

CONNECTICUT

# Woodlands

WINTER 2018



RESOLVE  
THIS WINTER TO  
GET OUTSIDE

A MAGAZINE OF THE CONNECTICUT FOREST & PARK ASSOCIATION



**On the Cover:** Winter is the perfect time to get outside, page 8



Ben Cosgrove, New England Trail Artist in Residence, page 11

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](http://ctwoodlands.org)





Wisconsin women hike the New England Trail, page 15



CFPA sponsors Shinrin-yoku workshops, page 18




# In this Issue

- 4 Editor's Note
- 5 CFPA Updates
- 6 From the Statehouse
- 8 Before the Snow Melts
- 11 Connecting People, Place, and Music: An interview with NET Artist-in-Residence Ben Cosgrove
- 13 A Bridge for All
- 15 Into the Woods: Two Women Discover the Challenges and Rewards of Thru-hiking the New England Trail
- 18 Shinrin-Yoku: How forest bathing can reduce stress and improve your health
- 20 From the Land
- 21 Tucked In: Overwintering Abundance
- 23 Pathways

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- ★ 1/1/18 **First Day Hike**  
James L. Goodwin Conservation Center, Hampton
- ★ 12/16/17 **CFPA Ramble: Highland Park History Hike, Manchester**
- ★ 1/28/18 **Winter Tree ID**  
Highlawn Forest, Middlefield

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Throughout our forests, creatures of all sizes, including insects, have developed surreptitious methods to survive our harsh, cold winters, page 21



## Editor's Note

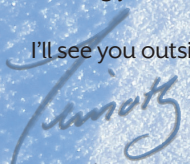
Welcome to the newly redesigned Connecticut Woodlands, the voice of the Connecticut Forest & Park Association for over 80 years. As the new Editor, I'm honored to join a team of devoted CFPA staff and members who are working hard to protect and enhance your forests, trails, and public lands.

We've made several changes to the magazine, including a unique look and feel, while maintaining a strong commitment to excellent storytelling. If you have a story to share, or are interested in contributing to Woodlands as a photographer or writer, we'd love to hear from you!

Winter in New England is a time for gathering together with family and friends as we celebrate the holidays. It's also a time for quiet introspection, for taking stock of the year that has passed and making resolutions for the one still to come. This issue of Woodlands features stories of both reflection and celebration in the great outdoors. Hanna Holcomb, a Wesleyan University student, writes about her passion for winter hiking in light of our changing climate. Thomas Worthley reports on a new wheelchair accessible bridge on the Nipmuck Trail that will help provide more people greater access to the deep woods. We have a feature article about two women from Wisconsin who thru-hiked the New England Trail this year, and an interview with Ben Cosgrove, the trail's current Artist-in-Residence. And there's a photo essay about Shinrin-yoku, or forest bathing, a contemplative practice that has been shown to reduce stress and improve your health. We hope that these and other stories inspire you this winter to take full advantage of the beautiful forests, trails, and public lands our state has to offer.

Wishing you and yours the very best for 2018!

I'll see you outside,



Timothy Brown  
Editor

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# CFPA *Updates*

## Mattabesett Trail Gets Major Upgrade in Durham

Over a mile and a quarter of pavement. That's what hikers could expect along the Mattabesett Trail between Cuginchaug Cave and Mt. Pisgah in Durham. Hikers have used blazed utility poles to navigate this roadwalk for years. In fact, the trail has always followed this route, although the roadwalk used to be a rutted farm track and dirt road. Now the neighborhood is built up with nice homes and large yards. Not a very scenic experience.

Things are about to change. After multiple scouting trips to identify the best route, CFPA is moving this trail section into the woods. Our volunteer sawyers hit the trail this fall to open the corridor. A series of work parties cleared and built substantial portions of the new trail. CFPA's Rock Stars installed rock steps and improved a water crossing. The Student Conservation Association (SCA) trail crew put in a week on some of the toughest sidehilling. The Connecticut Society of Engineers contributed a day to build a key footbridge.

The new 2.5-mile trail section is hosted on Cockaponset State Forest and South Central Regional Water Authority properties. Thanks to their support, hikers will soon be able to explore this undisturbed woodland. The new route features rocky ledges, large laurel groves, running streams, and three cacophonous vernal pools.

The trail, complete with fresh blazes, is set to open this coming spring. Bye-bye pavement — our hikers are going back into the woods!



## Major Trail Makeover Complete on Chauncey Peak

The 2016 trail season was spent improving the southern approach of the Mattabesett Trail to Chauncey Peak in Meriden's Giuffrida Park. This fall we moved to the northern end of the mountain. With steep grades and unstable footing, the trail has long been in need of repair. Thanks to funding from the National Park Service and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Recreational Trails Program, we were able to hire an SCA crew for the second year in a row.

This team of young trail builders, hailing from Alaska and Pennsylvania, were hired to help with the technical work on the steep mountainside. Every morning, the crew, which camped behind the CFPA office, pulled on their work boots and work gloves, shouldered their packs, grabbed their tools, and hit the trail early with the sun. They spent their days setting stone steps, building retaining walls, moving dirt, and constructing new trail.

The Mattabesett Trail sees intense hiker traffic on Chauncey Peak. The ridgeline offers outstanding views of the autumn colors and the climb is a favorite for families and weekend explorers. CFPA's goal is to prepare the trail as best we can to sustain such heavy foot traffic. Ultimately, we are working to create a trail with solid footing that will be well-loved by hikers for years to come.

Top: SCA workers take a break while working on the north side of Chauncey Peak.

Bottom: Hikers will soon enjoy a new trail section through an undisturbed woodland.





## From the Statehouse

# 2017 was Big, but 2018 will be

By Eric Hammerling

**O**n Halloween, Governor Malloy signed into law Connecticut's \$41.3 billion budget for Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019. Given the notable signing date, you may be wondering whether there are more “tricks” or “treats” in the budget for your forests, parks, and trails. Not surprising, there are a bit of both.

**Treat** One treat in the budget is the “Passport to the Parks,” a new source of funding for the operation and maintenance of Connecticut's State Parks. Funded through a \$10 DMV vehicle registration charge paid every other year, the Passport to the Parks will raise a projected \$13 million per year for state parks. This more sustainable funding should reopen the four campgrounds — Devils Hopyard in East Haddam, Macedonia Brook in Kent, Salt Rock in Baltic, and Green Falls at the Pachuag State Forest — that have been closed for the past two years, restore basic public services such as lifeguards at swimming areas, and stabilize the Parks budget, which has been cut nearly every year for a decade.

