Q: Do you have a personal favorite photo of amphibians?

A: “Probably one of my wood frog photos. I took them in Madison, which is where I grew up. There was this wood frog that was just sitting there and it let me get really close with my macro lens and I just really like how those came out.”

Q: What tips do you have for amateur photographers?

A: “Figure out where the amphibians might be by going out and exploring the woods, and maybe teaming up with herpetologists. Herpetologists are always going out looking for frogs and salamanders, and they’re always happy to have someone come along to take photos.”

The bottom line -

“I encourage people to go out and look for salamanders and look for frogs and any other amphibians. They’re often overlooked as a wildlife group, but they’re pretty fascinating.”

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Baltimore Oriole Nest
Hamden



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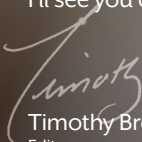
Editor's Note

Here in Connecticut, spring is the season of renewal. As the days begin to warm, sap flows through the veins of our sugar maples. Trees bud out and birds return. Frogs and salamanders awaken from their long slumber in search of vernal pools where they will lay their eggs. Nature is reborn.

After being cooped up for several months, people, too, emerge with a renewed sense of purpose. Some head to our Blue-Blazed trails to hike, and increasingly to run. Others enroll in a naturalist program and learn to see the world through new eyes. Neighbors who hardly know one other discover a renewed sense of community. Last spring, a group of committed citizens in Hamden banded together and fought to protect a place they love. At a time when many people feel discouraged about the state of our democracy, our society, and the natural world, it's important to remember that together we can do amazing things.

Last week I renewed my vehicle registration. It was the first time I had the privilege to contribute to the new Passport to the Parks, a \$10 fee paid every other year that will help ensure Connecticut's state parks have the support they need. Thanks to the staff of CFPA and members like you, now more people will have an opportunity to hike, camp, and explore our state parks. And be renewed in a way that can only come from spending time outdoors.

I'll see you outside,


Timothy Brown
Editor

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Spring Trails Workshop

By Clare Cain

If you have ever wondered how a trail gets built or how it can be improved, the Annual Spring Trails Workshop is your chance to learn. Join us on May 12 at Burr Pond State Park in Torrington as we work on a variety of trail improvement projects on the Walcott Trail that circles beautiful Burr Pond. Projects will include building a new trail, constructing a bog bridge, trail blazing, and more. Participants should bring water, snacks, a backpack, bug spray, and work gloves, and wear sturdy hiking shoes, long pants, and clothes that can get dirty. CFPA will provide all the necessary tools. We hope you will join us as we improve this popular hiking trail.

We will meet at 9am for introductions, donuts, coffee, and a tool safety talk. We will work until 12:30pm and then have lunch in the Park. For driving directions, sign-up information, and additional details visit our online events calendar.

Educational Programs for the Whole Family

By Emma Kravet

This spring, CFPA and our partners at the Goodwin Conservation Center will offer several exciting programs for adults, children, and families. Come learn about mushrooms, honeybees, native orchids, and tree identification from Master Naturalists, scientists, and environmental educators. On April 8, local nature writer Katherine Hauswirth will present for a half-day writing retreat with a focus on nature as theme and inspiration. We will also continue our popular Shinrin-yoku workshops led by Alexandra Lowry, a certified Integrative Life Coach and CFPA Ramble Guide.

The Discover Highlawn Forest Youth Series is a free, hands-on program for kids ages 10 or older. This series, hosted by CFPA volunteer and Master Naturalist, Lynn Kochiss, allows kids to explore the natural world on their own terms as they use microscopes to view lichens, and nets to catch frogs, salamanders, and other critters. A corresponding series is hosted by Lynn at Goodwin Conservation Center in Hampton. All children must be accompanied by an adult.

To learn more about these and all of our upcoming programs, go to ctwoodlands.org/CFPA-events



Thousands have downloaded *About My Woods*. Have you?

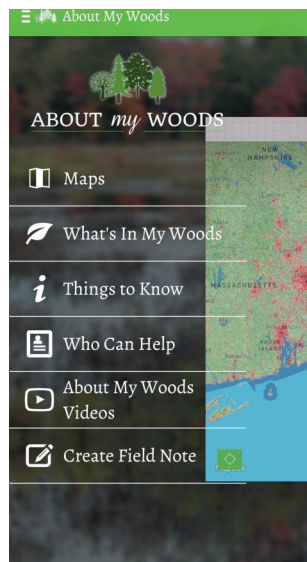
About My Woods, a free smartphone app, is now available for download. Woodland owners in New England and New York now have a new tool to help learn about their woods. Foresters, loggers and others who work in the woods will find it useful too. The app has just been completely updated & has 7 new forest stewardship videos.

Available for both Android and iPhones (and tablets), you can access the app by going to the App Store (Apple) or Play Store (Android) and simply typing "About My Woods" in the search bar or at www.ct.gov/deep/forestry. You can also go to www.aboutmywoods.org and see the app instructional video to learn how to use *About My Woods*. A link to a web version can also be found there.



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From the Statehouse

Why Does CFPA “Hike the Hill?”

By Eric Hammerling



Eric Hammerling, Executive Director of CFPA, and Clare Cain, Trails Stewardship Director, in Washington D.C. to Hike the Hill.

Although most of CFPA’s public policy effort is focused on the Connecticut General Assembly, there are always several national issues that impact the ongoing conservation of your forests, parks, and trails.

Every February, CFPA’s Trails Stewardship Director Clare Cain and I visit Connecticut’s congressional leaders in Washington, D.C. to participate in “Hike the Hill” with our partners at the American Hiking Society and the Partnership for the National Trails System. Along with dozens of organizations and individuals representing 11 National Scenic Trails and 19 National Historic Trails, we meet with congressional staff and members to talk about the important conservation legacy of these special trails.

