

CONNECTICUT

Woodlands

WINTER 2020

Short on Snow



A MAGAZINE OF THE CONNECTICUT FOREST & PARK ASSOCIATION



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



On the Cover: Snow guns create a blanket of white at Powder Ridge Mountain Park & Resort.



Recognizing the service and legacy of our CCC boys, page 8.

CONTRIBUTOR'S *Spotlight*



Sheila Foran

Stan Malcolm began taking daily walks along the Air Line Trail in eastern Connecticut because it was more convenient and far safer than walking on roads. But as he got to know the trail, he found the urge to take photographs along it "irresistible." Today, that inspiration has grown into a massive project—"Along the Air Line"—some 22,000 photographs taken over 18 years and 13,000 miles. His work has been featured in the Hartford Courant, WFCR's "Field Notes," and other outlets. An entomologist by training, Stan has won numerous awards including DEEP's Green Circle Award, the National Trails 2012 Trail Advocacy Award, and the 2010 National Recreational Trails photo contest.

We wanted to learn more about Stan's photography and what makes the Air Line Trail so special.



With warming winters, Connecticut's ski areas face an uncertain future, page 14.



Our birds are in trouble, but there are simple steps you can take to help, page 17.

In this Issue

What first drew you to nature photography?

I can't remember a time when I wasn't interested in photography, and it runs in the family. My great-grandfather was making tintypes of his brothers by the 1860s. My first camera was a used Kodak 620 model with a fold out bellows that produced black and white celluloid negatives. By college, I had a 35mm film camera. But the real passion came with digital, which coincided with the start of my walks on the Air Line Trail. The ability to take a shot, instantly review it, adjust, recompose, and retake, helped me become a better photographer.

What do you find so special about the Air Line Trail?

There's nothing special about this trail, and everything special about it. Nature is not very natural in Connecticut. Much of the vegetation along the trail is invasive. But look more closely and you'll see native plants and animals: fish (often in the beak of a heron), amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals—not to mention the insects! My subjects change with the seasons. In warm seasons, I tend to focus on smaller subjects; in winter, more landscapes and sunrises. But look closely and you'll find insects atop snow at around 32 degrees. Lots of them.

What one of the more unusual insects you've discovered along the Air Line Trail?

If pressed to pick a favorite, it might be the Cecropia Moth, our largest native silk moth, resplendent as an adult in brown, white, red, black, tan, and a bit of mauve. Once common, they're now rare in Connecticut, collateral damage to attempts to control Gypsy Moth with a parasitic fly. The fly wasn't very particular in its diet, attacking more than 300 other species of insects. Starting with a cocoon found along the trail, I reared hundreds of Cecropia Moths over several years, releasing many along the trail.

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info@ctwoodlands.org



Connecticut Trails Day 2020

Event registration opens
January 6, 2020
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Editor's Note

One winter, years ago, I lived in a one-room cabin deep in the rolling hills of western Massachusetts. The cabin had a woodstove for heat and a composting toilet, but no Internet and spotty cell service. The isolation, however, was far from lonely. I spent many weekends tracking fox, coyote, moose, and other creatures. On snowy nights, I'd settle into an old creaky rocker by the stove and devour novels, lost in distant worlds as my yellow Labrador Retriever, Kaya, dozed by my side.

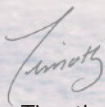
I've always loved how winter *feels*. I don't mean "feel" in just the physical sense, but also the reflective mood that comes with months of cold and darkness. Recently, however, winter in southern New England, with our increased rainfall and warmer temperatures, doesn't feel the same. It's hard for me to reconcile my expectations of what I think winter *should* be with what winter *is*, and likely will be going forward.

The climate crisis is the most critical environmental challenge of our time, one that requires us to immediately reduce our carbon emissions even as we adapt to a warmer world. But I refuse to believe that the crisis is as hopeless as some would suggest. And I'm constantly inspired by others: my friend, Eric, who bikes everywhere, even in the pouring rain; my sister, Lindsay, who's a strict vegan and animal rights activist; and the staff and volunteers at CFPA who are working hard to create a sustainable future for Connecticut.

When I spoke with Harold Oehler and Mike Caruso, men who had endured the Great Depression, for our story about the CCC, I was reminded how preceding generations have discovered happiness, community, humor, love, and hope, even in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges. It all makes me feel a little better about wearing a rain jacket at Christmas.

Wishing you and yours a joyful and healthy 2020.

I'll see you outside,



Timothy Brown
Editor

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Thanks to photo contributions from:
Timothy Brown, Sheila Foran, Steve Kornfeld, Laura Loffredo, Stan Malcolm, Hallie Metzger, James Moore, Pete Vertefeuille.

Sustainably printed on FSC-certified paper using LED-UV cured, vegetable-based inks and solar power.

Connecticut Woodlands is a quarterly magazine published since 1936 by CFPA. The magazine is distributed to members and donors, as well as public libraries and other state and local offices. Advertising local goods or services is welcome. For specifications and rates, visit ctwoodlands.org/rates. To advertise, contact tpeters@ctwoodlands.org or call 860-346-TREE.

CFPA Updates

On November 1, some 200 CFPA volunteers, members, donors, and friends gathered at A Villa Louisa in Bolton for our annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner. We celebrated another incredible year of stewardship in Connecticut's forests and parks and on the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System. This year 46 volunteers each contributed over 100 hours of volunteer service, and in total, volunteers contributed over 16,000 hours! A few special people were recognized for their outstanding efforts. Trail volunteers Kathy Carlson and Liane Stevens were both awarded the Golden Gloves for their tenacious trail work and overall awesomeness. Jo-Ann Bowen was recognized for her tireless efforts with the Friends of Auerfarm Scenic Reserve. Board member and CFPA Forester, Tom Degnan, was recognized for milling and donating lumber, recruiting co-workers for a volunteer trail project, and was a speaker for our education programs.



