



# THE WREN

April 2022



New Land Steward



Protecting Biodiversity



Remembering E.O. Wilson



Sustainability Group Supports SVT

## Protecting the Symphony of Nature

Happy Spring! What a wonderful time of year, when trees and flowers bud and bloom, and insects, birds, and other animals fill our forests and meadows. During our 2022 Benefit Gala, we celebrated this Symphony of Nature and highlighted SVT's efforts to protect the plants and animals that call our region home.

Unfortunately, many species of wildlife are endangered, with loss of habitat being a primary cause. Globally, over 40% of insect species are threatened with extinction. When a species becomes extinct, the rhythm of life is disrupted.

SVT counters this disruption and conserves essential habitats by protecting natural areas from development. Just as important, our Stewardship staff develops a management plan for every property we conserve. Some properties show signs of distress and require intense intervention; others can sustain themselves with a hands-off policy.

The management approach depends on factors such as the quality of the habitat and the likelihood of long-term success. Our goal is to restore healthy areas that set the stage for nature to sustain herself.

Using data from two key reports, we focus on rare and declining species and the habitats they need: The *Massachusetts State Wildlife Action Plan* lists the 570 species of greatest conservation need in the Commonwealth. *BioMap2*, an analysis spearheaded by the Commonwealth and The Nature Conservancy, identifies Massachusetts landscapes that provide important wildlife habitats and also pinpoints landscapes that should offer the most resilience to climate change.

### Hands On or Hands Off?

SVT's Memorial Forest in Sudbury is one property that we intensely manage, due to the presence of a rare pitch pine-scrub oak habitat and the many rare and declining species that depend upon it. Working with numerous partners to restore the rare habitat, we have implemented an aggressive long-term strategy that has included the clearing of trees and the use of prescribed burns.



*"I will argue that every scrap of biological diversity is priceless, to be learned and cherished, and never to be surrendered without a struggle."*

– E.O. Wilson

At Forty Caves in Berlin, SVT and our partners take a less active role. These forests are in good condition, with rolling topography, vernal pools, and a high-quality cold-water stream. Here, we are mapping the extent of invasive plants, which are most common along the trails and one of the wetland stream corridors. If necessary, we will intervene to remove the invasives to prevent them from spreading to the forest interior.

In another example, we have decided not to intervene at our Wrack Meadow and Mile Hill Woods properties in Boylston. These forested properties sit within hundreds of acres of high-quality intact habitat that have had little human disturbance in the last 100 years. This expansive size and lack of disturbance enable plants and wildlife to flourish without much assistance.

Pages 4 and 5 offer a more detailed look at how we manage our lands so every voice in nature's orchestra continues to be part of a spectacular symphony.



### Board of Directors


**Karin Paquin**, Marlborough, President  
**Paul Bakstran**, Berlin, Vice President  
**Lisa Schimmel**, Wayland, Treasurer  
**Peter Martin**, Northborough, Clerk  
**Colin Anderson**, Sudbury  
**Sherrill Cline**, Sudbury  
**Steven Correia**, Wayland  
**Molly Cutler**, Harvard  
**Rebecca Cutting**, Sudbury  
**Sean Fair**, Wayland  
**Richard T.T. Forman**, Concord  
**Ruth Kennedy Sudduth**, Stow  
**Andrew Magee**, Acton  
**John Mastrobattista**, Framingham  
**Bruce Osterling**, Bedford  
**Richard Perkins**, Stow  
**Greg D. Peterson**, Carlisle


### Staff

**Lisa Vernegaard**, Executive Director  
**Dana Baxter**, Development Associate  
**Christa Collins**, Director of Land Protection  
**Grace Fauver**, Director of Development & Community Engagement  
**Meredith Houghton**, Land Protection Specialist  
**Jane Maloney**, Land Steward  
**Laura Mattei**, Director of Stewardship  
**Kristin O'Brien**, Conservation Restriction Manager  
**Brandon Parker**, Property Maintenance Manager  
**Debbie Pullen**, Membership & Programs Manager  
**Deborah Sargent**, Communications Manager  
**Anthony Serra**, Land Protection Associate  
**Dan Stimson**, Assistant Director of Stewardship  
**Michelle Soares Vanslette**, Director of Finance & Administration  
**Lily Zanta**, AmeriCorps Member