Starting on January 1, 2018, all Connecticut residents will get access to state parks without paying a parking fee. (Currently fees are \$13 for a weekend visit to Hammonasset Beach State Park and other shoreline parks, and \$9 for many inland parks). The Charter Oak Pass, which for many years has provided free parking at state parks for adults aged 65 and older, will still grant seniors free admission to Dinosaur and Fort Trumbull State Park Exhibit Centers, as well as free tours of Gillette Castle State Park (the fees at these three parks are admissions fees and not parking fees that will be waived for Connecticut residents by the Passport).

**Trick** One disappointing trick in the budget is that it did not restore bond funding for Connecticut's Recreational Trails and Greenways programs, which funds trail projects statewide. The final \$5 million that had been authorized for recreational trail projects was eliminated in the May 2016 special legislative session as part of \$1 billion in bond authorizations cut across all state agencies. This essential source of support for recreational trails statewide is a top priority for CFPA to get restored in 2018.

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## CFPA's Conservation Priorities for 2018

### State Policy

**AMEND** the Connecticut Constitution to protect public lands from being sold, swapped, or given away by the General Assembly without adequate public input.

**ENSURE** Passport to the Parks funds operations and maintenance of state parks at a sustainable level to keep state parks and campgrounds open.

**INVOLVE** municipal tree wardens in municipal site plan reviews as part of the planning & zoning process to ensure tree selection is compatible with community goals for their future roadside forest.

### State Funding

**RESTORE** bonding for Connecticut's Recreational Trails and Greenways programs.

**AUTHORIZE** certain municipalities to collect a real estate conveyance fee to support local open space and farmland acquisition as well as park, forest and trail management projects.

**SUPPORT** full funding of Community Investment Act, Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program, Farmland Preservation Program, and Recreation & Natural Heritage Trust Fund.



## Huge Opportunity

2018 is the last chance for the General Assembly to pass a resolution to let you vote at the ballot box in November to amend your state constitution to protect your public lands from being sold, traded, or given away without adequate public input. Other states, including Maine (1993), Massachusetts (1972), and New York (1969), have already amended their state constitutions, and it's time for Connecticut to step-up and protect your public lands acquired by the state over the past century.

There are two primary paths to get a referendum question on the ballot to amend the state constitution: 1) pass a resolution in the General Assembly by a three-fourths majority; or 2) pass a resolution with a simple majority vote in two consecutive legislative sessions. The General Assembly passed a resolution in 2016 that would require the General Assembly to hold a public hearing and attain a two-thirds vote before your public lands could be sold, swapped, or given away. That 2016 resolution must be passed again by a simple majority in 2018, or else this huge opportunity will be lost.

Connecticut is known as “the land of steady habits,” but that doesn't mean that our state's steady habits are necessarily good ones. Connecticut clearly needs to break its bad habit of treating your public lands like benefits to be given away to special parochial interests, and you can do something about it by getting active and supporting CFPA.

Please respond to email alerts from CFPA in 2018 and contact your legislators if you want to protect public lands, restore funding for recreational trails, and fight off some really bad ideas that would damage your forests, parks, and trails.

If you already support our advocacy efforts, thank you very much! And if you want to get more involved in the important challenges we'll face in 2018, please contact me anytime at [ehammerling@ctwoodlands.org](mailto:ehammerling@ctwoodlands.org) or our CFPA headquarters at 860-346-TREE.

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

## Federal Policy

**LEVEL** the playing field amongst all 11 National Scenic Trails by supporting “unit” status for the New England, Ice Age, and North Country National Scenic Trails.

**INCENTIVIZE** private landowners to donate recreational access easements along the New England Trail through passage of the “Complete America's Great Trails Act.”

## Federal Funding

**MAINTAIN** key federal programs, such as the Forest Legacy Program, Land and Water Conservation Fund, and National Trails System, that further the conservation of forests, open space, and recreational trails.



# BEFORE THE SNOW MELTS

A Wesleyan student savors hiking in winter while she still can.

By Hanna Holcomb

A colorful temperature map of Connecticut appeared behind the weatherman. “Temperatures in the single digits today,” he said, “so stay inside!” I clicked off the television, removed the screeching tea kettle from the stove, and poured the hot water into a thermos before heading outside to make the short drive from my family’s home in Woodstock to Bigelow Hollow State Park.

The sun’s rays peeked through the tops of densely packed hemlocks and white pines as I drove down the park’s access road. At the trailhead, I knelt to strap on my snowshoes, the cold air shocking my briefly unmittened fingertips. “Be bold, start cold,” I whispered to myself before taking off my puffy jacket and stuffing it into my pack.

I walked down the wide logging road, happy to be the first hiker on the trail since snowfall. Ahead lay unmarred snow. I tromped through it, watching my feet disappear and reappear with each step. Burning cold air rushed into my lungs on each inhale as my heart pumped vigorously to keep up with my legs. I paused to turn around. My Sasquatch-sized footprints crossed the landscape like stitches on a quilt. Sounds that I usually heard while hiking — the crunch of leaves, the patter of animals scurrying, the whoosh of cars on a nearby road — had disappeared, absorbed by the deep snow. My thoughts filled the silence. Their only distraction was the creaking trees above.

The trail transitioned from logging road to single track and became more challenging to navigate. Most of the blue blazes were buried under a smattering of snow. Boughs drooped into the trail and I stooped to clear them. But when I spotted the East Shelter, I stood up too quickly and hit a branch, sending a small avalanche down the back of my neck. I took a seat inside the shelter and recalled camping there when I was younger. The hike had seemed so much longer then.

I moved on, but paused frequently to search for the bald eagle nest that my mom promised was in the top of a pond island tree. When I reached the northern side of Breakneck Pond, I put on my jacket and sat atop a car-sized boulder in the sun. Clouds of snow swirled across the wide-open glassy pond and the wind pushed my tangled, icy hair into my face. I thought about the weatherperson’s advice to stay indoors. I was grateful that I hadn’t. Frigid days like these force me to slow down. In a challenging landscape, I focus on the present — staying warm, hydrated, and safe. There’s no space to think about the exam that I need to study for, or the paper that I need to write. But cold days are becoming rare in Connecticut. With increasing frequency, I’m able to walk through campus in a t-shirt in the dead of winter, or I’m robbed of a ski because the temperature spikes immediately after a storm. When I wear hiking boots instead of snowshoes in February, I worry about a winterless future.

