



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE *Sharon Friends of Conservation*

SHARE • MAINTAIN • PRESERVE • ENJOY

A Native Plant: Cardinal Flower

by Rita Corey

Many years ago I biked from our apartment in Allston to the Garden in the Woods in Framingham. There I met Cardinal Flowers for the first time. They are truly spectacular! Hummingbirds love them!!

Since then, I have seen them in the wild on several occasions: once while eating at a picnic table in New York, next to the upper reaches of the Hudson River; on a walk down Morse Street during covid where I saw many in the middle of a stream; and most recently while walking on the Massapoag Trail near the bridge over the brook. I took a picture of it, a single stem, and mentioned how delighted I was to see it there to Peg Arguimbau, the head of the Conservation Commission.

Peg said that her son had also seen one along the brook and had taken a picture. That's what is printed

below (thanks Kee!) On page 2, see a large stand of Cardinal Flowers that I saw in early September when visiting the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens.

It's an amazing garden, from the parking lot plantings to the Back River shoreline. Do take the time to visit it!



Cedar Swamp

by Kurt Buermann & Josh Philibert, Conservation Agent

The Atlantic White Cedar Swamp west of Lake Massapoag lies atop Sharon's largest and deepest aquifer. Over the millennia dead vegetation from the cedars has created a layer of peat up to six feet thick. It is called Freetown muck. It is one of Nature's best water purifiers. Sharon's white cedar swamp covers an area of over 600 acres.

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Sharon's Trail Stewards

by Kurt Buermann

Some years ago, Sharon Friends of Conservation (SFOC) began a program to improve and maintain Sharon's hiking trails. The result was an informal group made up of people we named "Trail Stewards" who live near or frequently use the town's trails. Over the years the Trail Stewards, along with the Sharon Conservation Commission and our local boy Scout Troop 95, and the DPW had greatly improved the trails. Disused trails were cleared, signs and markers posted and bridges and boardwalks established to get people over the wet and mooshy places. Sharon's trails were in reasonably good shape. The Trail Stewards are important for maintaining them.

As I get older, I am not able to foot it as fealty as I used to and I do not get out on the trails as much as I once did. Regrettably, after I stepped down as Sharon Friends of Conservation President, I became less active and less in communication with the Trail Stewards. I do worry about letting our trails deteriorate.

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The Newsletter of the

Sharon Friends of Conservation

Rita Corey & Jana Katz, editors

Website: www.sharonfoc.org

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SFOC Potluck Supper 2024

by Kurt Buermann

Sharon Friends of Conservation held its 23rd annual Potluck Supper and general meeting on April 6th. At the general meeting our new president, Gaurav Shah was formally installed in office. Other new board members, Hana Jenner, Josh Simmons and Jana Katz were also “ratified” by a vote of the General Membership



The evening’s presentation was given by our new president. Gaurav has taken macro photography underwater! His subjects are the tiny creatures below the surface of vernal ponds. During their fleeting existence, vernal ponds are a vital resource for many species.

Vernal ponds provide a place where the eggs of frogs, salamanders, shrimp and other species are laid and then provide a nursery for the newly hatched young.

As usual, the food was nonpareil! SFOC members contributed dishes and food donations from Sharon businesses also appeared. We thank Shaw’s Supermarket, the Coriander Restaurant, Alice’s Mandarin Taste Chinese restaurant, Carriage House Pizza, Ward’s Berry Farm and Crescent Ridge Dairy (for the delicious ice cream).

Sharon Friends of Conservation Potluck supper dates back to 2001. It was seen as a means to bring conservation-minded folks together. Again, as always, we all enjoyed good food and good conversation.

Photos courtesy of Kurt Buermann.



Moose Hill Journal, “Breakfast on the Hill”

by Al Mollitor

Every once in a while, I actually follow through on an inspiration. I thought it would be cool to get up early, pack a breakfast and thermos of coffee, take the touring bike and pedal up to Moose Hill for a few moments of

solitude in the country. Well, on this April morning, I actually did it. What's doubly amazing, is that it worked out pretty much as I had hoped. I happened to wake early (About 5:15, out of bed by 5:45.) and the forecast rain seemed like it would hold off for a couple of hours.

