



# THE WREN

August 2025



Land Protection Successes



Managing Habitats



Spotlight on a Property Steward



Conservation Collaborations

## Explore, Gather, Belong on the All Persons' Trail

*Cecil Hynds-Riddle, Director of Development*

SVT has always invited everyone to enjoy our trails, but many of our neighbors have not been able to accept our invitation. People with mobility limitations or folks pushing children in strollers have difficulty navigating nature paths that can be uneven, rocky, and muddy.

Now, our All Persons' Accessible Trail at Wolbach Farm welcomes everyone to explore, gather, and belong outside. The trail route and surface were carefully planned to provide a firm, natural-looking path that is friendly to mobility devices such as wheelchairs, walkers, and strollers.

Our All Persons' trail addresses a common problem in Massachusetts, where there are few outdoor places that are accessible to people who use mobility devices or those who need a smooth path, near a populated building, with many places to sit and rest. Even better, our trail is free and open to the public year-round (like all SVT's trails!), which is an added bonus since many accessible trails in the state charge a fee to enter.

We held a public ribbon cutting for the first phase of our ambitious trail project on July 24. Local and state officials were on hand as we formally opened the new gently graded path that wraps around the Wolbach Farmhouse and leads to a new accessible picnic grove, the pollinator meadow, and a new stone terrace with views of the historic barn.

The ribbon cutting marked both the *grand opening* and the *beginning* of this ever-evolving project. More than three dozen people gathered to celebrate and share their input.

Next year we will extend the path into the woods along the existing Lewis Trail. Here guests will find deep shade, native plants and wildlife, and many seating areas for reading, medi-



State and local officials gathered with other community members, SVT supporters, and SVT staff to cut the grapevine ribbon and officially open our All Persons' Trail. (L to R) SVT's Dan Stimson, Sudbury Town Manager Andy Sheehan, State Rep. Carmine Gentile, State Sen. Jamie Eldridge, SVT's Davnet Conway, SVT Members Virginia and Chris Menge, Waypoint Adventure's Dan Minnich, and SVT's Brandon Parker.

tating, or enjoying the company of fellow nature lovers. The beloved Storybook Path will get a makeover with new kiosks and a condensed route so that children and their caretakers who require wheels for mobility can read the entire story.

In 2027 and beyond, we will add many enhancements to the trail, including an innovative accessible Nature Playscape at the picnic grove, many interpretive and educational features, and elements that we haven't even dreamed up yet. (Share your ideas through our feedback survey at [svtweb.org/aptrail](https://svtweb.org/aptrail).)

Stay tuned as we continue to build something even more welcoming in the coming years. But most importantly, gather up a friend and a picnic and come see the trail for yourself!

*SVT is also offering naming opportunities for various features of the trail. See page 7 for details.*



**Board of Directors**

**Paul Bakstran**, Berlin, President  
**Molly Cutler**, Harvard, Vice President  
**Lisa Schimmel**, Wayland, Treasurer  
**Peter Martin**, Northborough, Clerk  
**Sherrill Cline**, Sudbury  
**Steven Correia**, Wayland  
**Rebecca Cutting**, Sudbury  
**Sean Fair**, Wayland  
**Ruth Kennedy Sudduth**, Stow  
**Eric Klein**, Holliston  
**John Mastrobattista**, Framingham  
**Harry Newell**, Maynard  
**Karin Paquin**, Marlborough  
**Richard Perkins**, Stow  
**Loring Schwarz**, Sudbury  
**Jim Valone**, Wayland

**Staff**

**Davnet Conway**, Executive Director  
**Dana Baxter**, Assistant Director of Development  
**Sabina Cardenas**, Development & Administrative Assistant  
**Sally Purrington Hild**, Engagement and Events Manager  
**Meredith Houghton**, Senior Land Protection Specialist  
**Cecil Hynds-Riddle**, Director of Development  
**Jane Maloney**, Land Steward  
**Laura Mattei**, Director of Conservation  
**Kristin O'Brien**, Conservation Restriction Manager  
**Brandon Parker**, Property Maintenance Manager  
**Mike Perrin**, Conservation Associate  
**Sam Rogers**, Stewardship Field Assistant  
**Deborah Sargent**, Communications Manager  
**Tony Scibelli**, Land Protection Specialist  
**Dan Stimson**, Director of Land Management  
**Michelle Soares Vanslette**, Director of Finance & Administration