## 10 Tips for Winter Hiking

- ✧ Check local conditions and the weather forecast. Make sure roads are accessible and that trails are open.
- ✧ Wear breathable, wicking layers. No cotton! Have a winter hat and gloves, and always wear proper footwear. Nothing can ruin a winter hike faster than cold hands and feet.
- ✧ Remember the Rule of 20s: Dress as if it were 20 degrees warmer, but pack enough clothing to protect you from a worst-case scenario that turns 20 degrees colder.
- ✧ Start hiking cold to help prevent sweating. Remove a layer if you start to sweat.
- ✧ No thermos? No problem. Pull a thick sock over a water bottle to prevent liquids from freezing. Either way, stay hydrated!



“WHEN  
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boots instead  
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future.”

Last year was the warmest on record, but 2017 is likely to take its place. Human greenhouse gas emissions, aerosols, and other industrial byproducts are boosting the average global temperature. According to the National Climate Assessment, if emissions continue to increase, temperatures in the Northeast will be between 4.5 and 10 degrees Fahrenheit higher by the 2080s. Even if emissions are greatly reduced, temperatures will likely still rise by 3 to 6 degrees, the report says.


Winter temperatures are warming at an even faster rate. The Northeast Climate Impacts Assessment found that while average yearly temperatures have risen by about half a degree per decade since 1970, winter temperatures have risen by 1.3 degrees Fahrenheit per decade during that same time. By 2070, Connecticut winters could be plagued by heavy rain instead of snow. We'll spend fewer days in a winter wonderland and more days staring at a gray and muddy landscape.

That's why I've made my New Year's Resolution to enjoy this winter like it's the last. Of course, I hope that it won't be, but New England's winters are likely numbered. We should take advantage of snow while we have it. Say 'yes' to snowshoeing the rocky ridges of the Mattabesett Trail and enjoy the sweeping views at the top. Say 'yes' to cross-country skiing sections of the Nipmuck Trail and Shenipsit Trail, and invite friends and family along with you. Say 'yes' to joining CFPA at the Goodwin State Forest for a First Day Hike. Say 'yes' to rosy cheeks and a chilly nose, frozen hair and a snow-caked hat. When spring comes, and snowshoes and wool hats are swapped for hiking boots and baseball caps, you'll be satisfied that you experienced this winter to its fullest.

*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.*

- ✘ Stay warm with snacks that have a high-fat content, like nuts and cheese.
- ✘ Keep electronics close to your body to prevent a dead battery.
- ✘ Be prepared for ice on the ridges and on steep slopes. Use microspikes when necessary.

- ✘ It gets dark early in winter. Carry a headlamp or flashlight and plan accordingly so you don't get stranded in the dark.
- ✘ Make a hiking plan and let others know about it. And don't be afraid to turn around if weather conditions change unexpectedly.

A photograph of a snowy forest stream. In the foreground, a large, dark tree trunk stands on the left, with its roots spreading over grey rocks. The ground is covered in a thick layer of white snow, with some brown leaves and twigs scattered about. A narrow stream flows through the center-right of the image, its water appearing clear and blue. In the background, more trees and a line of tall, brown reeds or grasses are visible against a bright sky.

## Nathan Hale State Forest (Lebanon, CT)

By Tom Nicotera

I stop midway to the stream.  
Across the narrow waterway  
a deer freezes, eyes me.  
For one minute at least  
I study its dark eyes, its flanks,  
the tautness of muscles caught  
midstride beneath the brown hide,  
poised to either run or stay  
to see what I am.

Ever so slowly I raise my hand  
to scratch my cheek, and the deer  
disappears into the tangled river brush.  
An unseen doe follows,  
white tails up in flight,  
and the whole woodsy mystery  
goes with them, me left staring  
into the briars, into myself,  
going deeper into a dark I thought  
impossible on such a sun-struck day.

For a long time I watch the space  
where life stood still, where  
for a moment my heart was lost  
in a wild creature of the woods,  
and I forgot the creature I was  
and the world I inhabit.

*Tom Nicotera of Bloomfield has hiked many of the blue-blazed trails and parks in Connecticut and written poems about his experiences. He is the current coordinator for Bloomfield library's Wintonbury Poetry Series, and his book of poetry entitled What Better Place To Be Than Here? was published in 2015.*



## Connecting People, Place, and Music: An Interview with NET Artist-in-Residence Ben Cosgrove

By Emma Kravet

**F**or composer, pianist, and multi-instrumentalist Ben Cosgrove, music is much more than simply an aesthetic experience; it's a way for him to explore the complex relationships between people and place. His work, at once both intimate and expansive, takes the listener on a musical journey to deserts and mountain ranges, fault lines, marshes, and even urban environments. But the New England native says he has a particular soft spot for the landscapes he calls home.

Ben is currently the New England Trail's Artist-in Residence, a program managed by CFPA in partnership with the National Park Service (NPS) and Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) that aims to engage communities with the trail in new and exciting ways. Previously the program has supported visual artists and a poet, but he is its first-ever composer-in-residence. During the one-year residency, Ben will perform several concerts where audiences will have a chance to hear new works inspired by the trail.

He recently took a break from his busy touring schedule to talk with CFPA's Education Director Emma Kravet about his music, his connections to landscape and place, and his goals as NET Artist-in-Residence.

**"I've always been thrilled by the ways in which this diverse, bumpy, and gnarled landscape contains all these layers of cultural and environmental history all mashed up together."**

**Woodlands:** *You've been composing music inspired by landscapes for many years. Have you ever worked on a composition inspired by trails?*

**Ben Cosgrove:** I haven't. It seems crazy since it's such an obvious narrative device, but I've never written anything about moving linearly through a landscape. For the most part, I write music that considers the effects of being in a particular place rather than moving through a sequence of places. I'm excited to see what kind of music comes out of this residency.

*You recently started exploring the New England Trail. What are your first impressions of the trail?*

**BC:** The thing I've been most struck by is that although the trail stretches continuously from New Hampshire to the Long Island Sound, the majority of people who hike the trail experience it in segments. Hikers get to know it bit by bit and come to know the whole trail in this gradual, highly personalized, and unique way. I've never written about anything so big, but I think there's something to be said for gleaning important truths about the whole of something by focusing intently on a few of its smallest details.

