



# THE WREN

April 2026



3 Phase 2 of All Persons' Trail



4 Celebrate Earth Day with SVT



6 Spotlight on SVT and Water



7 New Business Sponsorship Program



## Healthy Land, Healthy Water

Tom Sullivan

SVT has a mission to protect land, yet the region where we work is defined by water: the 36 cities and towns around the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord Rivers. The lands in this region, known as the SuAsCo watershed, drain into one of these rivers, and the health of the water depends on the health of the land.

Land conservation, including both land protection and stewardship, is critical to clean waters and healthy watersheds. Undeveloped forests, wetlands, and open spaces filter rainfall, recharge aquifers, and protect rivers and streams.

Land protection and land stewardship also play a role in drought mitigation. Persistent climate-induced drought conditions and excessive residential and commercial water usage have severely depleted our freshwater reserves, and our region of Massachusetts has been in a significant drought status for almost two years. Protected natural systems reduce runoff and hold more water, and they also maintain a cooler environment.

Faced with our rapidly changing climate and its associated impacts, SVT works with a variety of conservation partners on initiatives that offer many benefits to the SuAsCo watershed:

**Improved water quality.** Natural landscapes and floodplains filter pollutants from stormwater runoff from roofs, parking lots, roadways, agricultural fields, and fertilized lawns. This

filtering promotes nutrient cycling, helps retain sediment, and results in higher-quality groundwater that feeds private wells and public water supplies as well as our ponds and streams.

**Carbon storage.** Watersheds with intact natural land cover and soil resources are capable of sequestering carbon, thereby offsetting greenhouse gas emissions.

**Reduced flooding and increased resilience.** Intact floodplains and riverbank areas hold water and are better adapted to absorbing the stormwaters that result from the extreme weather patterns and changes in precipitation associated with climate change.

**Reduced risk for invasive species colonization.** Naturally functioning ecosystems are more resilient and can favor native species, helping them out-compete invasive species.

One critical SVT partner in this work is OARS, a nonprofit that advances efforts to safeguard our three rivers. Each year, SVT and OARS bring together conservation groups, municipal officials, and state legislators to discuss important conservation priorities and statewide regulations for protecting lands and water. Our shared goal is to protect the long-term health of the watershed as well as the people and wildlife of the region.

Turn to page 6 to learn more about SVT's efforts to protect local waters.

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**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**

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# A Time of Hope

*Davnet Conway, Executive Director*

At SVT’s Flower Power Gala in February, we celebrated the collective traits—resilience, generosity, diversity—that make our extended SVT community so powerful. Now, as we head into spring, we can add “hopeful” to the list as we eagerly await the emergence of spring ephemerals—those showy understory plants that bloom in April and May and then go dormant once the trees above them leaf out.



Despite their diminutive size, these early-arriving flowers bring joy with their beauty while serving as a powerful part of our forest ecosystem. They provide critical early food sources for pollinators, help improve soil health, and reduce water runoff during a time of year when few other plants are blooming.

Similarly, SVT’s land protection work does more than meets the eye. Conserved land supports permanent, compounding benefits that serve as a preventive investment in natural, long-term solutions to environmental and social challenges in the form of clean air and water, fresh food, and open space for all.

SVT’s success in conserving natural areas requires a healthy dose of hope and the belief that despite the environmental challenges we face, we can make a positive impact. The arrival of Earth Day is an inspiration to renew our resolve, take on new challenges, and stretch our capacity.

Let your spirit be renewed, too, by getting back outside this spring to reap the benefits of nature. SVT is celebrating Earth Day with an array of volunteer opportunities and nature programs, and we invite you to come along. And be sure to keep an eye out for the tiny spring ephemerals that live along the land—and waters—of our region.

Happy Spring!

P.S. Thank you to everyone who made Flower Power Gala such a success. Page 7 has more details—and includes a link to our new video, “The Power of SVT.”