**The Wren**

**Jason Fairchild**, Truesdale Group, Designer



@SudburyValleyTrust



@sudbury\_valley\_trustees



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**

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



# A Future that Honors Our Legacy

*Davnet Conway, Executive Director*

In my first few months as SVT's Executive Director, many people have asked me to describe my vision for the organization. I usually pause, because it feels presumptuous to insert a personal vision into an organization with such a rich legacy. Rather, it is a collective vision, one rooted in the legacy of those who built the organization, the passion of those who sustain it now, and the potential of those who will carry it forward in the future.



During a recent chat with David Morgan, I learned what inspired his father, SVT founder and first executive director Allen Morgan, to form SVT. A passionate birder, Allen created a niche for SVT by recognizing the value in preserving smaller, often overlooked, parcels. Research has since confirmed the ecological value of this tactic, which can provide interspersed refuges in urban areas.

As our service area has grown, the vision of SVT's founders continues to guide the organization. We still value those smaller parcels, but we have made a strategic shift in our approach. By using data from multiple sources, we have identified the lands in our region that best serve important community needs, and we are reaching out to landowners to introduce them to the options and benefits of conserving their land.

A willingness to adapt will continue to guide SVT going forward. We can honor the legacy of those who made SVT what it is today and stay true to our values, while envisioning new solutions to the challenges that face us as we advance our core mission of land protection.

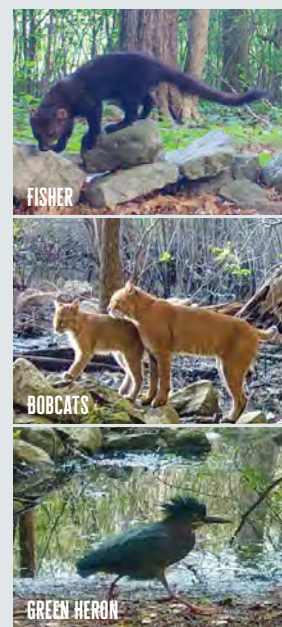
Happy Summer!

**NATURE SIGHTINGS**

Beaver dams and the resulting ponds play an important role in our landscapes: They provide additional flood storage after major storms, and by slowly releasing water, they extend the storage into periods of drought.

Beaver ponds are also a magnet for wildlife. In addition to the aquatic species that use the ponds—fish, frogs, turtles, salamanders, etc.—many species such as water birds, bats, mink, and raccoons find a high portion of their food at beaver ponds. The ponds also attract wider-ranging species, like bobcats and coyotes.

These photos were captured on a trail camera by Margaret McKane, whose property abuts an SVT property in Framingham where beavers dammed a stream and built a lodge in the resulting pond. See more at [svtweb.org/NS-beavers](http://svtweb.org/NS-beavers).



Margaret McKane



## Land Protection Successes

This summer has been a busy one at SVT, as we have closed on four conservation restrictions (CRs)!

**Assabet River Bluff, Concord.** SVT and Concord Land Conservation Trust permanently protected this 6-acre property when we accepted a CR from the Town of Concord. The land features upland and wetland habitats and helps protect water quality for aquatic species. [svtweb.org/arb](http://svtweb.org/arb)

**Town Forest Project, Ashland.** SVT now holds a CR on a 52-acre Winter Street property that the Town of Ashland acquired in January with our assistance. The conservation of this wooded land extends the Ashland Town Forest/ Cowassock Woods Conservation Area to create more than 700 contiguous protected acres. [svtweb.org/ashland](http://svtweb.org/ashland)

**Moritz Land, Acton.** SVT accepted a CR from the Town of Acton on 33 forested acres that it purchased in April with assistance from SVT, Acton Conservation Trust, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. On July 23, the Town also held a grand opening for a new trail system on the property (pictured above). [svtweb.org/moritz](http://svtweb.org/moritz)

**Holliston Community Farm, Holliston.** The Town of Holliston granted a CR to SVT on this 30-acre property that features garden plots, an apiary, and a 1/2-mile loop trail. In 2015, the Town used Community Preservation Act funds to purchase this land that it also uses for public events.

