



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE

Sharon Friends of Conservation

SHARE MAINTAIN PRESERVE ENJOY ·

A Mother Monarch's Story

by Madeline Champagne

This probably will never happen, but just imagine, if you can, that a female Monarch butterfly could remember where she laid an egg on a particular milkweed plant, and she came back twice to visit her caterpillar, when it had just come out of the egg, and when it was ready to make the chrysalis. Here's what she might say on her first visit:

Well, hello, Dear Little One! I see that you have eaten your way out of your egg, and now you're eating that eggshell, which is important nutrition for you. The next thing you'll be doing is eating some fibers of the leaf that you're on, then you'll be eating that leaf. I searched very carefully to find the right plant, which is milkweed, to lay an egg on, and to lay my egg on a nice tender leaf to get you off to a good start.

I'm going to tell you some things about your life as a caterpillar. Not many caterpillars are told ahead of time what is going to happen. I don't have to teach you what to do - all your behaviors and actions that you do to insure your survival, you know how to do by instinct. Which means that you just know what to do, no one has to teach you.

But since you are my special caterpillar, I thought you might like to know what your future will be like. You'll be about 2,700 times your original mass. A few times your skin will feel too tight, so you'll find a safe place to stay in, maybe staying on your plant and maybe moving off of it, and you'll make some of that silk to help you hold on to whatever surface you're on. Then you'll push with your muscles in the back of your neck, which will split your skin and there will already be a bigger new skin underneath. New body parts, like breathing tubes and head capsule, have been developing, so you'll be replacing your skin but also some other body parts. This is

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Beaver Brook Bridge Fix

by Kurt Buermann

Earlier this year, I received reports from hikers that the Beaver Brook Bridge might be in need of attention. The bridge, built in 2007, had always had some unusual characteristics. Originally prefabricated in a back yard, bridge pieces were numbered and transported to the brook site where a crew of volunteers and Boy Scouts helped reassemble them. At a point in the process, it was thought that spreading the bridge stringers – the beams

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Bridge Fix

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supporting the wooden deck treads—at the ends might add more stability to the bridge. To some extent this worked. However the change in stresses gave the bridge a bowed appearance, making it look curved. In fact, it was curved.

Despite the idiosyncrasies of the bridge, it served walkers well over the years. Prior to the bridge, brook crossers had to negotiate the top of a small dam. This was slippery in winter with ice and in summer with algae. A check on the bridge's condition showed that the bridge footings were deteriorating. The 6 x 6 beams that the bridge rested upon were set into the brook's bank and were wet much of the time. Rot had begun in the ends and places where the wood had been cut, exposing areas where pressure treating did not penetrate.

It was time to make some fixes. With the blessing of the Sharon Conservation Agent, John Thomas, Sharon Friends of Conservation put out a call out for volunteers. It finally boiled down to me, Kevin Izzo, Lajos Kamocsy, Steve Clough Matt Moses. First, the bridge ends were slightly raised so the old footing beams could be removed. It was possible that when the bridge was detached from the footings it would have a tendency to tip. Accordingly, safety lines were run from the bridge to nearby trees. Even so, it was dicey work. Using a hydraulic jack, the ends were lifted, first one then the other. It was an especially muddy and messy undertaking. People and things tended to scoot down the stream banks into the brook. The footings were replaced and given extra anti-rot treatment. In addition, the bridge's beams and handrails were improved

and strengthened. The bridge is used a lot, not only by hikers but by commuters living nearby who find it a good shortcut to the Train Station.

The Beaver Brook Trail runs from Berkshire Avenue to the Train Station. Several Boy Scout projects have extended it over the years. The trail has some very scenic stretches with pine forest, glacial moraines and fine views of Beaver Brook (Which is rated as an especially healthy stream.)

Sharon Friends of Conservation can provide a map of the trail:

sharonfoc@gmail.com



before



(right to left) Volunteers Lajos Kamocsy, Steve Clough and Ken Hyman pry out old footings of the Beaver Brook bridge.



Sharon Friends of Conservation Events

In the past, Sharon Friends of Conservation would schedule events for the upcoming 6 months. In view of the current and changeable situation with the Covid-19 virus, we will be scheduling events as they are deemed safe. This means that we will give a shorter notice—one or two weeks—before the events. Event notices will be sent out via our email list as well as posted on our website. www.sharonfoc.org and the the *Sharon What's Up* private Facebook page: www.facebook.com/groups/513119605440082

If you would like to be added to our email list

please send a request to:

sharonfoc@gmail.com

You do not have to be a member to join our email list. We do not share your information with any one!



Join the Sharon Friends of Conservation or Renew Your Membership

Join or renew online: www.sharonfoc.org/become-a-member-of-sfoc/

Name: _____

Address: _____

☐ New Member

☐ Renewal

Check one. Dues are \$25 per year.