**NATURE SIGHTINGS**

**Snapping turtles.** In early spring, you might see snapping turtles start to emerge from their winter brumation and travel between waters, possibly to seek out feeding opportunities in vernal pools. By late May, female turtles will travel over land to lay their eggs. Sandy roadsides are often an attractive nesting spot, so keep an eye out to avoid turtles that might be crossing roads. Baby snapping turtles that emerge later in the summer and survive the journey back to waters may live for 50 years or more.



William Watt

## SVT's Newest Property: Miscoe Woods

On December 18, SVT acquired our 96th conservation area when we purchased a 108-acre property on the Upton-Mendon town line. With its stands of oak and pine trees as well as wetlands containing highbush



blueberry and sweet pepperbush, Miscoe Woods provides important habitat for a diversity of birds and other wildlife. SVT thanks the Mass Audubon 30x30 Catalyst Fund, the Family of George and Doris Meyers, and many individual donors for supporting this project.

The property does not have formal trails, but our stewardship staff is making plans to manage the habitats, and we are still raising funds for stewarding this land. Learn more: [svtweb.org/miscoe](http://svtweb.org/miscoe)

## Sweet Autumn Farm Protected!

In another December success, SVT permanently protected 12.8 acres of Sweet Autumn Farm in Carlisle when the landowner donated a conservation restriction (CR) to ensure the land can always be used for farming.



Katharine Endicott

Sweet Autumn Farm is located next to Woodhaven Farm, which SVT and the Carlisle Conservation Foundation protected with a CR in 2016. Both properties are now part of an expansive corridor of open space that includes Estabrook Woods on the Carlisle-Concord line. Thank you to the generous landowner!



SVT has welcomed **John Maccini** as our new part-time Property Maintenance Manager at Wolbach Farm. John joined the staff in mid-December, and he immediately jumped into the task of keeping everything at Wolbach running smoothly. He brings an incredible skill set to the position, with over 40 years of experience in residential and commercial construction, equipment operation, and automotive repair.



Anushri Mishra

## Phase 2 of All Persons' Trail Starts Soon

In July 2025, SVT opened the first portion of the All Persons' Trail at Wolbach Farm, a gently graded path with a stabilized stone dust surface. The trail provides access to nature for people who rely on mobility devices, and it also includes a Picnic Grove with accessible picnic tables where everyone can gather for a summer outing.

This year, we have even more exciting plans for the property. In May, we expect to launch Phase 2 of the project: We will extend the trail nearly 1,200 feet into the woods, add a second picnic area, and improve the access path to our barn. We will also condense our popular Storybook Trail onto the All Persons' Trail so visitors in strollers or wheelchairs can more easily enjoy the story.

Once the changes are complete, we expect Wolbach Farm will be a destination spot for those seeking an accessible space to explore nature, participate in events, and relax with friends and family. We'll post updates on our website and social media pages to keep you informed of our progress. [svtweb.org/aptrail](http://svtweb.org/aptrail)

## Expanding Forty Caves

This spring, SVT is working to purchase an 11-acre property in Berlin that is located just yards from the Forty Caves Conservation Area. The land, currently owned by the Matthews Family, features mature forest and areas of wetlands. Its conservation will help to buffer the habitats in Forty Caves, which includes lands owned by SVT and the Towns of Berlin and Clinton.

Please help! SVT is raising funds to support the purchase and long-term stewardship of the land, which we will manage as part of Forty Caves. Learn more: [svtweb.org/matthews](http://svtweb.org/matthews)

# Celebrate Earth Day With SVT



*Signs of spring abound along your favorite trail.* Trilliums and trout lilies bloom. Wrens and warblers return. Salamanders and spring peepers rejoice. Bears and bats emerge. It is evident that nature is beautiful and essential.

*Earth Day calls us to love the planet that we call home,* as we are reunited with its warmth and light.

*This Earth Day, we invite you to celebrate the earth the SVT way:* Get out on the land, watch a bird from your window, plan a pollinator garden, or read "Firefly" (a poem by Jacqueline Woodson), as you wait for still warmer days to arrive. (You can link to "Firefly" from SVT's Earth Day web page: [svtweb.org/earth26](http://svtweb.org/earth26).)