## In Memoriam: Judy Mack

SVT lost a good friend when Judy Mack of Sudbury passed away on May 3. As an SVT employee from the mid-1980s until 2001, Judy had a hand in just about everything, from land stewardship to volunteer coordination to map making to newsletter editing. After retiring, Judy continued to edit and write for SVT publications, and she and her husband, Will, remained dedicated SVT volunteers. Together, they were honored with our Lifetime Achievement Award in 2014.

We express our condolences to Judy's family, who have asked that donations in her memory be made to SVT.



## Public Programs Are Free for All!

SVT believes everyone belongs outdoors, so we are removing barriers to access. SVT membership is no longer required to access our free educational programs such as guided nature hikes, animal shows, or our Outdoor Voices speaker's series.

With people becoming less connected with the natural world, now is a good time to provide free programs to our neighbors. When someone is curious and joyful about nature, we figure they're more likely to do everything they can to help protect it.

When (very occasionally) a program does require a fee because of significant underlying materials or other costs, the charge will be the same for both members and non-members.

Visit [svtweb.org/calendar](http://svtweb.org/calendar) for a full list of the wonderful programs we have on offer this summer and fall!



## Protecting Laurel Ridge

Laurel Ridge in Hopkinton is a stunning wooded property with diverse habitats and gorgeous views of the Whitehall Reservoir. This privately owned land on Piazza Lane sits within a corridor of conserved lands in the Hopkinton-Upton area.

It is already a popular place for hiking, birdwatching, and fishing thanks to a trail network that the land-owners have maintained for all to enjoy. In fact, a visitor could easily think Laurel Ridge is part of the adjacent Whitehall State Park that encircles the reservoir.

SVT is on the verge of permanently protecting this waterfront forest with a conservation restriction. We have raised most of the necessary funds through grants, and we have also launched a public fundraising campaign. Please help protect this important land! [svtweb.org/laurel](http://svtweb.org/laurel)



## MANAGING HABITATS ON CONSERVATION LANDS

Once SVT and our partners successfully protect a property, our work is far from over. Wildlife habitats—even when they are healthy—often require careful management.

SVT takes a comprehensive approach to revitalizing the native habitats on our lands: We restore ecological processes and dynamics, rejuvenate native plants and wildlife, and control invasive plants. On these two pages, we highlight the progress we are making on some of our longer-term habitat-management projects.

### DESERT NATURAL AREA/MEMORIAL FOREST

For 15 years, this property on the Sudbury-Marlborough line has been the site of a comprehensive effort to restore a rare pitch pine/scrub oak barrens habitat that supports declining species of birds, insects, turtles, and plants. In addition to pulling invasive plants by hand, we have cleared trees from the canopy, and we have held prescribed burns to create soil and vegetation conditions that are essential to these barrens.

In March 2025 (11 years after our first prescribed burn of 14 acres), SVT and the City of Marlborough conducted a second prescribed fire over 40 acres. (We had hoped to burn 75 acres, but weather conditions and a need to ensure safe havens for breeding wildlife reduced the size of the burn area.) In preparation, we thinned an area of the forest and removed trees from 50 acres. Thanks to the support of the Marlborough and Sudbury Fire Departments as well as the DCR Fire Warden and fire personnel, we were able to conduct a safe and successful burn. [svtweb.org/desert](https://svtweb.org/desert)



at Canadian frost weed, a plant that is common to barrens habitats.

We are conducting long-term vegetation monitoring to evaluate success. Botanist Ted Elliman (center) helped us with our vegetation monitoring on a June visit to the burn area. In this photo, we are looking



Art Illman/MetroWest Daily News



New plant life is already appearing in the area we burned in March. We are pleased to see a much higher abundance of both pitch pine and scrub oak, which create the foundation of this special habitat. Prairie warbler and eastern towhee, two of the “target” bird species we hoped to support with this project, were breeding at the site this past spring. (35 towhees were observed: That is incredible!)