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

Would you like to volunteer? Special skills? _____

Send to SFOC, 45 Furnace St., Sharon, MA 02067 or join/renew online at www.sharonfoc.org/support/membership.html

Please note: Sharon Friends of Conservation does **not** share or make your membership information available to anyone.

Mother Monarch

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so you will likely have to rest for a while afterwards. If you're not disturbed, you'll probably turn around and eat your old skin. Your life is simple, but there are dangers. There's a lot of bigger creatures out there, who may not be very careful about the plant that you're on. There are insects that like to eat caterpillars, and there are insects that lay their eggs in caterpillars. There isn't much you can do about the other insects. One thing that is very fortunate for you is that you will probably be very safe from birds, who like to eat caterpillars. You see, when you eat milkweed, you are eating some chemicals that make you taste bad to birds, so they learn to leave you alone.

When you sense danger, you'll probably try to move out of the way. When you're little, you might fall off the leaf but you'll be able to stay on the plant since you'll be hanging by a piece of that silk that you make. When you are bigger, you'll curl up in a ball and fall off the leaf into the grass and leaves - but you'll easily find your way back onto the plant.

I'll come back and check on you in about two weeks, that is when you will be a full-grown caterpillar!

Two weeks later:

Well, hello, Dear Big One! My, how you have grown. I'm glad to see that you had a good life as a caterpillar. Now you're going to make a big change, so that you can turn into a special butterfly like me. You're going to have to do some work to get ready, and I'll tell you what you'll be doing - but don't worry, as I told you before, if you don't remember everything I tell you now, it will come to you through the process.

First, you're not hungry anymore, so you've stopped eating. Now you'll need to climb to a nice safe place - it might be on the underside of a leaf that you're on, or you could walk off the plant and look for a sheltered place. If you stay on the underside of a leaf, you'll want to stay along the main vein of the leaf, that is the strongest part. It is important to find a place that is up from the ground. After you've climbed up to your safe place, you'll use your silk to make a little mat, and make a little silk button in the middle of it. Once that is done, you can rest for a while, holding on to that mat of silk. The next step is to walk a little bit and when your very back two legs are at that button, make sure you are holding on to that button with the two legs at your tail end, and when you are sure that you are holding on tight, let go with your front legs so that you end up hanging with your head end down. Now you can relax for a day or so. The next step will be to shed your skin for the last time - but this time instead of a new skin under the old skin, as your skin splits from behind your head, there will now be a shell.

Here's the last two things that you'll do as a caterpillar. While you're hanging upside-down there, you'll shed your skin for the last time. Remember how you push the muscles at the back of your neck to split your skin. As it splits off now, instead of a new skin there is a shell that will form over your body. Here's the very tricky part: as you were growing as a caterpillar, there was a little black stalk developing at your tail end. At the far end of the stalk are lots of little hooks. As that shell, called a chrysalis, is forming, you need to push that stalk up so that the hooks catch on to that thick button of silk that you were holding onto with your back legs. You'll have to squirm around to make sure that the hooks catch on. When your chrysalis shell is forming, it is soft at first - which is why you need to be hanging off the ground - and then the shell will harden. This is the last thing you'll be doing as a caterpillar. Then a wonderful thing will happen. cont'd on p 5



photo by Al Troutman - Creative Commons License

Monarch

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Safe inside that chrysalis shell are cells that have been with you all along, and they will form and develop into something that is not at all like a caterpillar - can you imagine! When all that development is done, you'll look just like me - with eyes, antennae, 6 legs, a body, and wings that are not only beautiful with a bright orange color and black lines where the veins are, but they are strong and will carry you far and wide. And you won't be eating leaves, you'll be drinking nectar from beautiful flowers.

I am glad to see that you have grown up so big and so healthy. It is exciting to think about how you started as a little egg. In that eggs were cells that would develop into all the physical parts of the caterpillar, chrysalis, and butterfly stages. Also in that egg was everything you needed to know to survive.

I'm not going to tell you what it is like to be a butterfly, but you'll know what to do, just as you would have known what to do as a caterpillar if I didn't tell you. I probably won't be here when you become a butterfly, but you'll know how to find other Monarch butterflies to be with.

We Monarch butterflies have been on this earth for thousands of years, so you have ancestors for many, many generations back. As a butterfly you'll find another Monarch to mate with and you will be making sure that there are Monarch butterflies for many generations to come.



photo by Paul Lauenstein

Sharon Conservation Days Revived

by Jana Katz



Jana Katz and some future environmental stewards

Sharon Town reports from the early 1960's talk about Conservation Days, spearheaded by the Conservation Commission. These events somehow lapsed over the years. This year John Thomas, Sharon Conservation Administrator and Conservation Secretary Jana Katz sought to revive this tradition in the hope that it would rekindle and continue for the years ahead.

