



Mass Audubon  
*Protecting the Nature of Massachusetts*

# Connections

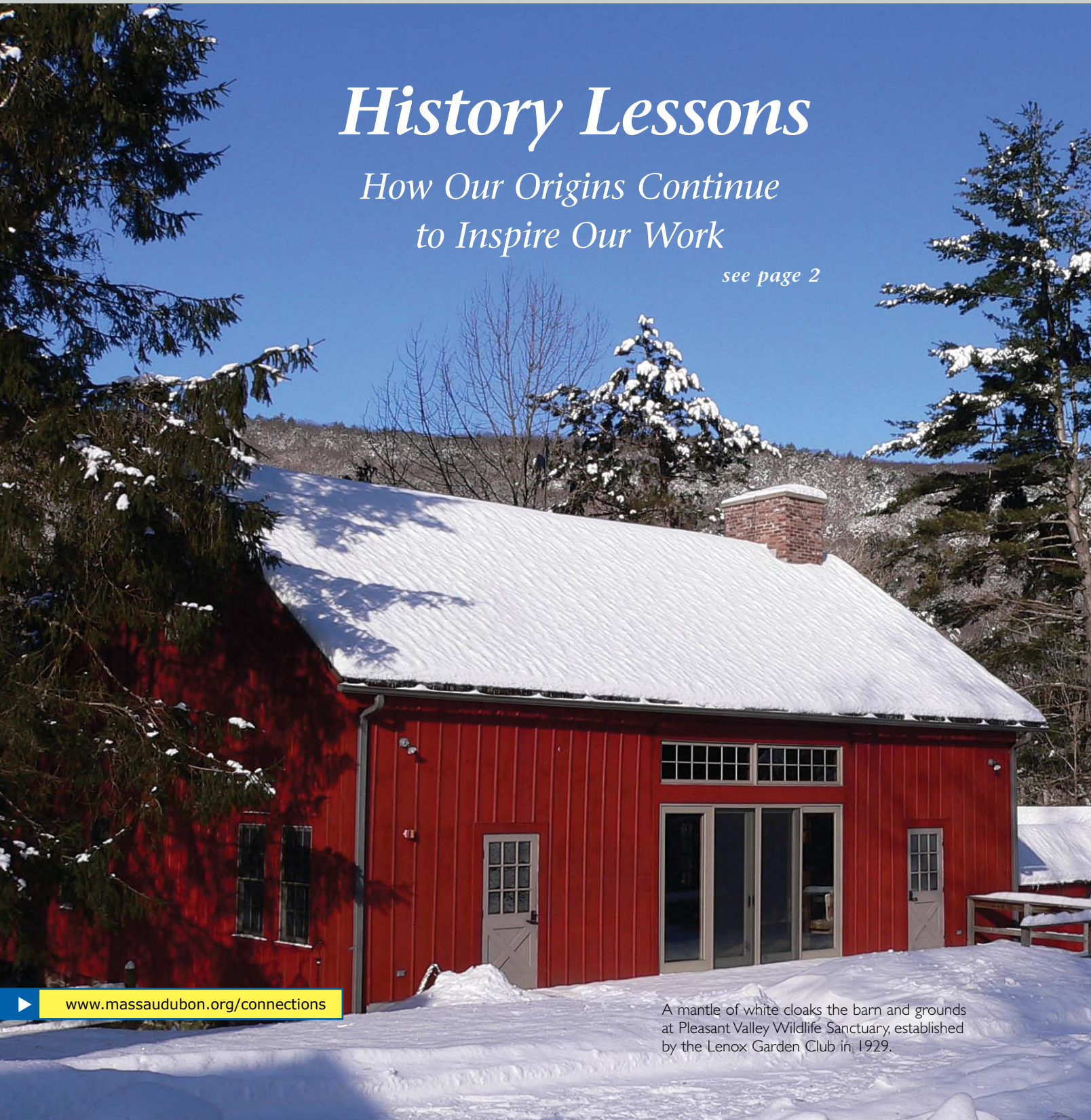
JANUARY – MARCH 2012

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE MEMBERS OF MASS AUDUBON

## *History Lessons*

*How Our Origins Continue  
to Inspire Our Work*

*see page 2*



[www.massaudubon.org/connections](http://www.massaudubon.org/connections)

A mantle of white cloaks the barn and grounds at Pleasant Valley Wildlife Sanctuary, established by the Lenox Garden Club in 1929.



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**Editorial Team:**

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Traumatized by war and its widespread consequences; wracked by fiscal uncertainty and a sputtering economy; bitterly divided over issues of race, gender, morality, and the way forward—surely an unpromising moment in the nation's history to issue a battle cry in the cause of bird conservation. Or so it must have seemed in the 1890s when Harriet L. Hemenway and her cousin Minna B. Hall began a letter-writing campaign to end the indiscriminate slaughter of birds to satisfy the demand for feathers to bedeck women's hats.

Our own times have without doubt been "interesting," but the second half of the 19th century seemingly contained enough catastrophe and social turmoil to reduce the sturdiest structure of civilization to rubble. The Civil War was still an open wound that festered well into the 20th century. The nation endured a continual sequence of

The killing of birds to supply the women's hat trade prompted a public outcry that led to the birth of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, now known as Mass Audubon.

recessions, leading to widespread bank panics, high unemployment, and the rise of market manipulators. The women's suffrage and temperance movements rent the social fabric along the same weak seams that are splitting again today. Two presidents were assassinated, crime and corruption were rampant, and by 1898 we were once again at war.

### Welcome Illumination

*And yet*, this same period was also a time of intellectual, cultural, and spiritual awakening of great brilliance—as if to bring much-needed light into the darkest of times. Many of Boston's enduring cultural institutions, such as the Museum of Fine Arts and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and some



# History Lessons

by Chris Leahy, Gerard A. Bertrand Chair of Natural History and Field Ornithology at Mass Audubon



Pleasant Valley, shown in this 1930s image of sanctuary director Stuyvesant Morris Pell, links past to present through its longtime record of land stewardship.

of its finest architectural achievements, such as the Boston Public Library and Trinity Church, arose in this tumultuous era. Most striking of all, perhaps, was a renewed appreciation for nature, stimulated no doubt by the rampant conversion of American landscapes and wildlife into profit. Consider this list of “green” organizations and projects that emerged in New England in the late 19th century: The Arnold Arboretum (1872), the Appalachian Mountain Club (1876), Frederick Law Olmsted’s Emerald Necklace (begun 1876), The Trustees of Reservations (1891) and, of course, the Massachusetts Audubon Society (1896).

And, in the broader horizon, Yellowstone was established by Congress as the world’s first national park in 1872.

