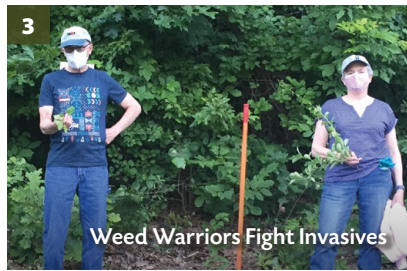




THE WREN

August 2020



Healthy Land, Healthy People, Healthy Society

Health. It has been at the forefront of our minds since COVID-19 charged into our lives earlier this year.

At SVT, we believe that natural areas and working farms are essential to health—the health of people, the health of communities, and the health of landscapes and wildlife. In this and coming issues of the *Wren*, we will explore the many ways that SVT's work directly supports the well-being of our region.

When most of Massachusetts shut down in late March, we kept SVT trails open. We recognized that natural areas were providing people with a safe refuge where they could exercise, find peace of mind, and interact with others (albeit from a distance).

Many studies have found a link between time spent in nature and human health—both mental and physical. In addition to giving us a chance to exercise and breathe fresh air, spending time in nature restores attention and provides mental and cognitive benefits. It helps us recover from psychological stress and mental fatigue, especially the stress caused by the noise, pollution, and constant motion of urban areas.

According to *Scientific American*, urban dwellers are up to 39% more likely to have anxiety disorders than people living in rural or suburban areas. Efforts to provide green refuges in urban areas—even by planting street trees—are crucial to mitigating that stress.

Natural areas provide indirect benefits to our health, too, by protecting the quality of our water, air, and food. Trees and

other plants filter the water that runs into our streams and reservoirs (and reduce the need for expensive filtration facilities). Massachusetts' Quabbin Reservoir provides drinking water to 3,000,000 people, and the protected forest around it does most of the work to keep that water clean.

Similarly, studies have shown that forests in New England (many of which remain unprotected) annually cleanse the air of roughly 760,000 tons of pollutants that cause smog and ground level ozone, which can exacerbate conditions such as asthma and bronchitis.

Local agricultural lands play a role in our health by providing us with the most nutritious fruits and vegetables. Researchers at Michigan State University found that the nutrient value of food begins to decrease as soon as it is picked. Food that is grown and sold locally not only has a smaller carbon footprint, but also is more nutritious than food that travels thousands of miles to reach our tables.

The evidence is clear: We need nature. Our health depends on it!

Pages 4 and 5 provide examples of how SVT's work supports public health.



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The Wren

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@SudburyValleyTrust



youtube.com/SVTsightings



@sudbury_valley_trustees

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

Sudbury Valley Trustees

18 Wolbach Road
 Sudbury, MA 01776
 978-443-5588
svt@svtweb.org
www.svtweb.org



Nature Needs Us

Lisa Vernegaard, Executive Director

Over the past several years, we have accelerated the pace of land protection and increased our stewardship efforts in response to the cascading impacts of development, climate change, and myriad other threats to our natural areas. Thanks to you, our members, we have been getting a lot done.

Then along came the COVID-19 virus that threatened human health and upturned our lives. We asked ourselves, "Should we stay the course and build on our momentum? Or should we hunker down?" As we considered these questions, we watched as people took refuge at our properties to find calm in the storm, to be reminded of the beauty that remains in the world, and to witness the life-affirming coming of spring. One truth became clear: Nature is good for us.

So, we had our answer. We must continue to accelerate. In these days when we are reminded that we need nature, we are also reminded that nature needs us. Natural areas must be conserved and wildlife habitats must be restored if they are to survive and provide respite for future generations.

While we have adjusted our day-to-day work, we haven't missed a beat in pursuing our mission. Since March, we have launched several new land protection projects, filed comments on issues before the state legislature, trained volunteers to fight invasive plants, maintained hiking trails, monitored our conservation restrictions, and moved our programs to online webinars—and we've all become Zoom experts!

We invite you to join us for our online Annual Meeting, where you'll get a full recap of the past year and a peek at the year to come. (See the back page for details.) With wishes for good health,



NATURE SIGHTINGS: It has been a bountiful

season for Nature Sightings, perhaps because many of you have had more time to enjoy nature. Thank you to everyone who has shared photos in recent months.

Spring is a time when we get to see goslings, chicks, cygnets, pups, and the rest. Russ Place shared a wonderful series of red fox kits playing, wrestling, and spending time with their parents in Sudbury. To see all the photos and a video compilation that Russ shared with us, choose "Red Fox" from the species list at www.svtweb.org/sightings.