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SHARON FRIENDS OF CONSERVATION

President: Gaurav Shah
Vice-President: Paul Lauenstein
Treasurer: Leo Waters
Secretary: Jana Katz

Board members:

Kurt Buermann
Rita Corey
Judy Karlin
Hana Jenner
Josh Simons

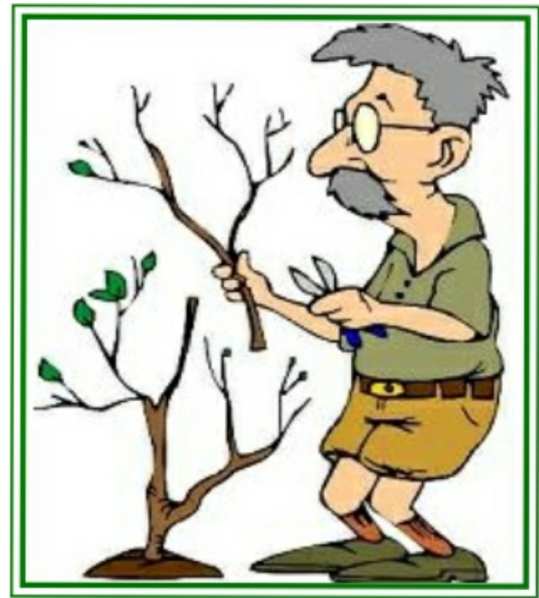


Cardinal Flower photo courtesy of Rita Corey

Trail stewards continued from p.1

Toward this end, SFOC has decided to re-vitalize the Trail Stewards program starting this fall.

Stewardship is a great way to get outside regularly while also performing a valued community service, whether that be by walking trails, helping create new trail signage, doing repair work, or being on call to help with clearing obstructions when reported.



To learn more, please attend a meeting for both current and prospective stewards in the ballroom at the Community Center at 7:30pm on Wednesday, November 6th.

To become a steward, please call or email

Kurt Buermann: 781-784-4625

kurt237@comcast.net

Trail Maintenance Handbook:

www.sharonfoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/SFOC-Trail-Stewards-guide.pdf

GIANT FLYING JORO SPIDERS

by Paul Lauenstein

Please keep an eye out for Giant Flying Joro Spiders in Sharon.

They are scary looking, and they can bite if provoked, but they are docile and not a serious threat to humans.

If you see one and photograph it, I'll post your sighting on the [Sharon Wildlife Sightings](#) web page.

Photo to the right from Wikipedia.org/wiki/Trichonephila_clavata.



Join or renew your SFOC membership.

Mail:
SFOC 45 Furnace St., Sharon, MA 02067
Online:
www.sharonfoc.org/become-a-member-of-sfoc

SFOC does not share or make your information available to anyone.

NEW MEMBERSHIP
 RENEWAL

Dues are \$ 25 per year. Includes family.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE _____ EMAIL _____

WOULD YOU LIKE TO VOLUNTEER? SPECIAL SKILLS? _____

Cedar Swamp continued from p.1

It accumulates and purifies rainwater which then seeps into the underlying aquifer and flows out in all directions, feeding the Canoe River, Beaver Brook and Billings Brook aquifers as well as other springs that feed the lake. Sharon's six municipal wells all collect water purified by our cedar swamp. No streams or brooks flow into Sharon due to the Town's high elevation. Sharon's water supply depends exclusively on rain water. If the Cedar Swamp were somehow completely covered over and no rain was allowed to fall upon it, Beaver Brook and Billings Brook would become seasonal streams. The springs feeding Lake Massapoag would decrease and the lake would stagnate. Sharon would eventually run out of (free!) drinking water.

Atlantic white cedar trees grow very slowly. Increases in height slow after about 50 years and stop after 100 years. Increases in diameter may continue at a relatively even rate up to 100 years. Stand age rarely exceeds 200 years, although some trees apparently have reached 1000 years of age! The trees require wetland conditions. Presently there are hundreds of dead cedars in Sharon's swamp and many cedar saplings are shaded out by invasive vegetation. Cedars cannot flourish if the Freetown muck layer is dried out.

