



SPRING 2022

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE

Sharon Friends of Conservation

SHARE • MAINTAIN PRESERVE ENJOY

HAVE YOU SEEN A BALD EAGLE LATELY?

by Dan Arguimbau



If you are one of the fortunate people in Sharon to see a Bald Eagle in the vicinity of Lake Massapoag, there is a name you should know- Jack Swedberg. He, along with a number of others in the Mass. Division of Fisheries and Wildlife and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, worked to bring back this historic bird to our state. Sadly, he passed away in 2018 at the age of 89.

Jack Swedberg had been the senior wildlife photographer for the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. He had been taking pictures for years of wintering bald eagles in one of his favorite places to explore – Quabbin Reservoir. Bald eagles had been extirpated from Massachusetts by the early 1900's. Habitat destruction through land clearing, pollution of lakes and streams during the industrial revolution, misguided killing of bald eagles thinking they were a threat to humans and livestock, and the introduction of pesticides into the environment all combined to destroy the last population of bald eagles in our state. By 1980 Jack Swedberg, who was often referred to as "Father Eagle", was researching the feasibility of bringing bald eagles back to Massachusetts. He was helped by Paul Nickerson from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service who had worked on a restoration project in New

York State. The idea was to take young bald eagles from multiple nests found in other parts of the country and Canada, and raise them in large wooden cages built on a tower to keep them safe from predators. The young eagles would have as little contact with humans as possible. This concept called "hacking" had been done successfully with peregrine falcons. The hope was that when the eagles were released, they would naturally imprint on the area from

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The Newsletter of the

Sharon Friends of Conservation

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And Lived to Tell about it: *Fisher Cats Treed by House Cat*

by Kurt Buermann

Some time ago I was working in our yard when I glanced over to notice our cat fixated on something in a small pine tree. As Callie circled the tree, she kept her gaze on something in its branches about five feet above her. Looking closer, I saw two small gray forms holding



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Meet Sharon's New Conservation Administrator

We would like to welcome Sharon's new Conservation Administrator, Josh Philibert. Josh began his new position in January, but for the past 22 years he has been working in Sharon on a yearly vegetation study in support of the town's water withdrawal permit from the state.

Josh grew up on Summit Ave., and he has great memories of time spent in the Sharon woods. Josh holds a master's degree in botany and worked for over 15 years as an environmental consultant in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and the mid-Atlantic states. This work included resource area delineations and permitting for large public-works projects, as well as the opportunity to take part in rare species inventories, habitat evaluations, wetland mitigation design, and other natural history investigations.

In addition to his consulting work, Josh also taught science at the grade school and middle school levels for many years. In his free time, Josh enjoys hiking, gardening, and beekeeping. In the summer he can be found biking on the roads and in the woods of Sharon and Foxborough or kayaking throughout New England.

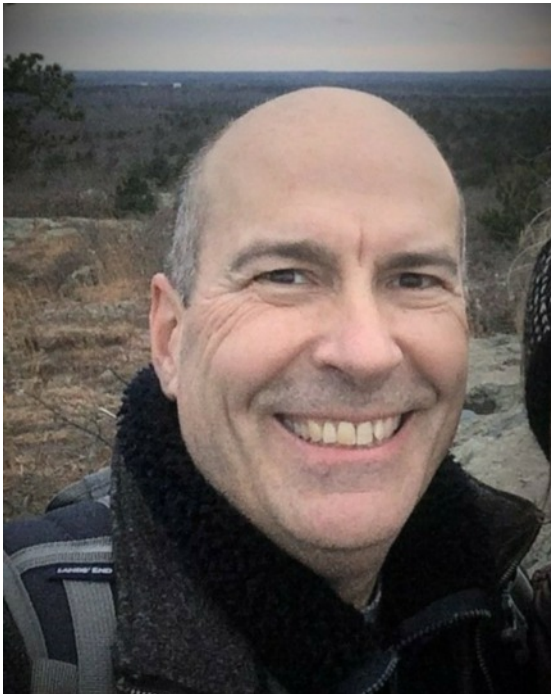


photo courtesy the Sharon Conservation Commission

A Little More of Sharon Preserved

by Peg Arguimbau

Early 2022 saw the completion of a two-year long effort by Anita Hadlock and John Martino Kaylor to permanently protect their land at 256 Mansfield Street, known as Next Week Farm. They chose to place a Conservation Restriction(CR) on the property. They approached the Conservation Commission with their idea and the process began.