The struggle between the forces of light and darkness was no genteel debate. Then as now, there were those who could not imagine what wilderness might be good for and thought of national parks as nothing more than theft of resources perpetrated by “the government.” And Mass Audubon’s Founding Mothers—Mrs. Hemenway and Miss Hall and the 900 well-to-do women they quickly assembled to battle the plume merchants—were among the radical feminists of their day.

## Birth of Advocacy

Success did not come easily. Many millions of dollars were at stake; market gunners and recreational hunters feared that their livelihood and sport would be compromised; and the intrinsic value of birdlife was not universally recognized. Debating the wisdom of new

conservation laws on the Senate floor in 1913, Senator James A. Reed of Missouri, “speaking of egrets,” wanted to know “why we should worry ourselves into a frenzy because some lady adorns her hat” with the feathers of a “long-legged, long-beaked, long-necked bird that lives in swamps and eats tadpoles and fish and crayfish...” The first bid to pass a national wildlife protection act in 1898 had failed. But in 1900, Congressman John F. Lacey of Iowa proposed a law that would prohibit interstate trade in wildlife killed in violation of state laws. By this time, a grassroots, pro-wildlife movement, inspired by the Audubon initiative had passed conservation legislation in many states and, when the Lacey Act became law, the plume trade was doomed and market gunning mortally wounded.

The slaughter of the plume birds was indeed appalling. The newspaper accounts that jolted Hemenway and Hall





Harriet Hemenway, one of  
Mass Audubon's Founding Mothers

into action vividly described the gore, stench, and orphaned nestlings left in an egret colony in Florida after the plume hunters had killed the adults and skinned them for their nuptial feathers. Colonies of terns in Nantucket Sound that had numbered more than 100,000 pairs were reduced to fewer than 5,000 within a few seasons. But these early champions of conservation had tapped into something broader and deeper than a love of birds. The founders of the Audubon movement convinced the public that while birds were worthy of our admiration—for their beauty, song, power of flight, and spiritual symbolism—their destruction by people portended something even more ominous than a world without birds. They were simply the most vivid examples of the threat being posed to all of nature, representing a gross degradation of the quality of human life.

## Then and Now

Compare those troubled times with our early 21st-century challenges. We are at war and in debt; financial malfeasance is part of the national discussion; our politics are feckless; and the nation is divided on a wide range of social values. In the midst of this turmoil, does anyone really want to have a conversation about *bird conservation*?

I'm pretty sure our Founding Mothers would have said, "Yes, indeed!" They understood that when a democratic society is struggling with its identity, it is especially open to hearing the truth, confronting issues, and seeking bold solutions.



Community engagement goes to the heart of  
our mission.

## State of the Birds Report on Sale!

Mass Audubon's landmark "report card" on Massachusetts birdlife, ***State of the Birds***, can be downloaded from our web site at [www.massaudubon.org/sotb](http://www.massaudubon.org/sotb). The 64-page report is also available for purchase at the Audubon Shop at Drumlin Farm in Lincoln for \$9.95.

*And members receive a discount!*

[www.massaudubon.org/advocacy](http://www.massaudubon.org/advocacy)

Among the most disturbing phenomena described in our recently published ***State of the Birds*** report include the sudden decline of some bird species for no single, obvious reason and the gradual decreases in the populations of some of our commonest birds over the last 50 years. This implies a complex of threats pervasive in the environment, some of which we don't yet fully understand. It may be that the solutions to these issues will require more than sweat and treasure, but rather the kind of political will that banned the commercial killing of birds a hundred years ago. As messengers from the natural world, birds have alerted us to our follies before and pointed the way out of traps of our own making. Are we still listening? And will we respond? ▲

## Make a Difference

Looking for a way to support Mass Audubon and still receive income for yourself or others? Consider a Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA)—a simple and effective way to meet your needs. With a CGA you can receive:

- annual, fixed income for life
- an immediate income tax deduction
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- our enduring gratitude for your vision and support

To learn more about this and other thoughtful Planned Giving options, please contact:

Nora Frank, Vice President for Philanthropy  
781-259-2125; [norafrank@massaudubon.org](mailto:norafrank@massaudubon.org)





**Grand Prize winning photographs:** A closeup of a black-eyed Susan wildflower by **Brian Amici** of Berlin (Under 18) and an image of a painted skimmer dragonfly by **Mary Dineen** of Arlington (18 and Older)

# Shutterbugs Salute 'Your Great Outdoors'



On a fittingly beautiful autumn afternoon, photographers, families, and friends gathered with great anticipation at Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary in Natick to hear the results of Mass Audubon's second statewide photo contest.

Last year's inaugural competition prompted the submission of more than a thousand photographs. So we were all thrilled that this year's **Picture This: Your Great Outdoors** contest drew an astounding 2,700 images from more than 700 photographers!

Entrants included weekend shutterbugs and "family photographers," serious amateurs and professionals, and ranged in age from youngster to elder.

Winners announced at the Sunday, November 6, finale were chosen in two categories: Best Overall Photograph (Grand Prize) and Best Photograph Taken at a Mass Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary. Photographers competed in Under 18 and 18 and Older divisions.

Grand Prize winners were Brian Amici of Berlin (Under 18), for his photograph of a black-eyed Susan, and Mary Dineen of Arlington (18 and Older), for her image of a painted skimmer dragonfly. "Best Wildlife Sanctuary" winners were Josh Brooks of Barnstable (Under 18) for his photograph of a soaring gull at Wellfleet Bay in Wellfleet, and Lauren Kreyling (18 and Older) for a pondside photo of her husband and son at Ipswich River in Topsfield.

Twenty Honorable Mentions were also named. All the photographs chosen were hung on the walls of

Broadmoor's Nature Center.

Submissions reflected the marvels of the natural world in myriad ways, from celebrations of birdlife and other fauna and flora to magical landscapes and children making their own outdoor discoveries.

Mass Audubon President Laura Johnson saluted the photographers for using their talent and passion to connect with nature and help admirers of the images do the same.

"Through these photographs, we can enjoy remarkable visions of nature, and be inspired to get outdoors ourselves," Johnson said. "Observing nature is fun and always brings a new experience to the viewer." ▲

To view the winning images on the Mass Audubon website, visit

[www.massaudubon.org/picturethis](http://www.massaudubon.org/picturethis)



## UNFAMILIAR FACES

Photographs of Vanishing Wildlife  
by Kevin Schafer

January 29 - May 13  
[massaudubon.org/visualarts](http://massaudubon.org/visualarts)



# Return of the Wood Duck

by John Galluzzo, South Shore Sanctuaries Education Coordinator

As a birder approaches a secluded pond in Massachusetts, she is likely to hear a wood duck before she sees it. Well tuned to disturbance of any kind, wood ducks sensing danger will burst from the water and take flight with plaintive, repetitive alarm calls. Caught unaware, though, a male in breeding plumage offers one of the most beautiful sightings in nature. Sporting a green cap and multihued bill, and a body and wings that include shades of cream, maroon, rich auburn, and deep blue, the bird is a floating rainbow. Seemingly decked out for a wedding celebration, the wood duck has a scientific name, *Aix sponsa* that is most appropriate. *Aix* is Greek for “water bird” and *sponsa* is Latin for “betrothed.”

