



THE WREN

April 2020



Pollinator Palooza



Acting Locally for Global Impact



Take a Hike: Lyons-Cutler



Volunteer with SVT

“Think Globally, Act Locally”

Those four simple words form the maxim that defines the spirit of Earth Day. At a time when many of us feel paralyzed by the overwhelming complexity of the global climate crisis, it's worth taking a moment to consider what this call to action means to us today, 50 years after the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970.

When SVT's founders united in 1953 to protect the rural nature of Wayland and Sudbury, they couldn't have imagined the far-reaching impact of their early efforts to save land along the banks of the Sudbury River.

Today, those saved lands, which are part of the Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge that extends from Wayland to Billerica and surrounds the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord Rivers, are an important tool in the fight against climate change. The marshy areas protect us from widespread flooding during increasingly intense storms, and they protect the river from the effects of human development (erosion, sediment runoff, wastewater pollution).

And the benefits of the Great Meadows can be seen far beyond our region. They provide an important flyway—and rest stop—for migratory birds on journeys that may extend from the Arctic to South America. The rivers themselves are

part of a network that extends to the Gulf of Maine, where the small shad and alewife that spawn in our freshwaters provide food for large predator fish that are essential to our regional fishing industry.

Even in our increasingly developed region, the local actions of SVT continue to have a global impact.

Protecting a single parcel of land from development prevents carbon from escaping into the atmosphere. Restoring habitat for wildlife prevents threatened species from disappearing—and protects the circle of life that nature depends upon. Building a hiking trail provides a recreation opportunity for our urban and suburban residents, which improves their health and (hopefully) inspires them to act for nature in the future.

Most important to remember is that it is our collective actions that result in progress. Individual actions can feel meaningless, but when we act as a community, our power is increased exponentially. Take a look at pages 4 and 5 to learn how SVT's work addresses global issues and climate change, and check page 6 for some steps you can take at home.

Then, on Earth Day 2020, challenge yourself to take one small positive action to protect the environment, and share that success story with a friend. Together we can make a difference!



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@SudburyValleyTrust



youtube.com/SVTsightings



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Looking for Something to Do?

The Trail Maps page of the SVT website includes an interactive map with "pins" that help you find nearby trails. Click on a pin to learn the name and address of a property and also get a link to its trail map. www.svtweb.org/maps

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The Power of Collective Action

Lisa Vernegaard, Executive Director

Fifty years ago, a school teacher unwittingly lit a fire under my backside. It was April 22, 1970, and I was probably squirming at my desk, almost certainly filled with spring fever and eager to get outside. Mrs. Whitney (yes, I remember her name!) announced that we were heading outside to pick up litter in the surrounding neighborhood in recognition of the first Earth Day. Our band of 4th graders returned with several large bags of trash, and we marveled at what we had accomplished.



I've carried this lesson with me ever since: When individuals come together to take action, we can, in fact, make a difference. That principle is so very much in evidence at SVT, where you, our 3,000 members, have come together to protect some of the region's most vulnerable landscapes.

Fifty years after the first Earth Day, collective action is needed more than ever to address a slew of environmental issues. Indeed, we must multiply ourselves so we can scale up our impact, both locally and globally. The challenges are daunting, but I also find tremendous hope in the power and potential of collective action. I owe Mrs. Whitney a world of thanks for instilling this in me.

With thanks for your individual action on behalf of our local lands and our earth, Happy Earth Day.

NATURE SIGHTINGS:

Primarily fish eaters, otters, like this one that Tami White photographed at Fort Meadow Reservoir in Marlborough, take advantage of well-connected aquatic habitats to travel throughout their relatively large home ranges. Otters are becoming more common in our region thanks to better protection of wetlands and water quality.

See more great Nature Sightings photographs at www.svtweb.org/naturesightings.



Tami White



Conservation Options for Agricultural Land

At a February 19 workshop sponsored by SVT and the Bolton Conservation Commission, nearly 30 attendees learned about soil health, farmland conservation, and succession planning for their farms. Heidi Ramsey of the USDA described a program that can provide payments to farmers who follow certain conservation practices. Ashley Davies of SVT discussed farmland conservation options for Massachusetts landowners. Jae Silverman of Land for Good discussed the challenges and benefits of finding a new generation of farmers to take over the land. More details and a copy of the presentations are available at www.svtweb.org/bolton021920.

Making the Case for CLTC

On February 26, SVT Executive Director Lisa Vernegaard and two conservation colleagues met with State Senate President Karen Spilka to discuss the Conservation Land Tax Credit (CLTC) program.

This popular program offers tax credits of up to \$75,000 to Massachusetts landowners who donate land for conservation. The three conservationists encouraged Senate President Spilka to raise the annual \$2 million cap on the program in order to increase the pace of conservation across the state. www.svtweb.org/cltc.