Cedars are dead and dying because the water table has been lowered by human activities such as ditching and pumping for municipal wells. Sharon withdraws about 600 million gallons per year from the ground largely for residential use. A deep ditch dug in the 1960s to alleviate septic system and basement flooding in the Sharon Heights neighborhood allows millions of gallons more to flow out and away from the swamp. The cedar trees are very sensitive to water levels. If the water level gets too low, invasive plants spring up which crowd and shade out the Atlantic White Cedar saplings. Also, a low water level makes cedar saplings accessible to animal browsing.

In the last 20 years or so, people have become aware of the ecological importance of Cedar swamps. They harbor wildlife, songbirds, rabbits, mice and deer as well as a unique species, the Hessel's Hairstreak butterfly (*Callophrys hesseli*), which eats and lays eggs only on white cedar leaves.

In Sharon several studies have been done of our swamp. As a result of these studies, a proposal has been made to raise the swamp water level by partially damming the old, ill-advised drainage ditch. There would be an adjustable dam featuring a number of boards --or a



Photo: M.W. Nelson courtesy of Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

gate-- which could be raised or lowered to set a desired water level. If homeowners begin to see water incursion, the ditch drainage flow could be increased. In drier times the swamp water level could be raised, thus helping the existing cedars and preventing invasive vegetation and animal browsing from destroying the cedar saplings. The underlying Freetown muck, so vital to the swamp, will actually rejuvenate if it is kept sufficiently wet. There is an information sheet and reports about Sharon's cedar swamp available through the *Conservation and Preservation Documents* tab on the Sharon Conservation Department's web page.

<https://www.townofsharon.net/conservation-commission/pages/conservation-and-preservation-documents>



Photo: Sharon's Great Cedar Swamp

Interview with Experts: Are backyard mosquito sprays safe and effective?

reprinted with permission of Montgomery, Maryland, County Department of Environmental Protection

We get a lot of questions and concerns about backyard mosquito sprays. We interviewed two experts to learn more about the risks. Each year, more yards are being sprayed for mosquitos. Did you know you could be poisoning your yard but mosquito populations are not being reduced? Before deciding to spray your yard, know the facts. Spraying can harm you, your kids, pets and your neighbors. The chemicals can also harm birds and insects that help eat mosquitos and pollinate your yard.

To learn more about the problems with mosquito spraying, we interviewed Deborah Landau (DL), an entomologist and conservation scientist at The Nature Conservancy, and Mary Travaglini, (MT) a certified organic land care professional and organic landscape manager at the Montgomery County, MD Department of Environmental Protection. These experts agree: Mosquito treatments, including the alleged “all natural” variety can harm you and your environment, while not actually reducing mosquito populations.



How effective are mosquito sprays?

MT: Published and peer-reviewed research by Professor David Pimentel shows that only 0.1% of the pesticides on average reached the target pests. [Pimentel, Cornell University 1995]. When Pimentel looked specifically at flying insects in the study, like mosquitos, the average was less than 0.0001%, or only one in a million. This is because the droplet size of a pesticide must be small and must float in the air. The droplet size of a mosquito spray must be so small that the chemicals must float in the air, but they also easily drift out of the target area, killing

other insects or mingling into the air we breathe.

DL: Sprays can only kill mosquitos that are in your yard at the time of spraying. Mosquitos typically fly 1-3 miles, so they can quickly re-populate your yard. A commercial mosquito treatment will be more likely to kill butterflies, bees and ladybugs in your yard at the time of application than the mosquitos you're trying to get rid of. Mosquitos are most active at dawn and dusk, but mosquito spray companies often come during the day when most pollinators are active. If the treatments target standing water, beneficial insects that eat mosquitos, like dragonfly larvae, will also be killed. If the spray is focused on wet areas, such as piles of wet leaves, chances are they're killing far more fireflies than mosquitos. Sadly, birds will often pick up insects killed by insecticides, and eat them or feed them to their young.

What am I getting for my 300 dollars' worth of a pesticide spray?