Second, as a native New Englander I've always been thrilled by the ways in which this diverse, bumpy, and gnarled landscape contains all these  
*continues next page.*

layers of cultural and environmental history all mashed up together. The trail provides an opportunity to wind through layers of historical time, geological time, and physical space all at once. It takes you through a variety of patterns of development, classes of conserved land, and types

of communities. The poet David Leff, my predecessor as Artist-in-Residence, says there's nowhere else in the country where civilization and nature cohabit the same spaces so completely as they do here. I think that's one of the trail's greatest strengths, and I'm glad that CFPA, AMC, and the National Park Service have seen fit to elevate and celebrate this pathway.

*For those who are unfamiliar with your work, how would you describe your music and how it may intersect with the NET?*

**BC:** I write music inspired by place, landscape, or ecology, and then give voice to specific concepts within those themes. A lot of my work is written for solo piano, but it draws from folk music, rock music, classical music, and really any other sounds that I've happened upon and become obsessed with at some point.

I'm deeply interested in how we interact with and inhabit all these different physical environments and have found it profoundly gratifying to use my music as a way to think about those relationships. It makes me look at my own reactions to landscape much more critically, and it also gives a sense of grounding and unity to a career for which I have to spend a ton of time driving around and adjusting to different environments.

*A goal of the Artist-in-Residence program is to help connect the public to the NET in new and different ways. As the first composer-in-residence, how do you see your work contributing to this goal?*

**“I’m deeply interested in how we interact with and inhabit all these different physical environments, and have found it profoundly gratifying to use my music as a way to think about those relationships.”**

**BC:** Although I only play instrumental music, I've always acted more like a folk singer. A critical part of my work is giving performances where I tell stories, personally engage audiences, and walk away with everyone feeling like they've participated in a conversation. During my residency, I'll be performing a handful of concerts while I'm in the process of writing new music about the trail. It will be both helpful for me to be gathering feedback during that time and hopefully interesting for the community to watch me as I go through the process of figuring out how best to musically respond to the NET. I hope my work inspires listeners to think critically about the trail and the region.

*You're very busy writing and performing music. Do you have any other interests or hobbies?*

**BC:** The vast majority of my non-musical hobbies — hiking, exploring new places, meeting new people, and writing nonfiction — are things that I've found ways to fold into my musical work. I've tried to build a career in which all my external interests can be wrapped into this larger thing. Maybe that's bad for my work-life balance, or maybe it's good for it. So far it's really been fun and I hope it doesn't stop anytime soon.

*Emma Kravet is the Education Director at CFPA and the coordinator of the NET Artist-in-Residence program.*

*For more about Ben's music, go to [bencosgrove.com](http://bencosgrove.com)*



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It can be difficult for people who use wheelchairs to access the state's most remote forests. But a new bridge along the Nipmuck Trail will help provide more people greater access to the deep woods.

By Thomas E. Worthley

Around noon on a warm, humid day in mid-July a group of workers paused in the shade of hemlocks for a well-deserved break. Stout wooden supports had been assembled, located, and leveled; timbers had been carried, placed, and aligned; and deck planks had been sawn, laid in place, and fastened to timbers. These workers were building a triple-span timber bridge over an old water-powered mill raceway, a canal-like excavation that once diverted water from a millpond to a waterwheel. The old raceway, mill site, and a riverside hiking trail — the Nipmuck Trail — lie adjacent to the Fenton River at the southern end of the Fenton Tract of the UConn Forest.

This portion of the Nipmuck Trail in eastern Connecticut is a relatively level stretch between the river and a long hill, a glacial feature known as an esker. Passing through various forest cover types — deep hemlock woods, mixed hardwoods, and white pine — this trail segment presents a rich and diverse ecological experience, a feeling of remoteness,



Students used a portable sawmill to cut deck planks for the bridge.

and a sense of quietude for hikers, all within a relatively short distance.

A recent graduate from the University of Connecticut Department of Natural Resources and the Environment suggested that this stretch might make a good place for a wheelchair accessible trail. He would know. Not long after graduation, he'd become paralyzed from an accident. After multiple surgeries and a long recovery, he returned to campus to see some old friends on the UConn Forest Crew with whom he had worked as an undergraduate. He was eager to get out into the woods. He'd visited a number of

*continues next page.*

# A BRIDGE FOR ALL



The bridge, which will have a ramp when completed, is essential to a fully accessible trail.

wheelchair accessible trails, but said that accessible trails are often engineered and manicured and lack that “walk in the woods” feel. This site offered an opportunity to make a section of the trail accessible for wheelchair users, and the towering spruces, hemlocks, and oaks along the riverside created a deep woods atmosphere. But wheelchair accessible bridges would be needed in two places where the trail crossed the old raceway. Knowing the Forest Crew’s capabilities and the availability of raw materials from the forest, he enthusiastically said, “That’ll be easy!”

**A**t over 500 acres, the Fenton Tract is the largest of several forested parcels known collectively as UConn Forest, some 2,100 acres located in the vicinity of the University of Connecticut. The forest has many uses, from teaching and research, to recreation, watershed protection, and wood products, such as rough-sawn lumber. It is also a tranquil place, set apart from the high-tech world of the main campus. Overseen by the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment, management activities on the forest support the UConn Forest Crew, a professionally trained group of students engaged in a variety of stewardship tasks, from invasive species control to firewood production.

Each summer, the Natural Resources Conservation Academy, or NRCA, an outreach program at UConn, hosts a week-long program for high school students who go on to become Conservation Ambassadors in their home communities. A team of Conservation Ambassadors from the 2017 summer program chose to undertake the construction of one raceway bridge as a service project. These six high school students worked alongside the UConn Forest Crew and members of the CFPA Summer Trail Crew to transport and assemble the bridge components, helping to bring the vision of a wheelchair accessible trail one step closer to reality.

Earlier in the week, the Forest Crew began assembling materials. Using skills acquired during chain saw training, they harvested small black locust logs for bridge supports at another project where a habitat opening is being enlarged. Three large white oak logs were extracted from a wind-damaged stand where the crew has been engaged in a salvage and crown thinning operation, and were processed into 12-foot, 3 by 6-inch timbers on a portable band sawmill. White oak logs were set aside for processing into deck planks. The natural rot resistance of black locust and white oak made them ideal for this project.

