



THE WREN

December 2021



Scouts Making a Difference



Protecting Nature's Many Services



Spotlight on a Natural Teacher



It's Our Responsibility

Helping Nature, Helping Ourselves

Since the beginning of human history, people have tried to tame nature to serve societal needs. From felling forests to damming rivers, our increasingly consumptive lifestyles have led us to the climate and biodiversity crisis we face today.

Our problem-solving abilities generally serve us well, but they have led to an overdependence on engineered solutions to many problems. Nature's own services can solve, or at least mitigate, many of the climate challenges we face, and these services are not only free, but they don't need to be rebuilt or replaced repeatedly over time.

Nature provides clean water, clean air, and places to recreate. Large forests store carbon and moderate the earth's temperature, and undisturbed wetlands absorb heavy rains to prevent flooding. In some ecosystems, natural wildfires reinvigorate our soils so plants can germinate and grow. The "circle of life" keeps populations of native wildlife in balance.

Nature is able to moderate and repair itself—and also take care of us. When we conserve our forests and meadows and restore wildlife habitats, we ensure that current and future generations will always benefit from nature's services.

With this in mind, SVT and our conservation partners encourage local governments to invest in the protection of natural areas to take advantage of their benefits to both human

SVT Staff



Emily Schadler



health and local economies. One challenge in making this argument is that when nature is working, we tend not to notice.

When a river near a roadway overflows its banks, the water floods roads, seeps into basements, and damages bridges and buildings. It disrupts the community and leads to expensive and time-consuming repairs. Yet if that river meandered through an expansive wetland, the water would be absorbed by shrubs and grasses without causing damage or attracting public attention.

All of us—taxpayers as well as elected officials—need to be aware of the costs that are avoided by leaving natural systems intact. To that end, SVT is working closely with the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition and other partners to make the case for conservation with our local decision makers.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has also become a good partner in this effort. Through the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program, the state encourages cities and towns to address climate-change challenges with nature-based solutions. Since its inception in 2017, the MVP program has provided over \$65 million in funding to projects as small as rain gardens and as large as the acquisition of conservation land.

Whether large or small, land protection projects also protect the services nature has to offer. Pages 4 and 5 highlight two recent projects and their nature-based services.

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The Wren

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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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Embracing Nature's Services

Lisa Vernegaard, Executive Director

We humans can be an arrogant bunch, and for centuries we've worked on the assumption that we can engineer our way out of most any problem that confronts us.

There's no doubt that technology is critical to addressing a whole suite of problems. One only has to look back over the past 18 months to find notable examples, such as the mRNA vaccines that have saved thousands upon thousands of lives and the software applications that allowed businesses, friends, and family to stay connected during a pandemic.

That said, it's also time to fully recognize and embrace the power of nature-based solutions as technology's equal in combatting many climate challenges. Carbon-capture technology may be on the cutting edge, but let's also look to trees, native grasslands, and soils that have been sequestering carbon for thousands of years, all at no cost to us. By protecting natural areas from being developed, we continue to sequester and store that carbon, no technology needed.

So, if anyone ever asks why you support SVT, you can list the multiple low-cost (and beautiful!) benefits that come with protecting every acre of woodland, wetland, and farmland. Or show them this issue of *The Wren*, so they can read for themselves about the urgent need to protect the services that nature offers.

Thank you for being a part of the solution,



NATURE SIGHTINGS:

Hooded Merganser. The hooded merganser has made a significant increase in population and distribution throughout Massachusetts, thanks to conservation efforts that protect aging forests and beaver ponds, improve water quality, and install nesting boxes for wood ducks. This drake, photographed along the Boroughs Loop Trail in Southborough, is part of our Nature Sightings Best of 2021 collection. We'll share the full album in our newly relaunched Nature Sightings e-newsletter. Sign up at www.svtweb.org/enews.



Victoria Holland

Conservation Successes

Thistle Dew Farm

After several years of hard work by SVT and our partners, Thistle Dew Farm on Highland Street in Holliston is permanently conserved as farmland.

In October, the Town of Holliston and the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources purchased an Agricultural Preservation Restriction on the land. All current and future owners are now obligated to keep the property as farmland and cannot develop it.

SVT launched a \$150,000 fundraising campaign for the purchase, and we are grateful to Mass Audubon for securing a \$100,000 contribution from an anonymous donor. Thank you to everyone who helped this project succeed!

Two More Conservation Restrictions

In August, SVT accepted Conservation Restrictions (CRs) on two more properties, bringing our total number of CRs to 95.