MT: If we turn the .0001% effectiveness into dollars and cents, a millionth of \$300 dollars' worth of spraying is .0003, which is not even a third of a penny. In fact, we'd have to spend \$10,000 before we even got once cent worth of value! Spend your time and money cleaning gutters, removing standing water, and getting together with the neighbors to do this throughout the neighborhood.

DL: Over time, mosquitos become resistant to pyrethroids (the active ingredients in most mosquito treatments) through gene mutation in mosquito populations. Mutations in just this one single gene are enough to make mosquitos in one area resistant to the pesticides very quickly. Companies that spray on a regular schedule will make your mosquito population become resistant even faster. So essentially, you'll be left with a yard and neighborhood full of super skeeters.

Is there anything I can do to control mosquitos in my yard besides spraying?

DL: If you want more bang for your buck, purchase BTI mosquito dunks; they're cheap, effective, and easy to use (you just place them in areas that hold water). And these are a bacteria that will only kill mosquito larvae. You should always remove standing water from your yard, including under flowerpots, inside wheelbarrows, and pretty much on anything plastic. Don't forget to clean out your gutters even in summer (you'll be rewarded with a dry basement in addition to fewer mosquitos)!

Continued on p. 6



synthetic pyrethroids and the undisclosed chemicals they are mixed with are designed to be more lethal. Pyrethroids are neurotoxins in humans, and can cause rashes, respiratory distress, allergic reactions, headache, nausea, convulsions, and more. The additives can cause a host of other reactions. Pyrethroids are also very toxic to fish and other aquatic life, and spread easily on the wind to neighboring properties and into streams. The chemicals can persist on surfaces for days, further killing insects that come into contact. I looked up the data from the national poison control centers – over 27,000 calls were placed to poison control in 2018 for pyrethrins and pyrethroids,

accounting for over 33% of the pesticide calls to poison control alone! Imagine how many more exposures are unknown.

Here’s another tip: If you’re looking for a way to reduce the entire population, consider these simple devices called OviTraps—used by the military around the world effectively to reduce mosquito populations. Don’t forget to keep removing standing water from your yard all summer long and remind your neighbors to do the same. Your neighbors, pets, birds, pollinators, fireflies and skin will thank you!

I still hear about West Nile virus? Is this a concern?

MT: The CDC reported 6 cases of West Nile in Maryland in 2019, and no deaths. In 2018, there were 245 cases of all types of mosquito borne illnesses in Maryland, although it cannot be attributed to whether those were carried in the bodies of visitors or spread by mosquitos in the State. I looked up estimated cancer diagnoses for the first half of 2020, and we’re already at nearly 35,000 cancer cases. I’ll choose long sleeves and clearing standing water instead of spraying chemicals that won’t actually be effective but are a risk to my health.

DL: Prevent mosquito bites by wearing long sleeves and using non-toxic repellents that use oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE). Data shows OLE-based repellants are just as effective as the synthetic DEET formulations. DEET can be toxic at high levels and can damage synthetic clothing. cool you off but will keep them away from the area. A fan on your deck can be surprisingly effective – mosquitos are weak fliers, and the breeze from a fan will not only cool you off but will keep them away from the area.

What about the “all natural” alternatives that a company has told me about?

MT: Companies might describe that the chemicals used are derived from chrysanthemum flowers, but they are not from plant extracts. Commercial pyrethroids are synthetically produced to mimic the same properties of the pyrethrins in chrysanthemum flowers. Both chemicals paralyze the nervous system of many insects, but

Guided Walk—Dead Swamp Pond

The Taunton River Watershed Alliance is hosting a guided walk with Eleanor Simmons on November 12th at 10 AM. The 2.5 miles hike traverses Sharon Conservation Land including part of the Bay Circuit Trail and Greenway as well as Borderland State Park.

<https://savethetaunton.org/event/guided-walk-dead-swamp-pond/>

Friends of Borderland State Park

3-mile guided Full Moon Hike

Friday, November 15th at 5:00 PM

According to the *Farmer’s Almanac*, the full moon is known as the “Beaver Moon” as “beavers begin to take shelter in their lodges.”

www.friendsofborderland.org/events.html

AU REVOIR NOS AMIS: SFOC BOARD DEPARTURES

by Kurt Buermann

Over the past year, Sharon Friends of Conservation's board of directors has lost some valuable members. Some have been with us since our revival back in the year 2000. They are Daniel Arguimbau, Jim Barron, Richard Mandell, Mike Sherman and Mary Tobin. Each has contributed to the mission of SFOC in meaningful ways. They will be missed, along with their valuable insights and ideas.