Russ Place



Prospect Hill Orchard on the Path to Protection

At their Town Meeting in June, voters in Harvard agreed to contribute \$150,000 of Community Preservation Funds toward the purchase of an agricultural preservation restriction on Prospect Hill Orchard.

The 75-acre orchard is owned and operated by Community Harvest Project, a nonprofit organization that supplies fresh produce to local food banks.

SVT is part of the team that is working to conserve the land, and we are thrilled that Harvard residents took this important step toward its protection. www.svtweb.org/pho.



Weed Warriors Fight Invasives

In June, SVT launched a Weed Warrior certification program to train volunteers to remove invasive plants from our reservations. We recruited 10 volunteers who had an aptitude for plant identification and were willing to work independently.

To provide training during a time of social distancing, SVT's Laura Mattei and Kristin O'Brien posted a series of videos online and have led in-person sessions for small groups. Once certified, our Weed Warriors will regularly visit properties in Berlin, Concord, Framingham, Littleton, and Sudbury to fight invasives such as Oriental bittersweet, glossy buckthorn, multiflora rose, winged euonymus, and honeysuckle.

Saving the Wild Lupines

SVT is taking action to save the wild lupine that grows at our Memorial Forest Reservation in Sudbury. This native plant, which blooms in shades of blue and white, is uncommon in our local woods, yet it provides good food for pollinators and birds. The current patch of wild lupine is threatened by a high-power line that Eversource wants to install through the area.

To help save the wild lupine, SVT volunteers Nan Burke and Don Burn collected seed pods from this year's blooms and are drying the pods in the garden window of their home. Later this year, we'll plant the seeds at other locations at Memorial Forest. Fingers crossed, we'll be enjoying wild lupine blossoms once again in 2021.



Nan Burke and Don Burn. Inset photo: Ginny Hutchison

Project Updates

Thistle Dew Farm, Holliston: We reached our fundraising goal of \$150,000 for this project, thanks to many wonderful donors, including the Town of Holliston Open Space Committee. Special thanks to the anonymous donor who pledged \$100,000 and to Mass Audubon for securing the anonymous gift. A closing is anticipated for the fall, at which time the property will be permanently protected under an agricultural preservation restriction.

Robertson Property, Upton: In July, the Town of Upton and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation purchased a conservation restriction (CR) on this 48-acre property that includes a lengthy section of Warren Brook. It also abuts Upton Forest, and the town is planning to create a trail across the land later this year. SVT has long supported the protection of this property and assisted in crafting the purchase agreement and CR.

Protecting and Improving Human Health

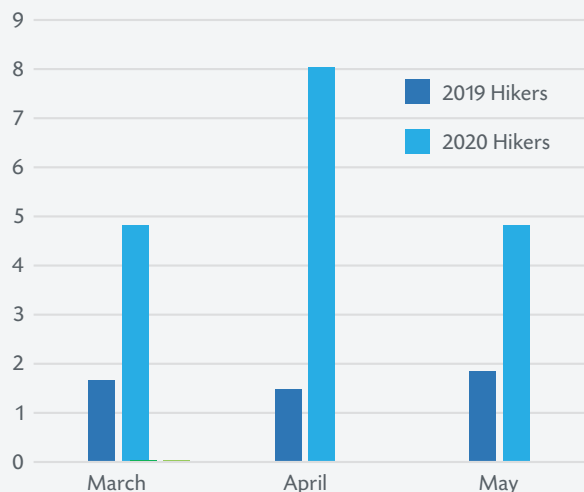
It's easy to see how SVT's conservation work protects the health of local lands and native wildlife. What may be less clear is how SVT's work affects human health.

These pages illustrate a few of the ways that our efforts to conserve land, steward our properties, and host educational programs have a direct connection to the health of everyone who lives in the region.

Respite

SVT hiking trails and natural areas became an essential service for many people when COVID-19 forced us to self-quarantine and social distance in mid-March. After determining that we could safely keep SVT trails open with some new policies and guidelines, we watched as the use of our properties increased significantly over typical levels. Visitors regularly told us we'd made the right decision: "Your trails have been a lifeline during these difficult times," wrote one. "Thank you for your work."