The property was purchased in 1984 by Jeff and Anita Hadlock as their home and that of their horses over the years, especially their beloved stallion Red Thorn. The house had been built in 1769 and the barn in 1900. From the beginning they viewed themselves as stewards of the place. Jeff passed away and eventually John Martino came to live there and appreciated the farm just as much. He worked with Anita to fix up the house and barn and maintain the farm with flower and vegetable gardens. The property lies within the Canoe River Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

The process to preserve over 11 acres of their farm started in 2020. The time frame to do this is not a short one. A survey is required, legal documents, visits to the property, review and approval by town boards and ultimately the State. Patience is key to the process. Fortunately, Anita and John were determined to accomplish this goal. Kudos to them!

Owners of larger acreage are not always willing to make the effort and pursue permanent protection for their land. The State has programs where there is tax incentive for doing so, however, at this time, approvals are taking until 2024. A CR will lower a property's tax assessment, as it becomes no longer buildable. Any landowner interested in finding out more about this process can contact the Sharon Conservation Commission office.



Birdsfoot violet

SFOC EVENTS for 2022 ~ 2023

Sunday, May 29 at 1 pm Massapoag Trail part 1: Rotary to Mann's Pond. 1 mile. Meet and park at the boat ramp area at Beach & Pond streets.

Sunday, June 12 at 1 pm Massapoag Trail part 2 : Mann's Pond to Belcher St (and Devils Rock) 1 mile. Meet and park at he Mann's Pond lot on Billings St.

Sunday June 12 at 1 pm Rattlesnake Hill hike to the summit. 1 mile out and back. Meet and park on side of Mountain St at about # 339. This is about half a mile south of Hampton Road.

Sunday June 26 at 1 pm Elson Cross Trail on Mountain St. .85 miles, roundtrip Meet and park at the trail head about 276 Mountain St.

Sunday, July 3 at 1 pm Visit King Philip's Rock and Cave. 1 mile roundtrip. Meet and park at the small lot between 81 and 95 Mansfield St.

Sunday, July 17 at 1 pm Rock to Meadow from King Philips Rock trail to the Lakeview meadow 2 miles (out and return) Meet and park at the small lot between 81 and 95 Mansfield St.

Sunday September 11 at 1 pm (An event to be determined.)

Sunday October 9 at 1 pm Check out the new Lakeview trail. Just a short trek (2/10 mile) to the Massapoag lakeshore) Meet and park at the trailhead. On Lakeview St. it is .16 mile from Livingston Dr. or .60 mile from Morse St. (Trailhead has a sign.)

Sunday, November 27 at 1 pm Rattlesnake Hill Summit (maybe better view with foliage reduced) 1 mile out & back. Meet and park on side of Mountain St at about # 339. This is about half a mile south of Hampton Road.

*****2023*****

Monday, January 16, at 1 pm Our annual Martin Luther King Day hike. Details to be announced.

Saturday, April 1 at 6:30 pm SFOC Potluck Supper and General Meeting Details to be announced.



Join the Sharon Friends of Conservation or Renew Your Membership

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

We could especially use volunteers with computer skills. Wordpress, Excel
or just skills in general.

Would you like to volunteer? Special skills? _____



☐ New Member

☐ Renewal

Check one. Dues are \$25 per year.

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.