As you know, CFPA and our volunteers maintain and improve 115 miles of the New England National Scenic Trail, or “NET” here in Connecticut. The full NET stretches 215 miles from the Long Island Sound in Guilford to its northern terminus at the New Hampshire border. It is managed in partnership with the Appalachian Mountain Club, who oversees the NET in Massachusetts, and the National Park Service, who provides federal seed funding and technical support. This year, our trip to Washington coincided with a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the 1968 National Trails System Act, which authorized National Scenic, Recreation, and Historic Trails.



Part of our goal when we “Hike the Hill” is to report on the outstanding work we have accomplished along the NET over the past year. For example, in 2017, our volunteers dedicated over 10,000 hours to maintaining and improving the NET; we transformed road walks into forested trails in Farmington and Durham; we improved former “butt slides” on the north and south approaches to Chauncey Peak in Meriden; we held 40 community outreach events and 26 trail work parties; Artist in Residence David Leff concluded a fantastic Haibun poetry project featuring over 90 sites along the NET; and much more.

We also “Hike the Hill” to encourage all Members of Congress from Connecticut to support critical budget and policy issues that impact the NET, including:

1. Increase appropriations for the NET through the National Park Service

NET appropriations have been both inadequate and flat since the NET was designated in 2009 and an increase is long overdue. The NPS only provides \$40,000 per year to support NET projects in Connecticut. To put this in perspective, the work at Chauncey Peak, for example, cost \$25,000 before considering CFPA’s related staff costs.

2. Achieve parity for the NET amongst National Scenic Trails

When the NET, North Country, and Ice Age Trails were designated, they were not made “units” of the National Park Service like the eight other existing National Scenic Trails. This has hindered opportunities for funding and recognition within the NPS, and passage of the National Scenic Trails Parity Act would level the playing field.

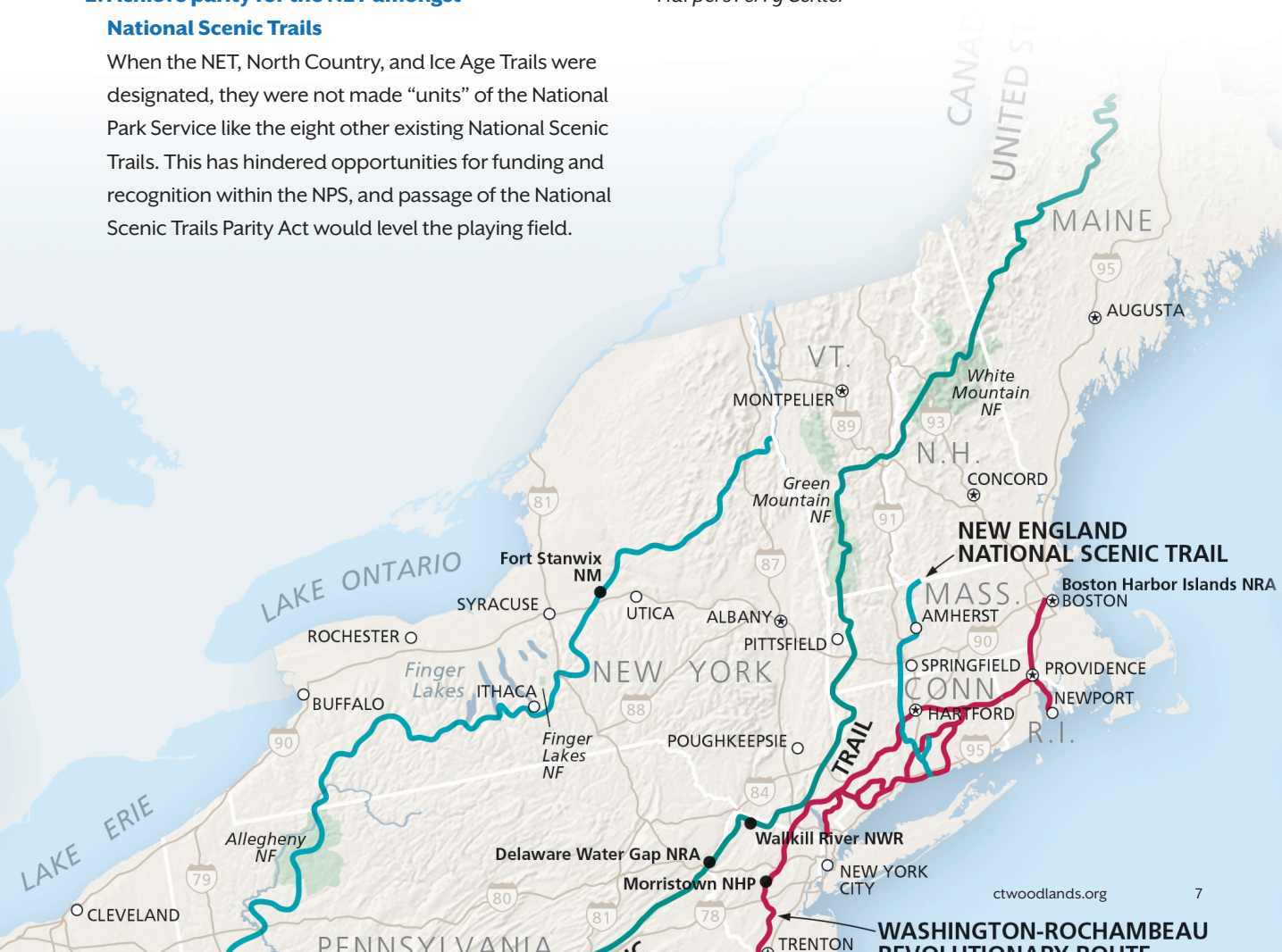
3. Support the Complete America’s Great Trails Act

This legislation, spearheaded by Sen. Blumenthal, would provide a tax credit to private landowners who donate a conservation easement on their properties to enable sections of National Scenic Trails to become permanent. If adopted, this bill would incentivize landowners and help keep the NET trail corridor connected.