### The Wren

**Jason Fairchild**, Truesdale Group, Designer

 @SudburyValleyTrust

 @sudbury\_valley\_trustees

 youtube.com/SVTsightings

### Looking for Something to Do?

The **Calendar page** of the SVT website lists our upcoming trail walks, webinars, and volunteer projects. After two years of the pandemic, here's a chance to connect with others while enjoying nature.  
[www.svtweb.org/calendar](http://www.svtweb.org/calendar)

### Sudbury Valley Trustees

18 Wolbach Road  
 Sudbury, MA 01776  
 978-443-5588  
[svt@svtweb.org](mailto:svt@svtweb.org)  
[www.svtweb.org](http://www.svtweb.org)



## Diversity Is Fundamental

*Lisa Vernegaard, Executive Director*

In this issue of the *The Wren*, we describe the many ways that SVT protects and, in some cases, restores the biodiversity of our region. Just as biodiversity is fundamental to the health and resilience of natural landscapes, diversity is also fundamental to a healthy and resilient human society. To truly advance our goals of protecting natural areas for wildlife and all people, SVT must strive to become a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization.

To that end, we have embarked upon a journey of listening, learning, and purpose-driven work to engage and serve the full diversity of people who live in our region. To lay the foundation for this important endeavor, SVT's Board has initiated organization-wide training, an internal audit of our operations and engagement efforts, and outreach to historically marginalized communities with the hope of building lasting relationships.

We recognize that we have much to learn, and we are committed to keeping our members and the communities we serve informed as we proceed. We invite you to join us in this effort and to submit any comments to [diversity@svtweb.org](mailto:diversity@svtweb.org).

Thank you,



### NATURE SIGHTINGS

**Bobcat:** We received several reports of bobcat sightings over the winter, and Jon Turner took this beautiful bobcat photo along a Harvard road in January. The bobcat population is thought to be on the rise in eastern Massachusetts, as the cats appear to be supplementing their diet with squirrels, small mammals, and birds around suburban back yards. Despite still being elusive, bobcats offer more sighting opportunities when they are on the move during their mating season in February and March.



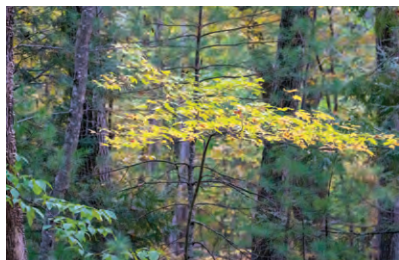
Jon Turner

## Eastern Greenway-North: Success

Thanks to generous donations from many individuals and foundations, we raised enough funds to purchase a conservation restriction on the 45-acre Eastern Greenway-North property from Harvard Conservation Trust (HCT).

With its hilly woodlands and forested wetlands, Eastern Greenway-North provides essential habitat for a variety of wildlife. Its protection knits together several conservation areas—including Horse Meadows Knoll—to create an expansive wildlife corridor in the High Ridge region of Harvard, Boxborough, and Littleton.

Plus, SVT's fundraising success helped HCT secure the funds it needed to buy the entire 200-acre Eastern Greenway property near the Harvard-Boxborough town line. This wonderful stretch of open space will now be protected forever. [www.svtweb.org/EGN](http://www.svtweb.org/EGN)



Louis Callisi

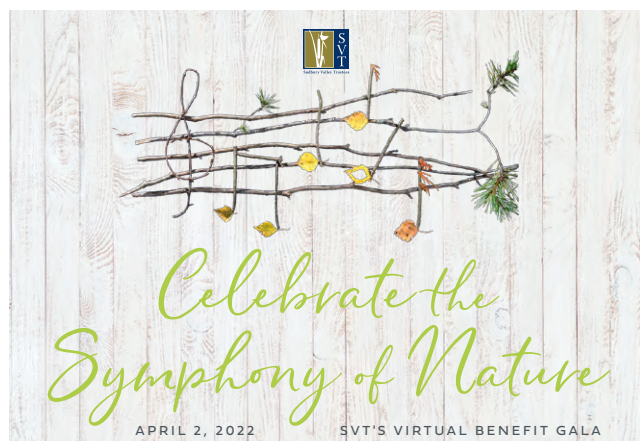
## Prospect Hill Orchard: Almost There!