Average Number of Trail Users Encountered
Per SVT Property Visit



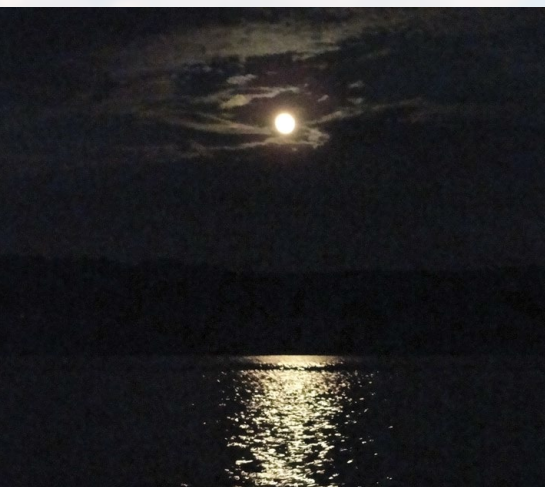
Fitness

Trails provide the perfect setting for many levels of exercise. Whether your interest is in walking to stay active, a brisk hike to get your heart going, or cross-country skiing to test your agility and fitness, SVT has worked on a trail that fits your needs. Mount Pisgah in Berlin/Northborough, Nobscot Scout Reservation in Sudbury, and Cedar Hill and Sawink Farm in Northborough/Southborough are great examples of large trail networks with hills that provide a challenge.



Farmland

As agricultural lands across Massachusetts are lost to development, we all lose access to locally grown food. SVT works with municipal and state partners to permanently protect local farms so they can continue to provide us with sustainably grown, nutritious fruits and vegetables. Our many successes include Mainstone Farm in Wayland, Caouette Farm in Acton, and Golas Farm in Boylston. Plus, our Baiting Brook-Welch Reservation in Framingham (pictured) is home to two CSA ventures.



Jim Lagerbom

Dark Skies

Because of artificial lighting, many of us rarely experience the truly dark skies of the day-night cycle under which humans evolved. Excessive light can suppress our melatonin production and disrupt our circadian rhythm and our sleep patterns. By working on large-scale conservation projects like the Tri-Town Initiative (Berlin, Northborough, and Boylston) and the High Ridge Initiative (Harvard, Littleton, and Boxborough), SVT helps create corridors of undeveloped land that also preserve dark skies for future generations.



Urban Green Space

Through programs such as ParkRx, physicians in many states prescribe “spending time in nature” as a way for patients—especially those in urban areas—to reduce anxiety and improve their health. To make it easier for residents of downtown Framingham to enjoy time outdoors, SVT is supporting a project that will convert a vacant lot on Irving Street into a neighborhood park. Here, we organized an event at City Hall to raise awareness of the project and encourage public support.

Mindfulness

While taking a fast-paced hike has obvious physical benefits, many people are recognizing the importance of simply immersing themselves in nature as a way to reduce stress and improve their well-being. SVT has held several “mindfulness” outings, during which participants take slow walks through the woods, contemplate nature with all their senses, and pay close attention to how they feel internally.





Walking to Relieve Pain

SVT member Robert Pantzer of Framingham describes himself as “a [lifelong] creature of the forest.” This love of the outdoors led to his establishing a walking group for people who suffer from chronic pain.

When participants in the Boston PainCare Functional Physical Therapy group were advised to take walks as “at-home” therapy, one member of the group balked at the idea. Robert, who was also part of the group, invited the skeptic to join him for walks in the woods.

“Chronic pain can be emotionally depressing,” said Robert. “Walking is perhaps the best non-medicinal approach to moderating it.”

What began informally as two people taking short, flat walks, grew to an organized group who find relief from their chronic pain along the trails. “As we move our joints the pain is lessened. It relaxes the stiffness,” Robert explained.

Robert has enjoyed exploring many SVT trails, and he can now tailor walks to the abilities of his hikers. After years of leading others with chronic pain, he credits walking in natural areas with sustaining both physical and mental health, particularly during these difficult times: “The gentle swaying of trees, sounds from a brook, and occasional wildlife visits are soothing.”



When Robert Pantzer (left) and another member of the therapy group first started walking in the woods in Spring 2017, they needed to wear leg braces. Today, both men walk without requiring the braces.

Robert Pantzer

Transitions



Much to our dismay, **Chris Wilson** has resigned from SVT after nearly 30 years of service as a property caretaker, small engine mechanic, jack-of-all-trades, and land steward. A skilled woodworker who even built his own kayak, Chris had a knack for solving problems creatively and on a limited budget.

Chris began his SVT tenure in 1992 as a part-time steward, helping with bridge-building, trail work and mowing. When SVT moved to the Wolbach Farm headquarters in 2003, Chris stepped into the role of property and buildings caretaker, a position he held until this summer.

Talented, helpful, and always pleasant, Chris has been a quiet and steady presence in the background of our operations.