Were it not for the efforts of numerous conservationists working on multiple fronts over the last century or so, however, today’s Mass Audubon members might never have had the opportunity to enjoy the sight of these spectacular ducks. When John James Audubon visited Boston in 1835, he noted that wood ducks were “rather abundant,” having witnessed hundreds in single flocks. Three decades later, birders still used words like “swarms” and “plentiful” to describe the species in Massachusetts; however, the tide had turned by the late 19th century when the population fell precipitously as a result of overhunting.

Edward Howe Forbush, the state ornithologist long associated with Mass Audubon early in the 20th century, recalled in his *A History of the Game Birds, Wild-Fowl and Shorebirds of Massachusetts and Adjacent States* that “[Wood ducks] were shot at any time, spring or fall, whenever they exposed themselves.”

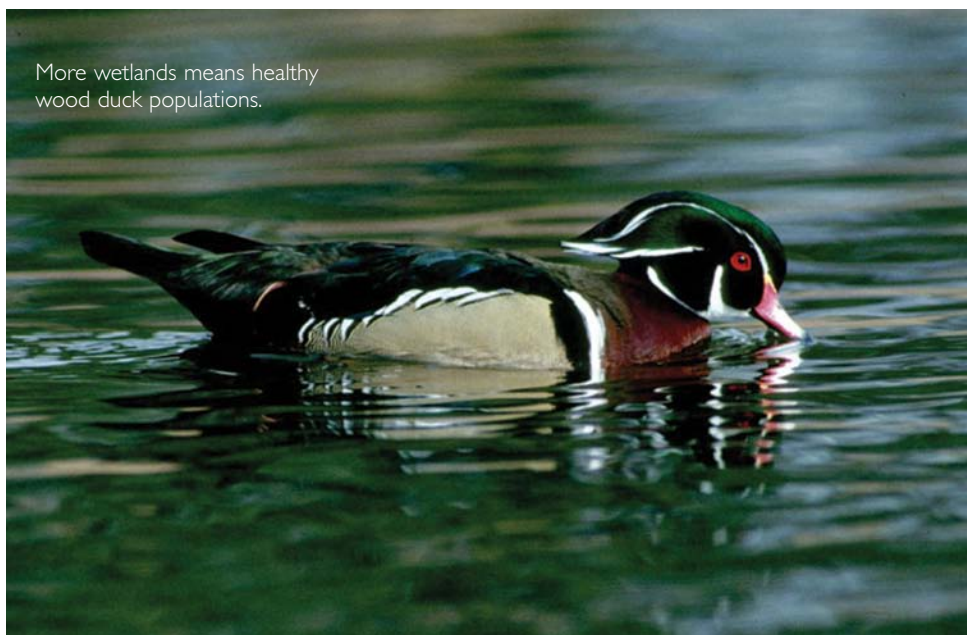
By the first decade of the 20th century, hunting, deforestation, wetland habitat destruction, and the associated loss of suitable nesting cavities in trees had



driven the wood duck to the edge of extinction. Massachusetts acted quickly, outlawing spring shooting of the species, giving those relatively few birds still breeding in the state at least the opportunity to raise new generations of young each year. It was the first step in a multipronged, multigenerational approach to saving the species. Meanwhile, the intrepid duck was already rebuilding its own population in deep, remote, and inaccessible swamps.

The adoption of the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 afforded instant protection for the wood duck, but Mass Audubon felt that more needed to be done. “Save the Wood Duck” was a headline in the December 1922 Bulletin. “Please write to the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., and ask him to continue the close [sic] season on the wood duck... These beautiful birds are coming back... Now comes a drive on the part of the sportsmen to have an open season...”

By the 1930s, Massachusetts’ agrarian way of life had waned, and farmlands were reverting to forests. The return of beavers to the state in 1931 brought direct benefits, creating freshwater wetlands to which wood ducks immediately flocked. Again, however, wood ducks faced adversity, as explosive post-WW II development impinged on their habitat. To help the species in Massachusetts, the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife designed wood duck boxes in the 1950s and 1960s to be used throughout the state—a project that continues.







The male in breeding plumage.

## *Sporting a green cap and multihued bill, the bird is a floating rainbow.*

Still, wood ducks could not get off the population roller coaster. They yet again faced decreasing numbers as toxins left by pesticides such as DDT killed the insects necessary to feed young wood ducks. Only after the 1972 ban on DDT did the enduring waterfowl truly rebound.

Has the wood duck weathered its last storm in Massachusetts? No one knows for sure, but the Commonwealth has shown that over time, through legislation, restoration of natural systems—and citizen action—we can ensure success stories for native wildlife. Go to your favorite wooded pond next summer and see for yourself. ▲

▶ [www.massaudubon.org/birds](http://www.massaudubon.org/birds)



Specially designed nesting boxes have helped wood ducks rebound, as have the restoration and stewardship of wetlands.

## **A Safe Harbor at Pleasant Valley**

West Stockbridge residents were surprised to learn in the late 1920s that beavers had moved into a great swamp in town, felled trees, and built a dam. The Massachusetts landscape was going through a transitional period at that time—from predominantly farmland to forest. Prized by early settlers for their pelts, beavers had not been seen in Massachusetts since the mid-1700s.

And soon the returning rodents would be joined by a feathered species also dependent on water: the wood duck.

The beaver restoration coincided with creation of what would become Mass Audubon's Berkshires gem, Pleasant Valley Wildlife Sanctuary in Lenox. In 1929, the Lenox Garden Club purchased the old Power Farm, 200 acres of fields and mixed habitat, and then, at the end of the year, the abutting 50-acre Crockett Farm.

When Stuyvesant Morris Pell arrived to take over as sanctuary director, he quickly began making changes. "The area was not a particularly rich one, biologically," Pell related in his memoirs. "In fact, the lack of birds was often rather embarrassing." In 1932, Pell brought in three beavers from New York and released them on the sanctuary. A pair promptly began to gnaw down trees to build dams, creating ponds and broader wetlands.

Results were immediate. By importing the long-absent beavers and giving them a new foothold in Massachusetts, Pell coaxed numerous wetland bird species to return to Pleasant Valley—including the long-vulnerable wood duck.

▶ [www.massaudubon.org/pleasantvalley](http://www.massaudubon.org/pleasantvalley)



# The Winter Night Sky

Few things are more beautiful than a starry winter night. So bundle up and discover an entire universe right outside your door!

## Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

Stars are not cool. In fact, they're really hot. Stars are glowing, rotating balls of gas, which, combined with very high temperatures and lots of pressure, cause a star's energy to continuously move from deep inside to its surface—thus producing the light we see.

More stars than you can count (or imagine). What we see is only a fraction of the stars in the universe. Astronomers estimate that there are more than 200 billion billion stars.

Ready,  
Set,  
Go Outside!

Moonlight isn't really moonlight. Stars shine on their own, but non-stars, such as planets and moons, only reflect the light around them. So moonlight is actually sunlight—the sun is the closest star to Earth—reflecting off the moon's surface.

Star light, star bright. The reason stars look different is that they vary in size, color, composition, temperature, and distance from Earth. All these factors determine how bright a star appears to be. Stars are different colors because of their temperatures. The hottest ones are white or bluish. The coolest ones are reddish orange.

## Parent/Teacher Note

### Skills Learned:

*Observation and comparison:* light, color, shapes, patterns, arrangements

*Experimentation:* measurement, physical properties of atmosphere and space

*Creative expression:* vocabulary, imagery, imagination, creative writing

*Information Science:* researching myths and stories

## Exploring the Night Sky

Here are some tips for successful stargazing:

- ★ Pick a night that is moonless, without clouds or fog.
- ★ Go to a place with the least light. If you go in your backyard, turn off the house lights.
- ★ Dress warmly. Bring a hot drink if you want.
- ★ Let your eyes get used to the dark.
- ★ Bring a chair or blanket so you can sit comfortably.
- ★ Bring binoculars if you have them.

## Night Sky Scavenger Hunt

Look for these things:

- ★ The first star you see (make a wish)
- ★ A familiar constellation
- ★ A “star” that appears to be moving (it could be an airplane or a satellite)
- ★ A twinkling star (there may be clouds or atmospheric gases moving in front of it)
- ★ The brightest star you see (it may be a planet)
- ★ Clouds
- ★ Different colors in the night sky

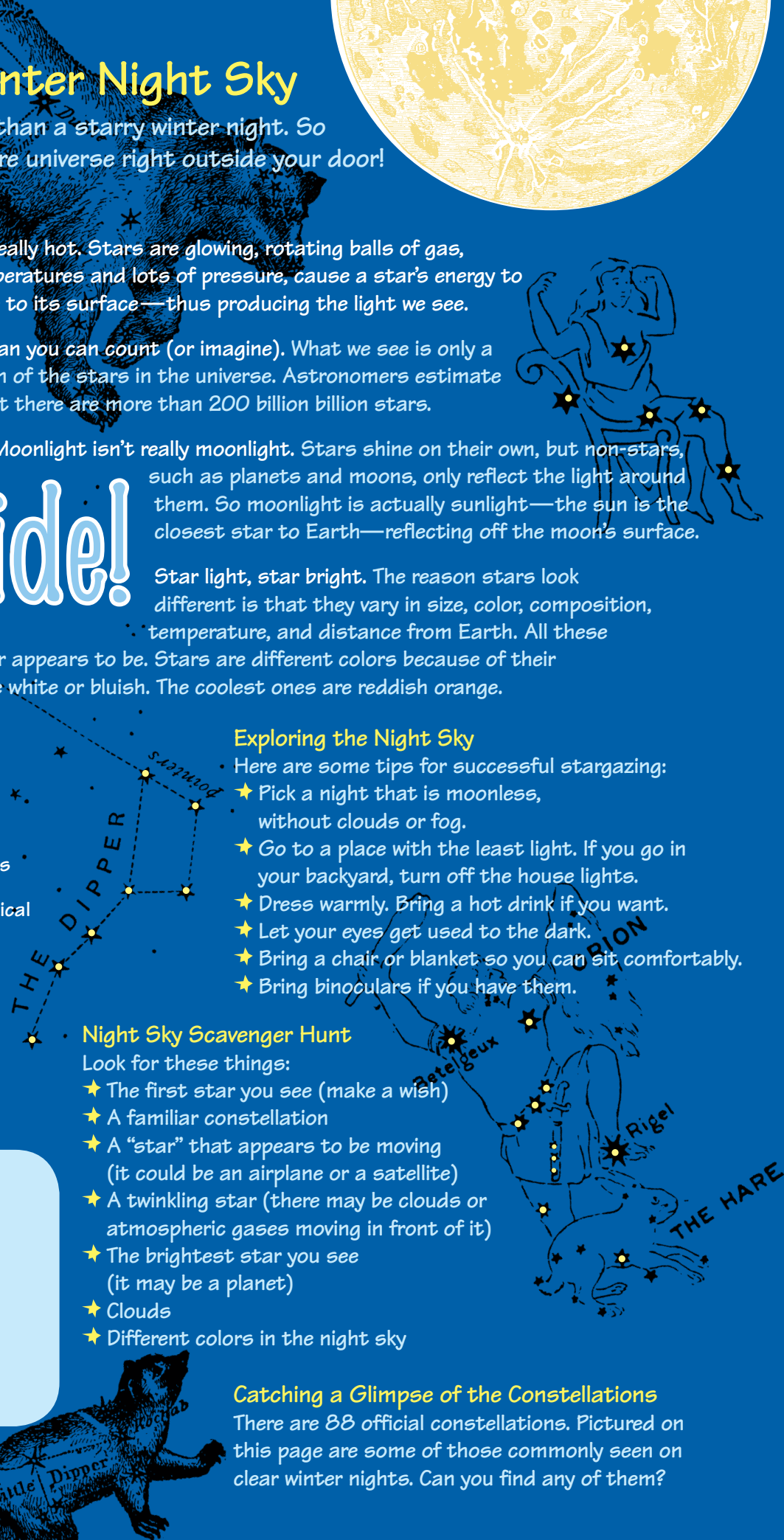
## ONLINE BONUS!

Learn more at:  
[www.massaudubon.org/go](http://www.massaudubon.org/go)

- ▶ Nature's GPS
- ▶ Moon Watch
- ▶ A Starry Story

## Catching a Glimpse of the Constellations

There are 88 official constellations. Pictured on this page are some of those commonly seen on clear winter nights. Can you find any of them?





# EXPLORING THE NATURE OF MASSACHUSETTS

by Lucy Gertz, Visitor Education Coordinator

## Den Sites

Stone walls, originally built to confine livestock or delineate boundaries, now provide habitat for small animals, which can find both food and den sites in these sheltered nooks.

Crisscrossing woodlands throughout New England, stone walls stand quietly whispering stories to those who listen. These centuries-old historical markers indicate that land was previously cleared for agricultural use. Now often hidden by thick undergrowth and tree roots, and covered with lichens, stone walls tell a story of geology, changing land uses, natural plant succession, and renewal.