Starting early in the morning, part of the NRCA student team worked with the Forest Crew to operate the portable sawmill, about quarter-mile away, where they sawed additional deck planks and carried them to the bridge site. Other students worked with the CFPA team, Forest Crew members, and NRCA faculty to assemble the mortise-and-tenon bridge supports. Then they placed the supports in the correct locations, aligned and attached the timber stringers, and made sure everything was level in time for the arrival of decking planks. By noon the basic structure had been completed. Later, railings would be installed and gravel hauled in to create gently sloping approaches to complete the bridge’s accessibility.

Twenty-eight feet in length, 6 feet wide, and made of strong and durable materials, this project contributes to the eventual full accessibility to this part of the forest. Wheelchair users can now enjoy a visit to the woods at the riverside where previously there was a barrier. But the new bridge, made from locally grown, harvested, processed, and utilized wood products, is also a symbol of teamwork, hands-on education, and sound forest management that helps protect Connecticut’s water quality.

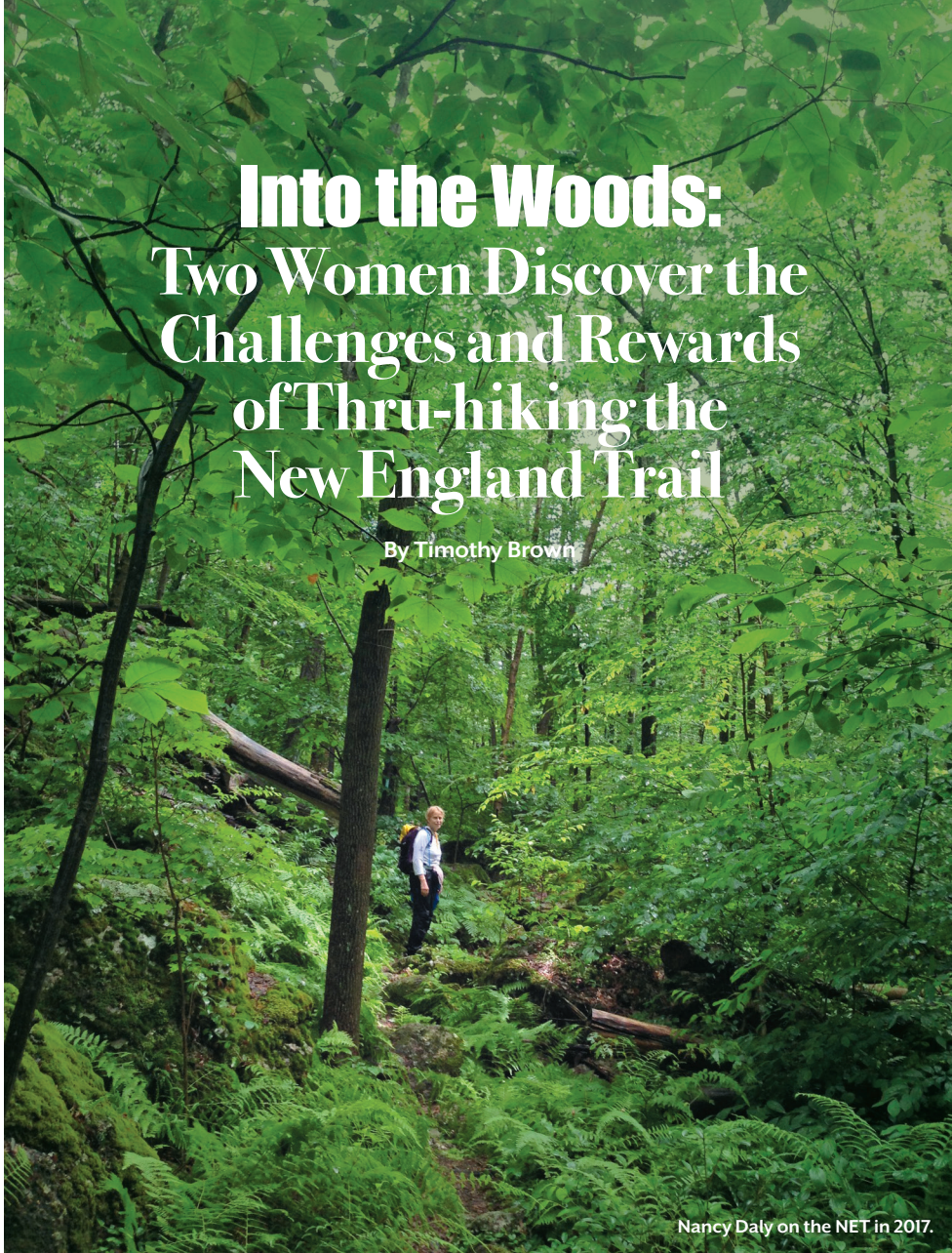
“This site offered an ideal opportunity to make a section of the trail accessible for wheelchair users, and the towering spruces, hemlocks, and oaks along the riverside created a deep woods atmosphere.”

In addition to many other forest management tasks, the UConn Forest Crew will continue to make improvements to the trail. The CFPA Trail Crew and volunteers will continue to maintain the Nipmuck Trail for the enjoyment of the public. And the NRCA students will return to their communities as Conservation Ambassadors with an experience to remember that connects natural resources, conservation ethics, the rewards of hard work, and a valued public service.

*Thomas Worthley is Assistant Extension Professor at the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service and the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment.*

# Into the Woods: Two Women Discover the Challenges and Rewards of Thru-hiking the New England Trail

By Timothy Brown



Nancy Daly on the NET in 2017.

Last April, an article appeared in a local paper about a new book by Melanie McManus that recounts her 36-day thru-hike on the Ice Age Trail, a National Scenic Trail that snakes its way across Wisconsin for a thousand miles, tracing the outline of the state's most recent glacier, which receded some 10,000 years ago.

Nancy Daly was intrigued. "It just really struck me," she recalled during a recent interview. "I thought thru-hiking sounded amazing, but wondered if it was something I would ever do?"

She went to Melanie's book talk to learn more about thru-hiking — generally defined as hiking a long distance trail end-to-end in one season — and was inspired to give it a shot. Although she maintains an active lifestyle as a road cyclist, the 63-year-old thought the Ice

Age Trail sounded a bit too ambitious for her first multi-day hike. But Melanie had mentioned another National Scenic Trail — the New England Trail, or NET — which sounded more doable. That is, except for the fact that Nancy is from Madison, Wis., and had never hiked in Connecticut. At the time, she'd never used a compass.

