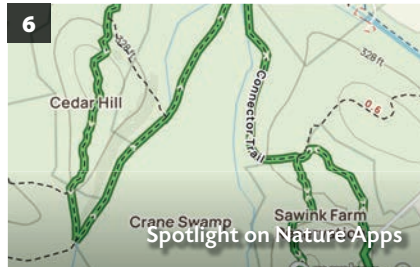




THE WREN

September 2023



Introducing SVT's New Executive Director

We are delighted to welcome Lindsey Ketchel as our new executive director! Lindsey arrived at Wolbach Farm on July 17 and has quickly made herself at home. To help everyone become acquainted with her, we invited Lindsey to answer a few questions, both serious and lighthearted. You will also have a chance to meet Lindsey in person at our Annual Meeting in October.



Lindsey Ketchel (left) received an introduction to SVT's Wolbach Farm property from Laura Mattei.

What inspired your career in conservation?

At a very young age, I was introduced to the wonderment of nature on a hillside farm that my Grampie Ted owned in Vermont. We would take long hikes, play in the river, and spend evenings watching the beavers keep busy with their ponds. I felt at peace in nature, and these experiences reinforced my belief that protecting nature would be core to my life's journey.

Where have you worked previously?

My career in sustainable agriculture and conservation started while I worked for the State of Vermont, the Intervale Center, and Heifer International. After 20-plus years, I moved to Alaska, where I served 5 amazing years as Executive Director of the South East Alaska Conservation Councils. Family ties then drew me to the Midwest, where I served as the Executive Director of Northern Water Alliance of Minnesota for 5 years. In 2018, I jumped at the opportunity to become the first Executive Director of the Landmark Conservancy in Wisconsin, which was formed through a merger of two other land trusts.

What do you most enjoy about this work?

I love working with landowners and watching their conservation dreams unfold. Each land protection project has its own story, and it's great to celebrate with donors and supporters after years of hard work. But probably my happiest times are spent with volunteers. Helping to keep trails open and watching visitors enjoy nature is a beautiful full-cycle experience.

What do you see as the greatest opportunity for SVT?

Connecting people with nature is core to our work, and I see lots of opportunities to enhance SVT's amazing 70 miles of trails. I also expect we will make strategic investment in targeted land protection opportunities. But the greatest opportunity is to address folks' anxiety around climate change and show how nature can offer tangible solutions.

What non-work activities help you stay energized?

I grew up a Coast Guard brat, and I love water! I love to kayak, sail, and just float!

It's the simple experiences that help keep me engaged, like going on walks and spending time with my dogs George and Octavia and my cats Pumpkin and Midge. I also love music and going to art museums.

What I'm really going to enjoy is spending time with my family, who live in Massachusetts. While in Alaska and the Midwest, I missed out on lots of family gatherings. It will be so nice to just drive and be with family in a few hours.

Where are your favorite places to hike?

I like hiking everywhere, but in Alaska, every hike was amazing! One of my favorite hikes involved a 3-hour drive on logging roads and a 2-hour hike up a rugged and steep hillside. As I stopped to evaluate old growth stands, I had a wonderful time watching two grizzly cubs and their mom play on a snow patch. What a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

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youtube.com/SVTsightings

SVT is committed to being an equitable and inclusive organization that works in partnership with the full diversity of people in the region to ensure everyone feels welcome to enjoy local natural areas and participate in the efforts to care for these lands.

Sudbury Valley Trustees

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Welcome to Lindsey Ketchel

Karin Paquin, Board President

I am thrilled to introduce our new Executive Director, Lindsey Ketchel, and simultaneously express SVT's heartfelt gratitude to our retiring leader, Lisa Vernegaard. This moment marks a transition for SVT, and we should take time to celebrate both leaders.

First, let's extend a warm welcome to Lindsey! Since joining SVT in mid-July, Lindsey has been learning about the open space in our region and meeting many of our conservation partners. With her dedication to environmental conservation and her profound understanding of the challenges

and opportunities faced by land trusts, Lindsey is a perfect fit for our organization.

Lindsey will oversee day-to-day operations, engage with members and partners, collaborate with our talented staff, and work closely with our Board of Directors to advance SVT's mission. Previously, she held the Executive Director position at land trusts in Alaska, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. She is excited to return to her roots here in Massachusetts and join the exceptional SVT team. The Board is confident her leadership and expertise will contribute significantly to the continued success of SVT.