The 2021 Conservation Day was held on Saturday and Sunday September 11th and 12th. Plans included two scavenger hunts each morning to teach the next generation of environmental stewards about map reading and trail maintenance. Festivities were scheduled from 9 to -11 am.

A scavenger hunt for pre-school aged children took place at 9:30 am at Beech Tree Park. Maps were provided and families were encouraged to seek and find carefully placed prizes throughout the park. At 10 am a more comprehensive scavenger hunt took place along the Massapoag Trail starting at the entrance close to Beech Tree Park. Hidden items included biodegradable packaged seeds, trivia, and a biodegradable container for starting seedlings.

Twenty families joined in the fun over the two days. The Sustainable Sharon Coalition was an integral part of bringing the community together for this event to support environmental stewardship and celebrate Sharon's natural beauty.



SFOC president Kurt Buermann and John Thomas, (right) Sharon Conservation Administrator, at Conservation Day in Beech Tree Park.

SFOC Wildlife Sightings

Send Some In!

This year over 200 wildlife sightings have been added to the collection at sharonfoc.org, bringing the total to almost 1,200 sightings representing approximately 500 species. The impressive abundance and diversity of Sharon's wild plants and animals is a tribute to the foresight and determination of residents such as the late Alice Cheyer, who worked tirelessly to preserve tracts of natural habitat in Sharon.

The collection of sightings is organized into categories to make it easier to find what you are looking for. For example, there are 7 species of ferns, 23 species of mushrooms, 70 species of butterflies and moths, and over 100 species of birds. A free cell phone app called "Seek" can help you identify wild plants, insects, and other wildlife. If you get a photo of something interesting or beautiful (or both!), please share it with the rest of us by using the sighting submission form at sharonfoc.org.

If you encounter a rare species please consider reporting it. Sharon officially has 22 rare species listed www.mass.gov/service-desk/rare-species-viewer.

It is important to verify that these rare species have not yet disappeared from Sharon. The State has set up a website for reporting rare species

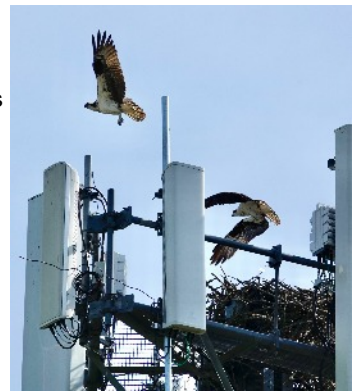
www.species-registry.com/vernal-pool-observations

The State also keeps track of animals that have been run over while trying to cross roads. At places where an unusually high number of road kills occur, the State can install passageways under the road for wildlife to cross without being run over. So, if you see an animal that has been run over, you can help prevent future road kills by reporting it:

www.linkinglandscapes.info/wildlife-roadkill-database



Ospreys nesting atop a Sharon Cellular tower.



photos by Paul Lauenstein

Flying Squirrel Family Re-homed

by Kurt Buermann and Richard Kramer

We are familiar with wildlife we see in the day. Perhaps we are less aware of the creatures who inhabit the dark hours. One of these species is the flying squirrel. While common, they are hardly ever seen as they operate secretively during the night. These squirrels really do not fly. They do glide-- with good control and Precision. Glides of about 300 feet have been recorded.

Worldwide there are about 50 species of flying squirrel. Some are large-- raccoon size. One Asian flying squirrel species can grow to be 3 feet long! Here in New England we have the the Northern Flying Squirrel (*Glaucomys sabrinus*), a little omnivore that consumes seeds, nuts, fungi, fruit, and insects. They grow to about 12 inches long. They nest in hollow spaces, holes in trees, birdhouses, abandoned squirrel nests ... and sometimes people houses!

A friend of mine had become aware of certain noises and skitterings in his attic. An investigation revealed that a family of flying squirrels had taken up residence. While they're mighty cute little guys, they do have a penchant for destructive chewing. This includes wood and sometimes wires. A plan was laid to trap all the squirrels and then seal up any openings where they had gained access to the house. (They can fit though a dime-sized opening.) After several days of very patient effort, a family of four was rounded up. After double checking for any remaining ones, it was decided to relocate the squirrels to a nest box in the woods. It took a few days to construct the box. Meanwhile, as long as the family was together in captivity, they seemed happy and enjoyed the fresh water, peanut butter and tidbits provided for them.

The day came when the squirrels were transferred from their cage to their new nest box which was attached 15 ft up a tree in the woods. It didn't take long to show results. The squirrel family seemed really pleased with their new accommodations. Check the SFOC website, www.sharofoc.org in the days ahead for more photos (and maybe videos) of this local flying squirrel family.



Two flying squirrels peep at the world outside.



One decides to emerge.