Left to right: Tom Degnan, Jo-Ann Bowen, Liane Stevens.

INTERNSHIP AVAILABLE!

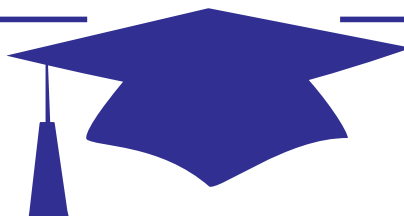


Can You Dig It?

The Summer Trail Crew internship is open to anyone between the ages of 18-24 years old. If you have a positive attitude, are enthusiastic about the outdoors, and are interested in learning about trail stewardship and conservation, this might be the job for you!

Application deadline March 2020

For more information or to apply, visit
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From the Statehouse

By Eric Hammerling

CFPA's Policy on Climate Change

Keeping forests healthy and abundant is one of the best ways we can respond to the climate crisis.

What does CFPA do to keep forests healthy and abundant?

For nearly 125 years, CFPA has been working with landowners, policy-makers, and concerned citizens to keep forests healthy. Initially, our priorities were re-growing forests and protecting them from wildfire. Since that time, our goal has been ensuring forests are well-tended and good laws are bolstered by a partnership of forestry professionals, municipal tree wardens, and an educated public. Today, CFPA continues this long tradition of taking action for forests in several ways, which helps to combat climate change.

- **CFPA advocates for laws** such as Public Act 490, which keeps property taxes low for forest landowners, and the Forest Practices Act, which ensures the highest standards for Connecticut's forestry professionals.
- **CFPA conserves over 2,000 acres** of forested properties to benefit wildlife and forest health, and to provide training opportunities for other forest landowners.
- **CFPA educates the public** about the values that forests provide for public health, wildlife, clean air, and water.
- **CFPA builds and maintains trails** that enhance recreational access and deepen the public's appreciation for Connecticut's forests.

How do forests relate to climate change?

Greenhouse gases (GHG) like carbon dioxide and methane are being emitted into the atmosphere at an unsustainable rate. Globally, about one-third of GHG are being absorbed, or sequestered, by natural solutions such as plants, soils, and the ocean. Amongst land-based sources, forests sequester about 90 percent of atmospheric carbon.

How is Connecticut utilizing forests to slow down climate change?

About 55 percent of Connecticut's landscape is forested. For the past five years, our forests have grown slightly faster than they have been lost, and overall there have been net

gains in forest biomass. This is encouraging, especially in light of significant forest losses and fragmentation over the past 50 years. However, more forests should be protected by acquisition, easement, or long-term forest management commitments by private landowners.

Today, many state and private forests are managed as "working forests." Working forests utilize forest management plans to accomplish multiple ecosystem and economic objectives, such as generating revenues and wood sustainably while also enhancing wildlife habitats, protecting water quality, and providing recreational opportunities. Some of the outputs from working forests, such as flooring or furniture, represent another way that carbon can be sequestered.

What can Connecticut do differently moving forward?

Although keeping forests healthy and abundant is one of the best ways to mitigate climate change, the government has focused on reducing emissions from the energy, housing, and transportation sectors. Of course, reducing emissions from these sectors is critical, but it's equally important to have ambitious goals and programs that encourage carbon sequestration by investing in natural ecosystems, like forests and wetlands.

The Governor's Council on Climate Change recently formed a working group on "natural and working lands" to help identify the resources necessary to protect and manage forests, farmlands, open space, and wetlands.

In addition, existing plans such as Connecticut's Green Plan, Forest Action Plan, Wildlife Action Plan, Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, and management plans for state forests include several recommendations that, if implemented, can move Connecticut forward with a more coordinated and focused approach to climate change mitigation.

Connecticut should also provide incentives and outreach that encourages reforestation in urban and suburban areas, forest management for increased sequestration and resilience, funding for additional protection of forestland, and recognition of the benefits from forestlands that don't qualify for enrollment in P.A. 490 (forests under 25 acres), but represent a large portion of our forested land.

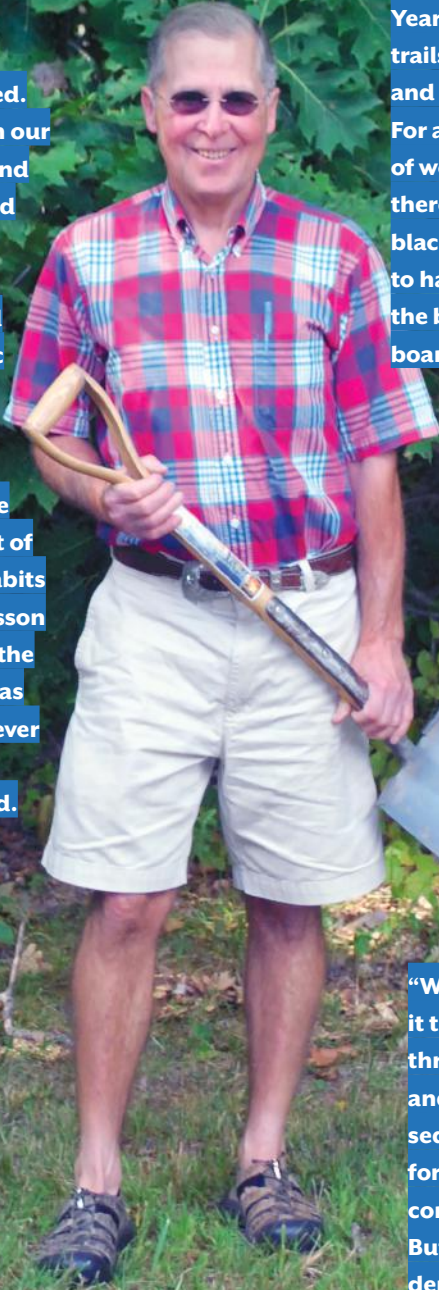
Thanks to your support, CFPA will be participating in these efforts and will continue to be a leader in promoting the importance and value of forests in combatting climate change.