Finally, we “Hike the Hill” to be part of something bigger than ourselves. It is inspiring to meet with other trail advocates from around the country, share success stories and frustrations, and express our appreciation for the important work being done. (We also enjoy challenging other states to host as many Trails Day events as we do in Connecticut). Two of the most inspiring stories I heard this year were from a Marine veteran with Warrior Expeditions who organizes long distance hikes on National Scenic Trails for military veterans before they reintegrate into civilian life; and from the young organizer of Latino Outdoors in Los Angeles who is working to create a national community of Latino leaders in conservation and outdoor education.

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

Map courtesy of the US National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center



Springing Back to Life

Long misunderstood, vernal pools are now seen as critical habitat for frogs, salamanders, and other creatures.

Photographs by Nicole Freidenfelds and Geoffrey Giller
Story by Hanna Holcomb

When temperatures climb and winter gives way to spring, wood frogs and salamanders awaken from their frozen slumber. Triggered by elevated temperatures and rain, these creatures leave their winter burrows, crawl out from beneath downed trees and leaf litter, and head for a vernal pool – a type of transient water body essential to the breeding and development of several amphibian species.

If you're willing to stand in the midst of a storm, you can catch one of nature's most spectacular migrations.

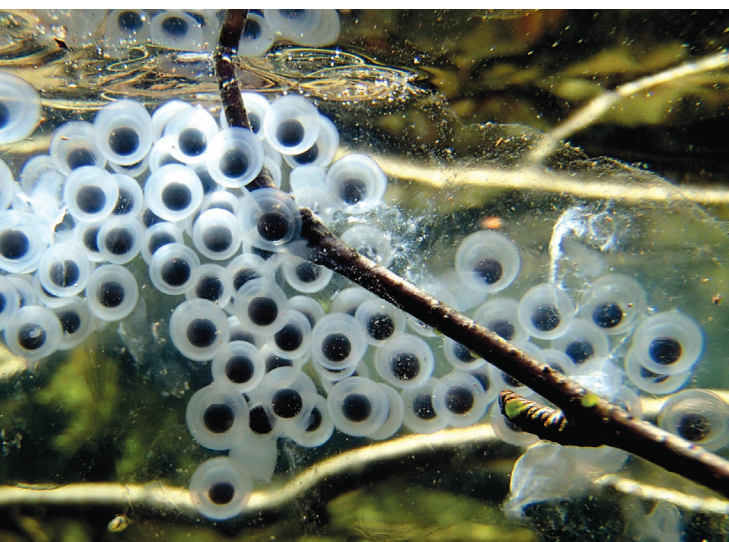


"The amphibians are just boiling up out of the ground and trudging," says Jim Arrigoni, a Ph.D. candidate in conservation biology at the State University of New York College of Environmental Science in Syracuse. "You can see life restarting again after a New England winter."

The amphibians travel to one of the thousands of vernal pools across Connecticut, which were formed over 10,000 years ago by glacial retreat. In early spring, pools fill with winter snowmelt and rain runoff. Decaying organic matter and small invertebrates provide ample nutrients to the famished travelers.

The amphibians mate shortly after arrival, and within a day or two the pool teems with gelatinous egg masses. Wood frog eggs float in clusters in the sunniest parts of a pool, while salamander eggs are often attached to vegetation or on the bottom of the pool. Here the amphibian parents don't have to worry as much about predation; the pool dries for part of the year, so there are no fish to eat the eggs.

After a few weeks, the tadpoles hatch and swarm the pool. Salamander larvae hatch shortly after and use their gills to live underwater. As these amphibians mature and prepare for life outside the pool, they trade tails for



Clockwise from lower left: *Ambystoma maculatum* (spotted salamander) eggs; a vernal pool in springtime; *Rana sylvatica* (wood frog) tadpoles; *Notophthalmus viridescens* (Eastern newt)



legs and gills for lungs. When development is complete, they exit the water and move into nearby uplands. Sometimes, though, a pool dries before the amphibians have finished maturing. When the surrounding trees leaf out, they suck up water, causing the pool's water level to drop quickly. If development is not completed before drying, the immature amphibians will die in the desiccated puddle.

Those that make it out in time can wander up to a kilometer away from the vernal pool seeking food and a spot to burrow. Both the pool and surrounding uplands are critical to the amphibian lifecycle and need to be protected from development and degradation.

"The amphibians need an aquatic place next to a good terrestrial place," says David Skelly, Oastler Professor of Ecology at Yale and Director of the Peabody Museum of Natural History. "When both of those aren't there, they don't make it."

But vernal pools – and wetlands in general – have historically been poorly protected.

"People didn't understand and didn't value the resources that swamps, vernal pools, and other wetlands were providing to wildlife and humans," says Lindsay Suhr, CFPA's Land Conservation Director.

In the early 20th century, many wetlands were drained and developed, degrading and fragmenting acres of potential amphibian habitat. These changes to the landscape have contributed to a decline in local populations of frogs and salamanders. Further, mild winter temperatures caused by anthropogenic climate change negatively affect the amphibians. Unseasonably warm Februaries fool the amphibians into early breeding.

continues next page



"If amphibians come out during a week that seems like May, and then they get hammered by a bomb cyclone the next week, you could lose an entire year of breeding," says Skelly. "The earlier the breeding happens, the more likely that will take place."

But Arrigoni says that amphibian populations have evolved to deal with high mortality. Traits such as large egg numbers and offset reproduction times within and between genders help amphibians survive in variable conditions.

Moreover, society has established better policies to protect vernal pools and to limit development near wetlands. CFPA prioritizes the conservation of large tracts of forested land with vernal pools because of the value that these habitats provide to wildlife. "Keeping the preexisting forest and the

pond adjacent to each other will benefit the amphibians and many other species that depend on these adjacencies," says Skelly.