Wild lupine—a plant that relies on an open canopy—has resurged after the burn, thereby expanding the local populations of this declining species. Volunteer Nan Burke planted this patch of lupine and multiple other patches with seeds she collected from the one remaining natural population in the Desert, which is located along the new rail trail.





## SMITH CONSERVATION LAND

A wonderful conservation area with diverse habitats, this property on the Littleton-Harvard line was overrun with Asian bittersweet and featured a large stand of non-native European larch and dying non-native red pine trees. During the past three years, SVT has recruited volunteers to pull and smother the bittersweet, hired a logger to remove the trees, and hired a contractor to apply targeted herbicides to invasive plants to prevent regrowth. Rather than plant any native seeds or seedlings, we wanted to see what would grow back naturally. [svtweb.org/smith-habitat](https://svtweb.org/smith-habitat)



APRIL 2023

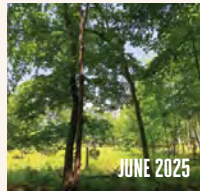


FEBRUARY 2024

We are delighted to see the continued success of our habitat-restoration efforts. There is a dramatic reduction in the abundance of Asian bittersweet



OCTOBER 2019



JUNE 2025

and a corresponding resurgence of multiple native plants. Native plants that have "appeared" or have increased in abundance include nodding trillium, joe pye-weed, boneset, winterberry, water horehound, and tulip tree.

We hosted two BioBlitz events at Smith this past spring to observe and catalog some of the plants and wildlife at the property. We are recruiting volunteers to help us record all of the species that we see in this revitalized habitat—butterflies, moths, birds, plants, and more. (Interested in helping? Contact us at [svt@svtweb.org](mailto:svt@svtweb.org).)



## COWASSOCK WOODS

"Invasives Alley" no longer exists! Until recently, the entrance trail at this Framingham conservation area was lined with an overwhelming abundance and variety of invasive plants. Fighting them seemed hopeless. Yet, thanks to Rob St. Germain and other volunteers (see Spotlight, page 6), the invasives are virtually gone and in their place are flourishing natives like viburnum.



Rob St. Germain

Cowassock is also traversed by a power-line right of way, where corporate volunteers and an Eagle Scout have created two areas of native plants for pollinators and other wildlife.

## GOWING'S SWAMP

Since 2016, this unusual bog habitat in Concord has been a target for our invasives-removal efforts. We have mowed woody invasive shrubs in some areas and have also cut and removed a large patch of knotweed.

Over the past 9 years, volunteer Ruth Ladd and the SVT staff have led numerous work sessions where volunteers used manual efforts to control invasive plants. In the first few years, we also used targeted herbicides to treat the invasives.

The results? A noticeable decrease in glossy buckthorn throughout the property, which has allowed the native blueberry plants to flourish.



Plus, we have also seen a dramatic reduction of knotweed in a small meadow where native plants now abound. And we have prize-winning very tall joe pye-weed plants (if anyone gave prizes for such things)! One other sign of success: We don't need as many work days at Gowing's now. [svtweb.org/gowings-habitat](https://svtweb.org/gowings-habitat)



## Spotlight On... an Invasives-Fighting Property Steward

Many years ago, SVT gave the name “Invasives Alley” to the entrance trail at Cowassock Woods. The area was overrun by invasive plants and the idea of fighting them seemed hopeless.

“We could not devote all of the time it would take to tackle this site, given all of the work we were already doing,” said Laura Mattei, SVT Director of Conservation.

Then in 2016, volunteer Rob St. Germain of Ashland offered to tackle the project. “I emphasized to Rob what a big job it would be, but Rob was persistent,” said Laura. “So we helped him recruit volunteers, and now the area is a showcase of what is possible!”