At the same time, we express our heartfelt gratitude to Lisa Vernegaard for her outstanding leadership over the past 10 years. Her unwavering commitment, tireless efforts, and invaluable contributions helped shaped SVT's success during this time. We are indebted to Lisa for laying such a solid foundation for SVT's future success. Her retirement is well earned!

Of course, it's mainly because of you—our amazing members, friends, volunteers, and partners—that SVT is able to attract such great leaders. Your continued support demonstrates the thriving conservationist spirit in the region and offers promise that we will protect many more vital natural areas in the years to come. As SVT moves forward into this exciting new chapter, we thank you for your support!



Lisa Vernegaard, Karin Paquin, and Lindsey Ketchel



Chris Renna

NATURE SIGHTINGS

More often found along the coast, the yellow-crowned night heron isn't a common sight in the SVT region. Yet during several visits to the Desert Natural Area in Hudson this past spring, Chris Renna managed to capture images of one such heron, which had found a productive feeding spot in a vernal pool.

Success at Prospect Hill Community Orchard

In another big win for conservation, Prospect Hill Community Orchard in Harvard has been protected!

On June 29, the Town of Harvard and the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) finalized their purchase of an agricultural preservation restriction (APR) on this orchard owned by Community Harvest Project (CHP).

This significant achievement was made possible through the multi-year efforts of SVT, Harvard Conservation Trust, the Town, MDAR, CHP, and the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service, who together raised \$2.5 million for the purchase.

The sale of the APR ensures the land will always be used for agriculture. CHP will use the proceeds to endow its nonprofit mission to raise produce for donation to hunger-relief organizations.

This project was a wonderful intersection of important community interests: It protected 70 acres of priority farmland, extended a corridor of conserved lands that include public hiking trails, and played a role in hunger relief. Thank you to everyone who played a role in its success.



Louis Callisi

SVT Accepts 98th CR

In late June, the Town of Boxborough officially granted SVT a conservation restriction (CR) on the 21 acres of land along Sargent Road in the eastern part of town. This marks SVT's 98th CR since our founding in 1953.

The Sargent Road property was initially conserved in late 2022, thanks to the efforts of SVT, the Town of Boxborough, and Boxborough Conservation Trust, with assistance from the Massachusetts LAND grant program. By working together, the partners prevented a proposed housing development from carving up the forested parcel, which protects water resources and creates a link between nearby conserved lands.

The Town now owns the Sargent Road property and has granted the CR to SVT to ensure it remains permanently protected.



Enjoy an SVT Trail

Have you noticed anything different about SVT's roadside signs? Our new "All Welcome" messages invite everyone to enjoy these wonderful natural areas.

Not sure where to hike? The

Suggested Walks page of our website offers recommendations for Gentle Hikes, Short Walks, Longer Walks, Interpretive Trails, and Walks with Water Views. You can also download the trail maps from our website. www.svtweb.org/maps

For those who prefer to navigate with a mobile phone, we have uploaded at least one route from each trail to the popular AllTrails app (see more on page 6).

Improving Habitat at Cedar Hill



With the help of Botanist Ted Elliman, SVT recently monitored the vegetation at our Cedar Hill property in Northborough, where we have been restoring an important shrub habitat for the past 20 years. By periodically studying the vegetation, we can assess our progress and adjust our management plans.

SVT volunteers also conduct regular surveys of birds at Cedar Hill to determine whether declining species are breeding here. Recent surveys have spotted prairie warblers, blue-winged warblers, indigo bunting, and eastern towhee, so we know we are making progress!



Volunteers...what would we do without you?

If SVT properties are important to you, thank a volunteer.

By clearing trails, pulling invasive plants, monitoring conservation areas, joining workdays during Volunteer Week in April, and helping out in countless other ways, SVT volunteers keep our properties safe for visitors and healthy for wildlife. We could not succeed without them.

Here, you can read about just a few of the 200+ SVT volunteers who have made a difference in the past year. If you see one working on a trail, say hello!

A group of **13 volunteers** pitched in during Volunteer Week to position culverts, align planks, and hammer lots of boards as they installed a boardwalk over a muddy trail at our **Lyons-Cutler Conservation Land in Sudbury**.

Other volunteers have since started a second boardwalk at Lyons-Cutler in order to re-open access to the property from **Raymond Road**.