## Volunteer with SVT

*Each spring, Earth Day reminds us that protecting the places we love takes all of us.* Volunteering is one of the most direct and meaningful ways to care for the land—whether you're pulling invasive plants, building and maintaining trails, or introducing new members of our community to the joys of the outdoors. Every hour given restores native habitat, supports local wildlife, and ensures that our conserved lands remain healthy and accessible for generations to come.

When you volunteer with SVT, you're not just giving back—you're making a lasting, visible impact on the land right here at home. Check our upcoming volunteer events below to register for an April volunteer project.

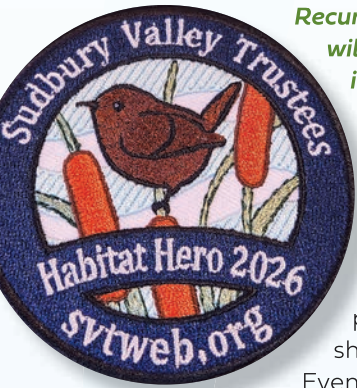
If you have recently become an SVT volunteer or if you're interested in volunteering for the first time, please join us for a **Volunteer Orientation and Kickoff on Tuesday, April 7, at 5:30 p.m.** SVT's Dan Stimson and Sam Rogers will provide background about SVT's work and describe the many ways our volunteers protect land and wildlife. You will meet other new volunteers, connect with seasoned volunteers, and enjoy a tour of SVT's headquarters! Light refreshments will be provided.

### April Volunteer Schedule (Register at [svtweb.org/calendar](http://svtweb.org/calendar))

- Tuesday, April 7, 5:30 p.m. | **Volunteer Orientation and Kickoff**, Wolbach Farm, Sudbury
- Saturday, April 18, 9:00 a.m. | **Invasives Pull and Walk**, Smith Conservation Land, Littleton
- Saturday, April 18, 10:00 a.m. | **Garlic Mustard Pull**, Cowassock Woods, Framingham
- Sunday, April 19, 10:00 a.m. | **Garlic Mustard Pull**, Cowassock Woods, Framingham
- Monday, April 20, 10:00 a.m. | **Weed Warrior Pull**, Cowassock Woods, Framingham
- Wednesday, April 22, 2:00 p.m. | **Trail Clean-up**, Sawink Farm, Westborough
- Saturday, April 25, 10:00 a.m. | **Clean-up and Trail Build**, Centennial Park, Framingham
- Saturday, April 25, 2:00 p.m. | **Weed Warrior Pull**, Cowassock Woods, Framingham



## Become a Monthly Member— Snag Your Habitat Hero Patch



Recurring monthly donors to SVT will now receive this amazing iron-on patch. Plus, if you keep your monthly giving streak going, we will send you a **new patch with a new fun design every year!**

Monthly gifts provide steady, dependable support for our land stewardship and conservation work.

Even a modest monthly donation adds up to meaningful, long-term impact—helping SVT protect habitats, maintain trails, and respond to emerging needs as they arise.

Reliable, ongoing support allows SVT to plan ahead with confidence, budget responsibly, and care for conserved lands in every season. By becoming a monthly donor, you create lasting stability for the places and wildlife we all cherish.

Visit [svtweb.org/support](http://svtweb.org/support) to become a Habitat Hero today! (And to current monthly donors, keep an eye on your mailbox for your 2026 Habitat Hero patch coming soon. Thank you for your dedicated support!)

## Earth Day and Environmental Justice

**Earth Day celebrations began in 1970** when a senator from Wisconsin organized a nationwide protest on college campuses in response to environmental disasters, including an oil spill in Santa Barbara, California. In our current decade, environmental disasters occur almost every day and adversely affect our neighbors and friends right here in the 36 communities that SVT serves.

Environmental Justice (EJ) is the concept that everyone has a right to clean air and water, access to green space, and freedom from the devastating health impacts of pollution and toxins. In our region, marginalized communities—including low-income people, Indigenous peoples, people of color, people whose first language was not English, and people with physical and mental disabilities—are disproportionately impacted by the burdens of environmental destruction and pollution, and they have less access to the benefits nature provides.