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

Signing Off

Eric Lukingbeal, CFPA's Board president for the last eight years, completed his term and stepped down as of November 1st. Board member Rich Croce was elected to fill the position at the 2019 Annual meeting.

An environmental attorney, Eric, who will remain on the board, is well known for his sense of humor and ability to make people feel at ease. We asked him to share some reflections from his tenure as board president.

A man with short grey hair and sunglasses, wearing a red and blue plaid shirt and khaki shorts, stands in a grassy field with a shovel. He is smiling and looking at the camera. The background is a dense green forest.

"The legislative process can be influenced. I am often struck by how much attention our state legislators pay to e-mails, letters, and phone calls from constituents. Our board members and loyal supporters make a real difference. That is the feeling I have about CFPA's successful effort to amend the state constitution to require a public hearing before selling, swapping, or giving away state lands. When we got started on this, I thought our chances were marginal and that it would take five or even ten years. To win with 85 percent of the vote in 2018 in the Land of Steady Habits was not even in my dreams. The main lesson is that the public really does care about the environment. This was not easy, but it was worth doing. As Margaret Mead said: 'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.' I still get goosebumps thinking of this."

"I'm not aware of another non-profit in Connecticut that gets as much done with as little fanfare as CFPA. Year after year, well over 800 miles of trails are kept clear, bridges are built, and erosion controls are installed. For a long time we have had a corps of wonderful volunteers who are out there in the mud, heat, cold, and black flies. And we've been fortunate to have a loyal and committed staff—the best I've seen since joining the board in 1997."

"We need to do what we can to see to it that Connecticut responds to the threat of a rapidly warming world, and the best and cheapest way to sequester carbon is a tree growing in a forest. At age 73, I won't see the worst consequences of climate change. But my five grandkids will. CFPA's demographics suggest that I am not alone. So, let's get to work."

HONORING CONNECTICUT'S CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS

Connecticut was once home to 30,000 CCC boys. Today there are only two. This year, statues were finally erected to honor their service and legacy.

By Timothy Brown

For years, Sharon Viadella had a photo of her dad and a football team hanging in her home in Griswold. In the photo, all the boys are wearing uniforms with the number "179." One day, a friend who happened to see the picture, said the numbers referred to Company 179 of the Civilian Conservation Corps, or CCC for short.

"I didn't know anything about the CCC until then," Sharon says.

But even those who have never heard of the CCC have undoubtedly witnessed their legacy in forests and parks throughout the country.

The Civilian Conservation Corps, part of President Roosevelt's New Deal, was a popular work relief program that ran from 1933 to 1942. Roosevelt, a staunch conservationist, believed the program would not only improve people's lives, but that it would serve as a long-term investment in our nation's natural resources. In exchange for their service, enrollees were paid \$30 a month, \$25 of which was sent directly home to their families. From constructing trails, roads, bridges and dams; to harvesting and planting trees; to fighting forest fires and invasive insects; "CCC boys," as they were known, fundamentally changed the landscape of America.

Soon after learning the history behind the photograph, Sharon attended a talk by author and historian Martin (Marty) Podskoch about Connecticut's CCC camps. There she learned about efforts to erect a CCC statue at Chatfield Hollow State Park. At the time, Connecticut—once home to 21 CCC camps that employed over 30,000 young men—was one of only ten states without a statue. Marty and others had already raised \$8,000, one-third its total cost. Sharon wanted to help.

She began soliciting donations while volunteering at the CCC Museum in Stafford Springs, and at local farmers markets. She hosted fundraisers. And as a founding member of the Friends of Pachaug Forest, she dreamt of erecting a



Top: Harold Oehler was only five-foot-four when he joined the CCC in 1934.

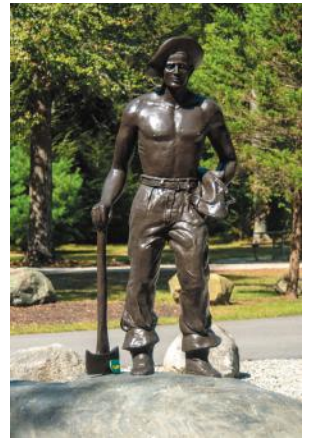
Bottom: Connecticut now has two "CCC Worker Statues" in honor of our CCC boys.

second statue in Pachaug State Forest. It would be the first in the country to be located in a state forest, and a fitting tribute to her father, who spent most of his service there at Camp Lonergan.

Earlier this year, two CCC statues were finally erected in Connecticut thanks to the generous contributions from hundreds of supporters, and Sharon's leadership and vision.

"I'm happy to be able to do this for the state of Connecticut, and for my dad," she said.

Marty Podskoch interviewed over a hundred subjects for his book, "Connecticut Civilian Conservation Corp Camps: History, Memories & Legacy of the CCC." Today, only two are left—Harold Oehler and Mike Caruso. The following excerpts were taken from interviews with Harold and Mike in October, 2019. Their answers have been edited for length and clarity.





Harold Oehler

At 102, Harold Oehler lives independently in Stafford Springs and still drives. On the day we met, he was having his furnace serviced for winter.

Originally from Holyoke, Mass., Harold joined the CCC in 1934 shortly after graduating from high school. He was assigned to Company 112 in Beartown State Forest where he helped build roads and plant trees. The following year his company was relocated to Menden Peak, near Rutland, Vt. He left the CCC in 1936 to attend Massachusetts State College (now UMASS) where he studied forestry. After graduating, he worked as a surveyor mapping state forests before serving five years in the U.S. Army.