Thank you to The Public Lands Fund, a program of Dick's Sporting Goods Foundation, for contributing a \$10,000 grant toward these boardwalks.



Volunteer Nest Box Monitors visit SVT bird boxes to see if bluebirds, tree swallows, or house wrens have nested or laid eggs, and whether any eggs have hatched. They upload their findings to Cornell's Nestwatch app to provide valuable data to researchers. Earlier this summer, **Patty Shesgreen** spotted three bluebird nestlings in a box at Wolbach Farm.

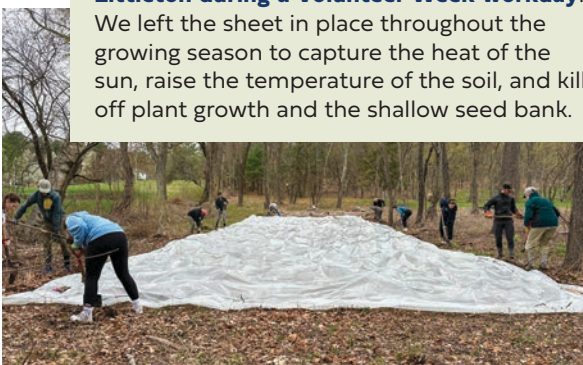
Dan Clawson, a Preserve Steward at **Memorial Forest in Sudbury**, used a chain saw to clear a fallen tree from the trail.



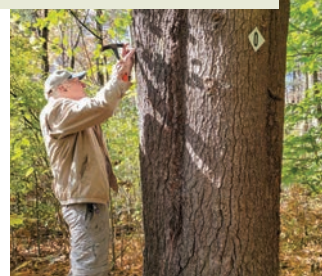
Teenager **Chase Reinhard** is a Preserve Steward at **Gray in Sudbury**, where he clears brush from the trails and makes note of issues that require staff attention.



Volunteers spread a 30x100-foot plastic sheet over a plot of bittersweet and poison ivy at our **Smith Conservation Land in Littleton during a Volunteer Week workday**. We left the sheet in place throughout the growing season to capture the heat of the sun, raise the temperature of the soil, and kill off plant growth and the shallow seed bank.



Terry Lockhart hammered in a trail blaze at **Upper Mill Brook in Wayland**. He also joined with Jothy Rosenberg and Kelsey Thompson to install a signpost at the property.



Ken Appel, Carole Hohl, and **Dan Clawson** helped install a water flow device in a beaver dam at **Upper Mill Brook in Wayland**. The device lets beavers stay in their habitat but prevents the stream from flooding, which could cause public health and safety issues.



When SVT and the Town of Berlin protected **Highland Ridge Woods** in February, we also designed a 1.5-mile trail loop, a portion of which had already been cleared.

Wielding loppers, rakes, and saws, **SVT volunteers and members of the Berlin Conservation Commission** cleared another 1,000 feet of trail during Volunteer Week. Since then, volunteers have cleared and brushed out the remaining length of trail, and we anticipate having a grand opening this fall.



Erik Prosnitz and Liz Darley visited **Cowassock Woods in Framingham**, where they helped Preserve Steward Rob St. Germain pull out bagfuls of the aggressive and invasive garlic mustard.



Weed Warrior Ruth Ladd worked with other volunteers to dig up piles of buckthorn at **Gowing's Swamp in Concord**.



Jim Shelhamer and Jim Makuc helped SVT staff install a trailhead kiosk at **Horseshoe Pond in Berlin**.



Ginny Lemmerman is one of several volunteers who represent SVT at community events. In May, she chatted with attendees at the **Westborough Environmental Action Fair**.



When students from **Acton-Boxborough Regional High School** were looking for a community service project, they signed up for a **Weed Warrior workday**. The students removed garlic mustard, greater celandine, wall lettuce, and other invasive forbs from our **Smith Conservation Land in Littleton**.

As they do every year, **seniors from Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School** spent their **Day of Service** working on SVT properties in Sudbury. One group tidied up the grounds at **Wolbach Farm**, while another pulled invasive glossy buckthorn at **Memorial Forest**.



Our annual **Volunteer Appreciation Event** at **Wolbach Farm** in June brought together dozens of SVT volunteers who support regional conservation in many different ways.

Thank you for all you do!