**"The rest of the world  
just disappeared. There were  
no politics, no people,  
no lists of anything."**

**Nancy Daly**

She contacted Clare Cain, CFPA's Trail Stewardship Director, and Bridget Likely of the Appalachian Mountain Club for advice on thru-hiking the NET, and started a training program, exercising several days in a row. If she biked 50 miles on one day, she'd do

a 15-mile hike the next. Along with her husband, Pete, she made countless trips to REI. Nancy figured she could do the entire 215-mile trail in nine days. But the trail would prove

*continues next page.*

“There were days when I didn’t see a single person. And there I was thinking, ‘Okay, I know where I am. There’s a blaze. And now I have to find the next one.’”

**Nancy Daly**



Nancy Daly pauses on a ridge during her thru-hike.

much more rugged than she’d anticipated. “Sometimes it’s nice to go into something not knowing what you’re getting into because you might not do it,” she said.

**T**he New England Trail, which runs from the Long Island Sound in Connecticut to the Massachusetts-New Hampshire border, was designated a National Scenic Trail in 2009. It winds through 41 communities — over ridges, past forests and farms, through river bottoms. It is managed and maintained by CFPA staff and volunteers in Connecticut, and by the Berkshire Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club in Massachusetts. Both organizations work closely with the National Park Service to protect and care for the NET.

Nancy started hiking the trail in Guilford on July 7. Unlike some other National Scenic Trails, the NET has few designated campsites. Nancy decided to stay in Airbnbs and booked the first several nights in advance. Her first day out, it rained seven-tenths of an inch. There were frogs everywhere. She exceeded her mileage goal. That night, Nancy and Pete, who’d volunteered to serve as her crew — dropping her off at the trailhead in the morning and picking her up each evening — stayed at a cozy Airbnb. Their hosts had never heard of the NET. Nancy felt like an ambassador for the trail. She pointed out the blazes and explained what they meant.

But over the next several days, the gentle coastal plain gradually gave way to steep hills with large roots and sharp rocks. By Day 5, she was nine miles behind her goal. By Day 7, she was getting discouraged. She was tired and her feet hurt, and she wouldn’t be able to finish the entire trail in under 10 days as she had hoped.

**M**elanie McManus, another Madison native who, along with her husband, also recently thru-hiked the NET, agrees that it was tougher than she’d expected. “It was a wonderful experience, but it’s a difficult trail,” she said. “It wasn’t so much the hills that bothered me; there’s a lot of rock that was hard on the bottoms of my feet.”

The 56-year-old author of “Thousand Miler: Adventures Hiking the Ice Age Trail,” is currently attempting to hike all 11 National Scenic Trails. Her latest project is the Florida National Scenic Trail. “Everyone talks about the AT (Appalachian Trail) and the PCT (Pacific Crest Trail) and maybe the Continental Divide,” she said, “but people don’t really know about these eight other National Scenic Trails. I decided I wanted to do them all.”

Melanie loved the beautiful views along the NET, but her favorite parts were places where she had to use her hands to climb up steep ascents. At night, she and her husband stayed at motels, which allowed her to continue to work as a freelance writer.

“There are so many different ways that people can hike and there are so many misconceptions out there, such as ‘you must backpack’ and ‘you must hike the whole thing from start to finish,’” she said. “But I very much disagree with that. I just think it’s important for people to get out on the trails.”



In recent years, long distance hiking has skyrocketed in popularity, thanks in part to bestselling books like Bill Bryson's "A Walk in the Woods," and more recently, Cheryl Strayed's "Wild," which has dramatically boosted the number of women on the trail. By some estimates, the number of people hiking the Pacific Crest Trail has increased tenfold since the movie adaptation was released in 2014, and women now account for some 60 percent of the thru- and section-hikers on the PCT. On the AT, nearly 30 percent of hikers are women.

In 1955, Emma Rowena "Grandma" Gatewood became the first woman to thru-hike the entire 2,168-mile Appalachian Trail. For this survivor of an abusive marriage, the woods were a kind of sanctuary. On the trail, she carried a home-made knapsack and wore Keds sneakers. In lieu of a tent, she used a blanket and plastic shower curtain. She was 67 and had 11 children and 23 grandchildren when she finished the AT. Two years later, she thru-hiked it again. And in 1964, at age 75, she became the first woman to complete the entire AT three times.

These days, websites, outdoors magazines, and travel blogs extoll the virtues of solo long distance hiking for women. Veteran hikers offer training advice, gear reviews, dehydrated food recipes, and tips for how to stay safe on the trail. For the novice hiker, long distance hiking can seem dangerous and intimidating. Some women may wonder if they're fit enough, or young enough, or have the right gear. It can be easy to make all sorts of excuses why you shouldn't try.

"So much of any big goal is mental. If you decide you really want to do this, even if you're not super fit, you can start out doing less miles and work up," said Melanie.

Nancy loved the solitude and quietness of solo hiking. She encountered less than 20 other hikers along the entire route. But she says her thru-hike tested her, both physically and mentally, in ways that she could never have imagined. "There are times in our lives when you think you just can't do it anymore and you have to pull yourself together to do it," she said. "I needed to know how to use a compass, how to read a map, how be out there with nothing around — I mean nothing. There were days when I didn't see a single person. And there I was thinking, 'Okay, I know where I am. There's a blaze. And now I have to find the next one.'"

There are many reasons why people hike — for exercise, for research, or to catch a sunrise from a high peak. In an era when we're rarely unreachable and constantly glancing at our phones, hiking can be a kind of solace from our increasingly harried lives. Spending multiple days on a trail allows you to become fully immersed in the present moment, to attune your senses to nature, listening for the sounds of other creatures and watching for subtle movements. You follow the blazes, but you also follow your intuition. And through hiking, you discover more about yourself.

For Nancy, the feeling of being on the trail was similar to floating in a sensory deprivation tank. "The rest of the world just disappeared. There were no politics, no people, no lists of anything. It was just the place, that moment, and that trail. And nothing else in the world mattered. It was just magical," she said.

**"There are so many different ways that people can hike. I just think it's important for people to get out on the trails."**

**Melanie McManus**

Toward the end of her journey, the trail was taking a toll. Her entire body hurt and she struggled to finish the final 20 miles. But she was ecstatic. Nancy had hiked the

entire New England Trail. It had taken her 11 days, most of them spent alone. And in the process, she learned what she's capable of accomplishing when she puts her mind to it.