In 1965, Harold bought a small lumberyard in Stafford Springs which he ran for 25 years. Harold and his wife, Gladys, who passed away in 2001, raised a son and two daughters. A lifelong hunter, Harold has always loved the outdoors. "The place that I've always enjoyed was out in the woods," he said. "No question about it."

Like many others, Harold joined the CCC because he couldn't find work.

Harold Oehler: I couldn't do anything that summer. Those were hard times.

Connecticut Woodlands: What was it like when you first arrived in Beartown?

HO: They were laying out a road to a pond. The men were laying the stones and then the dump trucks would come with their gravel and finish the road off. There were an awful lot of boulders laying around, like everywhere in New England. They gave me an 8-pound sledgehammer and said, "You gotta break

these so we can pick them up." So I was banging away at those damn stones. I was exhausted, but I wouldn't drop that sledgehammer. Some guys said, "Don't that ever get to you?" I said, "I'm aching all over. And I'm growing like a weed!" I was having thirds at breakfast. That was quite a test, I'll tell ya.

CW: Did things get any easier when your company was relocated to Vermont?

HO: The winter of '36 was so bad up there. We went to work in four feet of snow in the woods and had to wear bear paw snowshoes to get to the work site. They wouldn't

send us out if it was below zero; they thought that was too cold to work. But if it got up to zero, we went up into the woods.

CW: How was the camp set up?

HO: We lived in typical bunkhouses. There was a long building with a pitched roof and a door on each end. Each company had four or five of those sleeping sheds with probably 25 people each and cots on both sides. You had your trash box for clothing at the tail of the cot. They had three wood stoves to heat it in winter-time, and there were men who got assigned to work at night who had to feed the stoves. There was always a kitchen hall and a headquarters building, but the main ones were those sleeping halls. They were not much more than a barn, really. But they did the job.

CW: Why did you end up leaving the CCC?

HO: My leader of the woods crew was an old graduate of the University of Vermont who had studied forestry. He went with us and told us which trees to cut and how to cut them. I got to know them pretty well. He was a strong forester and he taught me an awful lot. I started to get into forestry and was always asking him questions. He said, "You're too good and too smart to be staying in the CCCs. You should be getting into college somewhere." I said, "Oh my family is in bad shape." My father had been laid off during the Depression, so I kind of begged off a while. And by summer, I said, "Okay, I'll give it a try." So he made the arrangements and I got the discharge from the CCCs. I thumbed my way home from Burlington; I kept my CCC uniform on because when you had your uniform on you had a good chance of getting a ride.

Mike Caruso

Mike Caruso, who turns 96 this January, lives independently in Killingworth, not far from the CCC camps where he worked in 1939. He no longer drives, which makes it challenging for him to visit his wife, Margaret, who lives in a nursing facility in Madison.

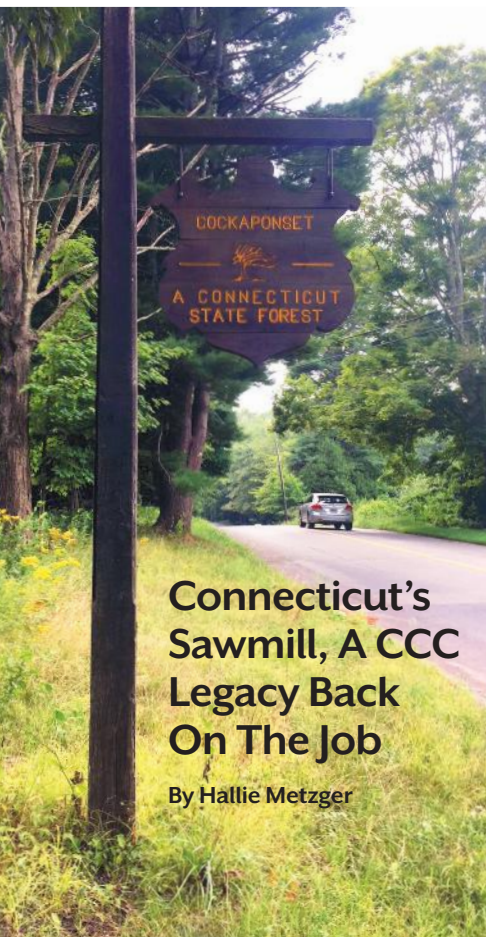
Mike's father died when he was only seven months old, leaving his mother to support eight children. After attending Hillhouse High School for just three months, he joined the CCC at age 16 to earn money for his family. At the time, you had to be 17 to join the CCC, but he forged his older brother Joe's name on the application. Mike was stationed at Camp Hadley in Madison where another brother, John, was already a straw boss. But most of his work was at Camp Roosevelt at Chatfield Hollow State Park. After six months in the CCC, he left to look for work elsewhere. When he was 18, he was drafted into the Army and spent three years fighting in the Pacific where he earned four Bronze Stars for his service.

Like Harold, growing up during the Great Depression had a profound affect on Mike.

Mike Caruso: Those were hard times. You couldn't get anything to eat. I had to take a wagon with my mother and go down to welfare and they would give you a pound of coffee, a pound of sugar, a pound of prunes, some flour; only in pounds. I had to pull the wagon home, back and forth. There was no money, no income. You couldn't get a job.

CW: What was your first assignment in the CCC?