Stone walls dot the New England landscape because the soil is so rocky. Glaciers formed thousands of years ago, scouring, trapping, and then transporting and depositing millions of stones throughout the region as the ice sheets advanced and eventually retreated. Ever practical, Colonial-era farmers and the generations who followed used the rocks they ploughed up as they cleared land, mainly because of their availability.

By the mid-19th century, most of Massachusetts had been cleared for farming—almost 4 million acres. And stone walls provided most of the

## Stone Walls

### Built to Last

Most old New England stone walls were built from 1750 to 1850, by tossing available rocks one atop another. Because water didn't pool within the loose piles, many walls still remain in place today.

### Stories in Stone

The stones present in a wall often indicate both ancient and more recent history. Stones with faraway origins were evidently moved here by glaciers or industrious masons. Chisel marks tell which rocks were quarried, then split into smaller, more manageable pieces.

*Illustrations by Kristin Foresto*

### Seasonal Refuge

Stone walls provide refuge from bitter cold temperatures and desiccating winds, making them ideal overwintering sites.

fencing: for confining livestock, defining boundaries between fields, and lining cart paths. The land yielded an annual crop of “New England potatoes”—rocks that worked their way to the surface of the tilled land after each harsh winter. But as the Industrial Revolution began to provide more manufacturing jobs and expanding railroads opened up the richer, more fertile soil of the Midwest to farmers from the East, many Massachusetts farmers abandoned their land, leaving behind a vast network of stone walls.

Without grazing livestock or farmers working croplands, the old pastures and fields have reverted to forests. The abiding stone walls provide shelter for all manner of small woodland animals. When you happen upon a stone wall, consider the farmer who constructed it long ago for a specific purpose. Observe the small animals now using it. Listen, for each wall tells a story of the past and offers a glimpse of our changing relationship with the land. ▲

## Stone walls tell their stories at these wildlife sanctuaries and others.

**Allens Pond, Dartmouth**—Varied stone walls define bygone and remaining fields and ancient roadways, and form an impressive bulwark of entry points along Horseneck Road.

**Broadmoor, Natick**—Mill Lane runs between two beautiful stone walls that once marked the passage for wagons carrying corn to be ground in the gristmill.

**Drumlin Farm, Lincoln**—Start at the Nature Center for a look at a newly constructed wall that frames a hilltop view, then follow Drumlin Loop Trail to discover farm walls now serving as wildlife habitat.

**Felix Neck, Edgartown**—Follow the Green Trail to our newly uncovered Old Stone Amphitheater,

and wonder how and who built and used this structure.

**Graves Farm, Williamsburg**—The stone wall viewed from the loop trail tells a tale of human toil and industriousness. The farmers are long gone, but moose, bears, and bobcats cross that trail now.

**Ipswich River, Topsfield**—Hike Bradstreet Lane Trail alongside a stonewall that dates to the 1700s when livestock grazed the open landscape.

**Long Pasture, Barnstable**—At Site 8 on the Lichen Trail, walk along a stone wall and discover both crusty lichens and several species that prefer rocks. A good example is rocky greenshield lichen, which is leafy and yellow-green.

**Oak Knoll, Attleboro**—A hike along the pathway to Lake Talaquega passes several stone walls. One popular trail extends between open, mixed forest and woodlands sheltering an understory filled with dense wetland plants and shrubs.

**Wachusett Meadow, Princeton**—Look for a six-foot-long cantilevered stone in an ancient wall that steeply ascends Brown Hill. The stone extends into the air from a small ledge top and once prevented sheep from falling.



[www.massaudubon.org/sanctuaries](http://www.massaudubon.org/sanctuaries)



According to legend, a young boy once turned to a friend, pointed to a prominent hill in the town of Spencer, and vowed, "Someday I will own that hill and build a house on top of it." That boy was Rufus Sibley, and in this classic example of the local-kid-makes-good story, young Sibley would grow up to make a fortune as a dry goods magnate in Rochester, New York, and in 1887 buy Moose Hill Farm and build his mansion.

Given the pace of development throughout Massachusetts, the events that allowed any large landscape to survive the last century intact are bound

to have contained a mix of planning and serendipity. That certainly holds true for the land that was the object of Rufus Sibley's dreams and ambitions, and which is now the focus of a major land protection effort by Mass Audubon. What became known as Sibley Farm prospered under the direction of Rufus and his son John. Known for its prize-winning herd of Jersey cows, the farm grew to more than 700 acres, and at its peak produced, processed, and delivered milk to more than 7,000 households throughout central Massachusetts.

In the early 1960s, near the end of his life and as Spencer was changing,

John Sibley wound down the farm operation, auctioning off the cows, selling 40 acres (including Moose Hill) to the regional school district, and giving 105 acres to Mass Audubon to create Burncoat Pond Wildlife Sanctuary. The largest part of the farm was sold to a realty company, and that began a 40-year struggle over the land.

The closest the farmland came to being erased by buildings and pavement was when a developer acquired it, and an adjacent farm, just five years ago, and obtained permits for a shopping center and a 304-unit condo complex on 352 acres.

Not just any acres, but a glorious mosaic of scenic hayfields, oak-pine

# Saving Sibley Farm

By Charlie Wyman,  
*Land Protection Specialist*

## A Multigeneration Legacy Worth Preserving in Central Mass.



### PROTECTING LAND AND HABITAT



The Sibley "dairy parlor" (top) was a state of the art facility. The farm's prize Jersey herds (below) drew farmers from throughout New England.



uplands, extensive grasslands, and a variety of wetlands—streams, beaver ponds, and wooded swamps—all feeding through the adjacent sanctuary to Burncoat Pond and supporting an abundance of wildlife.

We thought this land was lost forever. But then the economy soured, and the rosy real-estate market the developer had forecast vanished almost overnight. The bank foreclosed on the property in May 2010. Seeing our chance, we started talking to the bank, and last July signed an option to purchase the land by June 2012 for \$2.3 million.

Mass Audubon acquired the option not because we have \$2.3 million to

spend on this land—would that we did!—but to buy time to assemble a conservation partnership that could acquire and protect it. Partners have stepped forward: the Greater Worcester Land Trust, Common Ground Land Trust, and the Spencer Conservation Commission. Three state agencies have expressed interest in helping, and we've turned to three state grant programs for assistance. As we go to press, we're working hard to fit the pieces together, but the outcome is far from certain, and we have a great deal of work ahead of us.

This is how important land gets saved in Massachusetts these days, through

partnerships, risk, creative planning, and perseverance. Fortunately, and thanks primarily to the support of our members, Mass Audubon is in a position to take the lead on projects such as Sibley Farm, investing time, expertise, and money for a greater reward we hope will arrive.

To get the latest news on the project and follow its progress, visit the partnership's website at [www.sibleyfarm.org](http://www.sibleyfarm.org). With a little more luck and a lot more hard work, the landscape Rufus and John Sibley assembled a century ago will be there to benefit wildlife and people for centuries to come. ▲

## Why Farms Matter



In the last 40 years, Massachusetts has lost more than a third of its cropland and pasture—more than 150,000 acres—to other uses. Some of it was transformed into subdivisions and other types of development; some of it was abandoned and returned to forest.