"I was so overcome with emotion — that I was doing this, that I was nearing the end, that it was so incredibly beautiful," she said. "I was literally thanking the woods and thanking the trees and feeling so grateful to be there."

*Timothy Brown is the Editor of Connecticut Woodlands.*

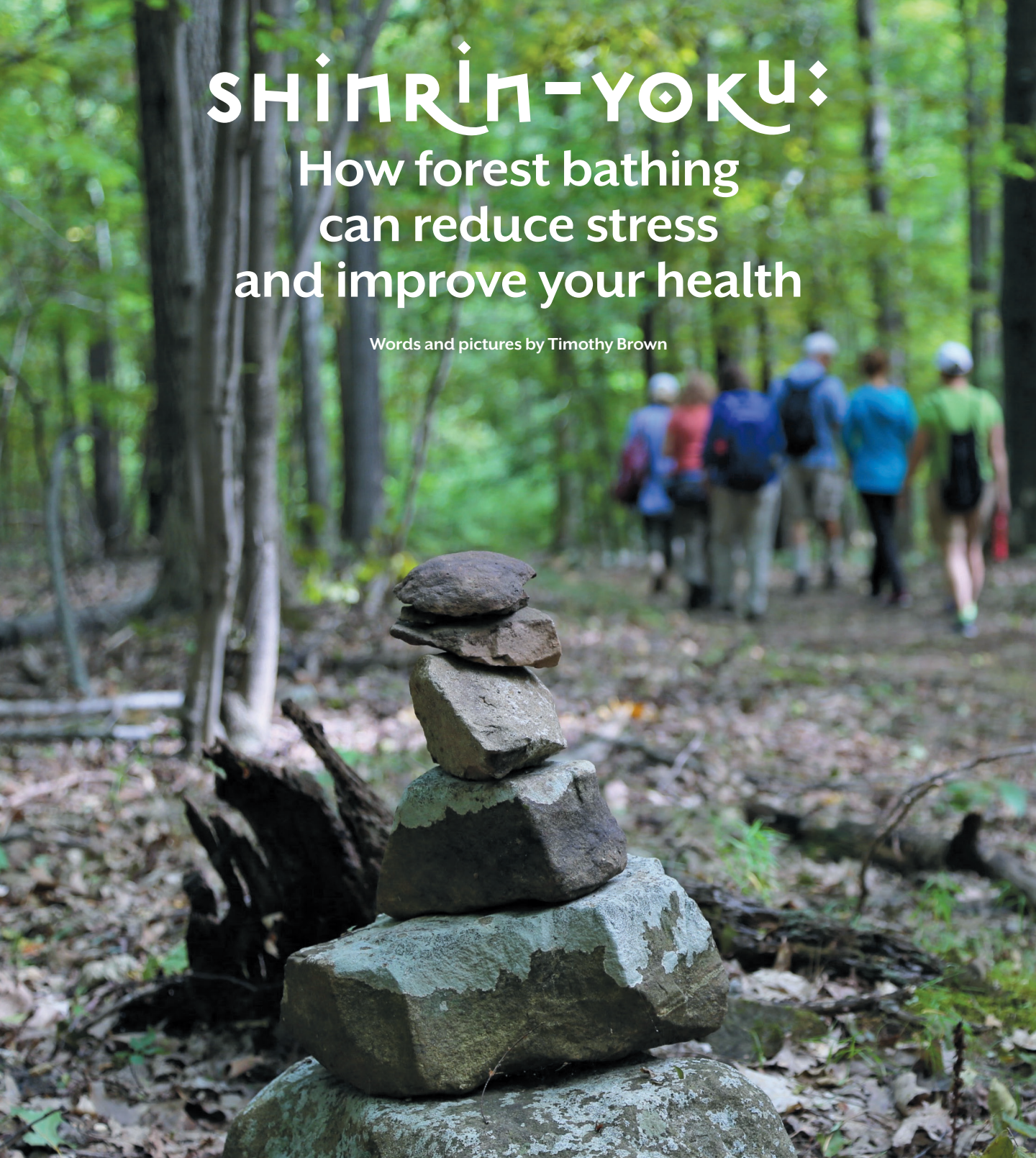


Melanie McManus  
on the NET in 2017

# SHINRIN-YOKU:

## How forest bathing can reduce stress and improve your health

Words and pictures by Timothy Brown





When we hit the trail, it's often with a specific goal in mind, such as reaching a summit. But this year CFPA sponsored several Rambles led by Alexandra (Alex) Lowry, a certified life coach, who introduced participants to a more contemplative nature experience — Shinrin-yoku, or forest bathing. “How many of us are living in this low-level anxiety all the time?” she asked a group at a recent session. “Trees can have a positive effect on our emotional well-being.”



First developed by the Japanese, Shinrin-yoku is a slow, sensory, meditative walk in the woods. Numerous scientific studies suggest that it can reduce anxiety and stress by lowering cortisol levels,

and improve the immune system by boosting natural killer cells. During the session, Alex guided participants on a silent hike, pausing infrequently to invite the group to focus on one sense at a time. “One of the biggest questions I get is, ‘Why do I need a guide?’” she said. “You can take a contemplative walk in the woods by yourself, but do you? Most people don’t.”

Maureen Arnone, who regularly practices meditation, said forest bathing allows her to fully immerse herself in nature. She also said being in the woods is a form of healing. In May, she underwent brain surgery to correct obstructive hydrocephalus, a potentially life-threatening condition.

“Walking in nature has had the biggest healing for me both physically and emotionally since this health crisis,” she said. “It helps me to manage my pain and keep it in perspective, as well as lowering my anxiety over what the future may hold.”

“It really is about the trees,” said Alex. “Nature affects our human biology. We need it more and more in our society.”

*This winter, CFPA will continue to host Forest Bathing Rambles. For more information go to [ctwoodlands.org/CFPA-events](https://ctwoodlands.org/CFPA-events)*

Trees can have a positive effect on our emotional well-being.

Far right: Alexandra Lowry gives basic instructions before a forest bathing session.

Upper Left: A group walks silently during a forest bathing session. Forest bathing can be a very powerful practice, especially for people who are healing or have experienced trauma.

Far left: Linda Byam meditates at a sit spot. “I appreciated the silence. It puts you into a different space,” she said.

Left: Forest bathing is all about slowing down and using your senses to connect with nature, noticing things you might otherwise hurry past.