MC: When I got there, my bother said, "I want you to push this thing down." I said, "What's that? To put air in the tire?" "No," he said, "you just stay here." He had planted about 500 sticks of dynamite all over the hill. And he said, "When I say 'Push the plunger,' you say, 'Fire in the hole!'" And then another guy says, "Fire in the hole," and another, and another. There were about eight or nine of them. So in case anybody was around they had to get the hell out of there. Then you waited ten minutes. When I pushed the plunger down, I didn't hear anything. And all of a sudden, I saw the whole mountain falling down. We were leveling off the ground for the roads.



Connecticut's Sawmill, A CCC Legacy Back On The Job

By Hallie Metzger

You see them whenever you enter our state forests and parks: wooden shields commemorating the iconic Charter Oak. Those shields were nearly an endangered species until last year when James Moore was appointed our new Connecticut Sawyer at the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) mill in Portland, founded in 1935 as Civilian Conservation Corps' Camp Buck.

"When I got here, the mill had been operating on and off for six or seven years," Moore recalled. "Once I got it running, 30 loads of salvaged oak logs from the Salmon River State Forest came to the mill in three weeks!" That load was not a daunting sight for Moore; his family has been here since the 1600's and saw-milling for generations. In fact, in 1674, the town of Windsor hired his ancestor Andrew Moore to build a ferry to cross the Connecticut River. By 1910, his great grandfather E. L. Moore was the owner-sawyer of a steam-powered mill. Following in his footsteps, Moore worked for 33 years with his dad in the family sawmill in Bloomfield.

"My real challenge coming to Portland." Moore continued, "was the equipment." The sawmill manufactured by Chase Machinery, new in 1967, was inoperable.

It came down to badly worn parts, especially pins as small as 1¼ inches that keep the mechanism functioning. In addition, many parts of the sawmill needed to be adjusted, repaired, or replaced. But with Chase long closed, Moore had no source for the parts he needed.

So he turned to his former teacher, Charles Hilton, head of the Connecticut Department of Education's CT Aero Tech Aviation Maintenance School. Hilton,



We did all kind of maintenance work. We worked on culverts; we worked on the dam over there. We had a garage there. We had dump trucks. And I was starting to drive one of the trucks. I liked it. It was outside work. All I did was outside work.

CW: What'd you do for fun?

MC: They used to bring us into town once a week to go see a moving picture. When the show was over at 11, you had to be back on the truck. If not, you had to walk from town all the way to the park. And that was a long walk at night. So you made sure you were there.

CW: What else would you like our readers to know about the CCC?

MC: What I think they should do now is to take these kids who are 16 or 17 and make a place where they can fix up some land that the government owns. Let them work in it; let them sleep in it. I tell ya, it's the best thing in the world. What more can you ask? I loved it.

who previously taught at Harvard H. Ellis Technical School, from which Moore graduated in 1996, contacted Principal Robert Sartoris at Howell Cheney Technical School in Manchester who, in turn, led Moore to Jacob Walsh, Department Head of Precision Manufacturing Technology. Under Walsh's direction, students made working drawings and manufactured the parts Moore needed to repair the Chase saw, especially those small pins.

With more student help, Moore also revived the Portland sign shop that turns out the well-known state shields. "Continuing the traditional production of our iconic shield signs is vitally important. But all I had to start with was drawings of the Charter Oak design and a manual router machine using letters and numbers," Moore explained. "I wanted a simple, uniform process. For that I needed metal templates," he said.

Again, Walsh's students stepped in, this time to write sophisticated technical software and to produce a metal template for the routing machine that cuts the Charter Oak pattern into the wood. To appreciate the challenge, consider that our state shields require either one line or two lines depending on the length of the park or forest's name. So the students actually had to design and produce two different templates.

For Walsh's students, this was an excellent way to learn CAD (computer-aided design) manufacturing software. One student in particular, senior Josiah Mulock, was enthused. "He loved this project," Walsh said. "He worked with Moore's pictures and drew the entire Charter Oak himself. We practiced making the template on scrap metal and then tried it on a blank. I had never worked with a

continued on page 21



Students at Howell Cheney Technical School manufactured replacement parts to get the Chase saw running again.





THIN ICE

Along the Air Line Trail

Photographs by Stan Malcolm

In winter, I shoot mostly landscapes, including sunrises. But I look down, too, and am often drawn to the smaller scale of mammal and bird footprints, feathers or a late fallen leaf, insects out for a stroll atop snow, or these patterns in ice.

To see more of Stan's work, go to performance-vision.com/airline



Short on Snow

As Connecticut's winters become warmer and wetter, local ski areas face an uncertain future.

By Hanna Holcomb

I watched the tips of my cross-country skis dip and reemerge in untracked snow as I glided through the backyard and away from home. After crossing our neighbor's field and climbing a crumbling stone wall, I ducked beneath snow-laden hemlock boughs until I found our little trail. The trail wrapped around old farm fields and across half-frozen brooks. It ended at the slopes of Ohoho.

Thick snowflakes fell onto Ohoho's gently pitched and now overgrown trails. I tried to imagine what the Woodstock ski area was like when it was open from 1971-1989.

"Ohoho was a really wonderful place for local people to go and ski," my neighbor Jane Fine said. "Our kids met their friends there almost every weekend and had a great time."

The area was owned by the late Joe Campert, a Woodstock local and jack-of-all-trades who ran the snow machines, cleared the trails, and kept the T-bars operating. For just \$8, skiers could ride Ohoho's T-bars and enjoy a mix of beginner and intermediate slopes. The trails all had Christmas-themed names like "Sleigh Ride" and "North Pole." A late 1970s brochure advertised "a natural glade of hemlocks and pines." Snowmaking covered about 50 percent of the terrain. Ohoho even offered night skiing on three trails.

Jane remembers the area as a place for people of all ages and ski abilities to gather. Local high schoolers helped to run the lifts and advanced skiers helped novices learn. The three-floor lodge at Ohoho's summit was always warm and inviting, with crackling fireplaces, and hamburgers and hot dogs for sale at the snack bar.

