

Nashoba Conservation Trust Spring 2019 News

Conservation Corner

Ken Hartlage

A few weeks ago, NCT Board member Russ Schott sent me an email about a group of White Suckers in the Nissitissit River, hanging out just upstream of the Prescott Street Bridge. As I was reading it, my first reaction was “What’s a White Sucker?” But knowing that Russ was also an avid angler I quickly deduced it must be some sort of fish. Probably a vampire fish, given the name. Or not.

Anyhow, Russ’ email added that they were about to spawn, having returned to the area where they were born, so we’d better hurry up down there and catch the show. We were not disappointed – about 75 of these dark gray fish, most about 18” long, were lined up head to tail and fin to fin in the Nissitissit’s clear waters. What a sight!



From what I learned, White Suckers are definitely *not* vampire fish, but use their sucker-shaped mouths to ‘hoover up’ insect larvae, crustaceans, snails and other mollusks, and worms and leaches, for food. White Suckers are also an important food source for trout, as well as the heron and kingfishers we have patrolling our waters.

White Suckers depend on well-oxygenated cool waterbodies for their survival and, like our native Brook Trout, are vulnerable to increased temperatures arising from climate change. While certain factors contributing to climate change are outside our immediate control, there are things we can do to reduce the stress on aquatic life.

A Few of My Favorite Places

Russ Schott

One of the outstanding benefits of living in Pepperell is the close proximity all residents have to scenic and interesting Conservation Land. The Nashoba Conservation Trust is fortunate to own outright, or hold conservation restrictions on several of these properties.

It is very difficult for me to choose one property over the others as my favorite place to visit. For instance, I am thrilled every time I hike north on the Jeff Smith Trail through the Gulf Brook Ravine on the Pepperell Springs Property. Likewise, I greatly enjoy walking the Walent/Westside Trail along the west bank of the Nashua River, and also walking the Bike Path along the east side shoreline of Pepperell Ponds.

But, if my arm is twisted, I must admit that the Keyes Farm Property located between Elm Street and River Road has become my favorite parcel of Pepperell

Conservation Land. This property has many things going for it from my perspective. First, it is a three-minute car drive, a five minute bike ride or a 15 minute walk from my home on Townsend Street.

Second, I visit the property in all seasons. In the winter when we have abundant snow, I love to X-C Ski or snowshoe on the wide cart paths that criss-cross the property. In the spring and summer, the open oak and pine forest with isolated thickets of brush and a hemlock grove is a great place to walk and spot wildlife, especially early in the morning or at dusk. I have seen many deer and wild turkeys on Keyes Farm, and one Red Fox and one Porcupine, on my many hikes. Tom Ryden, the present owner of the Keyes House has told me that he has seen a Bobcat! Lastly, in the fall I make frequent trips to Keyes Farm to forage for edible wild mushrooms.



Keyes Farm near Elm St



Keyes Farm from bridge

One other thing makes Keyes Farm special to me. In 2010, as my son Christopher was closing in on his Eagle Scout Badge in Boy Scouts, he had to choose an Eagle Scout Project. He decided he wanted to build the connecting trail from the newly constructed Elm Street Parking Area, over to the existing trail complex that George Keyes had developed. This involved building a series of log bridges across a wetland, and then cutting a new section of trail, and cleaning up an old “farm dump” that was located within sight of the new trail. Christopher enlisted the assistance of other Scouts in his troop and directed their activities. I think they all did a great job on this project, and I feel a small parental bit of pride every time I walk on this segment of trail!

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Ken Hartlage

A big step we can all take is to reduce or eliminate the use of lawn fertilizers. When nitrates in the fertilizer end up in a lake or stream, they are decomposed by bacteria. The decomposition process reduces oxygen levels in the water and can also release ammonia. Low oxygen levels and ammonia combined with warm temperatures can kill fish and other aquatic life. If you do use fertilizer, select an organic or slow release fertilizer and apply only the recommended amount.

If you happen to own land that abuts a stream or river, create your own extended natural buffer zone using native plantings instead of grass or hardscape. This will help reduce heat zones and keep runoff from entering the waterbody. Better yet, consider donating land or a conservation easement to the town or a land trust so that it is permanently protected. NCT can provide guidance on how to do that and explain potential benefits to you as a landowner.

And, of course, your continued support of local land trusts and conservation groups helps all of us who are working to protect land and waterways for the benefit of wildlife and the public.

Pepperell Springs Nature walk

Ken Hartlage

An enthusiastic group of 18 people joined ecologist Pat Swain for a natural history walk at the Pepperell Springs Conservation Area this past Sunday. Featuring a steep-sloped ravine bisected by Gulf Brook and the brook itself, Pepperell Springs is both visually stunning and a great place to see spring flora. We were treated to sightings of mayflowers, hepaticas, wood anemones, bloodroot and wintergreen peering up from the undergrowth and rocky ledges, as well as budding spicebush and flowering hobblebush along the Brook.