We also say goodbye to our Senior Land Protection Specialist, **Ashley Davies**. Ashley joined SVT as an AmeriCorps member in 2011. Shortly following her two service years, she joined us as a full-time Land Protection Specialist.

Ashley formed excellent relationships with our local partners and worked with them to protect priority lands such as the Bentzen and Oberg properties in Berlin, the Golas Farm in Boylston, and most recently, the Robertson property in Upton. She also played a key role in two multi-town landscape initiatives: Tri Town and High Ridge.

We will miss Ashley's enthusiasm and infectious laugh, and we wish her the best of luck in her new role with the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources.



Finally, **Sara Amish** has completed two terms of service as an AmeriCorps member at SVT. Sara collaborated on numerous projects with our conservation partners and took the lead in working with OARS to organize our annual Legislative Breakfast. This fall, Sara will begin a master's program at the Harvard Kennedy School of Public Policy.

Take a Hike: Peach Hill Conservation Area

We are excited to join the Town of Berlin in welcoming visitors to the new Peach Hill Conservation Area, which incorporates the Wendler land that SVT helped the town conserve this year. The Berlin Conservation Commission, SVT, and volunteers created a trail across the land that links to trails in Bolton.

The new Mountain Laurel Trail now extends from a parking area along Lancaster Road in Berlin to an intersection near the Bolton town line. Visitors can choose to head east over a trail easement to Peach Hill Road, or west and north via Town of Bolton trails to the Fyfeshire Conservation Area on Wattaquadock Hill Road.

Directions and a map: www.svtweb.org/peach



Mountain Laurel



A group of Wayland Girls Scouts are supporting our stewardship efforts at Greenways Conservation Area, where they are manually removing the invasive glossy buckthorn plant and helping out with a biological inventory. Here, Matt Morris, an SVT AmeriCorps member, is instructing them on how to use the iNaturalist app so they can use their phones to record information about insects at the north field pollinator meadow.

Understand Forest Health

To learn how to read the signs of a healthy forest, download a copy of the Forest Health Toolkit booklet. You'll learn about the visual cues that indicate how well a forest can sustain both itself and the wildlife that rely upon it. The Metrowest Conservation Alliance, of which SVT is a member, produced the booklet primarily for local conservation commissions and trails committees, but the information is useful to anyone who owns a wooded property. www.svtweb.org/mca/fht



SVT Trail Guide Now on Sale



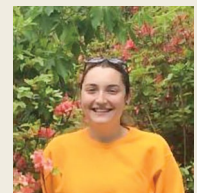
As you head out to explore the region's trails, take along a copy of the *SVT Trail Guide, 42 Walks West of Boston*.

Featuring detailed descriptions and trail maps for SVT properties and adjacent lands, the guide makes a great gift for every hiker in your family.

Purchase your copy today. www.svtweb.org/store

Have you seen these two out and about on SVT Properties this summer?

Deven Moroney and Kayleen Larose, our Seasonal Stewardship Technicians, have been doing a tremendous job of taking care of our properties. They have been manually removing invasive plants, mowing and trimming trails, monitoring property boundaries, and being a friendly (if masked) face on SVT reservations.





THE
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How does
SVT's work
protect your
health?
See page 1



Learn About Nature at an SVT Webinar

In this time of social distancing, we moved several of our nature-themed educational programs online. Recent programs have covered wildflowers, invasive plants, foraging, butterflies, beavers, bees, and more. As we schedule new webinars, we'll announce them through e-mail and list them in our online calendar: www.svtweb.org/calendar

Let's Stay Connected

SVT is increasingly using e-mail instead of paper mail to send news, announcements, and invitations to our members. We're saving paper and money while connecting with you more quickly.

Help us stay in touch! Please provide us with your e-mail address at www.svtweb.org/member

Save the Date: 2020 Annual Meeting

Thursday, September 24
7:00 p.m. • Online

Please join us as we conduct our 2020 Annual Meeting as an online webinar.

We will honor the recipients of our Annual Conservation Awards, review SVT successes from the past year, and get a preview of upcoming projects.

Register to Attend:

www.svtweb.org/AM2020

Voting: A key part of our Annual Meeting is the election of Board Members and the approval of the Treasurer's Report. In September, we'll send an e-mail message to SVT members with more information about the ballot so you can review it ahead of the meeting.

Not sure if we have your e-mail address in our files?

Provide it here: www.svtweb.org/member

Questions? Contact us at svt@svtweb.org or 978-443-5588, x110.



Dany Pelletier

At our 2019 Annual Meeting, SVT's Laura Mattei (left) presented the Distinguished Public Service Award to Priscilla Ryder, conservation officer for the City of Marlborough.