The Town of Northborough granted SVT a CR on 19.2 acres of land near Howard Street on the east face of Mount Pisgah, part of an expansive conservation corridor. The Town of Southborough granted a CR to SVT for the 30-acre Halloran property off Rockpoint Road that provides important wildlife habitat in an otherwise developed area.

Two more wins for conservation and wildlife!

Welcome to New SVT Staff



Anthony Serra recently joined SVT as our Land Protection Associate. In this newly created position, Anthony will provide support to our land protection projects while also participating on collaborative initiatives with our many partners. His work will be essential to SVT's goal of saving an additional 12,000 acres by the year 2050.



In September, Lily Zanta came onboard as our TerraCorps/AmeriCorps member for an 11-month term of service. Among her many responsibilities, Lily will work with volunteers, fight invasive plants, coordinate youth outreach programs, and assist our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts.

Scouts Making a Difference

Thanks to **Kristen Bestavros** of Wayland, trail users can now help SVT document environmental changes at three of our properties. For her Girl Scout Gold award, Kristen installed picture posts at SVT's Greenways Conservation Area in Wayland and at Memorial Forest and Wolbach Farm in



Sudbury. By resting a camera on a small platform, visitors can take photos of eight designated views and share them with the Digital Earthwatch Network. SVT staff will use the images to analyze the evolving environmental conditions on these lands. What a great citizen science project!

Visitors to Memorial Forest will also notice the handiwork of another local Scout. With the help of volunteers, **Walker Fryling** of Sudbury constructed a 128-foot boardwalk for his Boy Scout Eagle project. Located in the floodplain of Hop Brook, the boardwalk provides an improved walking surface while protecting the surrounding vegetation from trail users.

SVT Staff



Sally Fryling

(Left) Kristen Bestavros installed picture posts at three SVT properties to enable passers-by to share photos that track the evolving conditions of the land. (Right) Walker Fryling and a team of volunteers built a boardwalk to protect the floodplain of Hop Brook at Memorial Forest.

The Mayflower Council of the Boy Scouts recently surprised SVT's **Dan Stimson** with an Award of Appreciation for mentoring numerous scouts as they work on their Eagle projects. "Dan Stimson stands out among mentors in his ability to work with scouts in three areas: kindness, leading by example, and community service," said Bryan Corrigan, who serves on the Post Road Advancement Team of the Mayflower Council. "The scouts of the Mayflower Council cannot thank Dan enough."



Protecting Nature's Many Services

All SVT land protection projects have a similar goal: to protect healthy land for the benefit of people and wildlife. Yet the services offered by each parcel of land can differ, based partly on its size and location.

On these pages, we illustrate two recent conservation projects (one funded with a Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grant) and the valuable nature-based services these lands provide.

O'Donnell Property, Marlborough Protected in 2021

SVT joined with the Massachusetts Department of Recreation and the City of Marlborough to protect this 33-acre property and add it to the adjacent Callahan State Park. Left unprotected, the land could have been used for as many as 22 house lots.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND RECREATION:

The project permanently protected a section of a popular trail in Callahan State Park. As with other conservation areas across the state, visitations here soared during the pandemic, and we received testimonials from many hikers who explained how much this land helped with mental health during the lockdown.

"This piece of land roots me in peace and tranquility in an otherwise hectic and unpredictable world. I've been hiking here for many years and have returned again and again to rejuvenate a weary soul."

– J. Convery



Dany Pelletier

FLOOD MITIGATION: Angelica Brook originates in nearby Beebe Pond (pictured) and cuts across the O'Donnell Property. Had the land been developed into 22 house



lots, its ability to absorb water during heavy storms would have been diminished, and the downstream neighborhoods in Southborough and Framingham would have faced a vastly increased risk of flooding.

WILDLIFE HABITAT:

The successful protection of the O'Donnell Property not only directly saved 33 acres of wildlife habitat, it also provided a buffer to the habitat in Callahan State Park. A housing development, with its lawns, pavement, and pets, would have been detrimental to wild animals. The more room that wildlife have to roam, the healthier their populations are, and the more in balance the food chain.



TEMPERATURE REGULATION: As the climate warms, we become more vulnerable to pests and diseases that thrive in warmer conditions. This has implications for human health and food production. Forests, which sequester carbon and cool the ground and air underneath their canopies, provide climate control on a local scale.



Craig Smith

Browns' Woods, Littleton Protected 2020

SVT and the Littleton Conservation Trust supported the Town of Littleton in its endeavor to purchase these 24 acres situated between the Town Forest and Long Lake. The Town received an MVP grant of \$763,000 from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts toward the purchase. SVT raised additional funds and will hold a conservation restriction on the land.