But by the late 1980s, Woodstock's climate had begun to shift.

"Joe would run the snowmakers to get snow on the hill," said Jane. "But a day or two later it might rain for two days and all the snow would be gone."

Money spent on quickly melting snow and rising insurance costs made Ohoho too expensive to operate. In 1989, skiers took their final turns at Ohoho.



For just \$8, skiers could ride Ohoho's T-bars and enjoy a mix of beginner and intermediate slopes.



“Everyone was pretty heartbroken,” said Jane. “It was a hill that a lot of kids grew up on, and a place that people of all ages enjoyed.”

During most of the 20th century, Connecticut had at least 60 other small ski areas like Ohoho. Many were the neighborhood hill and had just one rope tow, but they all served as important outdoor community spaces. The vast majority of these areas have closed, some due to fire or financial troubles, but many others because of unpredictable snowfall. Today there are only four downhill ski areas and one cross-country ski area in Connecticut, all of which are feeling pressured to adapt to our warming climate.

The Connecticut Physical Climate Science Assessment Report, published in August 2019, analyzes the climate change impacts here in the Nutmeg State. The report found that Connecticut winters are warming faster than summers, and that the number of frost days, currently about 125 per year, is expected to fall to about 80 by 2050. Winter precipitation is expected to increase by 10 to 30 percent by the end of the 21st century, but because the

number of days below 32 degrees Fahrenheit is declining, that precipitation is more likely to fall as rain than snow.

“It’s not just about coming to ski. It’s a place to gather, eat, play, and interact with other members of the community. And that is critical.”

Sean Hayes

Powder Ridge Mountain Park and Resort in Middlefield, New England’s southernmost ski area, is already feeling the effects of climate change.

“Originally, the rain/snow line was south of Powder Ridge, and we were very successful,” said Sean Hayes, the resort’s CEO. “That line has clearly shifted now so that it follows the I-84, Route 9 diagonal, putting Powder Ridge to the south.”

Under previous ownership, the resort closed after the 2006-2007 ski season. Strapped for cash after several rough winters and unable to get a waterpark approved that would have turned the area into a year-round destination, the resort was put up for sale.

In 2012, Mr. Hayes, of Brownstone Exploration & Discovery Park, bought the area and focused on turning it into a four-season resort. In addition to skiing, Powder Ridge now offers downhill mountain biking, disc golf, zip lining, summer tubing and skiing on synthetic surfaces, an obstacle course, a full service restaurant, and a wedding venue.

The resort has also made improvements to Powder Ridge's skiing by installing high-tech snow-making equipment. When the temperatures are in the mid-to-low 20s, the snow guns can cover the entire mountain in just eight days.

"Last year we had a lot of cold temperatures," said Hayes. "We had great snow-making conditions and made a lot of snow. But we also had rain events and warmer temperatures and lost a lot of the snow that we made."

Though Powder Ridge was able to make enough snow to keep the mountains covered, the lack of natural snow off of the mountain hurt skier visitation.

"If people don't see snow in their backyard, especially novices and beginners, they don't think of going skiing," said Hayes. "Connecticut resorts depend on mother nature, not for our snow, but for snow to motivate the customers to come ski locally."

When advanced skiers don't see snow in their backyards, they're likely to head to north, Hayes said. But trips to Vermont, New Hampshire, or Maine are expensive. Gas, lodging, and food, plus lift tickets, which often cost more than \$100 per day, make ski trips too pricey for many families. And like Connecticut, northern New England is experiencing fewer days below freezing, drastic temperature fluctuations, and increased rainfall.

Skiing is hurt by climate change, but the ski industry itself contributes to global emissions. Accessing ski resorts by cars and planes uses fossil fuels, and mountain operations—running lifts, making snow, and grooming trails—takes a lot of energy. A weeklong ski trip with a lengthy domestic flight adds about 2,000-4,000 pounds of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere.

But, according to Jake Black, Program Manager at Protect Our Winters (POW), the ski industry's carbon footprint is minimal compared with other businesses.

"The biggest impact a resort can have is to engage in advocacy efforts and encourage their staff and customers to participate as well."

Jake Black

"The reality is, every ski resort in the world could go 100 percent renewable and it wouldn't even make a dent in reducing the impact of the global emissions," said Black. "Yes, ski resorts should reduce their footprints to reduce their consumption and save money, but the biggest impact a resort can have is to engage in advocacy efforts and encourage their staff and customers to participate as well."

Many resorts have reduced their emissions by encouraging carpooling, minimizing food waste, and installing renewable energy sources like solar arrays and wind turbines. For example, Powder Ridge installed solar panels this fall. Some resorts have started working with elected officials to push for climate solutions. The Aspen Ski Company has advocated for every piece of climate legislation in Colorado since 2004, and Sugarbush Resort in Vermont urged representatives to support climate legislation. Individuals too should call their representatives to back policies that protect open spaces and limit emissions.

"The current enemy is time," said Black. "According to the IPCC, we have until 2030 to dramatically reduce emissions or we will see irreversible damage to the climate."

As the setting sun turned Ohoho's hillside pink and orange, I headed home and imagined what it'd be like if all Connecticut resorts were forced to close. Chair lifts would hang from their cables, moved only by the wind, and wide-open slopes would go untracked. There'd be no shouts of joy on a powder day, no kids making friends or falling in love with a lifelong sport.

"It's not just about coming to ski," said Hayes. "It's a place to gather, eat, play, and interact with other members of the community. And that is critical."

Hanna Holcomb graduated from Wesleyan University with a degree in biology and English. She recently moved to Montana and already logged ten days of skiing in the month of October.

