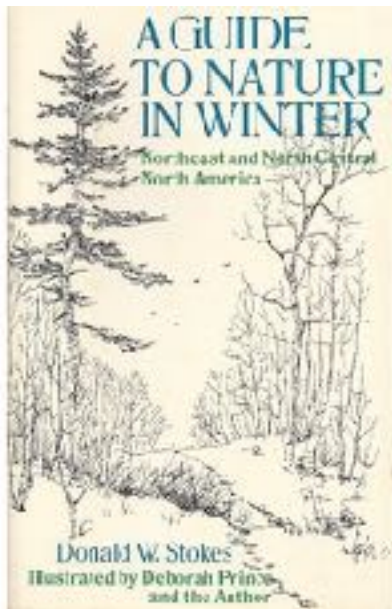


### Conservation Corner

Ken Hartlage

Walking through the woods near my house one winter day, I noticed this round, papery structure - about the size of a ping-pong ball - attached to the stem of an oak tree. "Hmm" I thought to myself, "I wonder what that is?" I made a mental note of it and continued my walk. I didn't really have any other option, short of breaking off the branch and taking it home with me, because this was 1977. No cell phone cameras, no internet and certainly no iNaturalist to help me identify this strange looking object. And so it remained, a mystery unsolved, until I came across Donald Stokes' *A Guide to Nature in Winter* at our local bookstore, which helped me identify the odd-looking orb as an oak-apple gall.



*A Guide to Nature in Winter* was my first "nature" book, and a revelation for my teenage self. As both a field guide and a natural history of our wintery northeast, it helped me to observe my surroundings with a keener eye. Book in hand I could now identify a basswood by its waxy, red buds, yarrow by its winter rosette and distinguish mink tracks from weasel. Moreover, the Guide and those forests walks helped me understand how interconnected the natural world is, and sparked my interest in conservation biology. Forty-odd years later, our winter forests and fields are still a source of inspiration for me, as I hope they are for you too. As the trees continue to shed their leaves, the air turns crisp and the word "nor'easter" creeps into the weather forecast, I hope you will continue to walk, snowshoe and ski our conservation lands, and make your own discoveries of nature in winter.

## Seminatore Meadow Update

Michael Veit

It's been busy in the meadow this season! Not only have we heard reports of more individuals and families walking the trails and enjoying the meadow, but we captured some interesting wildlife images on our game camera. We have known for a long time that deer have been visiting the meadow, noticing their sign on numerous occasions, but we had no idea about the extent. Our game camera has revealed that up to eight deer at a time have been regularly feeding in the meadow, usually near dawn or dusk, including a spectacular 12 point buck! We also have images of a sleek bobcat stalking prey in broad daylight (likely the numerous rodents that make the meadow their home) and both barn and tree swallows hawking insects in flight.

With the generous help of 17 volunteers from throughout the NCT community, and under the direction of native plant specialist and garden guru Deb Fountain, nearly 600 plugs were planted on Sept. 12th. It was quite a team effort with some folks responsible for digging holes and others for planting plugs in appropriate micro-habitats throughout the meadow and watering them. Twelve species of flowering perennials were planted and included a range of flower color, structure, and bloom times. The list included such beauties as Swamp milkweed, Butterfly weed, Scarlet bee balm, Broad leaf mountain mint, Foxglove beardtongue, NY ironweed, Cardinal flower and others. The goal was to increase the diversity of flowering plants in order to provide more food and cover for a diversity of pollinators and other animals, and to make the experience of human visitors even more rewarding.



Special thanks go to the NOLA volunteers from North Middlesex High School for their enthusiastic help and Kathie and Tom Hartner for their help, access way, and for generously allowing us the use of their water spigot.

## Secrets of a Lazy Gardener

Deb Fountain

Fall is the time of year when most homeowners and gardeners spend hours cutting back perennials, fertilizing lawns, blowing leaves or raking, raking and more raking.

There is a great perk to gardening with native plants that isn't just about the environmental benefits of providing wildlife habitat and preservation of our natural resources. It's a bit more self-serving. You see, native plant gardeners have some very valid reasons to be lazy gardeners, especially in the cool, invigorating days of autumn.

Native plant gardeners don't cut back their perennials in the fall because they know that many insects have laid eggs in the plant stems where the larvae will overwinter safely and emerge in the spring. Cutting them back destroys the insects' life cycles. Also, seed heads of many late flowering plants are an important food source for winter birds. So, while leaving the brown stems and spent flower heads standing may look unkempt popping up through the snow, we can feel good about skipping this chore because we know that we are letting nature do its own work without our interference.



Many native plant gardeners now opt for smaller lawns, no lawns, or even choose a lawn substitute such as wild strawberries or other mixes of low-growing native plants. This is better for the environment, resulting in healthier soils, improved groundwater, less watering requirements and a healthier habitat for insect populations. Although the trend to reduce lawn size or composition may not be the most important reason to consider making changes in our yards, a reduced amount of time and effort spent on lawn maintenance certainly is a welcome side benefit for the lazy gardener.

And finally, there is our obsession with leaf removal in the fall. Blow them, rake them, bag them, burn them— just get them off the lawn! It's actually a myth that leaving your leaves on the lawn will kill the grass. Leaves provide important natural nutrients and microbes for the soil. They can serve as mulch or compost for the homeowner, as well as food shelter and bedding for a wide variety of wildlife. If you can't bear to leave them on your grass, consider a quick, gentle raking to move most of them to an area where you can stockpile them as future compost, or spread a fabulous (free) winter mulch in your garden beds.