PUBLIC HEALTH AND RECREATION: Trails through Browns' Woods will make it easy for residents from adjacent neighborhoods to enjoy the physical and mental benefits of spending time in nature. Forests also absorb pollution from automobiles on nearby roads, which helps shield against respiratory illnesses.



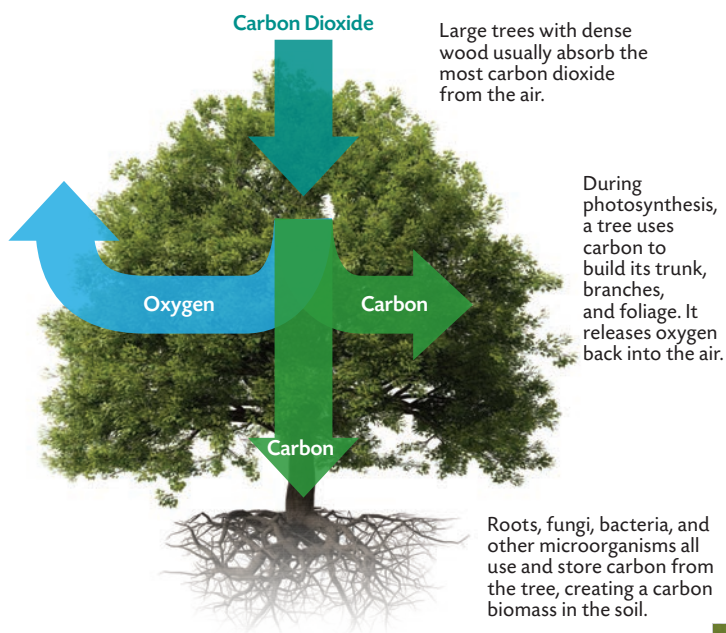
Great Horned Owl: Anne Dykiel

BIODIVERSITY: Browns' Woods and the nearby Long Lake provide habitat for beaver, otter, muskrat, deer, bobcat, fox, coyote, groundhog, raccoon, fisher, mink, stoat and smaller mammals. Over 125 species of birds also have been observed here.

WETLANDS PROTECTION: Protecting the land near vulnerable wetlands and floodplains, instead of allowing a housing subdivision to fill the space, was an important step toward preserving water quality in the area. The Town plans to improve the quality of the wetlands by removing Phragmites (pictured) before they spread into the Long Lake marsh; the dense growth of this invasive wetland weed interferes with water flow.



CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION: The upland and wetland forests that predominate on this property are a good buffer against climate change. It is estimated that a 10-year-old tree can absorb about 48 pounds of carbon annually, and that one acre of new forest sequesters about 2.5 tons of carbon per year.





...A Natural Teacher

Neela de Zoysa of Sudbury has been an SVT member and volunteer since 2014. A respected botanist, Neela has led numerous nature walks for SVT and other organizations, including Lincoln-Sudbury Adult & Community Education.



What inspired your involvement with conservation?

Growing up in tropical Sri Lanka, my love of plants was fostered by my father who was an avid gardener. In college, I was introduced to the declining rain forests on the island and was captivated by their beauty.

In the decade that followed, I advocated for the conservation of these ecosystems. Most recently, I was involved in policy formulation to combat climate change impacts caused by deforestation to meet the Paris Agreement requirements.

What motivated you to lead nature walks?

The walks and courses I offer are the products of over two decades of exploring open spaces. This region has superb conservation areas with rich biodiversity. SVT properties are botanically interesting: Gowing's Swamp for bog plants, Memorial Forest for inland pine barrens, Greenways for floodplain forest and river frontage, and Wolbach Farm for rocky-ridge-top plants.

I observed the effects of suburban sprawl and climate change and was motivated to share my knowledge with others. My training as a botanist also propelled me to research the complex partnerships of federal, state, town, and private agencies that accomplish the goal of land protection. I realized how difficult it is for newcomers to acquire this knowledge without guidance.

How do the participants respond?

Participants are delighted to discover new areas. They comment on the stunning vistas and interesting history. After learning about the complex land protection arrangements, they say they have greater appreciation of the big picture and their roles as taxpayers, voters, and members of nonprofits such as SVT.

During the pandemic they greatly appreciated the ability to gather safely outdoors. Being in nature provided solace, and being among others provided connection and camaraderie.

Remarkable Conservationists

The SVT Staff and Board were delighted to present awards to several outstanding conservationists during our online Annual Meeting on September 26.