“The land was a deserted construction site,” said Rob, who wanted to create a more attractive entrance to the combined Ashland Town Forest/Cowassock Woods Conservation Area. “Bittersweet is called *bittersweet* for a reason. Invasives Alley was overrun with it—some thicker around than my arm—and lots of burning bush, multi-flora rose, barberry, garlic mustard, celandine, poison ivy, knotweed, and buckthorn. There was lots of fun to be had by many volunteers!”

Rob estimates that he has had well over 100 helpers “including SVT staff, a volunteer landscaping company, and friends and fellow enthusiasts, as well as high school students and Eagle Scouts. I was also lucky to have the continued support of Michael Wells [a former SVT Board member] who was instrumental in protecting Cowassock.”

A dedicated volunteer, Rob helps out in many ways at Cowassock: monthly monitoring, basic maintenance and storm cleanup, and mentoring Scouts. Even the improvement of Invasives Alley required more than just plant removal; Rob and his volunteers contended with piles of asphalt, fallen trees, raspberry thickets, and trail erosion, and they planted dozens of native plants to provide wild-life habitat.

Beyond SVT, Rob has long volunteered on the municipal committee that cares for Ashland Town Forest. “We have built kiosks, installed map posts, remarked trails, rerouted the Bay Circuit Trail, added three parking lots, built a rain garden, built 11 bridges, and done culvert work.” In addition, Rob has led hikes, restored historic ruins, and coordinated a project to build a large shed.

Recently, Rob led the Town’s effort to acquire a 52-acre property from the United Church of Christ and expand Ashland Town Forest/Cowassock Woods to more than



(L) Rob St. Germain sits atop a bench he built and helped SVT install at Cowassock in 2023. “As an SVT volunteer,” he says, “you get a sense of being part of the team.” (R) Rob led guided walks to raise awareness of the recent project that added 52 acres to the Ashland Town Forest/Cowassock Woods Conservation Area.

700 acres. Rob worked closely with SVT to negotiate the deal and apply for grant funding. The Town purchased the property in January, and SVT now holds a conservation restriction on the land.

Volunteering is really a full-time job for Rob. Since his 2011 retirement from a career in IT and business, Rob estimates that he has spent about 40 hours a week volunteering at Ashland Town Forest and Cowassock Woods! His hard work and dedication earned him SVT’s Steward of the Land Award in 2021.

“SVT has many great volunteers,” said Laura, “but Rob is unique. He is one of the most passionate, persistent, and productive volunteers we work with.”

What inspired Rob to become involved with conservation? “No one thing. I grew up in New Bedford, and Boy Scout summer camp introduced me to the woods. Throughout my life, I have been nurtured by open space. After retirement, it seemed natural to give back.”

Rob is philosophical about volunteering. “We work for money because we need money to live. We volunteer for something much deeper and internally satisfying. Even in the seemingly endless battle against invasive plants, there is the feeling that we have made a difference.”

He acknowledged that there are other worthy conservation organizations in Massachusetts, “but what makes SVT special is its size and its staff. As an SVT volunteer, you get a sense of being part of the team. If you love and enjoy nature, volunteering with SVT is a ‘win-win.’”





## Take a Hike: District 9 Schoolhouse Conservation Area

Now open! SVT's newest trail is a result of a partnership with the Town of Upton. This 92-acre area is named for a schoolhouse that was located near this land in the 1800s. SVT coordinated many volunteer workdays to build a trail that connects to the Stefans Farm Open Space and links to the nearby Robertson Family Conservation Restriction.

The trails are open for hiking, biking, and horseback riding, and are best accessed from a new parking lot on Mechanic Street (the name we originally used for this property). Highlights are impressive rock outcrops and babbling intermittent brooks after rains. Frogs can be heard from a vernal pool in spring, and the calls of eastern towhees are ever-present along the powerline trail in the summer.

Directions and Trail Maps in English, Spanish, and Brazilian Portuguese: [svtweb.org/district9](http://svtweb.org/district9)



## Be Part of History at Wolbach Farm

### All Persons' Trail Naming and Dedication Opportunities

Individuals or businesses can name or dedicate elements of the All Persons' Trail at Wolbach Farm! Opportunities include naming of the Woodland Trailhead Overlook or the accessible Nature Playscape; dedication of a bench, picnic table, or interpretive installation; naming of the Storybook Path or dedication of a Storybook Path signpost; and more!