**When we lose farmland** we forfeit a source of fresh, locally grown food.

**We weaken the connection** that people increasingly seek between the land and their dinner plates, missing opportunities to learn about and participate in the growing of our food, whether it be community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs or local farms and gardens.

**Our cultural landscape and sense of place fade away.** What would Massachusetts look like without its farm fields and pastures?

**Increasingly rare habitat types are further diminished.** Mass Audubon's recently released *State of the Birds* report describes how the loss of grasslands and shrublands is associated with the decline in a number of bird species such as the American kestrel, eastern meadowlark, and grasshopper sparrow.

State, municipal, and nonprofit support of projects such as Sibley Farms offer us a chance to arrest these trends and ensure that these open lands, and the many benefits they provide, will be preserved for the future.





## Birding and Natural History Tour

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**100+ years** of bird conservation

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[www.massaudubon.org/travel](http://www.massaudubon.org/travel)  
800-289-9504  
Email: [Travel@massaudubon.org](mailto:Travel@massaudubon.org)



**We're looking forward to spring:**

## Birdhouse Sale

February 4-29

Members receive a double discount on nest boxes, poles, and accessories\*  
\*sale items excluded

At the **Audubon Shop** at  
Drumlin Farm Tuesdays-Sundays  
(and Monday holidays)  
10am-5pm  
781-259-2214

Whether you're staying close to home or vacationing on the Cape and Islands or the Berkshires, Mass Audubon has a summer camp nearby. Reserve a spot for your camper in one of our 18 day camps, or at Wildwood, our overnight camp.

# wildwood

Summer 2012 information is now available on our website  
[www.massaudubon.org/camp](http://www.massaudubon.org/camp)



# WINTER PROGRAM SAMPLER

A snapshot of programs from among hundreds that Mass Audubon offers this season at our wildlife sanctuaries

## Woodcock Walk at Stone Barn Farm

March 9: 5:30-7:30 pm  
ALLENS POND, Dartmouth  
and Westport, 508-636-2437

## Vernal Pool Night Hike

March 16: 7-8:30 pm  
ATTLEBORO SPRINGS, Attleboro, 508-223-3060

## Vacation Week—Winter Adventures (grades 3-5)

February 21-24: 10 am-3 pm  
BERKSHIRE SANCTUARIES,  
Lenox, 413-637-0320

## Maple Sugaring Days at Blue Hills

March 10 & 11: 10 am-4 pm  
BLUE HILLS, Milton, 617-333-0690

## Coyotes in the City

February 12: 2-3:30 pm  
BOSTON NATURE CENTER,  
Mattapan, 617-983-8500

## Broad Meadow Brook to the Blackstone on Snowshoes

February 5: noon-4 pm  
BROAD MEADOW BROOK,  
Worcester, 508-753-6087

## Broadmoor Owl Festival

February 4: Live Owl Show 3-4 pm;  
Owl Prowl 4:15-5:30 pm  
BROADMOOR, Natick, 508-655-2296

## Eagles at Quabbin Reservoir

February 25: 10 am-1 pm  
CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY SANCTUARIES,  
Easthampton and Northampton, 413-584-3009

## Woolapalooza

March 31: 10 am-4 pm  
DRUMLIN FARM, Lincoln, 781-259-2200

## Pinkletink Pizza Party

April 27: 7 pm  
FELIX NECK, Martha's Vineyard, 508-627-4850

## Naked Shrubs in Winter

January 28: 10 am-2 pm  
HABITAT, Belmont, 617-489-5050

## Maple Sugaring Tours

March 3 & 4; 10 & 11; 17 & 18:  
10 am, 12:30 pm, 2:30 pm  
IPSWICH RIVER, Topsfield, 978-887-9264

## Superbowl of Birding IX

January 28: 5 am-5 pm  
Mass Audubon's Great Winter Birding  
Competition. Lead corporate sponsor: Nikon  
JOPPA FLATS, Newburyport, 978-462-9998

## Maple Sugaring Festival

March 11, 17, 18: 11 am-3 pm  
MOOSE HILL, Sharon, 781-784-5691

## Introduction to South Shore Birding

January 11 & 21; February 4: 8-10 am  
SOUTH SHORE SANCTUARIES,  
Marshfield, 781-837-9400

## Field Trip to the Boston Flower and Garden Show

March 16: 9:30 am-3:30 pm  
STONY BROOK, Norfolk, 508-528-3140  
and OAK KNOLL, Attleboro, 508-223-3060

## Art Up Close: Behind-the-Scenes Tour of the John James Audubon Collection

March 4: 2-3:30pm  
Maximum of 12 participants  
VISUAL ARTS CENTER, Canton, 781-821-8853

## Sheep Shearing Open House

April 14: 1-4 pm  
(Rain date April 15: 1-4 pm)  
WACHUSETT MEADOW,  
Princeton, 978-464-2712

## 17th Annual Cape Cod Natural History Conference

March 10: 9 am-3 pm  
WELLFLEET BAY, Wellfleet, 508-349-2615



[www.massaudubon.org/programs](http://www.massaudubon.org/programs)



## Cold Weather Champs

**Belmont**—This winter, when so many living things are in some state of dormancy, HIP volunteers are hard at work at Habitat in Belmont.



HIP (Habitat Intergenerational Program) brings together elders, parents, and kids to learn together, year-around, through environmental stewardship projects at Habitat and beyond. HIP's programs include: a weekly gathering focused on projects at Habitat; monthly bird walks; maintaining the courtyard garden at Belmont's middle school; nature programs at a family shelter; and maintaining the Sun and Moon herb gardens at Habitat.

The brainchild of Habitat teacher and friend Phyl Solomon, the volunteer initiative is entering its 15th year at the 90-acre sanctuary.

"And we don't stop for winter," Phyl says with a chuckle. The HIP coordinator, a grandmother herself, stresses, "We come here to work, so we work, no matter what our ages. Of course, I also bring home-baked cookies."

For more information, visit [www.massaudubon.org/habitat](http://www.massaudubon.org/habitat)

## Stone Barn Revival

**Dartmouth**—Visitors to Allens Pond Wildlife Sanctuary will be delighted to discover a tangible link to the South Coast's colonial past when rehabilitation work on Stone Barn Farm's two barns is completed this spring. And Mass Audubon staff will be pretty happy, too—the stone barn will house much-needed program space and public restrooms, while the wood barn will serve as a maintenance center for property stewardship.



"This project will hugely improve how we

can interact with all of the people and programs that want to engage with us," says South Coast Sanctuaries Director Gina Purtell. "The potential that will be realized in terms of conducting meetings, advancing stewardship projects, and working with schools is exciting."