Fisher Cat

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on to branches. My first thought was that she had treed two small kittens. I called to Cassie to desist but she ignored me. I went over to the tree and scooped Cassie up and carried her away from the tree, thinking the two trapped kittens could then escape. When they saw Cassie was removed, they leapt to the ground and began to run away. I was struck by their mode of locomotion. Instead of a running motion, these two moved in leaps and bounds. There was something peculiar about them. It took me another few seconds and I realized that these were not cats. It seems Cassie had scored a feline first by cornering two *fisher cats* and surviving to tell the tale! Later, I sat down to find out more about fisher cats. I found that fisher cats are not cats. *Pekania pennanti*, as they are scientifically named, are members of a family known as Mustelids. They are related to weasels, badgers, otters, ferrets, martens, minks and wolverines.

Fishers average 30 to 40 inches long. A third of the length is the tail. The females are smaller than males. Fishers are omnivorous. They hunt smaller mammals and are even able to subdue porcupines. Fisher cats are excellent climbers. They can walk both up and down trees with good speed. They may even catch the occasional squirrel:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=7smmd_AgAw4

Fisher cats are quiet hunters. The curdling screams attributed to them are most likely those of Red foxes.

Finally, the reports of fisher cats attacking feline pets are likely greatly exaggerated. They might conceivably attack a cat if they are very, very hungry and see a good opportunity. Alas! Cassie's bragging rights are somewhat diminished.



Cassie

Bald Eagles

cont'd from p. 1

which they were released and eventually return there to breed. In the spring of 1982, the first two young eagles, weighing approximately five pounds each, were brought to the Prescott Peninsula in the Quabbin. They had been taken from multiple-chick nests in the upper peninsula of Michigan. Back at the Quabbin a thirty-foot hacking tower had been built with one-way glass on the edges to allow for observation. A camper trailer was set up for a U Mass graduate student to live at the hacking site to oversee the raising of these young eagles and others yet to come. Keeping a fresh supply of fish for the young birds was a major task. There was so much excitement with the arrival of the eagle chicks they were given the names "Betsy" and "Ross". Betsy and Ross did very well and were released that summer with much fanfare and hope.

By 1988, over forty young eagles, now coming from nests in Canada, had been brought to the Quabbin and eventually released. The first two nesting pairs of eagles were documented there in 1989. One of the eagles was Ross, from the first 1982 release. Today there over 70 nesting pairs in Massachusetts, with the first nest found on Cape Cod in over 115 years. Bald eagles in Massachusetts have now gone from a "threatened species" designation to a "species of special concern".

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eagle "hacking" tower

King Philips Bridge Collapse

By Kurt Buermann

An important bridge on the trail to King Philip's Rock gave up the ghost around the end of March. The bridge spanned a deep ditch which had been dug in the 1950's to drain water which was flooding basements on nearby Mansfield Street. The bridge was important to the trail as it allowed walkers to make a loop to King Philip's rock and King Philip's Cave. The trail is very popular.

The bridge was installed by Sharon Friends of Conservation (SFOC) in 2003. Over the years it had been the subject of vandalism several times. Its final demise, however, was due to time and rotting timbers. Not long after its collapse, volunteers from SFOC were on the job. The remnants of the bridge were removed and a few temporary planks set down for passage across the ditch. Passage. After some investigation it was determined that the rot had begun in the ends of the supporting beams which rested on the ditch bank. Heavier beams and other measures were taken to prevent this problem in the future.



BENCHES

By Kurt Buermann

In my younger days I really never appreciated benches. With added years, I have come to actively seek them out. When walking a trail nothing is so welcome as a good spot to sit. Accordingly, as Sharon friends of Conservation completes a trail project—a boardwalk or a bridge, the left over material is often used to construct a bench. First, it saves carrying out the leftover wood. Rather than leaving it in a heap, it is converted into a spot for repose. Benches serve two purposes. First, they do offer the hiker a chance to rest. I think the second purpose is equally important. I have found that, if you stop and sit still for a while, the forest tends to open up around you. At a walking pace you tend not to notice the more subtle goings-on in the woods. By sitting still we start to tune in to the less obvious activities. Time slows down. I think wildlife becomes less chary of your presence and lets you in on its more secretive side.