So you may wonder, just what do native plant gardeners actually do in the autumn? Well, we may collect and plant native seeds for next year's garden, plant some new native plants in our yard, sit and watch a bee trying to get some pollen from a gentian flower, or put our feet up and read a juicy novel. But mostly, we like to take long walks on the beautiful conservation properties in our area, hug a few trees, take some photos, teach our kids about how to enjoy and explore a woodland, or take a lazy paddle on the Nashua River to enjoy the foliage and migrating birds. I really like my alternative to the traditional gardening autumn chore list and think you might too.

## Volunteer - Marc Basti

Paula Terrasi

The Board of the Nashoba Conservation Trust (NCT) relies on volunteers to help us to protect and maintain our conservation areas. NCT works together with the Town of Pepperell Conservation Commission and our many volunteers to keep our trail systems open and safe.

During these challenging times, we have witnessed an increase in users to all of our conservation areas and we can't think of a better time to recognize one of our volunteers, Marc Basti, for his efforts in repairing and painting almost every NCT and Town of Pepperell Conservation Commission sign and kiosk. Marc also has reconstructed trails around Heald Pond and Pepperell Springs, installed a pedestrian bridge over Gulf Brook, added trail markers on the Jeff Smith Trail, and helped increase the parking area at the canoe launch site on River Road.

When Marc isn't dedicating his free time volunteering, he supervises trail maintenance at the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation (MA DCR). Thank you, Marc, for your dedication!



## Fall Hike!

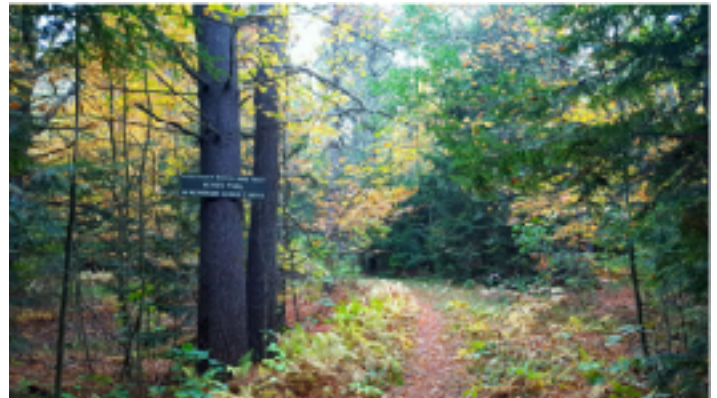
Sponsored by Nissitissit River Land Trust

**When:** Saturday Nov. 7<sup>th</sup> 9am

**Where:** George Keyes Memorial Trail- W. Hollis Street, Hollis NH

**Meet Up:** Beaver Brook Assoc. parking lot for Potanipo Trail at corner of West Hollis St. and Worcester Rd., Hollis NH

**Hike Leaders:** Craig Birch and Linn Clark  
978-337-4042 or [linn.clark@gmail.com](mailto:linn.clark@gmail.com) Please register with Linn so we can plan the hike or cancel for weather.



**Hike Info:** Approx 1.8mile out and back. The Keyes trail starts a short walk west of parking lot on W. Hollis St. just past a log cabin home on left. Sign for trail is set in from road. Beautiful and sometimes hilly hike along the Nissitissit River with views from a steep bluff overlooking the river. The trail terminates where the Jeff Smith Trail crosses the river. You can walk back along the Keyes trail or follow the JST out to Iron Works Lane (Brookline NH) and walk back along W.Hollis St. A car will be available at that point to transport some hikers back.

Trekking poles a plus! Bring a snack and water!  
Covid protocol: wear mask, keep 6ft distance. Please be well!

## Support NCT with your donations

The NCT offers the following levels of membership:

Individual - \$35

Family - \$50

Sponsor - \$100

Patron - \$250

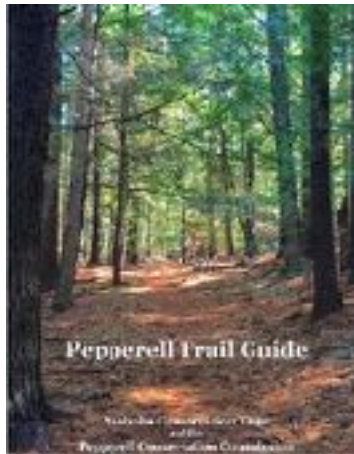
Benefactor - \$1000

All memberships include subscription to the NCT Quarterly Newsletter. Visit the website at [nashobatrust.org](http://nashobatrust.org) to donate or mail your check to:

Nashoba Conservation Trust  
PO Box 188  
Pepperell, MA 01463

## Pepperell Trail Guide

The Pepperell Trail Guide describes sixteen conservation area 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](http://www.nashobatrust.org) to download a copy.



### Directors

April Babbit  
Sue Bleiweiss  
Linn Clark  
Mark Camp  
Rob Rand  
Russ Schott  
Siri Stromsted  
Michael Veit

### NCT Board of Directors

President: Ken Hartlage  
Vice President: Paula Terrasi  
Secretary: Cindy Kuhn  
Treasurer: Patty Franklin

## 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.



## NCT Gear

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