Left to right: Emily Myron of The Nature Conservancy, Lisa Vernegaard, Senate President Spilka, Buzz Constable of Mass Land Trust Coalition.

Doug Howgate



Pollinator Palooza

It was another grand time at SVT's Annual Benefit Gala, when 250 SVT members and friends gathered on March 7 at the Sheraton Framingham for our "Pollinator Palooza." Our guests, many of whom were bedecked as butterflies, bees, or even seeds, generously supported regional conservation and the effort to protect habitat for native pollinators. Thank you.

Thank you also to the businesses and individuals who donated auction items, to the volunteers who planned the evening and took photographs, to Nele Kaps for her invitation design, and to Village Bank for its sponsorship. We look forward to seeing everyone at next year's gala!



Dany Pelletier



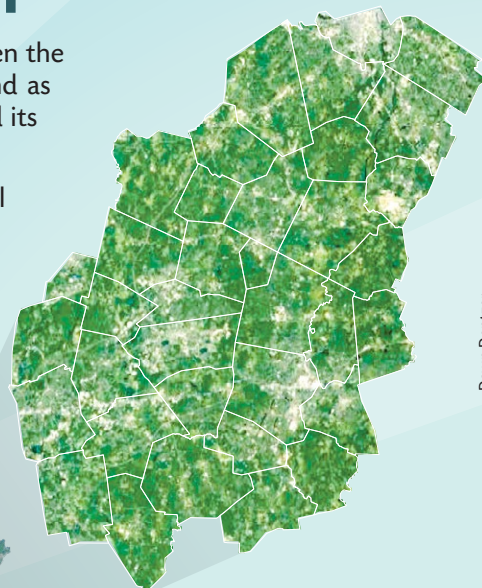
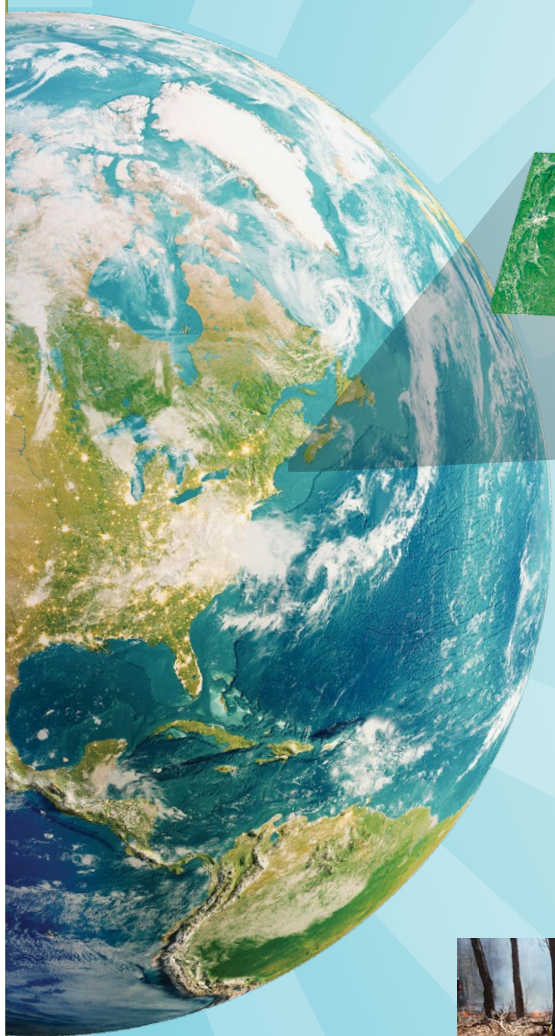
Left: Dany Pelletier. Right and Top: Pat O'Brien



Acting Locally for Global Impact

A changing climate, non-native invasive species, and misuse by people all threaten the health of the world's natural areas, wildlife habitats, waterways, and farms. And as society has moved "indoors," people are also losing connection with nature and its many health benefits.

SVT acts on these threats at the local level, confident that our successes will reverberate beyond our region to the state, the country, and the world at large. These pages show just a few of the approaches we take. We invite you to join us in acting locally: You could buy more food at local farmers markets, take a child on a walk in the woods, or plant some native flowers in your backyard.



Dawn Dentzer



Supporting

The world's food s
on fossil fuels, ferti

SVT'S RESPONSE

- Protect local farm
to grow food for
- Lease some of th
need additional l
of food.

SVT leases out our
Framingham to two
operations: Stearns

Protecting Wildlife Habitat

Development, pollution, herbicides, and non-native invasive plants have conspired to destroy wildlife habitats and have led to the decline and loss of tens of thousands of species.