CFPA also focuses on the educational and recreational value of vernal pools. Programs such as Frog Fridays, a guided experience exploring life in the vernal pools, and FrogWatch, a citizen science effort to monitor frog populations, bring people closer to the pools. And there are ample opportunities to hike near vernal pools in Connecticut. Visitors to Highlawn Forest, for example, can enjoy an elevated boardwalk with steps down to the water, and bring a net to see what creatures are present.



"If we're laying out a new trail and are able to take it into the vicinity of a vernal pool, we will," says Clare Cain, CFPA's Trail Stewardship Director. "It's certainly a treat for hikers to visit and experience these ephemeral wetlands. The best thing to do is to discover them on a trail near you this spring."



Nicole Freidenfelds is a former biologist turned high school science teacher with a passion for nature, especially the often-underappreciated critters like snakes and salamanders.

Geoffrey Giller is a freelance science writer and photographer based in Ithaca, N.Y.

Hanna Holcomb is a junior at Wesleyan University studying English and biology. She is also the coordinator for WesCFPA, a student-run partnership between the university and CFPA.

Clockwise from top left: *Rana palustris* (pickerel frog); *Ambystoma opacum* (marbled salamander); *Rana sylvatica* (wood frog); *Ambystoma maculatum* (spotted salamander); *Eubrachyus holmani* (fairy shrimp)



A New Way of Looking at Nature

In an era of rapid environmental change, the Master Naturalist Program at the Goodwin Conservation Center shows that the key to understanding these changes is careful observation.

By Beth Bernard

These days, with our increasingly hectic lifestyles, it's easy to overlook the wonder that surrounds us. Rami Haxi knows this all too well. After retiring from a 30-year career as a music teacher, the Middlebury native sought a new sense of purpose. He stumbled on the Master Naturalist Program at the James L. Goodwin Conservation Center while attending an educational program. "For the first 50 years of my life, I wasn't paying attention to what was happening around me," Rami explained. "I felt too overwhelmed to sit down and observe. The Master Naturalist program opened my eyes."

As a Master Naturalist graduate, Rami now teaches others about the natural world every chance he gets, whether hiking on a trail with his Meetup group or in his new position as a hike leader for a local bed and breakfast. "I've become more attuned to nature and I understand it more," he said. "Nature has more of an importance to me and I care more about it."

The term "naturalist" is often misunderstood. Although college students learn about ecology and environmental science, many could not tell you what it means to be a naturalist.

A naturalist can identify most of the species in their backyard. But more important, a naturalist is someone who has a deep relationship with the land. They observe nature on a regular basis and are able to detect patterns of change that others may miss. They discover rare fauna and flora, like an old growth tree, or unique ecosystems, such as a 13,000-year-old black spruce bog. And they notice the ways in which human interactions are affecting the natural world.

"This program isn't all about being able to identify everything in nature," said Brad Robinson, current instructor for the Master Naturalist Program. "We certainly work on identification, but the major point of the program is to see how it's all connected."

...a naturalist is someone who has a deep relationship with the land. They observe

Beauty in Unlikely Places
Jeanette Compton's ink drawings showcase
discarded natural objects.

By Krista Karlson

From a distance, "Pat's Mushroom Cluster" looks like its namesake, a few black and white mushrooms joined by a root ball. But step closer, and you'll notice small mushrooms peeking out between the larger ones. Step even closer and notice the intricate underside of the mushrooms and the fine vertical pattern on the stems.

As I walked through Jeanette Compton's exhibit, The Nature of New Haven, in the Ives Gallery at the New Haven Free Public Library, my nose ended up millimeters from the glass. One can easily become hypnotized by her nearly two dozen micropen drawings. Each piece — fungi, abandoned birds' nests, beehives, bark — contains thousands of lines and speckles that work together to create vivid textures and shadows.





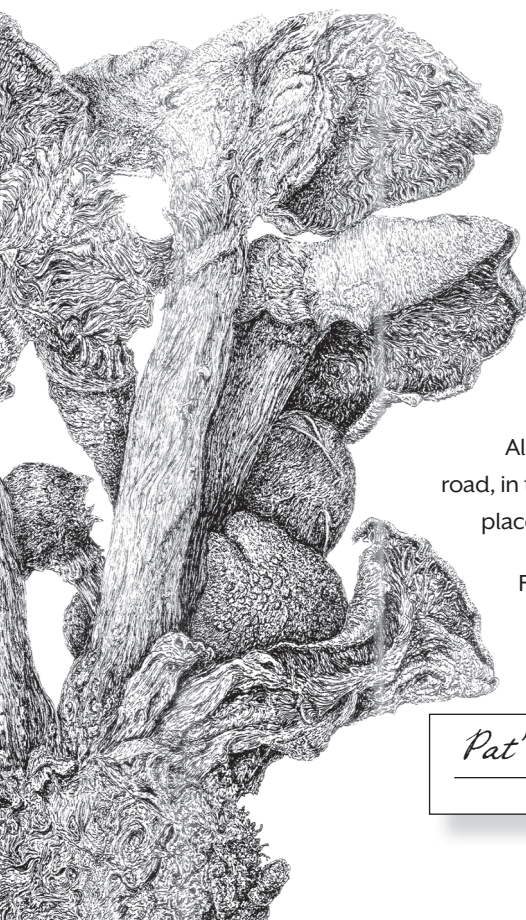
The Master Naturalist Program, which began in 2014, was created by Juan Sanchez who at the time served as the staff naturalist at Goodwin. Now in its fourth year, the program has strengthened its curriculum and reach, educating a range of students — from high schoolers to retirees — from across the state. Level One students attend class on six Saturdays, participate in field trips, and complete an independent research project. Graduates become leaders in their communities as teachers, researchers, and environmental role models. The program is funded by CFP, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and through the generous support of the Friends of Goodwin Forest.