The Lewis Conservation Award went to **Tim Simmons**, a restoration ecologist who has dedicated his career to supporting conservation in Massachusetts. **Rob St. Germain** was named Steward of the Land for fighting invasive plants, maintaining trails, and mentoring scouts at SVT's Cowassock Woods Reservation in Framingham.

We selected **Bob May** as the Morgan Volunteer of the Year for his tireless work on SVT's Finance and Wolbach Facilities Committees. And we presented the Distinguished Public Service Award to the Program Manager and six Regional Coordinators of the Massachusetts **Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP)** program that encourages municipalities to fight climate change with nature-based solutions.

Finally, we presented Youth Steward Awards to two Sudbury Boy Scouts: **Jed Howrey**, who installed educational signs about glaciers at Gray Reservation in Sudbury, and **Luke Orup**, who created a trail entrance and kiosk at Wayside Forest in Framingham. www.svtweb.org/am2021.



Top row (l to r): Tim Simmons, Rob St. Germain, Bob May. Middle: Jed Howrey, Luke Orup. Bottom: Manager and Coordinators of the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program.



Take a Hike: Yapp CR

Owned by the Town of Littleton, and with a conservation restriction held by SVT, the George and Lucy Yapp Conservation Land is part of a corridor of protected lands in southeast Littleton.

With plowed access in the winter, the trails here are perfect for a leisurely circuit around the property, or for an extended trip to neighboring conservation lands. A snowshoe trek at Yapp will bring you through fields and forest, to a farm pond, and to a large glacial erratic known as Fort Rock. The huge boulder is a favorite spot for young visitors who can explore the passageway that has been created as the rock has split due to weathering over millennia.

Trail connections link the property to the Town's Nagog Hill Orchards and to Littleton Conservation Trust's Cobb Memorial Forest and the Sarah Doublet Forest.

Directions and a trail map: www.svtweb.org/yapp



Volunteers Make a Difference

During a warm October day, three local high school students pulled up an impressive pile of invasive plants at SVT's Cowassock Woods Reservation in Framingham. We thank these teens and all our volunteers—we couldn't do this work without you.



Interested in volunteering with SVT? Visit www.svtweb.org/volunteers.

It's Our Responsibility

We were honored when Phil and Donna Schaefer, two members from Framingham, told us they have included SVT as a benefactor in their estate plans. When we asked what inspired this decision, they wrote:



"We have worked so hard through the years for what we have, and we really feel that the best thing we can do is leave something to protect and preserve the world that we live in.

"We are leaving this world to our nieces, nephews, and their children, and it's our responsibility to leave something to organizations that work very hard to keep open space for plants and animals. It would be so unfair to these children if they could never walk along trails as we do, watch the birds as we do, see the animals we see, and breathe clean air.

"SVT represents everything that we believe in and support. Saving open space is so important, and SVT works hard at it. The staff members are all welcoming people. They listen and they just care so much. SVT is a special organization that we are proud to be a part of."

Thank you, Phil and Donna. Your kind words and generosity inspire us to work even harder to save our natural areas.

Let Nature Be Your Legacy

with a gift in your will or trust

Give the gift of a lifetime. By including Sudbury Valley Trustees in your estate plans, you will protect our natural areas for the benefit of future generations.

It's easier than you think. With one simple sentence in your will or trust, you can bequeath cash, securities, or real estate to SVT. You'll be making a lasting difference while preserving your assets throughout your lifetime.

Learn more: www.svtweb.org/legacy

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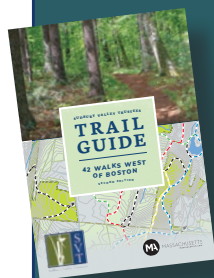


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Helping Ourselves**
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Give the Gift of Nature

Nature has never seemed more precious and essential than it has during the past two years.



This holiday season, share your love of nature—and your support of conservation—by giving copies of *SVT Trail Guide: 42 Walks West of Boston*. With the guide in hand, your friends and family can explore the tremendous, and sometimes hidden, beauty of our region. www.svtweb.org/store

Or, give **SVT Gift Memberships**.

The recipients will join a great group of conservationists who support healthy natural areas, productive working farms, and essential clean water. New memberships at the \$60 level (or higher) include a copy of the Trail Guide.

www.svtweb.org/gift



SAVE THE DATE:

SVT's Annual Benefit Gala Saturday, April 2, 2022

Charter Oak Country Club, Hudson



A photo from our "Pollinator Palooza" Benefit in March 2020

We are planning a special hybrid event that will provide guests the option to attend either in-person or virtually. Mark your calendars now and look for your invitation in late winter.