

Nashoba Conservation Trust Spring 2018 News

Conservation Corner

Ken Hartlage

What Makes a Bluebird Blue?

One cold, clear morning last month I watched as a male bluebird checked out a couple of nest boxes in my backyard. Set against the still snow-covered ground the Bluebird sparkled like a sapphire in the bright sun. And that got me wondering... what makes a Bluebird blue? So, I called up fellow NCT board member Michael Veit who, amongst his many talents, is a great resource for all things birds. Michael explained that the Bluebird's coloring is not a pigment. In other words, the feathers aren't actually blue. Instead, the way the feather is structured makes it reflect blue light wavelengths and absorb others. Apparently, the same applies to other "blue" birds, such as the Indigo bunting. Wow! Who knew? Well, certainly not me.

We're very fortunate to have such knowledgeable residents like

Michael, and we're even

luckier he enjoys sharing that knowledge with the rest of us. Michael will be leading the annual Breakfast with the Birds at Heald Orchard on Saturday, May 12 starting at 6:30 am. Please join us for coffee, donuts and a great morning of bird-watching.

Another local treasure-trove of information (and enthusiasm) is Pat Swain-Rice, retired Natural Community Ecologist with MA Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. Although Pat demurs when I refer to her as a wildflower expert, I've yet to show her one she could not identify. That's expert enough for me! Pat will once again lead a series of natural history walks on Pepperell conservation land. The first walk will be Sunday, May 6 at 10 am at the MA Fisheries and Wildlife property near Prescott Street bridge, where we should be treated to sightings of Bloodroot (below) and Marsh marigold.



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Spring Walk on the Jeff Smith Trail

Poem and Photos by Susan Edwards

Walking through the woods this morn,
An odd thing I did see,
A teeny-tiny wobbilee-woo
Peering straight at me.

I always see these things, mind you,
In my woods so deep.
Some while I am walking,
Others while I sleep.

'Twas Spring this day
I made my way
Down the woodland path.

You see it there?
It winds and winds,
O'er and behind,
The rolling ridge out back.

The shadows cast from oaks are long—sun's
peaking from the
east.

Oaks spindly limbs skim the sky, their roots
are in the peat.

— — —

This ancient path,
I'm sure made pass,
For many, long, long, before me.

In supple deerskin mocs,
Upon this trail they trod.
Right here they stopped, you see?

Soot marks the rock.
A sheltering spot,
Of peoples gone, gone, way before me.

Their spirits laugh and swirl—and oft in
anguish howl,
“Keep these sacred places.”

Forever.

Now.

Traipsing this hilly path, go I.
Over roots and 'round some rocks.
I stop and hear a crested bird,
Drum rhythm on hollow stock.

With each footfall,
Our Mother Earth exhales,
Her rich and fertile breath.
Her burbling stream beside me
Damps my each and every step.

Ah, the wonder of these woods!

Wandering on,
Two vultures cast their wobbly bulk
From high and craggy cliffs.
First, 'twas their inky shadows seen,
Spilling through the abyss.

Then the scrabble of little animals heard,
Knocking scree from the rocky wall,
Darting and ducking lest to be eaten,
Fur, feet, guts, and all.

'Twas then I stopped and looked around,
And found myself a bed of ground.
I bent my knees to lie right down.

By then, blue sky had turned to cloud.

Supine, I closed my eyes.
Warm liquid fell from darkening skies.
And on this hallowed spot,
My noggin and torso sunk deeper and deeper
down...

It was then I saw the woobilee-woo,
All furred, and feathered, and scaly, too.

It had breath like the wind,
And smelled of rain,
And sang a wondrous chorus of sound,
Of past and future and present found.

We looked each other in the eye.

Slowly, I rose, then said goodbye.

To the wobbilie-woo.

More background from Susan on her inspiration for the poem

My cabin home is nestled in Pepperell's forested landscape, next to the Jeff Smith Trail. It's my pleasure to share this special place with others—family, friends, and strangers.

Recently, Paula Terrasi and Cathy Kristofferson brought Doug Harris, Deputy Tribal Historic Preservation Officer of the Narragansett Indian Tribal Historic Preservation Office, to the region to speak about ceremonial stone landscapes. He stayed here while speaking in the region. Doug, Paula, Cathy, and I shared late night conversations.

This poem is influenced by this place—the section of JeffSmith Trail being my house, those conversations with Paula, Cathy, and Doug; and by that person.—Sue Edwards

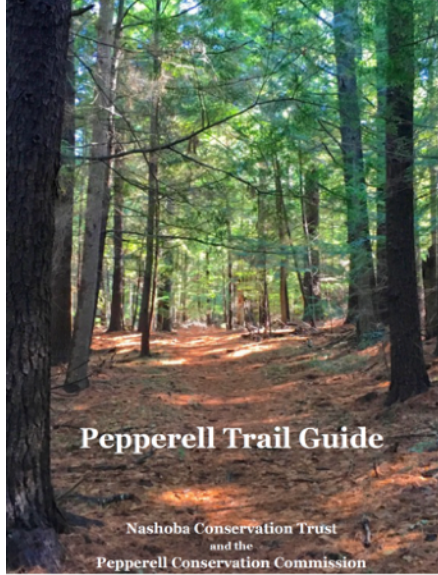


Member Articles

Paul Peavey

As you can see from the article above, we have some excellent writing talent out there in our NCT member base. If you have anything you are interested in or passionate about, from a conservation perspective please use the link below to let us know. 100 – 300 words is about average. We are always looking for volunteers to lend a fresh perspective to our newsletters. Newsletter@nashobatrust.org

Our new 2016 trail guide is available. The guide describes (16) different conservation areas managed by NCT and the Pepperell Conservation Commission. Contained in each section is a description of the parcel, a detailed trail map, and other information to help you enjoy each of these beautiful areas. If you would like a trail guide just visit the NCT website at www.nashobatrust.org



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