Earth Day offers an opportunity to stand with communities experiencing environmental injustices. In the SVT Region, 20 of our municipalities are home to state-recognized Environmental Justice communities. SVT is working collaboratively with people affected most by environmental injustices and is actively prioritizing stewardship and land protection in EJ communities.

Want to help? Join us at the Centennial Park volunteer workday in Framingham on April 25 (see [svtweb.org/calendar](http://svtweb.org/calendar) for details).



## Earthling Spotlight: **Marbled Salamander** (*Ambystoma opacum*)

**This critter is in a group called “mole salamanders”** and spends a lot of time underground in rodent burrows (it isn't particularly good at digging). The marbled salamander relies on vernal pools\* in a curious and uncommon way.

In late summer/early fall, the marbled salamander migrates to the dry bed of a vernal pool to mate and lay eggs, which the female guards until an autumn rain refills the pool. Larval salamanders (lovingly called “sallywogs” by some) emerge from their eggs within hours or days after contact with water. They remain in the ephemeral pond through winter, until March or April, when they lose their gills and move onto land in their adult form. They grow to about 3 to 5 inches long and can live 5 years or more.

In Massachusetts, these gorgeous little guys are a threatened species of greatest conservation need. The protection of upland forests, wetlands, water quality, and the delicate vernal pools they rely on to breed are the most important pathways to recovery for the marbled salamander.

\* Vernal pools or ephemeral ponds are small, temporary water bodies that come and go through the year.



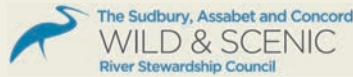
M. Olsdon-Douglas



## SVT and Water

### Wild & Scenic Partners

Nearly three decades ago, SVT was instrumental in advocating for parts of the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord (SuAsCo) Rivers to be designated as a national Wild & Scenic River. In 1999, the U.S. Congress awarded this designation to 29 miles of these rivers in eight towns because of their remarkable values, including scenery, history, ecology, education, and recreation.



Today, SVT partners with the Wild & Scenic River Stewardship Council (RSC) on initiatives to protect the health of these waters and aquatic habitats. SVT was a founding partner of the RSC and continues to provide input on river resource planning and projects.

The RSC also provides SVT with funding for efforts to protect undeveloped lands that support the wild and scenic values of the rivers and to steward existing SVT lands in the Wild & Scenic River floodplain. Funding from the RSC has helped to restore habitats at Wolbach Farm (Sudbury), Greenways Conservation Area (Wayland), Elliott Concord River Preserve (Carlisle), and Ralph Hill (Billerica).

In 2018, on the 50th anniversary of the Wild & Scenic program, an article in *The Wren* described the significant role that SVT cofounder Allen Morgan played in achieving the designation for the SuAsCo Rivers. Check it out: [www.svtweb.org/wild](http://www.svtweb.org/wild)



Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration

### Climate Collaborative

SVT staff members are participating in a Collaborative that was recently formed by our colleagues at OARS, the Town of Concord Office of Sustainability, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). The new SuAsCo Climate Collaborative has goals to address climate resilience and water resources management in the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord Rivers watershed.

The Collaborative, which received a \$450,000 Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, will help the SuAsCo communities prepare for the risks of climate change and extreme weather by:

- Building a regional framework and establishing a structure to foster communication and action across the watershed.
- Conducting a vulnerability assessment of critical infrastructure (like culverts) and natural assets in the region to pinpoint areas of greatest risk.
- Identifying shared regional priorities and data needs to guide projects and secure additional funding for climate-resilience efforts.

The Collaborative is now reaching out to municipalities and other partners to collect data and establish a governance framework. One of these partners is the Metrowest Conservation Alliance (MCA), which brings together government and nonprofit partners to address land protection and stewardship in our region. The MCA is eager to work with the Collaborative and share information that will help us reach our goal of building climate and ecological resilience in our 36 communities. As the administrative lead of the MCA, SVT will coordinate these efforts to maximize success.

## Take a Hike (and a Paddle)

Looking to get out on the trails *and* our rivers this spring? Three SVT properties along our Wild & Scenic Rivers offer canoe landings where you can get off the water, stretch your legs, and explore the fields or forests before finishing your paddle.