The farm itself dates back to the 1800s.

Support for the project included

\$688,000 in Community Preservation Act funding from the town of Dartmouth. For more information, visit [www.massaudubon.org/allenspond](http://www.massaudubon.org/allenspond)

Field Notes

## 2012 Annual Birders Meeting:

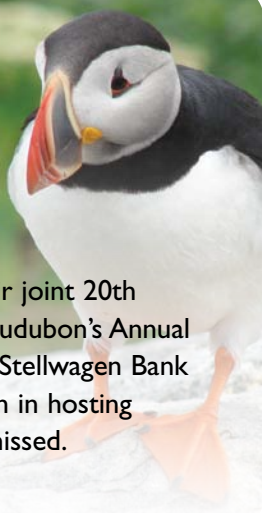
### Birds, Baleen, and 20 Years of Marine Conservation!

In recognition of their joint 20th anniversaries, Mass Audubon's Annual Birders Meeting and Stellwagen Bank Marine Sanctuary join in hosting an event not to be missed.

**March 3, 2012**

**Bentley University, Waltham**

[www.massaudubon.org/birdersmeeting](http://www.massaudubon.org/birdersmeeting)



## Town and Country

**Fitchburg**—Word is out that in Fitchburg people can enjoy acres of fields, woodlands, and hills less than a half-mile from downtown. Mass Audubon's Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary, accessible behind HealthAlliance on Nichols Road (look for the kiosk built by hospital staff), offers six miles of trails. Plus, Flat Rock connects to both the North County Land Trust's (NCLT) Crocker Conservation Area and city watershed lands.

And the increasingly popular conservation area is attracting more cold-weather visitors—lots of snowshoe prints, to go with those of coyotes, foxes, and deer! After a winter's worth of outdoor "homework," Flat Rock fans will know lots of clues when Mass Audubon and NCLT co-host a Family Nature Detective Series program April 1 (no fooling) at the sanctuary. "Fitchburg is a growing green community with many active conservation groups including the North County Land Trust, Nashua River Watershed Association, and the The Trustees of Reservations," Central Sanctuaries Director Deb Cary notes. "We're all working toward the same goals." For more information, visit [www.massaudubon.org/flatrock](http://www.massaudubon.org/flatrock)



# The Humble Handyman

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Dick MacKinnon, right, works on one of many of his projects, along with Broad Meadow Brook caretaker Erwin Jalbert.



About five years ago, Dick MacKinnon, who had recently retired, read an ad recruiting volunteers for Mass Audubon's Central Sanctuaries. The ad drew his interest, so he went to Broad Meadow Brook in Worcester and met Sanctuary Director Deb Cary. "She had a list of all the jobs that needed to be done," Dick recalls, "so I chose from the list and have been coming here ever since."

His first task resulted from a special request. "Will you clean the shop?" Deb asked. "The workshop was a mess!" Deb remembers. "He did a beautiful job putting everything in its place, and it's remained that way ever since. Now when people use tools, they're under strict instructions to put them back—or Dick will be on their case, and I will, too."

Described by everyone as humble, Dick is the first to give credit to the whole cadre of volunteers who often work alongside Property Manager Joe Choiniere at Broad Meadow Brook and at Wachusett Meadow in Princeton. "It's no one person who does everything," Dick points out. "We work well together; everybody brings their skills."

Deb sees him as not only as an accomplished craftsman but also a magnet for like-minded residents from the community. "Because Dick has such a high skill level," she notes, "he's attracted other volunteers and there's a great degree of expertise among them."

All of which greatly benefits the growing number of visitors to Mass Audubon's Central Sanctuaries. Dick's project roster includes building and maintaining the boardwalk at Broad Meadow Brook, constructing benches, clearing and raking trails, assembling picnic tables, erecting and breaking down tents for

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"We work well together; everybody brings their skills."

—Dick MacKinnon

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summer camp and special events, and establishing a nature play area.

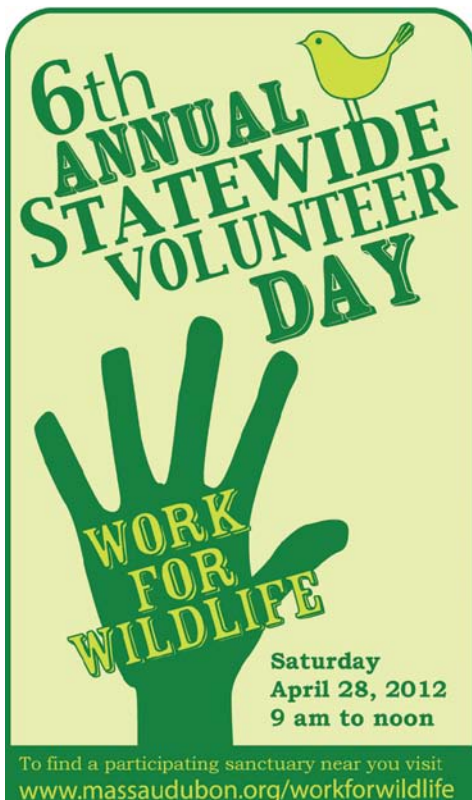
But perhaps most impressive is Dick's gift for repairing things.

"If you want something fixed around here," says Wachusett Meadow caretaker Erwin Jalbert, "this is the guy to talk to."

"I fix things when they're broken, which is constant," agrees Dick. According to Deb, his most impressive repairs have been to the fountain outside the Broad Meadow Brook Visitor Center. "He's done a masterful job of maintaining all the details of the fountain," Deb explains, "replacing all the tiles and keeping the pump in working order." A symbol of the Blackstone River watershed and a focal point, the fountain is always perfectly presentable thanks to his diligence.

"Dick is incredibly multitasking," Deb declares. "I speak for all of the staff when I say we're grateful that Dick has been so generous with his time and talent."

▲ Ann Prince





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# The Natural Inquirer

by John Galluzzo, South Shore Sanctuaries Education Coordinator

## Q. Do animal species that abandon or are pushed out entirely from Massachusetts ever return?

A. There are numerous cases throughout Massachusetts history of species leaving and then returning to repopulate the state. Wild turkeys top the list of species that have been lent a helping hand through reintroduction, but there are others that have made the trip back by themselves. Fishers, for instance, lost when their forest habitat was destroyed in the 1800s, came back into the state as reforestation took place during the 1900s.

The protections afforded by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 offered a number of species that once were hunted *en masse* in the state the opportunity to return.