Flowering Hobblebush



Black Throated Green Warbler

Birding-wise it was a mostly quiet morning, occasionally interrupted by the chattering of chickadees. However, one keen-eared member of our group picked up the call of a black-throated green warbler. This beauty, as seen in the image to the left, is a regular visitor at Heald Orchard each spring.

Join us on May 18 at 6:30 am at Heald Orchard for our annual Breakfast with the Birds and perhaps we'll see one together.

Upcoming Events

Town Wide Yard Sale

Nashoba Conservation Trust will be participating in the Town Wide Yard Sale on the Pepperell Town Field Saturday, May 4th from 7:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

As you begin your spring cleaning, please consider donating items to our yard sale tables. All money will be donated to NCT to continue their conservation efforts in Pepperell.



Please no clothing, books, large furniture or broken items. Call or text Pat at 508-320-2492 for pickup/drop off of items; questions or to volunteer

Breakfast with the Birds

Saturday, May 18th, 2019 - 6:30 AM at the Heald Street Orchard (East Gate).

This annual event is sponsored by the Town of Pepperell Conservation Commission and the Nashoba Conservation Trust.



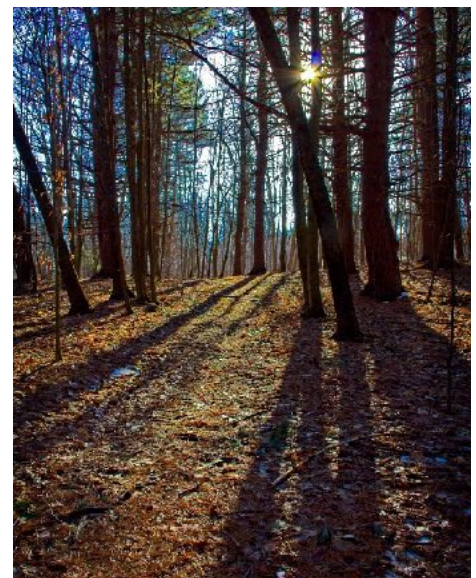
Black Throated Green Warbler
photo courtesy of Ken Hartlage

Coffee, juice, bagels, muffins, and donuts are provided. We will stroll through the Orchard and enjoy the spring migration of many bird species.

Pat Swain Natural History Walks Schedule

May 12, 2019 : Townsend Hill
June 2, 2019 : Bemis Road
June 16, 2019 : Mt Lebanon Woods
June 30, 2019: Pepperell Springs (middle area)
July 14, 2019 : Gulf Brook
July 28, 2019 : Stewart Brook
August 11, 2019: Day Woods
September 22, 2019: Keyes Parker
October 6, 2019: Blood Brook Ravine from Jewett

For more information on these walks please visit the Nashoba Conservation Trust website at nashobatrust.org



Mt Lebanon Woods
photo courtesy of Sue Bleiweiss

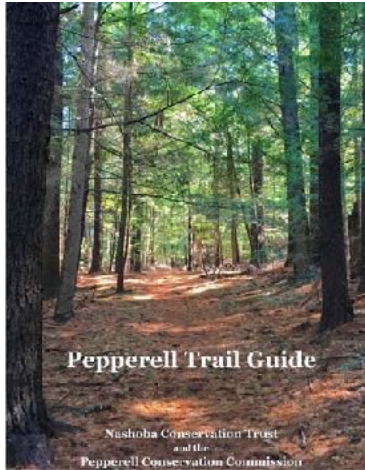
Call for Articles

As you can see from the articles in this edition, 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

Pepperell Trail Guide

The Pepperell Trail Guide describes sixteen conservation areas and almost 20 miles of trails, some of which pass through or alongside some of Pepperell's most stunning natural areas, including the Nashua and Nissitissit Rivers, Heald Pond and Gulf Brook Ravine. Visit the NCT website at



www.nashobatrust.org to download a copy.

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NCT has a brand new blog!

Check out our new blog at www.nashobatrust.org/blog/ where you'll find all the latest news and information on NCT initiatives and activities. At the bottom of each blog post you'll find a place where you can leave your comments, suggestions and feedback. You can get NCT blog posts delivered directly to your inbox so you never miss an update - just put your email address in the subscribe box that you'll find on the upper right hand corner of the blog and you'll never miss a blog post.

You'll also find a link directly to the blog on the NCT website in the upper right hand corner.

Support NCT with your donations

The NCT offers the following levels of membership:

Individual - \$35

Family - \$50

Sponsor - \$100

Patron - \$250

Benefactor - \$1000

All memberships include subscription to the NCT Quarterly Newsletter. Visit the website at nashobatrust.org to donate or mail your check to:

Nashoba Conservation Trust
PO Box 188
Pepperell, MA 01463

NCT Gear

Our new website makes it easier than ever to order NCT tshirts and window decals. Visit the NCT website at nashobatrust.org and get an NCT tshirt or window decal delivered right to your mailbox!