"According to the IPCC, we have until 2030 to dramatically reduce emissions or we will see irreversible damage to the climate."

Jake Black

Birds on the Brink

Slate Junco



Recent studies report that nearly three billion birds have vanished from North America since 1970, and two-thirds of birds face an increased risk of extinction due to climate change. But there are simple steps you can take to help to save birds before it's too late.

By Timothy Brown Photos by Pete Vertefeuille

Each year as the days become shorter and temperatures begin to fall, we hang two tube bird feeders from a makeshift pole in our backyard. Our toddler, who loves all birds, but is especially fond of owls, will stand next to the picture window in our living room and quietly watch juncos, titmice, nuthatches, and chickadees feast on a steady diet of black oil sunflower seeds. Underneath grey squirrels scurry to collect any seeds that the birds have dropped. I love watching our toddler watch birds as much as I love watching the birds themselves, and I smile when I find him flipping through the Petersen Field Guide, which rests next to an old pair of Bushnell binoculars on a side table by the picture window. While we have seen other wildlife in our suburban backyard—deer, opossum, coyotes, and red fox, for example—birds are easily our most common wildlife visitors.



As with most environmental issues, the future for birds depends on what actions we take today.

Despite being the fourth most densely populated state in the nation, Connecticut has excellent bird habitat, from large swaths of contiguous forest, to verdant grasslands, inland wetlands, and tidal marshes. According to the Connecticut Ornithological Association, the Nutmeg State is home to some 440 species of birds, including migrants who stop here on their journeys to and from their summer breeding grounds farther north. And despite having the country's highest percentage of wildland-urban interface—places where high quality wildlife habitat co-occurs in a developed landscape—several species once classified in Connecticut as threatened or locally extinct, including osprey, peregrine falcon, bald eagle, and wild turkey, have successfully recovered thanks to strict environmental regulations, increased habitat protection, and aggressive reintroduction campaigns.

But a recent study published in the journal *Science* paints a darker picture of how North America's birds are faring. The study, led by Ken Rosenberg, a conservation scientist at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, finds that North American bird populations have declined by nearly 30 percent—that's three billion fewer birds—over the past 50 years. While previous studies have reported declines of individual species, this is the first time scientists have broadly estimated the continental decline of birds. The study details declines by habitat; for example, grasslands have suffered the greatest losses, primarily due to urban and agricultural development and heavy pesticide use. Here in New England, we've lost an estimated 167 million birds since 1970, a more than 20 percent decline. And because many of our songbirds are migratory, the researchers observe, successful local conservation initiatives may be offset by habitat loss and degradation elsewhere, such as in their wintering grounds in Central and South America.

The study further emphasizes the multiple threats that birds face. While habitat loss, pesticide use, the availability of insects, and climate change are critical factors for birds, predation by housecats and glass windows on skyscrapers also contributed to the decline.

Simple Steps You Can Take To Help Connecticut's Birds

- 1 Make windows safer.** Use screens and other materials to break up reflections and reduce collisions.
- 2 Keep housecats indoors.** Keeping your cat indoors not only keeps birds safe, but your cat safe as well.
- 3 Reduce lawn and plant natives.** Native plants provide berries, seeds, and pollen, and attract beneficial insects for nesting birds.
- 4 Avoid pesticides.** Eliminate pesticides from your yard, but also from your diet. Eat organically grown food whenever possible.
- 5 Drink shade-grown coffee.** Shade-grown coffee preserves the forest canopy, critical habitat for over 40 migratory songbirds.
- 6 Reduce single use plastic consumption.** Use re-usable water bottles and canvas bags, and safely recycle all disposable plastic.
- 7 Reduce your carbon footprint.** Warming temperatures, driven by carbon emissions, is the most serious long-term threat birds face.
- 8 Protect open space from development.** Large, contiguous forests in Connecticut provide important refuge for species in decline elsewhere.
- 9 Volunteer.** Become a citizen scientist, trail manager, or amateur birder.
- 10 Advocate.** Your CFPA membership helps support vital conservation, education, and legislative action to protect Connecticut's birds.

Then, in October, the National Audubon Society released a report warning that two-thirds of North America's birds face an increased risk of extinction due to climate change. Here in Connecticut, the report says, many vulnerable bird species may lose more than half their current range and be forced to seek suitable habitat elsewhere. The report, which includes an interactive Climate Visualizer highlighting predictions for each state and habitat type, emphasizes the importance of limiting warming to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius. For example, with a 1.5-degree increase, three species in Connecticut are classified as high vulnerability and 34 as moderate vulnerability. But with 3 degrees of warming, the report says, 27 species, such as the Brown Thrasher, Scarlet Tanager, Eastern Towhee, and Wood Thrush, are classified as high vulnerability, and 44—including our state bird, the American Robin—as moderate vulnerability.



But these predictions, as dire as they may seem, should not be taken as prophecy. As with most environmental issues, the future for birds depends on what actions we take today.

For example, the Audubon report says that climate change mitigation will reduce vulnerability for 76 percent of North America's birds. And the Rosenberg study notes that not all bird species have declined over the past half century. The number of waterfowl as a group, for example, grew by some 34 million individuals since 1970, thanks in large part to effective wetland conservation measures. Here in Connecticut, CFPA is working hard to improve bird habitat and forming critical partnerships with like-minded organizations to safeguard our birds.

"We have incorporated 'Forest Bird Habitat Assessments' conducted by Audubon Connecticut into the last four management plans completed for CFPA properties," said Lindsay Suhr, CFPA's Land Conservation Director. "We've incorporated Audubon into past Coverts workshops and (Audubon) will be a major partner in our upcoming Master Woodland Owner program."