“The students absolutely love the program,” Brad said. “I am pleased to see the enthusiasm they bring to the class, especially those students who have very little background in the subject. They soak it up. It’s just really fun to see people’s eyes opened that way.”

For more information on Goodwin’s Master Naturalist Program, contact bbernard@ctwoodlands.org

Beth Bernard is Program Director at the James L. Goodwin Conservation Center.

nature on a regular basis and are able to detect patterns of change that others may miss.

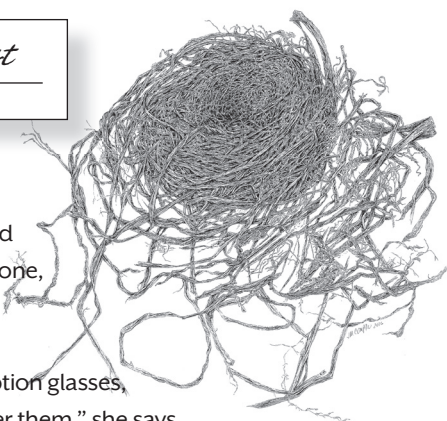


Danny's Nest

Guilford

Compton, a 7th and 8th grade science teacher at Fair Haven Pre K-8 School, is constantly on the lookout for discarded natural objects to draw. Once she finds one, she brings it home and studies it under bright light from different angles.

“I get very, very close using my prescription glasses, and then I place magnification lenses over them,” she says.



All the objects in the exhibit were found in an urban setting — on the side of the road, in the Stop & Shop parking lot, and along the Farmington Canal, among other places. “Nature is everywhere,” she says. “These things are hidden in plain sight.”

For Compton, nature is all about looking closely. Her drawings honor the discarded, the abandoned, and objects that are often deemed ugly, revealing the layers and patterns that make these objects beautiful.

Pat's Mushroom Cluster

Guilford

The Nature of New Haven is on display in the Ives Gallery at New Haven Free Public Library through March 30th.

SWEETNESS IN THE AIR

A small maple producer lives out his dream thanks to a conservation easement and CFPA.

TOWN LINE SUGARHOUSE

By Lindsay Suhr

It's mid-February and the early morning air is still crisp as Steve and Karen Broderick crunch through the snow toward their pickup truck. The six-foot bed overflows with buckets, tubing, tappers, and spouts. Just up the road, you can hear the whir and squeak of a cordless drill as it burrows into an old maple tree. The 2018 sugaring season has officially begun. "It's something we look forward to," says Karen. "That special time of year when winter is fading away and spring has not quite arrived. We feel like little kids out there."

For more than 25 years the Brodericks have produced maple syrup at their home in northeastern Connecticut, a 44-acre woodland spanning the border of Eastford and Woodstock. Town Line Tree Farm, as they call it, sits on a quiet street lined with towering oaks, and boasts shaded hiking trails, trickling streams, an abundance of wildlife, and a three-acre sugar bush. "The first time I ever walked the boundaries of this property, I saw that stand of sugar maples back there and said to myself, 'If I buy this place I'm going to be taking it up a notch,'" Steve said. Even before they moved to the farm, he developed a management plan and thinned out the non-sugar maple trees in the sugar bush.

"A lot of maple sugar makers are afraid to cut too many trees or do not get sound and unbiased advice, which hurts their production."

A now-retired state extension forester with more than a quarter century of experience, Steve knew the trees would thrive if their crowns were given sufficient growing space and greater access to sunlight. Leaves are the factories that produce the sugar, so the more leaf surface area that is exposed to the sun, the more sugar the trees can make. Trees must be at least 12 inches in diameter at breast height to be tapped, according to the Connecticut Maple Syrup Producers' Manual; each year Steve is able to tap a few more trees by carefully managing his forest. "You want to thin earlier and more heavily," he said. "If you don't,



the crowns get smaller and smaller because of the competition for growing space. Their growth slows, and the sweetness and yield suffers. A lot of maple sugar makers are afraid to cut too many trees or do not get sound and unbiased advice, which hurts their production.”

Steve was first drawn to maple sugaring as a young boy working on his uncle’s farm in Vermont, and over the years, his passion grew. Early in their married life, the Brodericks lived on a small four-acre piece of land in Canterbury, Conn. But Steve still found a way to get his sugaring fix. He tapped trees on the town green, repurposed an abandoned sauna into a sugarhouse, and made a homemade evaporator out of an old oil tank. Karen, who also loves sugaring, helps by tapping trees, running lines, and boiling sap.

Connecticut’s spring weather can be unpredictable, but as long as the nights stay cold and the days warm, the Brodericks typically produce 60-70 gallons, just enough syrup for their loyal customers, which they sell from their sugarhouse. In lieu of high-tech equipment, like a vacuum pump or a reverse osmosis machine, they use a gravity tube system with nearly 300 taps, a dozen collection tanks, and a couple dozen buckets hung on individual trees. They store sap in a stainless steel bulk milk tank and use a wood-fired evaporator. Family and friends helped them build their sugarhouse with lumber from a local sawmill. “I like keeping it simple,” Steve said. “There are not a lot of bells and whistles, but that also means there is not much that can go wrong. I think you could resurrect a sugar maker from 100 years ago and plop him down on our property and it would only take him a couple of minutes to figure out our system.”

In addition to sugaring, the Brodericks manage their property for a host of other values, such as wildlife habitat and soil and water conservation. For example, Steve cleared a small opening in the forest to create more habitat for ruffed grouse and woodcock. He worked closely with the logger

“Conservation easements not only protect land and their conservation values, but also create this secondary market where people like us — who just want a piece of land that we can love, care for, and live on — can afford to own one.”



Above: Karen helps Steve by tapping trees, running lines, and boiling sap.