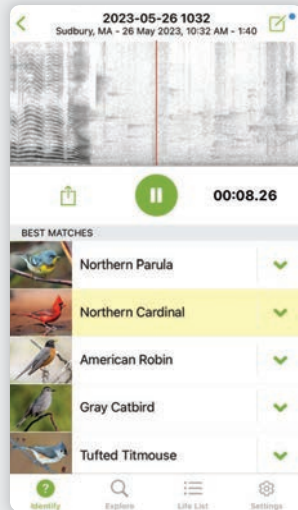
Spotlight On...Nature Apps

Mobile phone apps have become an almost indispensable tool for many nature lovers. Beyond snapping a photo of a favorite scene, apps can provide everything from a compass, to wildlife identification, to the labeling of hills on the horizon. Here are a few apps that might enhance your next visit to an SVT trail.

Merlin: Identify the Bird Song

The Cornell Lab's Merlin app offers an incredible bird song identification tool that makes it easy to learn bird songs while on a trail. Loaded with photos, descriptions, and range maps, the app can walk you through identification by sight as well, but it's the sound ID that is the most impressive.

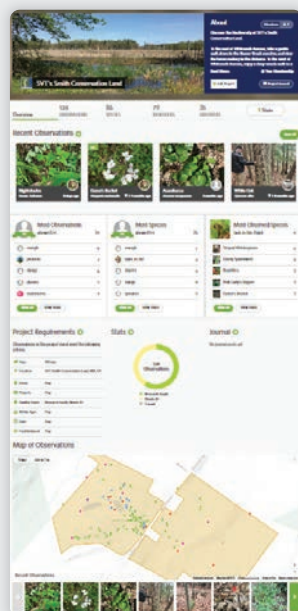
Using your phone's microphone, the app listens to bird songs and identifies the species it hears. When you stand in a spot with multiple birds singing, the app will display each of their names and highlight them as they are singing. The audio recording can be saved for later review, too.



iNaturalist: Identify Plants and Wildlife

iNaturalist is a great window into nature and provides an easy way to contribute as a citizen scientist. iNaturalist can identify plants, insects, and other wildlife when you snap their photos with the app.

The app will tell you what it thinks you are observing, and if you save your observation, other iNaturalist users can chime in to verify the identification.



SVT uses iNaturalist to learn more about the species on our lands. We've set up an iNaturalist "project" for a number of our properties. Whenever a visitor uses iNaturalist to record an observation or an identification within a property's boundaries, the project gathers the information for SVT staff to review. Visitors can also view the SVT projects to learn what plants and animals they might expect to see along our trails.

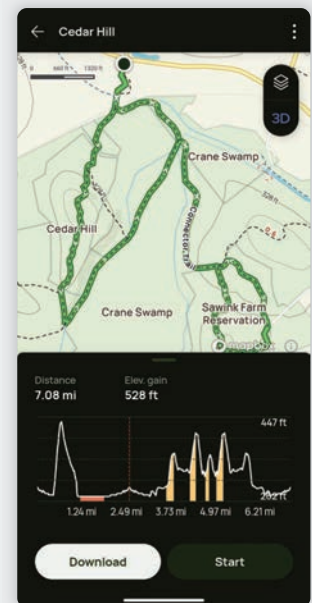
AllTrails: Find Your Way

Finally, don't we all need a little help with navigation?

SVT has added many of our trail routes to AllTrails, and we now feature at least one AllTrails walk on each trail map page on our website. To access these routes, click the "Suggested Hike on AllTrails" button below the "Download Trail Map" button on each property's page at www.svtweb.org/maps.

Visitors who prefer a little extra help from GPS can also download the AllTrails app to follow the hike and see additional trail options as they walk. This is a great way to learn about new hiking opportunities. From showing additional trails that connect to your favorite hiking spot, to displaying entirely new conservation areas, AllTrails offers a large database of outings that are often accompanied by reviews and photos from visitors.

As an added benefit, the app can automatically translate our English text into several other languages—including Spanish and Portuguese—making our trails more inviting to more people.





Take a Hike: Ralph Hill

Working together, SVT and the Town of Billerica manage the Vietnam Veterans Park and Ralph Hill Conservation Area that sit along a federally designated Wild and Scenic section of the Concord River. The nearly 2-mile trail loop passes through woods and along the bank of the river, as well as past numerous recreational fields. Paddlers can stop at landings on SVT land on either side of the river as well as at SVT's Jug Island and the Town's beach at Bartlett's Landing.