You need not be a conservation professional, however, to help birds. Simple steps such as reducing your carbon footprint and eating organic, locally grown foods, for example, can make a huge difference. Homeowners can create or improve bird habitat by simply replacing grass with a variety of native plants and avoiding the use of chemicals on their gardens and lawns.

Here in New England, we've lost an estimated 167 million birds since 1970, a more than 20 percent decline.

If you're especially interested in birds, consider becoming a volunteer citizen scientist. This winter marks the 120th annual National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count. Between December 14 and January 5, you can join fellow birders to survey birds throughout Connecticut and in all 50 states. All are welcome to participate regardless of previous birding experience.

The ecologist Thomas Lovejoy, who coined the term "bio-diversity," once said, "If you take care of the birds, you take care of most of the environmental problems in the world." Sage advice, not only for the sake of birds, but also for the next generation of bird lovers.

To learn more about the 120th annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count, go to: ctaudubon.org



1.3.19
7.58 a.m.
32 degrees

Piquant cardinal tilts into the bush and all that red opulence vanishes against the flat gray of branches; nibs of sleet make a tiny sound colliding with my jacket; dulled, steely pond reflects the thick, deep overcast by not reflecting it.

Poet John L. Stanizzi, of Coventry, is author of several collections including *Ecstasy Among Ghosts* and *Sleepwalking*.



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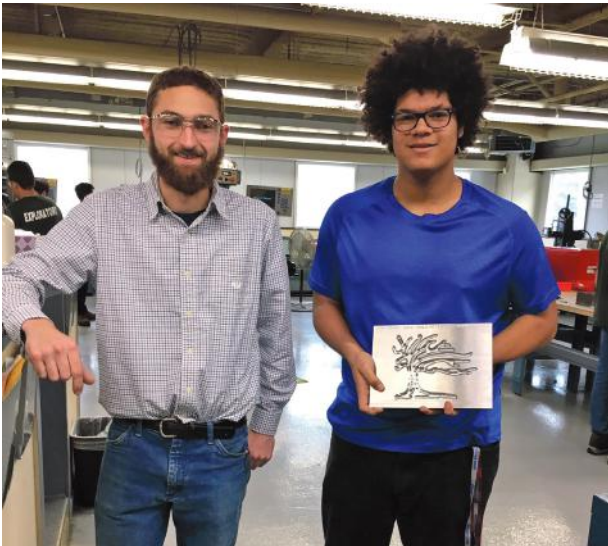
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Connecticut’s Sawmill, *continued*

wood router sign maker so we didn’t know if it would work the first time, but it worked perfectly.”

All that precision machining would have cost the state thousands of dollars. “The students did a great service for me and it was a terrific real-world experience for them,” Moore commented. Thanks to their work, he can now quickly provide the shields ready to paint and hang.



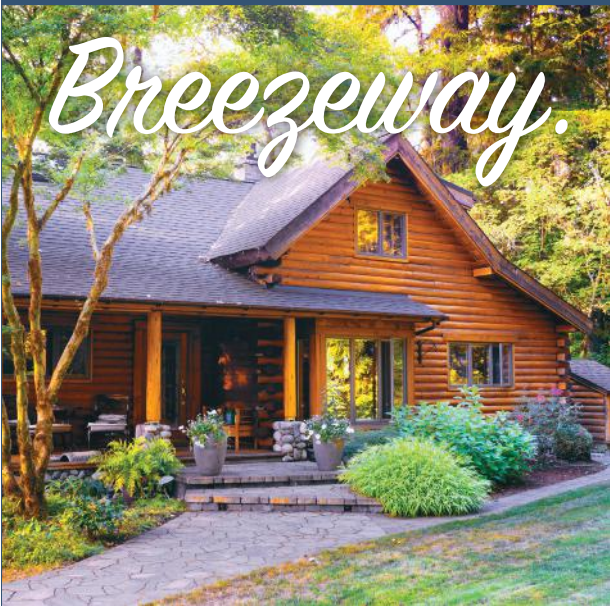
Jacob Walsh, Department Head of Precision Manufacturing Technology at Cheney Tech, and student Josiah Mulock.

Moving on from these successes, Moore is manufacturing more wood products: picnic tables; bird nesting boxes; tree cookie medallions for the No Child Left Inside Program; dam weir planks; information kiosks; trailer decking and sideboards; entrance gates for state parks and forests; railroad ties; and ladder signs. All of these are made from wood that has been salvaged or harvested from state forests.

Proud of the mill’s use of local natural resources, Moore successfully enrolled the Portland Sawmill in the Connecticut Department of Agriculture’s Connecticut Grown Program. He has also created a brand logo to let everyone know that the lumber he uses is locally sourced from sustainable harvesting operations. He even hopes someday to open the mill for demonstrations so people can observe the process themselves.

An avid outdoorsman and an accomplished ski racer and race coach, Moore notes, “I want everyone to enjoy visiting and to appreciate the amazing range and beauty of our Connecticut forests and parks.” Thanks to the help of Jacob Walsh’s students at Howell Cheney, that goal is in sight.

Hallie Metzger manages a family forest in Norfolk and edits the newsletter of the Timber Producers Association of Connecticut.



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Pathways

The above photo was taken at Sleeping Giant State Park in the 1930s.

The Quinnipiac Trail, which cuts through the park, is the original Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail, designed as “Trail 1” by the CFPA Trails Committee when they established the iconic trail system on December 27, 1919.

We have been celebrating the 90th anniversary of the Blue-Blazed Trails—one of the oldest hiking trail systems in the country—all year long. Thanks to a handful of committed visionaries, generations of Nutmeggers have been able to access, enjoy, study, and explore our rich natural heritage.

But the real thanks goes to you—the CFPA community—for your dedication, generosity, and passion to maintain, improve, and expand the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails over the past 90 years.

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