SVT is delighted to be part of the long-term effort to protect the stunning Prospect Hill Community Orchard (PHCO) in Harvard, but we need help for this project to succeed.

As part of the agricultural fabric of the region, the orchard plays an important role in hunger relief. The current owner, Community Harvest Project (CHP), grows produce for donation to local food banks. In 2021 alone, PHCO donated 189,000 pounds of apples and peaches to 23 organizations. By selling an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) on 70 acres of the land, CHP will raise funds to endow its mission while permanently protecting the orchard for agricultural use.

The Massachusetts Department of Agriculture (MDAR) and the Town of Harvard will contribute upwards of \$1.5 million toward the \$2.5 million project, and they will co-hold the APR.

SVT is collaborating with CHP and Harvard Conservation Trust on an ambitious campaign to raise the remaining funds and protect this important agricultural land. Please learn more and support this effort. [www.svtweb.org/phco](http://www.svtweb.org/phco)



2022 marked the 29th occurrence of our Annual Benefit Gala—and the second consecutive year we held the Gala as a virtual event. Thank you to everyone who watched and donated. We are humbled by your generosity. Special thanks to our Table Hosts who encouraged friends and family to take part, and to our Corporate Sponsors for your support of local conservation. [www.svtweb.org/Gala22](http://www.svtweb.org/Gala22)

### Project Updates

**Horseshoe Pond, Berlin:** SVT is raising funds to help the Town of Berlin purchase 100 acres of healthy woodland and wetland habitat and expand the Mount Pisgah Conservation Area. Popular trails already cross this land, which is the largest remaining private property on Mount Pisgah. [www.svtweb.org/horseshoe](http://www.svtweb.org/horseshoe)

**Assabet River Bluff, Concord:** SVT has joined the effort to protect 6 acres of oak and pine forest that overlook a bend of the Assabet River and connect to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. [www.svtweb.org/assabet-bluff](http://www.svtweb.org/assabet-bluff)

## Meet SVT's New Land Steward

Jane Maloney, who joined SVT as our Land Steward last fall, is already hard at work helping to keep our lands in tip-top shape. She plays a role in many stewardship projects, coordinates Weed Warrior Workdays (see page 7), and works with volunteers to maintain our trails.

Jane earned her bachelor's degree in environmental science from Saint Michael's College in Vermont, and she previously held positions with the Appalachian Mountain Club in Boston and the Umpqua Watersheds in Oregon. Welcome, Jane!





# PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY

SVT's Stewardship staff evaluates every SVT reservation to develop a management plan for its ecological features. Is the property filled with healthy native plants, or is it overrun by invasives? Is there a blend of young and old trees, or have deer overbrowsed the forest so young plants cannot mature? Are cold-water streams clear of sediment, or are the stream banks eroded?

The answers to questions like these help us decide whether to be **"HANDS ON"** or **"HANDS OFF"** in caring for the land.

## HANDS OFF

### Wrack Meadow and Mile Hill Woods, Berlin/Boylston

These adjacent reservations that span 243 acres are located in an impressive uninterrupted block of forest. The land is relatively free of invasive species, has less damage from deer browse compared to other properties in our region, and is a great example of a well-functioning habitat.



## NATURAL RECOVERY

Healthy forests with few invasive species are more likely to recover from disturbances that are exacerbated by climate change. The plentiful young growth in the understory can grow to fill gaps caused by big storms or by successive years of defoliation due to spongy moths (formerly known as Gypsy moth).

## EARLY DETECTION

We ensure our healthy areas stay healthy by visiting them annually and taking note of changing conditions. Through early detection of invasive plants and insects, we can react quickly to potential threats. Invasive insects such as the Asian long-horned beetle that attacks hardwood trees could quickly devastate even a healthy forest.