So if you come upon a bench—or any good place to sit—lean back, stay quiet and see what happens.



Bald Eagles

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This is the work of the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. There are many people to thank for this wonderful work, but Jack Swedberg stands out as one of the early visionaries of what can be done out of love and hard work. All deserve our thanks and support.



photo by Peg Arguimbau

Eagle in tree near Lake Massapoag



photo by MassWildlife

First Flight



photo by MassWildlife

Jack Swedberg

The Amazing Skunk Cabbage: Herald of Spring

by Mary Tobin

Eastern skunk cabbage, *Symplocarpus foetidus* is a perennial wildflower of woodlands, wetlands, and streams in North America. *Symplocarpus* is a genus in the family *Araceae*. The genus is characterized by having large leaves and deep and contractable root systems. It gets its name from the unique “skunky” odor it produces as well as its somewhat cabbage-like appearance. While humans may find the odor produced repellant, pollinators and other beneficial insects are attracted to its distinct aroma. One of the very first to sprout in late winter and early spring, this amazing plant generates such heat through cellular respiration (55-95 F), it can grow through frozen ground and burn its way through snow cover!

The first part of the plant to appear is the brownish purple, mottled, hood-like leaf called a spathe. This leaf surrounds a knob-like spike covered with tiny petal-less flowers called a spadix. The flowers appear before the leaves. Skunk cabbage requires the whole growing season to mature, and the seeds ripen by early fall. The plant can live up to twenty years! Native Americans used skunk cabbage medicinally to treat coughs and headaches.



Skunk Cabbage

a poem by Mary Tobin

There you are!

My sweet one!

First and bravest of all!

Pushing up fierce and audaciously bulbous,
in the chill green of morning
as the air pulses
new with sun and bird and buzzing wing,
and the earth, held tight in winter's fist,
releases.

Slowly, so tenderly,
the spiral of your leaves unfurl
opening
to reveal
your heart's
green and secret cup

As it fills
and we are filled,
and overflow
with light.

Sharon Wildlife Sightings



eastern coyote



wood frog



garden snail



river otter



Baltimore
oriole



pink lady
slipper orchid



bobcat

Please consider sending your Sharon wildlife encounters to our Wildlife Sightings page. We currently have over 1200 photos and listings of wildlife living in Sharon.

Send us your sightings. They can be animal or plant. A photo is good but just an account or drawing is fine:

<http://www.sharonfoc.org/sightings-grid>

S.O.S. !

Sharon Friends of Conservation was founded in 1986. to conserve and protect open space in Sharon and to foster community participation in these efforts. Since then we have been supported by a generous and loyal membership as well as the active efforts of individuals.

We have come to a sort of impasse. Since the passing of Alice Cheyer in August, 2018, we have come to realize just how much time and effort she had contributed to Sharon Friends of Conservation. Her absence has left a gap in our forces. Unless we can find more help, we may have to diminish our presence, merge with another group or, conceivably, disband .

So, now we are looking for some good people to fill this gap by actively volunteering for certain tasks. These are not too time consuming in themselves.. The problem is that currently one or two people manage several tasks and must to switch from one kind of job to another—riding two or— more— horses at once. Not only is this overburdening, the work is hurried and is not always of the best quality.

We could especially use folks with computer skills .

> **Publishing the our *Newsletter***

> **Leading trail hikes (Is there a trail you use that you know pretty well?)**

> **Representing SFOC at various events**

Also: Please consider serving on our Board of Directors. We would like see our leadership include younger and more diverse people.

So, if you are interested, or know someone who is, interested please contact me directly:

Thanks!

Kurt Buermann

President, Sharon Friends of Conservation

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