Directions and trail map:
www.svtweb.org/ralphhill



Is a QCD for You?

Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs) allow individuals who are at least age 70½ to distribute funds directly from their Individual Retirement Account (IRA) to a 501(c)(3) nonprofit (such as SVT) with no federal income tax consequences. Here are points to consider:

- QCDs may satisfy all or part of your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD).
- QCDs are IRA distributions that would otherwise be taxable.
- QCDs are not included in your Adjusted Gross Income, so using this strategy can lower your income and may provide a better tax benefit.
- QCDs require no special reporting by your IRA custodian; you will receive an IRS Form 1099-R for the distribution.
- QCDs are made directly from your IRA; your financial institution must make the check payable to a qualifying charity to have this strategy work for you.
- QCDs are limited to \$100,000 per individual, per year.

Everyone's situation is unique, so please consult with your tax advisor to find out whether QCDs make sense for you. Thank you for your support of SVT!

Conservation Collaborations

Creating a Conservation Community.

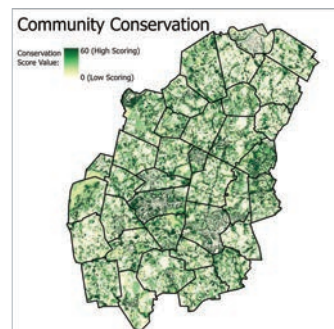
SVT's Jane Maloney and Laura Mattei led a group of Massachusetts conservationists on a walking tour



of our Smith Conservation Land in Littleton. Part of the annual Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference, the walk gave SVT colleagues a chance to learn from our experiences in restoring a native habitat and to share their own tips for protecting Massachusetts' important natural areas.

Setting Conservation

Priorities. In late 2022, SVT and the Metrowest Conservation Alliance unveiled an online mapping tool that helps conservationists pinpoint the lands that are the most essential to protect



in our region. Focusing on four criteria—Habitat for Biodiversity, Community Conservation, Natural Services, and Farmland—the interactive maps can guide municipalities and land trusts in deciding where to concentrate their conservation efforts. It should also foster collaborative projects where priority lands cross town boundaries.

In recent months, the SVT staff has met with groups in Acton, Billerica, Littleton, Lincoln, and Westford to explain how to use the tool and interpret the data. If you work with a land trust or local conservation commission and would like a group training session, please let us know.

Learning Local

Customs. SVT's Laura Mattei recently participated in a group walk at Cedar Swamp in Natick,



where she learned how Indigenous nations use cedar for many practical and ceremonial purposes. Organized by the Massachusetts Society of Municipal Conservation Professionals, the walk was co-led by Kristen Wyman of the Nipmuc Nation and by Waban Webquish of the Nipmuc Nation and Wampanoag Tribe.



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Volunteers...
what would we
do without you?

See pages 4-5



ALSO: Meet SVT's New Executive Director, see page 1

Upcoming SVT Programs

Here's a sampling of the offerings in our Online Program Calendar. Visit our website for the complete list and more information.

Evening Nature Walk

Thurs., Sept. 14, 5:30 p.m.; *Westborough*

Invasive ID Training

Sat., Sept. 16, 10:00 a.m.; *Sudbury*

Volunteer Orientation

Wed., Sept. 20, 7:00 p.m.; *Online over Zoom*

Fall Foliage Hike

Sun., Oct. 22, 10:00 a.m.;
Marlborough/Northborough

Natural Landscapes Tour

Sat., Nov. 4, 10:00 a.m.; *Littleton*

Senior Walk

Sat., Nov. 18, 9:00 a.m.; *Wayland*

Program sizes are limited;
registration is required.

www.svtweb.org/programs



You're Invited!

SVT's 2023 Annual Meeting

SVT invites our members and supporters to join us for our
2023 Annual Meeting:

Wednesday, October 18

Framingham Village Hall
2 Oak Street, Framingham

6:30 p.m. Refreshments & Socializing

7:15 p.m. Meeting Called to Order

We'll present our **Annual Conservation Awards**, elect
Board members, and recap SVT's **conservation successes**
from the past year.

Executive Director Lindsey Ketchel will give the keynote address:
"The Role of Land Conservation in Protecting Water Quality"

Look for more details in our Monthly News e-mail newsletter
and on our website: www.svtweb.org

Please register by October 11 to help us plan seating and refreshments!

RSVP: www.svtweb.org/2023AM