# From the Land

## Ready for Winter with Squash

By Jean Crum Jones

It's no secret that winter is my favorite season. I get a break from the frantic pace of farming and have time to enjoy cooking and baking with my grandchildren. Not surprising, my favorite winter food is flavorful, nutritious winter squash. I stockpile it in my garage in early November and challenge myself to use it up by spring.

Interest in winter squash has grown in recent years with the farm-to-table movement. Plant breeders have developed more varieties suitable for New England's climate. Winter squash can be big or small, smooth-skinned or covered in warts, long and thin, wide and flat. The skin might be pale blue, red-orange, forest green, beige, striped, or mottled. If stored at 50 to 60 degrees with good ventilation, winter squashes will keep well for 4 to 6 months, and are best enjoyed after being stored for 1 to 2 months prior to eating.

The greatest challenge with cooking winter squash is penetrating their exceptionally hard rinds. If you don't have a strong chef's knife, you can bake the squash whole. If you are going to make a puree, remove the squash after it has softened, cut it in half, and remove the seeds and skin. You can also place a heavy-duty squash inside a cloth bag and drop it on the floor to break it open. Not pretty, but it works.

Squash pairs well with herbs, spices, nuts, fall fruits, and citrus zest. It can be used in soups and casseroles, is great in mac and cheese and stews, or it can stand alone as a delicious side. As a puree, it's great in cookies, muffins, pancakes, custards, cakes, and pies. It's no wonder I love winter squash and winter!

*Jean Crum Jones lives in Shelton with her farming family.*



### Crispy Parmesan-Roasted Butternut Squash

Makes 4 servings. (1/2 cup each)

Prep 20 minutes

Roast 25 minutes at 450°F

3 cups or 1 Butternut squash, peeled, seeded, and cut into 3/4-inch pieces

2 tbsp olive oil

1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese

1/4 tsp dried thyme, sage, or basil, crushed

1. Pre-heat oven to 450°F. Coat a 15 X 10-inch baking pan with nonstick cooking spray.
2. Square off ends of squash and cut the squash in two just above the bulbous end. Stand the two sections on the flat ends and use a sharp knife (or vegetable peeler) to remove the tough outer peel, slicing from top to bottom.
3. Cut the rounded end in half lengthwise and scoop out the seeds. Save for roasting.
4. Cut the squash into uniform 3/4-inch cubes, so they'll cook evenly.
5. Place squash in prepared pan. Drizzle with olive oil and sprinkles with salt and pepper; toss to coat.
6. Roast 15 minutes. Stir squash; roast 5 minutes more. Stir in cheese and thyme. Roast 5 minutes or until squash is tender.

# Tucked In: Overwintering Abundance

How do insects endure the harsh, cold, wet winter?

By Katherine Hauswirth

Galls cover an oak leaf.

Once the leaves have finished their autumn showstopper, they descend from the stage and we're left with more muted environs. When I look out my window on winter days, I see grays and browns drawn in stark, heavy lines in contrast to a bright background of snow. Other than the birds and squirrels that visit my feeder, and the occasional passage of a deer, the landscape looks forlorn when compared to the color and bustle of the warmer months.

But throughout our forests, creatures of all sizes, including insects, have developed surreptitious methods to survive our harsh, cold winters. Wasp queens hibernate under tree bark. Some species of ants stay underground in their colonies until the warm weather beckons. Others take shelter in wood or even in acorns.

Grasshopper eggs, formed in the autumn, live in rigid pods in the soil where they'll stay in suspended animation until spring. Ladybugs shelter together by the hundreds, sometimes within the walls of our homes. On warm, late winter days they emerge to bask in the sun coming through my guest room window.

And then there are the galls, plant tissue growths that protect young insects, often until spring. Plants create the galls in response to some kind of stimulation from an insect, mite, fungus, or bacteria, and they come in an array of colors, shapes, and sizes. Some galls look like apples on oak trees, or pine cones on willows. Others are subtler and appear as a swelling along a stem, like blackberry knot or goldenrod galls. In the United States, there are some 2000 gall-producing insects, most of which are wasps or gnats.

Oak apple galls are fairly easy to find. These golf ball-sized spheres house the larvae of the *Amphibolips*

*confluent* wasp. The galls turn from green to brown and drop off the trees in the cooler seasons. By the time we find them they've been long abandoned. Look for the hole that served as the creature's escape hatch. If you crack open an older oak apple gall, you'll find fuzzy material surrounding the central egg chamber. The hackberry petiole gall, another brown sphere, is filled with up to 13 nymphs from aphid or cicada families. They overwinter in the gall's wax-lined "apartments."

If you see a brown, kidney shaped object approximately two inches in diameter on an apple tree, Eastern red cedar, or another species of juniper, it may be the home of the *Gymnosporangium juniperi-virginianae* fungus. These growths are sometimes called "cedar apples." When the weather warms, bright orange, gelatinous, spore-producing horns up to four inches long protrude from the gall.

Some galls, named for their bitter taste, are high in tannins, which are thought to protect them from fungal or bacterial infections. Galls have been harvested to make tannic acid, inks, dyes, and even bait. Larvae from goldenrod galls are said to be good for catching perch, bluegills, and trout. Galls have also been used as a spice and as an emergency food for livestock. And if you're camping and in need of a warm fire, dry galls make for excellent tinder.

Many of us are decorating trees this holiday season, and it turns out our insect neighbors may be doing so, too. Look closely and you will spot some of these well-crafted nurseries nestled among stems and branches. In the spring, we'll all be emerging together to test the warming air.

*Katherine Hauswirth lives in Deep River and often writes about nature. Her collection of essays, "The Book of Noticing: Collections and Connections on the Trail," was published in May 2016 with Homebound Publications.*





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# Pathways



**D**uring the winter of 1947, legendary skier Walter Schoenknecht opened Connecticut's first ski area at Mohawk State Forest in Cornwall. Two years later, the East Haven native helped develop the world's first snow guns, and in 1952 the ski area pioneered the use of artificial snow. He added chairlifts in 1960. Seventy years later, Mohawk Mountain Ski Area is still run by his daughter, Carol, in partnership with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection at Mohawk State Park. Named by the Tunxis and Paugussett peoples who used the mountain to send smoke signals to warn of the approaching rival Mohawks, the area is famous for its numerous hiking trails, fishing areas, black spruce bog, and of course, skiing.





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