Public recognition signage may honor the donor, someone they designate, or a business. Naming and dedication gifts support SVT's general operations where need is greatest to achieve our mission.

Find all current opportunities at [svtweb.org/aptrail](http://svtweb.org/aptrail) or contact Cecil Hynds-Riddle, Director of Development: [chyndsride@svtweb.org](mailto:chyndsride@svtweb.org) or 978-443-5588, ext.111.

## Conservation Collaborations

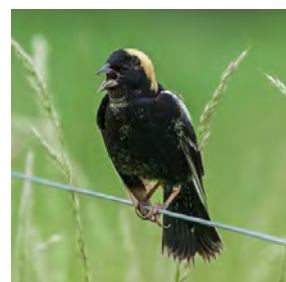
**Corporate Groups.** SVT welcomes the volunteer support we receive from area businesses. In June, employees from **Saint-Gobain Research** in Northborough removed invasives plants and trimmed brush at our Cedar Hill property, and a group from **Dupont** in Marlborough removed invasives from Memorial Forest. In July, a dozen staff members from **E Ink** in Billerica participated in a BioBlitz at Ralph Hill to help catalog the plants, fungi, and insects at the conservation area.

*Is your group looking for a volunteer workday? Contact us at [svt@svtweb.org](mailto:svt@svtweb.org).*



Fatin Lind

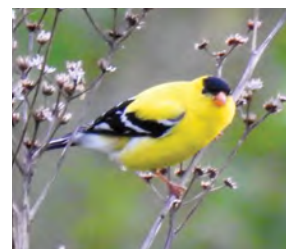
**Bobolink Habitat.** SVT's Mike Perrin recently oversaw a graduate student project at Tufts University alongside Mass Audubon's Bobolink Project. As the coordinator of the Metrowest Conservation Alliance, Mike was part of a team research-



Will Sweet

ing best management practices for grassland birds, habitat on active agricultural lands, and the complexities of balancing the needs of multiple stakeholders. Cornell Lab of Ornithology highlighted the effort in its July 2025 eBird Recap email, which reached **nearly 800,000 eBird users** across the globe! [svtweb.org/bobolink](http://svtweb.org/bobolink)

**SVT Big Sit.** On June 1, SVT, Boxborough Birders, and the Boston Birding Festival held a Big Sit Birdwatching Event at Wolbach Farm. Around 40 people participated, and altogether we counted **70 distinct species**, including two rare species: a black vulture soaring high above us and an American bittern flying over the Sudbury River. [ebird.org/tripreport/380405](http://ebird.org/tripreport/380405)





Sudbury Valley Trustees

# THE WREN

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.

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

## Ribbon Cutting: All Persons' Accessible Trail

See page 1



ALSO: Managing Habitats, see pages 4-5

## BEER in the BARN 2025

Enjoy an evening of music and camaraderie  
at this casual fundraiser for SVT

Friday, September 12, 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.

The Barn at Wolbach Farm, Sudbury

Beer • Refreshments • Live Music

Tickets: \$65 per person

Space is Limited - Get Your Ticket Today!

[svtweb.org/beer-barn-2025](https://svtweb.org/beer-barn-2025)



## SVT'S 2025 ANNUAL MEETING



Tuesday, October 7

Framingham Village Hall  
2 Oak Street, Framingham

6:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Refreshments & Socializing

7:00 to 8:30 p.m.

Meeting & Annual Awards

RSVP and Complete Details:

[svtweb.org/2025AM](https://svtweb.org/2025AM)



Outdoor Voices Program

## WAYS OF MY ANCESTORS WE ARE STILL HERE

Artist's Talk and Portrait  
Photography Presentation  
Scott Strong Hawk Foster

Wednesday, September 17, 7:00-8:30 p.m.  
The Barn at Wolbach Farm, Sudbury

Details and Registration: [svtweb.org/calendar](https://svtweb.org/calendar)