Left: Steve Broderick uses a clinometer to check the downhill slope on a tubing mainline.

who cleared forest access roads to minimize erosion. And he preserved an area of the property that has old growth forest characteristics, including large amounts of downed woody debris and trees well over 200 years old.

“I just love forested environments,” Steve said. He points to a journal he kept as an undergraduate student at the University of Massachusetts. “I wrote in that journal: ‘I now know that I have to find a career that will allow me to live and work in the woods, not just visit it on weekends like a prisoner on furlough.’”

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Living at Town Line Tree Farm is a dream come true for Steve and Karen, thanks largely to a conservation easement donated to CFPA by Edgar Wyman in the late 1980s. Working conservation easements help protect sustainably-harvested forests and well-managed farmland for wildlife and future generations. This easement specifically reserves the right for Steve and Karen to manage their woodlands, but limits future development to ensure the property remains open space in perpetuity. A secondary benefit of conservation easements is that they make land more affordable by lowering its overall market value. When property is assessed, its development potential drives up its value. But when a conservation easement restricts development, the property's value is reduced thereby lowering its tax burden.

"Conservation easements not only protect land and their conservation values, but also create this secondary market of affordable land where people like us — who don't want to profit from the land, but just want a piece of land that



Steve adds a drop of defoamer to keep sap from boiling over the pan.

we can love, care for, and live on — can afford to own one," Steve said. "This tool and the conservation ethic and generosity of Ed and Barbara Wyman has enabled us to spend the last 25 years in our dream home on our dream property."

Lindsay Suhr is the Land Conservation Director at CFPA.

The Truce

By L.M. Browning

Pluck a strand of wind
and listen to the trees quiver.

Run until your heart pounds
and watch the stagnant surface
of the pond ripple.

Throw back
the suffocating blankets of false comfort
and let yourself feel the renewal of the rain.

Only when we overcome
our fear of being alone,
can we come to know the company
that is always with us.

In surrendering, we are cradled.
In accepting, we are able to impart.
In kneeling, we stand taller.

Gather what is worthy of your devotion
and never betray it.

So that, in the end,
you will know that,
though you be small,
You poured out all that you are
into what is greater

And in doing so,
became a part of it.

L.M. Browning is the author of eleven books. In 2011, she opened Homebound Publications. She is currently working on a degree in Creative Writing at Harvard University's Extension School.



Transitioning to Trails

Runners are increasingly taking to Connecticut's trails, where they're finding more than just a physical challenge — they're discovering a sense of community.

By Krista Karlson

Inside Art Byram's running backpack are the usual things: water, snacks, a warm jacket. You'll also find a pencil wrapped in duct tape.

Each item has been carefully selected, usually after a memorable day on the trail. Once he got severely dehydrated; now he has a larger hydration pack. Once he got so cold that he knew he'd develop hypothermia if he stopped running; now he carries a packable down hoody. Once his shoe fell apart; now he carries a pencil wrapped in duct tape.

Just as the contents of his backpack have evolved over time, so has his love for running. After submitting his last college paper in 2002, he went for a two-mile run. At the time, he was 38 years old and out of shape. But having finished the 10-year journey to complete his Bachelor's degree, the run felt like a new beginning.

Byram, now 53, is soft spoken with a face that lights up when he talks about running. He recalls that first run with fondness and says it had a domino effect on his life. Just one year later, he ran the New York Marathon. He has since completed 20 marathons, as well as run every street in his hometown of Glastonbury.

In the beginning, Byram stuck to the pavement. He was afraid of trail running because he thought it was too dangerous. But everything changed when a friend convinced him to sign up for the Bimblers Bluff 50K in the fall of 2009. The Guilford race was his longest trail run to date, and athletes offered up encouragement and helped each other stay on course. "That race was so powerful for me," he recalls. "It was like I was an English major who had just discovered Shakespeare."

The love affair grew and by 2015 Byram was searching for new running goals that didn't include roads. After stumbling across Simon Edgett on Twitter, who was running every trail in Connecticut, Byram knew he had found his next goal — he would run all 825 miles of the Blue-Blazed trails.

Until recently, the Blue-Blazed trails have been mostly used for hiking. In 2014, Debbie and Scott Livingston set out to change that by creating the Blue-Blazed Trail Running Series, 10 races designed to grow Connecticut's trail running community and increase awareness of the trails as a multi-use resource. Runners in the series can expect prizes like a homemade apple pie, a rock on a plaque, or a chocolate bunny.

"By design, these are truly grassroots races," says Scott Livingston, a longtime trail runner and member of the Shenipsit Striders, the group that coordinates four races in the Blue-Blazed Trail Running Series. With a modest race fee, shorter runs for kids, and a potluck dinner afterward, the

continues next page

Top: Runners await the start of the Goodwin Forest Trail Run. Winners in both the 10K and 30K get homemade apple pie and zucchini bread.

Right: Art Byram has run all 825 miles of the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails.





“When I get into the woods, it almost turns into poetry for me.”
Art Byram

traces are family-friendly and deeply rooted in community. Most proceeds from the running series are donated to CFPA to support continued trail maintenance, an effort that enables new and longtime runners alike to enjoy the trails without fear of losing their way.

“We’ve always included our families,” says Debbie Livingston, race director for the Shenipsit Striders. The Livingston children share their parents’ love for the trails, and both have run several races including the Soapstone Jerry Stage 6K and the Goodwin 10K.

Individuals from teachers to pilots to gravediggers participate in the series as runners and aid station volunteers. “There are people out there in their 70s. It’s not about speed or competitiveness,” she says.

In late summer 2015, Byram began to run every mile of Blue-Blazed trails using CFPA’s interactive trail map and a website called City Strides to track his progress. He calls the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails the ‘Cadillac of Connecticut’s trails,’ adding that it’s hard to get lost on the trails because they’re so expertly blazed.

