

Conservation Corner

Ken Hartlage

Visitors to our Day Woods property will notice a roughly paved path extending from the parking area to the dam site on Gulf Brook. This is one step toward our twin goals of removing the concrete dam that partially blocks Gulf Brook and establishing an accessible trail from the parking area up to the dam site. Thanks to a grant from the Massachusetts Environmental Trust plus, a generous contribution from the Squan-a-Tissit chapter of Trout Unlimited and the assistance of the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration, a Reconnaissance Study was conducted as a precursor to obtaining the necessary permits to remove the dam. The concrete dam removal will restore stream flow and connectivity along Gulf Brook, benefiting the local fish and mussel populations.



Visitors to the dam site may have noticed a stone dam located behind the concrete dam. The stone dam dates from the 19th century and is of historical interest. This dam will remain in place as its impact on stream flow is negligible.

Meanwhile, with the support of Pepperell's own Highway Department, we are making good progress establishing Pepperell's second accessible trail. At just under .2 miles in length, the trail will lead to an overlook of Gulf Brook and the impounded area behind the dam. From this perch, visitors will have a great view of the historic stone dam and local wildlife. In addition to the trail itself, the parking area will be expanded, and additional informational signage will be installed.



We hope to complete both the dam removal and the accessible trail by Fall 2021.

Annual Christmas Bird Count

Michael Veit

On Sunday December 20th a dedicated group of Pepperell residents participated in the 121st annual National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count; an event when people all over the world count and identify as many birds as they can within a 25 sq. mile circle in a 24 hour period.

Much of Pepperell, along with parts of 10 other neighboring towns, are within the Groton - Oxbow Count Circle. This circle has been a part of the count since 2000.

This year's count was remarkable in several respects. Nearly 9000 birds were recorded including a robust number of 77 species. High numbers of 14 species were either set or tied for the 21 years that this count circle has been active. This number included three species of "winter finches" (Pine Grosbeak, White-winged Crossbill, Red Crossbill) that typically only travel this far south in winters when their seed and fruit sources crash in Canada and northern New England, a phenomenon that we enjoy only about once in a decade. Pepperell counters even recorded three species that were found nowhere else in count circle; Pine Grosbeak, Ruffed Grouse, and Yellow-rumped Warbler. Thanks to all the NCT and other community members who helped to make our count a success this year!



red crossbill



yellow rumped warbler

The count is open to everyone no matter how experienced a birder they are or where they live (i.e. you don't need to live within the count circle). Newcomers are welcome, and many more experienced birders embrace the company of novice birders for part or all of the day.

If you would like to participate next year, you can contact our town count compiler and NCT's vice president, Paula Terrasi, at: lakelover207@yahoo.com. The Groton-Oxbow count is held each year on the first Sunday of the count period.

General information about the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count, including count period dates and results for each count circle, can be found [on their web site here.](#)

In memory of Sara Butturini & Kathie Strait

Pat Peavey & Siri Stromsted

The NCT community recently lost two active, long-term members and dedicated volunteers, Sara Butturini and Kathie Strait. Both Sara and Kathie, also a former board member, could always be counted on to represent NCT in various community activities, such as the 4th of July parade, the Band Concerts, the Town-wide Yard Sale, the Fall Festival and NCT's membership recruitment.



Sara, an avid hiker and walker, enjoyed all of the conservation properties available to explore in town. But her true joy was Heald Orchard. Twice a day, she could be seen ambulating the trails, often with her husband, Allen, and their springer spaniels. It was where she could go for solace or meeting up with other walkers. Her infectious laugh and easy-going personality made her memorable to all



Kathie, who was known for posting many spectacular sunrise shots over Blood Farm, also had a passion for backyard birding. A quick whistle and her beloved bluebirds would be lined up for their special meal. She had the catbirds and chickadees eating from her hand and was determined to conquer more. Love of family activities would have all the Straits out walking, x-country skiing, snowshoeing on the trails and skating on the pond at Mt. Lebanon Woods.

Both these women left us much too early, and for all of us who had been blessed with their friendship, we are so saddened. Their hearts were full of love for the beauty of nature and they were dedicated to conservation.

Both families have expressed gratitude to all who have made donations to Nashoba Conservation Trust in their memory.

NCT acquires two more properties along the Nashua River

Ken Hartlage

Thanks to strong membership support, we were able to purchase the two parcels along the Nashua River that were the focus of our year-end fundraiser. With these acquisitions, NCT will have a total of five parcels in the vicinity of the "Ivy" streets area, some of which also border town conservation land. In combination, these protected parcels act as natural buffers to protect the river from stormwater runoff, provide wildlife habitat, and also help mitigate the impacts of flooding. The NCT Board extends its sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to this effort.

Upcoming Events

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, planned NCT events are on hold until further notice

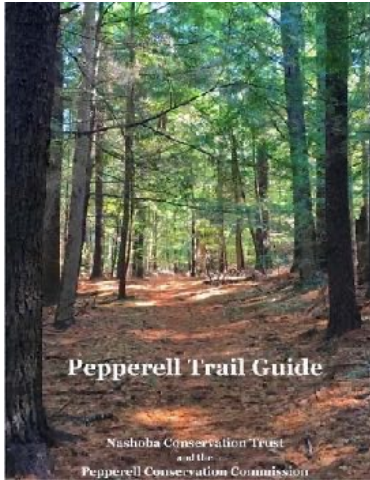
Volunteers

Volunteers are always needed and welcomed for all the activities that NCT participates in. If you would like to become involved, please contact Pat Peavey 508-320-2492.



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.



NCT Gear

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



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
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Pepperell, MA 01463

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