Greg Dysart

Gail Sartori

## BENEFITS OF BEAVERS

A series of beaver dams in Wrack Meadow hold water in times of drought, and they support a high diversity of plants and numerous species of wildlife, such as dragonflies, otters, ducks, bobcats, and mink. The large, uninterrupted landscape allows generations of beavers to move along waterways and create new ponds. The buffering forest also decreases the potential for conflicts with people caused by rising waters over septic systems and at culverts.

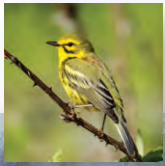
## ADVANTAGES FOR BIRDS

Large blocks of healthy forest provide habitat for birds that are displaced in fragmented landscapes. Wood thrushes take advantage of the healthy layer of shrubs in a forest with good cover. Red-shouldered hawks feed and nest along the edges of wetlands. One way we measure the health of a forest is through spring breeding bird surveys, when we watch for birds and listen for their territorial calls.



Lisa Eggleston





## FIRE IN THE FOREST

Since 2009, SVT has worked with several partners to restore expanses of pitch pine–scrub oak barrens—a rare forest habitat that features open spaces, shrubby undergrowth, and sandy soil that results from occasional fires.

This unique habitat supports rare and declining species of

birds, insects, amphibians, and plants, but it has diminished in the northeastern U.S. because of land development and fire suppression.

To re-create the conditions that allow this habitat to flourish, we burned 14 acres of forest in 2014, and we cleared 35–50% of the trees from 50 acres in 2016.

We plan to conduct another burn in the coming years.

## SURVEYING SPECIES

During our annual bird surveys, we listen for the distinct call of the whip-poor-will, a bird that nests on the ground in pitch pine-scrub oak barrens. The surveys indicated a stark decrease over 30 years and were an impetus for the implementation of the habitat-restoration project.



## SAVING STREAMS

A warming climate and stream-bank erosion are threatening two cold-water streams at Memorial Forest that provide habitat for eastern brook trout. We have restored vegetation to the banks, added fences along the trail, and established a dog-leashing policy to remind everyone that all visitors need to stay out of the water.



## HANDS ON Memorial Forest, Sudbury

This 220-acre property, which sits within the Desert Natural Area, is home to many species of plants and animals. SVT frequently visits this property to monitor its varied landscapes, survey the plants and wildlife, and repair trails and stream banks. The reservation is also the site of one of our most intensive restoration projects.

## PLANTING WILDFLOWERS

Patches of wild lupines declined at Memorial Forest until only one population remained. An SVT volunteer has gathered seeds from that population and planted them at other locations to encourage their growth and to provide a source of nectar for the frosted elfin butterfly and other insects.



## TRAIL POLICIES

While we want everyone to enjoy nature, free-running dogs can run through vernal pools, disturb breeding turtles, and trample the nests of whip-poor-wills. To protect the threatened species at Memorial Forest, we established a dog-leashing policy in 2021.



## PULLING INVASIVES

Glossy buckthorn is a pervasive invasive that threatens many native plants. SVT schedules several “buckthorn pulls” at Memorial Forest each year, when volunteers—including seniors at Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School—help us uproot this invasive plant.





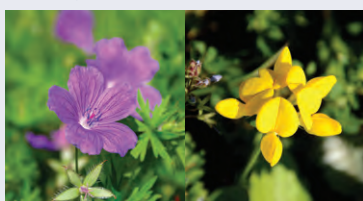
## Spotlight On...

## ...Backyard Biodiversity

*In 2021, SVT member Michele (Shelley) Trucksis became inspired by the writings of Doug Tallamy, a noted entomologist who has written passionately about the need to use native plants in backyard gardens. Shelley took the message to heart and is replacing part of her lawn with habitat for native bees, birds, and other wildlife.*

**What did you learn from Doug Tallamy?**

Using native plants helps maintain biodiversity in flora and fauna and helps prevent extinction of rare bees and other pollinators. A diverse mix of species increases the likelihood that the loss of one species can be compensated for by other species playing a similar role in the ecosystem.



Wild geranium (*Geranium maculatum*) and yellow wild indigo (*Baptisia tinctoria*).

Native plant gardens restore habitat and the relationships between animals and plants. They support both pollinators and birds—young birds eat caterpillars on host plants, and adult birds eat the seed heads of plants!