SVT'S RESPONSE

- Actively restore and maintain wildlife habitat at our properties.
- Help our partners carry out great stewardship of wildlife habitat.
- Encourage and support homeowners to plant native plants in their backyard and to reduce the size of their lawns.



SVT has long worked with several partners to restore pitch pine/scrub oak barrens at Memorial Forest in Sudbury (an ecosystem that is rare in New England) and rejuvenate habitat for several globally threatened species (such as whip-poor-will and wild lupine). The project has included a prescribed burn in 2014, tree thin-

ning in 2017, and a second round of burning this spring, dependent on COVID-19 precautions. www.svtweb.org/desert.

Addressing Climate Change

As the earth warms, we are losing wildlife habitat, suffering the effects of increasingly intense storms, and facing the disruption of normal seasonal rhythms.

SVT'S RESPONSE

- Protect forests that store carbon, wetlands that store floodwaters, and diverse habitat types that can support a variety of species, regardless of the climate.
- Create networks of protected land so animals have a safe-passage corridor as they move to find their desired habitat.



◀ Vernal pools provide habitat for a vulnerable collection of wildlife, such as the spotted salamander. In the spring, salamanders travel from upland areas to these temporary pools in order to mate. By protecting a network of lands that are unbroken by roads, SVT can provide safe passage for these roaming amphibians.

Local Farms

ystem has become industrialized and highly dependent
lizers, and pesticides.

ns that provide small farmers a place
nearby markets.

he fields we own to local farmers who
lands for the sustainable production

Baiting Brook-Welch property in
o local Community Support Agriculture
s Farm (pictured) and Hanson's Farm. ▶



Steam Farm

Improving Public Health

Between an abundance of desk jobs and the current fascination with mobile devices, we simply aren't getting enough exercise.

SVT'S RESPONSE

- Design and maintain trails that provide a place to exercise, relax, and rejuvenate.
- Lead recreational outings to give people a chance to connect with our natural areas.
- Provide special programs to encourage children to get outside.



Dany Pelletier

◀ Many SVT recreational outings include an educational component so attendees can learn about plants and wildlife as they enjoy the outdoors.

Advocating for Strong Public Policies

The protection of wetlands, forests, and other natural areas requires collective action and the support of national and local leaders committed to safeguarding the earth for future generations.

SVT'S RESPONSE

- Assist "Get Out the Vote" efforts in support of local conservation initiatives.
- Meet with public officials to advocate for conservation legislation.



◀ SVT and our colleagues at OARS host an annual breakfast where local conservation groups and state legislators discuss important environmental topics.

Helping People to Act for Nature

Many people who live in urban and suburban environments rarely encounter or explore natural areas and cannot identify different species of plants or animals.

SVT'S RESPONSE

- Encourage young people to become active participants in conservation.
- Train citizen scientists to assist researchers who are collecting data about local wildlife.
- Provide a range of programs and activities that engage people of all ages and interests to become more involved.

Each year, students from Minuteman Technical High School perform an environmental assessment of a property that SVT is considering for conservation. SVT learns valuable information about the past use of the property; the students gain insights about the complexities of land protection. ▶



Terry Reagan



Acting Locally

Each individual action may seem small, but together we can create a collective success.

In your home

- ♦ **Seek out places to recycle household goods.** In Acton, Household Goods accepts donations of furniture and housewares for people in need. At Framingham's Earth Day Festival (unfortunately cancelled for 2020), you can recycle contact lenses, batteries, wine corks, yarn, toothbrushes, and more.
- ♦ **Shop with packaging in mind.** Choose brands that use less packaging, or consider buying in bulk. Avoid online ordering of commonly available items to reduce the need for extra packing material.

- ♦ **Recycle packaging.** Some big chain stores and supermarkets have bins for recycling bubble wrap and other mailing supplies.



- ♦ **Go vegetarian or vegan for one day each week.** Beef and dairy products have a large carbon footprint, in part because they require farmers to dedicate agricultural land to growing crops just for their feed.

In your yard:

- ♦ **Avoid lawn treatments.** Your grass won't be as green, but you'll keep pesticides and chemicals out of our soils and water.
- ♦ **Plant a tree.** A young tree can absorb 13 pounds of CO₂, each year, and a mature tree can absorb 48. Over 40 years, one tree can sequester 1 ton of carbon.



- ♦ **Replace part of your lawn.** Add a small garden of native wildflowers or use a groundcover. You'll reduce mowing time (and save gas), and you'll provide habitat for native insects.
- ♦ **Remove invasive shrubs.** Prevent birds from spreading the berries and seeds of invasives to forests, where the plants take root and smother native species. Pull out the perniciously invasive burning bush, and plant natives like highbush blueberry, black chokeberry, or winterberry holly instead.