Getting lost is just one in a litany of fears that keeps runners off the trail. If they aren’t attacked by a wild animal, many believe they’ll twist an ankle or suffer an injury that will leave them without access to medical care. But that’s why Byram carries his pencil wrapped in duct tape. “It’s like an all-in-one medical kit,” he says. This one item can be used to repair a shoe, make a splint, fix broken gear, or tend blisters. But he also follows standard safety procedures like notifying someone of his whereabouts and carrying enough layers to stay warm if he needs to stop running.

Top: Byram and Jordan Grande pause during their 112-mile run across Connecticut.

Right: The annual Run for the Woods raises funds that help maintain the Blue-Blazed trails.

In many ways, trail running is less dangerous than road running. “A lot of people are concerned about the danger of the woods, but it’s much safer than running with cars,” says Byram. Debbie Livingston adds that trail running is better for the body because it eliminates the repetitive pounding that is the source of most common running injuries, and the varying terrain makes for a full-body workout. “The byproduct is that you’re healthier. You feel better,” she says.

As Byram’s runs got longer, it wasn’t just his physical health that improved. He also began to appreciate the long hours of silence. He never runs with headphones, instead preferring to use the solitude to think through problems. “Nobody ever thought of creative solutions after working



12 hours at a desk,” he laughs. “Out on the trail, all of a sudden, things just hit you.” The trail forces runners to be present and on the lookout for potential hazards such as roots or rocks, a process that enhances one’s awareness of their surroundings. “When I get into the woods, it almost turns into poetry for me,” he says. “I see something and I think, ‘What’s happening here is special.’” After the run, he Tweets about it.

Upon completing the entirety of the Blue-Blazed trails in 2017, Byram set his sights on a 112-mile run of the vertical length of Connecticut. Called the Connecticut Ultra Traverse, or CUT, the route begins at Rising Corners in West Suffield and connects the Metacomet, Mattabesset, and Menunkatuck trails, and ends at Chittenden Park in Guilford.

His running partner was Jordan Grande, a young ultra runner who works a full time job while also earning her law degree. Grande recalls being in an early morning shuttle on the way to the 47-mile Shenipsit Trail for the 2016 annual Thanksgiving weekend run when Byram asked if she wanted to join him on the CUT. “I was like, ‘Yeah, of course, no problem,’” Grande says. “I didn’t ask for any details, and I didn’t hear about it again until April.”

Five months later she received a Facebook message from Byram. “Remember when you said you’d run across the state with me?” it read. She remembered, and she was in.

The run began at 11 a.m. on a 90-degree day in June. Byram and Grande were the only two to complete the entire 112 miles, but more than 25 people joined for various stretches. One man ran the whole 60-mile Metacomet trail, while four people ran the longest distances of their careers, and two women ran for the first time at night. A support van met the group every five miles, and runners jumped in and out. “Every time a new person joined, they brought new energy

and new things to talk about,” says Grande, who notes that her best friends are from the trail running community.

She isn’t the only one. Trail running draws a diverse group of people who want to get outside and be healthy. For the Livingstons, this sense of community is one of the best parts of trail running. They describe meeting a professional metal forger, a teenager, and a single mom on the trails, among hundreds of others. Scott attributes the community’s wide reach to the sport’s relatively low barrier to entry. “What’s more simple than running trails?” he muses.

At the end of the CUT, having run for 40 hours straight, the Guilford Train Station elevators shone like a beacon in Byram and Grande’s headlamps. The CUT crosses the train tracks before melting into the beach at Chittenden Park, so the duo boarded the elevator for a quick rest before dipping their toes in the Sound. A skunk ran across the beach to congratulate them.

Among Byram, Grande, and the Livingstons, the passion for trail running is contagious. Local clubs host group runs several nights a week where runners can build confidence before setting out on the trails alone. Grande encourages new runners, especially women, to join a running club near them. “Even if you’ve never been to a run before, everyone will be so excited to see you,” she says. New runners are also invited to join for a portion of the CUT, which will be held this year on Trails Day, June 2-3, or attend trail running workshops hosted at EMS or REI.

When in doubt, follow the Blue Blazes.

Krista Karlson is a freelance writer based in New Haven. Her work has appeared in Backpacker, The Hartford Courant, and Long Trail News, among other publications. She has never run more than four miles on the trails, but she hopes to change that this spring.

2018 Blue-Blazed Trail Running Series		
4/14	Traprock	50K/17K traprock50.com
5/20	Soapstone Mt. Trail Races	24K/6K shenipsitstriders.org
6/3	Goodwin Forest	10K/30K friendsofgoodwinforest.org
6/10	Nipmuck South	22.7K shenipsitstriders.org
7/29	Soapstone Assault	8.9K shenipsitstriders.org
8/4	People’s Forest	12.1K greystoneracing.net
TBD	Run for the Woods	10K/5K ctwoodlands.org/runforthewoods
9/16	Trails to a Cure/Cockaponsett	12.9K snerro.com
9/30	NipMuck Trail Marathon	42.5K shenipsitstriders.org
10/21	Bimblers’s Bluff	50K bimbblersbluff.com



**A GRASSROOTS
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THAT A SMALL GROUP
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CHANGE THE WORLD.**

Saving Rocky Top

BY TIMOTHY BROWN



On the afternoon of January 18, 2017, Tim Mack got the call he had been dreading for years. A multi-million-dollar corporation had just submitted an application to develop a narrow ridgeline in Hamden called Rocky Top. “It was pretty daunting,” Tim said. “This time they came prepared.”

Three inches thick and the size of a coffee table, the application by Mountain View Estates LLC detailed plans for 288 luxury apartments, plus tennis courts, a swimming pool, and a clubhouse. The project would require leveling the ridge, removing some 90 vertical feet of trap rock — an estimated 50,000 truckloads — over three years.