**What plant species are you adding?**

My garden already had some native plants, such as butterfly weed, and I selected additional species recommended on the [beecology.wpi.edu](https://www.beecology.wpi.edu) website. I am adding plants with varying bloom times such as shrubby St. John's-wort, yellow wild indigo, and wild geranium to ensure pollen and nectar are available throughout the season for rare and native bees and butterflies. I'm also adding grasses such as lovegrass and little bluestem that serve as host plants for caterpillars.

**How will you irrigate and fertilize?**

I am not installing irrigation, but I am adding a fountain and pebble basin that will be a source of water for wildlife, including bees and butterflies. As for fertilizers, I am continuing to use organic material and supplements as dictated by soil tests to make up for any deficiencies.

**Do you have advice for those with small gardens?**

You don't need a large yard to make a difference. Even a few native plants can be part of a network of habitat that supports biodiversity. I started some of my plants by sowing seeds in milk jugs over the winter. Some public libraries offer seed banks, where you can get the seeds for free.

Learn more about native plants and pollinators at [www.svtweb.org/MCA-NPTF](https://www.svtweb.org/MCA-NPTF)

**Wanted: Preserve Stewards**

Volunteer Preserve Stewards help SVT take first-class care of our properties by acting as our eyes and ears on our trails. These dedicated volunteers maintain trail markers, remove trash, cut back tree limbs, and take note of issues that need our attention.

Interested in volunteering as a Preserve Steward? We have openings at Frances Hill in Westford and Gowing's Swamp in Concord.

Learn more about these and other volunteer opportunities: [www.svtweb.org/volunteer](https://www.svtweb.org/volunteer)



(L) Caitlin LeDuc recently signed up as the Preserve Steward at our Saddle Hill and Highland Park Reservations in Hopkinton. (R) On a bright winter's day, Mike Shneer marked the property boundaries along our trail at Ralph Hill in Billerica.

**Remembering E.O. Wilson**

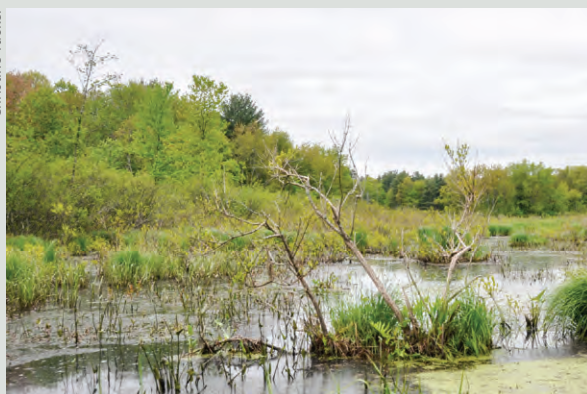
The conservation world lost a giant in 2021 with the passing of E.O. Wilson. A recognized authority on evolutionary biology who taught at Harvard for 46 years, Wilson specialized in entomology with an emphasis on ants. He also published more than two dozen books—many for a general audience—including *Half Earth*, in which he argued for half the world's surface area to be set aside for preserving biodiversity.



In 2005, E.O. Wilson spoke at a Biodiversity Day at Chestnut Hill Farm and Beals Preserve in Southborough (where SVT holds a conservation restriction). On that day, volunteers counted 47 species of birds, 73 species of trees, and 123 species of wildflowers.

Dr. Wilson leaves an amazing legacy, and SVT will honor that by continuing to do our part to preserve biodiversity in our region.





## Take a Hike: Whitney & Kennedy-Bowers CRs

Two fields, a brook, and a small upland forest await visitors to these privately owned properties in Stow where SVT co-holds conservation restrictions. Not far from the parking lot, the trail crosses Heath Hen Meadow Brook and offers beautiful open views of both the brook and its wetlands.

Trails here connect to those on other lands owned by the Town of Stow, allowing visitors to enjoy a pleasant short stroll or an ambitious hours-long hike. Expect mud in wet seasons, and be on the lookout for poison ivy.