In your community:

- ♦ **Be an environmental voter.** Support initiatives like the Community Preservation Act, and vote to elect conservation-minded candidates.
- ♦ **Support local agriculture!** Join a Community Supported Agriculture collaborative, or shop at a farmstand. You'll eat nutritious food, contribute to the local economy, and reduce carbon emissions generated by the long-haul transport of vegetables.
- ♦ **Help clean up our natural areas.** Join a volunteer project at SVT, OARS, or a similar group to pull invasive plants, clean our local rivers, or pick up trash along the road.

- ♦ **Pick up and properly dispose of dog waste.** Dog waste contains bacteria that harm wildlife and that seep into our soils and our water supplies.
- ♦ **Join a citizen science project to help researchers collect data.** Many times, you can collect data while you enjoy a peaceful walk along a trail. See www.svtweb.org/citizenscience for ideas.
- ♦ **Go on a hike with a child.** Nothing inspires a love for conservation like a walk through a natural area on a sunny day.



Help Plant Native "Flowers"

Calling all crocheters, knitters, and those who are craftily inclined! SVT is joining a public arts project to install a field of crocheted and knitted flowers at the Arlington Street Park in Framingham later this spring. Led by Framingham MakerSpace, and with the support of the mayor's office, the project will enliven an otherwise plain metal fence.



The organizers are seeking knitted or crocheted flowers of any color, size, or design. What a great chance to use up yarn left over from other projects!

To put an SVT twist on the project, we encourage you to try to replicate native flowers, such as purple coneflowers or black-eyed Susans, and also to create a few butterflies and bees. More details are available at www.svtweb.org/yarn or by emailing svt@svtweb.org.



Joan Chasan

Take a Hike: Lyons-Cutler

Spring is the perfect time to visit Lyons-Cutler Reservation in Sudbury. Start your walk at the Town of Sudbury's Landham Brook Marsh Conservation Land on Landham Road. Listen for spring peepers and wood frogs as you make your way to Allowance Brook along the northern boundary of Lyons-Cutler.

Look for nesting great blue herons atop the standing dead trees in the beaver widened stream and surrounding marsh. You'll also see freshly chewed stumps and the beavers' lodge as you continue along the streamside trail. The changes beavers make to their habitat draws activity of birds and wildlife, making this an excellent spot to take a quiet break and gather the sights and sounds of spring.

Download a trail map or a self-guided nature walk brochure: www.svtweb.org/lyonscutler.

You can also find other trails with our interactive map at www.svtweb.org/maps.



Volunteer with SVT

Interested in helping to protect local lands? SVT is planning several projects that will require volunteer assistance, once the coronavirus crisis passes and we are able to hold group activities again.

We are also planning a Volunteer Orientation for new volunteers and a Bark Ranger Training for those interested in engaging dog walkers on our trails. These sessions may be held online.

Check our website to learn more and register for any of these activities. We'll notify registrants when we schedule each event. www.svtweb.org/volunteer



The Need for Dark Skies

The light pollution that prevents us from enjoying a starlit sky also negatively affects wildlife. One example: For frogs whose breeding rituals include nighttime croaking, an abundance of light disrupts reproduction.

Environmentalists have long pointed out the importance of "dark skies," and many Massachusetts communities are passing bylaws that require the use of red LEDs in public lighting, the shielding of lighting, and a dimming of street lamps. There are also bills in the legislature that would implement these changes statewide.

You can learn more from the International Dark Sky Association (www.darksky.org) and from Globe at Night (www.globeatnight.org), a citizen science project that aims to create a map of worldwide light pollution.



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Stand Up for Nature on Earth Day 2020



As we prepared this issue of *The Wren* in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the first Earth Day, the COVID-19 pandemic was just unfolding, and we were receiving frequent updates about bans on public gatherings and the resulting cancellation of events and programs, including several Earth Day celebrations. Despite these cancellations—and perhaps because of them—we encourage you to celebrate Earth Day this year. The value of nature has never been clearer, the importance of local actions has never been more apparent.

In these stressful days of Spring 2020, many, many people are seeking out natural areas for escape, meditation, and solace. If you can get outside, we encourage you to enjoy our trails and reap the restorative benefits of fresh air and exercise.

And if getting outside is not possible, you can enjoy our regular Nature Sightings emails, which share a collection of wildlife photographs from the region and provide a reminder of the beauty that still surrounds us (sign up at www.svtweb.org/enews).

SVT's successes at protecting natural areas and farmlands are a direct result of you—our members—"Standing Up for Nature." Your support is the perfect example of the positive impact a community of people can have when we work together. Best wishes for good health, and good nature, to all.