At **Greenways Conservation Area** in Wayland, a picnic table on a wildlife viewing knoll overlooks the Sudbury River landing spot at a central point in the trail system. Further north, on the Concord River in Carlisle, **Elliott Concord River Preserve** hosts a canoe and kayak landing and short trail with a bench overlooking the river. A paddle along this stretch of the Concord River features a beautiful stretch of Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge.

Downstream (and even further north) along the Concord River in Billerica (pictured) lies **Ralph Hill**



**Conservation Area**, which includes lands on either side of the river, and even a small island on the upstream side. Paddlers can get out and explore the large trail network on the west side of the river, via a landing where the blue trail overlooks the river. (On the east side of the river, the Town hosts a small parking area and launch area near Bartlett's Landing.)



Fatin Lind

## New Business Sponsorship Program: Support Conservation Year-Round!

Area businesses have a big role to play in the conservation of local natural areas. When your business supports SVT, you demonstrate to your employees and your customers that you share our values and that you care about the health of the region and the well-being of the local communities.

Our expanded annual business sponsorships start at just \$250 and offer many benefits, including:

- Recognition in the community and acknowledgement at SVT's Signature Events throughout the year
- Placement in SVT's robust marketing materials, online and in print
- Outdoor experiences and perks for employees
- Signature Event tickets, including SVT's Annual Gala and Circle of Friends donor-appreciation gathering

Find more details about the impact and benefits of sponsoring SVT at [svtweb.org/business](http://svtweb.org/business)

## SVT's Flower Power Gala: Thank You!

We were delighted by the incredible turnout at our Flower Power Gala on February 7, when nearly 250

guests gathered at the Charter Oak Country Club in Hudson to support our conservation work.

Thank you to everyone who made the evening a success: those who attended in person, made donations, or placed bids in our online auction; those who donated items for the auction; the Table Hosts who invited so many wonderful guests; David O'Leary, the evening emcee; Lisa West Photography; Freddie Fontaine of DJ Backspin Entertainment; and the eight Garden Clubs that contributed beautiful arrangements as part of our Centerpiece Contest.

During the evening, guests enjoyed the debut of "The Power of SVT," a video that showcases the importance of SVT's work. Enjoy it for yourself: [svtweb.org/power-svt](http://svtweb.org/power-svt)





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ALSO: Healthy Land, Healthy Water see page 1

## Earth Day Programs All Month Long

SVT has planned an array of free programs for the month of April. Join with us to spend time on our trails, learn about nature, and celebrate the success of land conservation.

**Tuesday April 7, 3:30 p.m.** | **Frog and Toad Storytime**, Wolbach Farm, Sudbury

**Sunday, April 12, 2:00 p.m.** | **Ecopoetry for Everyone**, Wolbach Farm, Sudbury

**Saturday, April 18, 10:00 a.m.** | **Storytime**, Wolbach Farm, Sudbury

**Saturday, April 18, 10:00 a.m.** | **Beavers at Upper Mill Brook**, Upper Mill Brook, Wayland

**Saturday, April 18, 10:00 a.m.** | **Nature Walk**, District 9 Schoolhouse Conservation Area, Upton

**Tuesday, April 21, 10:00 a.m.** | **Nature Walk**, Elliott Concord River Preserve, Carlisle

**Wednesday, April 22, 10:00 a.m.** | **Celebration of Earth Day**, Nobscot Scout Reservation, Sudbury

**Wednesday, April 22, 2:00 p.m.** | **Earth Day on the Trails**, Sawink Farm, Westborough

**Thursday, April 23, 1:00 p.m.** | **Nature Walk**, Forty Caves, Berlin

**Friday, April 24, 2:00 p.m.** | **Nature Walk**, Walkup & Robinson Memorial Conservation Area, Westborough

**Sunday, April 26, 10:00 a.m.** | **Vernal Pool Salamander and Frog Search**, Smith Conservation Land, Littleton



Register for Earth Day programs and volunteer projects: [www.svtweb.org/calendar](http://www.svtweb.org/calendar)