Directions and a trail map: [www.svtweb.org/whitneyfields](http://www.svtweb.org/whitneyfields)

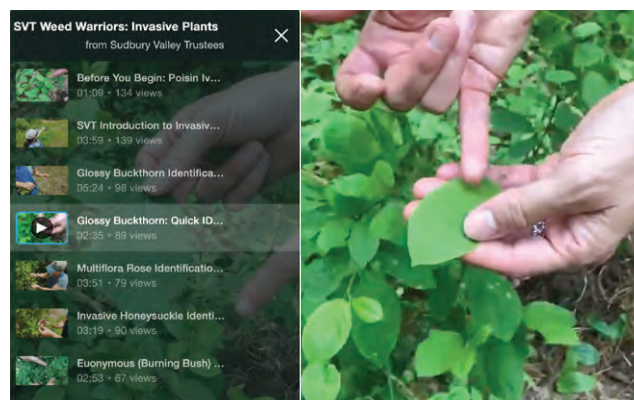


## Weed Warriors Stand Up to Invasives

In 2020, SVT launched a Weed Warrior program to train volunteers in invasive plant identification and removal. Once certified, Weed Warriors visit SVT properties on their own or in small groups to pull non-native invasives so native plants have a better chance to thrive.

New volunteers are always welcome to join the Weed Warrior program, **but you don't need to be certified to help.** Everyone is invited to attend a Weed Warrior Workday (two are planned for April), where you'll help to pull invasives. If inspiration strikes, you can also register for our next Weed Warrior training session on May 14.

[www.svtweb.org/calendar](http://www.svtweb.org/calendar)

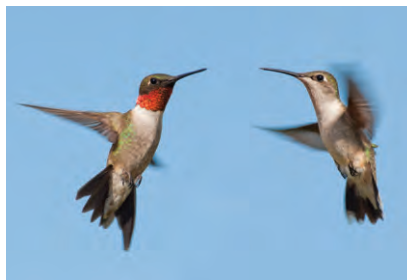


The Weed Warrior page of our website includes short videos where you can learn to identify glossy buckthorn (pictured), multiflora rose, invasive honeysuckle, and euonymus.

[www.svtweb.org/weedwarriors](http://www.svtweb.org/weedwarriors)

## Double Your Impact!

Want to double your support of SVT's conservation efforts without it costing you anything extra? It's possible—if your employer offers a matching gift program.



Each year, our donors contribute thousands of extra dollars to SVT, simply because their employers match their donations. By taking a few minutes to fill out a form, you could double or even triple your annual contribution and lend greater support to the protection and care of natural areas in this region.

Please check with your Benefits Department; the process may be simpler than you think. Thank you!



**Sustainability Group Supports SVT.** Last fall, employees in the Sustainability Group at DuPont Co. in Marlborough nominated SVT to receive a \$2,000 donation from the company in recognition of our efforts to protect natural areas.

To teach the group more about our work, SVT's Laura Mattei led them on a tour of our Cedar Hill Reservation, where we have restored an early successional shrub habitat to help bird species such as eastern towhee and blue-winged warbler as well as several species of butterflies and other insects.



Sudbury Valley Trustees

THE  
WREN

NON-PROFIT MAIL  
PRESORTED  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
BROCKTON, MA  
PERMIT NO. 402

WOLBACH FARM  
18 WOLBACH ROAD  
SUDBURY, MA 01776

 Printed with soy inks on recycled paper  
using 100% post-consumer waste.  
Printed with 100% wind power.

Protecting the  
Symphony  
of Nature  
*See page 1*



# STAND UP FOR NATURE: Earth Day Is April 22

Join with SVT as we celebrate and care for the earth!

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK, APRIL 17 - 23

- Trail Work at Walkup & Robinson Memorial Reservation, *Westborough*
- Build Bridges at Lyons-Cutler, *Sudbury*
- Pull Invasives at Smith Conservation Land, *Littleton*
- Pull Invasives at Cowassock Woods, *Framingham*

## NATURE WALKS EARTH DAY, APRIL 22

- Henry's Hill, *Framingham*
- Cowassock Woods & Ashland Town Forest, *Framingham/Ashland*
- Greenways Reservation, *Wayland*
- Horse Meadows Knoll, *Harvard*

EARTH DAY  
Stand Up for Nature



**All Volunteer Projects and Nature Walks require registration. Space is limited! Sign Up Today.**

**[www.svtweb.org/calendar](http://www.svtweb.org/calendar)**