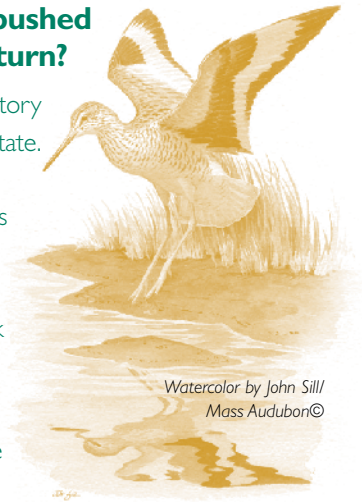
Double-crested cormorants, viewed as competitors by fishermen, were hunted to the point that they were no longer breeding in Massachusetts by the late 1800s. Yet by 1944 the coastal diving birds had begun nesting again on Shag Rocks in Boston Harbor.

Willetts, feared to be in danger of disappearing altogether on the East Coast just 80 years ago, are breeding in Massachusetts. Even sandhill cranes, once common in New England but gone by the start of the 20th century, have again begun breeding in the Bay State.

The last century was a trying time for birds across the Commonwealth, faced with hunting, pesticides, habitat loss, and destruction: but these species and more have shown that, given a chance, they can recolonize areas from which they've been pushed away.

**Natural fact:** Whooping cranes, trumpeter swans, elk, cougars, and wolves are among the species that were once common in Massachusetts but remain mere ghosts today.

Have a question for the *Natural Inquirer*? E-mail [inquirer@massaudubon.org](mailto:inquirer@massaudubon.org)



Watercolor by John Sill/  
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## The Final Word

We invite your comments, photographs, and suggestions. Please send correspondence to: Mass Audubon Connections, 208 South Great Road, Lincoln, MA 01773, tel: 781-259-9500, or e-mail: [connections@massaudubon.org](mailto:connections@massaudubon.org) For information about becoming a member, or for questions regarding your membership, contact: Member Services, Mass Audubon, 208 South Great Road, Lincoln, MA 01773 tel: 781-259-9500 or 800-AUDUBON, or e-mail: [membership@massaudubon.org](mailto:membership@massaudubon.org)

### Photography:

Cover: Pleasant Valley Wildlife Sanctuary barn—  
Rene Laubach/Mass Audubon©

p. 1: Women wearing bird hats—Mass Audubon©

p. 2: Pleasant Valley, 1930s—Mass Audubon©

p. 3: Harriet Hemenway—VAC/Mass Audubon©  
Community engagement—Stephanie Elson/Mass Audubon©

p. 4: Black-eyed Susan—Brian Amici©  
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p. 5: Waterfowl losses—USFWS©  
Wood duck—Tim McCabe/USFWS©

p. 6: Wood duck “dancing”—George McLean©

Wood duck nesting box—  
Steve Hillebrand/USFWS©

p. 9: Sibley Farm dairy parlor—Courtesy  
of Spencer Historical Society  
Jersey cows and farmers—Courtesy  
of Spencer Historical Society

p. 10: Tractor (inset)—Nathan Goshgarian©  
Open field (background)—Charlie  
Wyman/Mass Audubon©

p. 12: Puffin—John Galluzzo/Mass Audubon©

p. 13: Dick MacKinnon and Erwin Jalbert—  
Ann Prince/Mass Audubon©

Mass Audubon works to protect the nature of Massachusetts for people and wildlife. Together with more than 100,000 members, we care for more than 34,000 acres of conservation land, provide educational programs for 225,000 children and adults annually, and advocate for sound environmental policies at local, state, and federal levels. Mass Audubon's mission and actions have expanded since our beginning in 1896 when our founders set out to stop the slaughter of birds for use on women's fashions. Today we are the largest conservation organization in New England. Our statewide network of wildlife sanctuaries, in 90 Massachusetts communities, welcomes visitors of all ages and serves as the base for our work, to support these important efforts, call 800-AUDUBON (283-8266) or visit [www.massaudubon.org](http://www.massaudubon.org)



# Winter Wanderings

## at a Mass Audubon Sanctuary Near You



Mass Audubon has 51 wildlife sanctuaries open to the public year-round. They provide important habitat for wildlife and opportunities for you to enjoy and appreciate nature.

### Broadmoor

The wildlife sanctuary's oldest human artifact is a 4,000-year-old spear point found on the Charles River Trail.

- 32 Boston Nature Center, Mattapan
- 33 Blue Hills Trailside Museum, Milton
- 34 Visual Arts Center, Canton

### South of Boston

- 35 Moose Hill, Sharon
- 36 Stony Brook, Norfolk
- 37 Oak Knoll, Attleboro
- 38 Attleboro Springs, Attleboro
- 39 North River, Marshfield
- 40 Daniel Webster, Marshfield
- 41 North Hill Marsh, Duxbury
- 42 Allens Pond, Dartmouth
- 43 Great Neck, Wareham

### Berkshires

- 1 Pleasant Valley, Lenox
- 2 Canoe Meadows, Pittsfield
- 3 Lime Kiln Farm, Sheffield

### Connecticut River Valley

- 4 Road's End, Worthington
- 5 High Ledges, Shelburne
- 6 Conway Hills, Conway
- 7 Graves Farm, Williamsburg and Whately
- 8 Lynes, Westhampton
- 9 Arcadia, Easthampton and Northampton
- 10 Laughing Brook, Hampden

### Central Massachusetts

- 11 Pierpont Meadow, Dudley
- 12 Burncoat Pond, Spencer
- 13 Broad Meadow Brook, Worcester
- 14 Eagle Lake, Holden
- 15 Rutland Brook, Petersham
- 16 Cook's Canyon, Barre
- 17 Wachusett Meadow, Princeton
- 18 Lincoln Woods, Leominster
- 19 Lake Wampanoag, Gardner
- 20 Flat Rock, Fitchburg

### North of Boston

- 21 Nashoba Brook, Westford
- 22 Joppa Flats, Newburyport
- 23 Ipswich River, Topsfield
- 24 Endicott, Wenham
- 25 Eastern Point, Gloucester
- 26 Marblehead Neck, Marblehead
- 27 Nahant Thicket, Nahant

### Greater Boston

- 28 Habitat, Belmont
- 29 Drumlin Farm, Lincoln
- 30 Waseeka, Hopkinton
- 31 Broadmoor, Natick

### Cape Cod and the Islands

- 44 Ashumet Holly, Falmouth
- 45 Sampsons Island, Barnstable
- 46 Skunknet River, Barnstable
- 47 Barnstable Great Marsh, Barnstable
- 48 Long Pasture, Barnstable
- 49 Wellfleet Bay, Wellfleet
- 50 Felix Neck, Edgartown
- 51 Sesachacha Heathlands, Nantucket

 = Wildlife sanctuaries with nature centers

Get outdoors and explore your world during school vacation week. We have something for everyone during February, March, and April vacation weeks! Register now for half-day, full-day, extended-day, and multi-day programs at many of our wildlife sanctuaries across the state.

[www.massaudubon.org/vacationweek](http://www.massaudubon.org/vacationweek)

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