An 18-acre tract of upland forest, Rocky Top boasts a rich natural and cultural heritage. It is connected to larger open space by forests and trails, and serves as a vital corridor for foxes, bears, and other wildlife. Several wetlands and a seasonal vernal pool lie at the base of the ridge. Edgar L. Heermance, a preacher and early conservationist, blazed a portion of the first Blue Trail there in 1929. For Tim and Roberta Mack, who relocated to Hamden from Maine 24 years ago, it was the ideal place to raise a family. Their two children grew up playing in its woods behind their house. The thought of losing Rocky Top was simply devastating.

Despite the fact that removing trap rock would disrupt the local hydrology, cause traffic congestion, and release toxic silica dust, which has been linked to a host of respiratory illnesses, the application included reports by scientists

and engineers who attested to the project’s environmental integrity. And it stated that 30 percent of the apartments would be affordable housing, which sounds like a good thing. As real estate costs skyrocket, many cities are struggling to provide housing for their lower-income residents. But in this case, affordable housing seemed out of place. Rocky Top is more than a mile from the nearest bus stop, and there are no grocery stores or other amenities within walking distance. Even if there were, there are no sidewalks for pedestrians, only a narrow, winding road that floods each spring. Still the Town Planner warned that it would be an uphill fight.

“He almost made it sound insurmountable,” said Roberta.

Under Connecticut law, towns with less than 10 percent affordable housing are subject to SS8-30g, a controversial measure that allows developers to bypass local zoning regulations if they designate 30 percent of their units as affordable housing. To deny a permit, the city must show that the development presents a significant threat to public health and safety. The best chance to stop the development rested with the Inland Wetlands Commission. Once the application went to Planning and Zoning, it would be nearly impossible to halt.

The Macks knew they had to act fast. They convened a meeting in their living room. Nearly two dozen neighbors joined the cause. One woman created the Rocky Top Neighbors Facebook group. Another went door-to-door

collecting signatures and emails. A third started an online petition; Hamden Mayor Curt Leng was the first to sign. The group began to hold frequent meetings. Neighbors made and planted signs in their yards and other visible areas. Others composed and handed out informational flyers to the surrounding neighborhoods and students at the adjacent Quinnipiac University campus. Stories appeared in the New Haven Register and on the local news. A strong local resistance was brewing.

“But in the back of my mind, I knew I was going to have to start asking people for money,” Tim said. They needed to hire an attorney, scientists, and engineers. “If you don’t

THE BEST CHANCE TO STOP THE DEVELOPMENT RESTED WITH THE INLAND WETLANDS COMMISSION. ONCE THE APPLICATION WENT TO PLANNING AND ZONING, IT WOULD BE NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO HALT.

have experts to say, ‘That isn’t true,’ and it goes to court, they’ll side with the developer’s experts,” he said.

The group asked for \$500 from everyone living next to Rocky Top, and they set up a GoFundMe page. People contributed whatever they could. Then New Haven philanthropist and conservationist Henry Lord donated \$3,000. An anonymous donor provided \$5,000 toward the engineer’s fees. By the end of March, the group had raised \$30,000.

Tim and Roberta are hardly your stereotypical environmental activists. He’s a respiratory therapist, she’s a retired science teacher. An American flag waves outside their split-level home. Inside, large-scale paintings by Tim and his daughter blanket the walls. In the back, a modest deck looks up at Rocky Top, a place they have fought to protect for nearly a decade.

In 2008, the owner, Paul Kaplan, submitted an application to create a gentleman’s farm on the ridge. It, too, involved removing a million cubic yards of trap rock. The permit

was denied by the Inland Wetlands Committee and later upheld in the courts, but not before nearly a dozen acres were clear-cut. Eight years later, workers reappeared. They cleared an access road and drilled more than 30 boreholes in the rock. “We thought they were going to start blasting, so everyone was up in arms,” said Tim. “We were very diligent after that.”

At the Inland Wetland Commission’s April meeting, an army of concerned citizens defended Rocky Top in front of reporters and television cameras. It was a passionate outcry that proved too much for Mountain View Estates. By the end of the month, they withdrew their application. Instead, they decided to place a 15-year conservation easement on the land, hoping to claim a large tax deduction. But when

the appraisal came back lower than expected, they chose to simply donate the property outright. Lindsay Suhr, CFPA Land Conservation Director, conducted a baseline study and helped with the transfer of ownership to the Hamden Land Conservation Trust, who will manage Rocky Top for the benefit of both wildlife and the general public in perpetuity.

“We really need to have a diversity of habitats when planning for the future,” said Jim Sirch, President of the Hamden Land Conservation Trust. “I know there has to be development, but it has to be smarter.”

Ultimately, the fight to save Rocky Top did much more than just protect the forest. Neighbors became friends. People became active in local politics. And it confirmed that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can still change the world.

Tim, the newest member of Hamden’s Inlands Wetland Commission, is just relieved that Rocky Top will remain intact. “It’s a great feeling to know this is all done,” he said.



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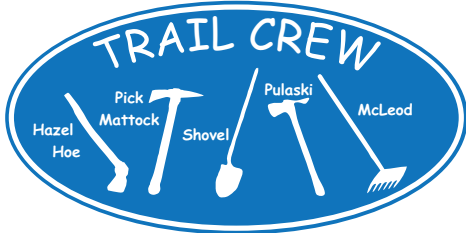
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Pathways



“Field trips were an early and continued Association activity. The first of these, on May 18, 1907, was typical. It was held at the Portland (now Meshomasic) State Forest. Participants presumably came by train to Middletown, and then by trolley and horse-drawn stage to the forest. A photograph taken on that occasion shows a group of eight men, clad in jackets, vests, hats, and ties, walking along a muddy cart path through a sprout land of gray birch.”

George McLean Milne,
“Connecticut Woodlands: A Century’s Story of the Connecticut Forest and Park Association”

SAVE THE DATE

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