Daniel Arguimbau joined the board in the year 2000. SFOC had just re-emerged from dormancy. It was originally founded by Dan's wife Peg and three other women in 1986. Dan has been a great source of knowledge and history of land conservation in Sharon in the past. He has worked to maintain those trails as well as allowing some public trails to cross his land. He also instructed volunteers in trail maintenance.

Jim Barron has served as SFOC vice president since the beginning. He has watched over the King Philips Trail which his land abuts and has aided and abetted improvements to it as well as assisted in projects on other trails. He has allowed his land to be used as a staging area for trail projects. His dedication and sense of humor will be missed at board meetings.

Richard Mandell has been active with SFOC projects. He and Dan organized our last photo contest. He often made his pickup truck available for SFOC projects. During the long years leading up to the Town's acquisition of Rattlesnake Hill land, Richard served as our eyes and ears, monitoring the back-and-forth between the would-be developers and the conservationists.

Mike Sherman served for many years as SFOC's trail person. He kept a special eye on the Massapoag Trail. Every year he would pick up the donated ice cream from Crescent Ridge Dairy for our Potluck supper as well as bring a tasty dish from his own kitchen. Now it seems he and his wife, Leah will be moving to Maryland to be closer to their daughter who lives & works there.

Mary Tobin joined the board more recently. She was friends with her neighbor, Alice Cheyer, SFOC's prior Secretary (who passed on in 2018.) Mary is a diligent observer of nature. For years she kept a close eye on the Billings Land, an 11-acre strip which Alice Cheyer had worked hard to preserve as conservation land.

All board members persevered diligently to preserve the 320-acre Rattlesnake Hill for conservation land-- some for over 20 years!

Moose Hill Journal continued from p.2

So, I dug out the old Stanley thermos bottle and brewed a fresh pot of coffee. A few slabs from a fresh loaf of whole wheat bread and natural peanut butter with an orange would be breakfast. I found my binoculars, stuffed everything in a backpack, pulled the bike out of the shed, and was on my way.

It's a short ride from home to the top of Moose Hill, just over two miles of mostly climbing. To the top of the road, that is. The actual summit itself is a hike on the trails somewhat higher up. At the top of the paved road, I pedaled a bit further on a dirt woods road to a spot that probably sparked this idea in the first place. The road passes through a forest for a short while before opening up to a series of old stone-lined pastures. Several bird nesting boxes are mounted on trees and poles, and on a jog a few days before I watched as a beautiful male bluebird scoped things out. I found a sunny spot to sit near an old-style pine carriage shed that offered views over a meadow.

I didn't stay long, but long enough to do some normal daydreaming about the way things were supposed to be and the way things have become. In my dreaming, I thought it might be nice to make these visits a regular thing and keep a journal of observations. Things like the birds and trees that provide a connection to my past life.

I like to visit Moose Hill in different seasons and different times of the day. I can explore its many habitats. I can go for different reasons: I can go on nature excursions, like that day, or go up there for exercise. (I call it the "Moose Hill Health and Fitness Center.") Other times, I'll just drive through slowly, as I often do, taking the 'scenic route.'

On this particular early Spring day I saw a phoebe, a goldfinch and a group of tree swallows twittering overhead. There was not much of any green yet, but things were just about ready to pop. The frogs and peepers were going at it in the swamps. The world was waking up from its winter slumber, and so was I.

*Sharon Friends of Conservation
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Sharon, MA 02067*



Sharon Friends of Conservation was started in 1986 “ to promote, encourage and foster the preservation care and maintenance of all public lands waters and wildlife in the town of Sharon in order to further the recreation and enjoyment of the towns residents.” We are a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.

We welcome all contributions to our Newsletter and we are eager for more– especially those of young people. Please write about a conservation issue of importance to you. We welcome art work, stories, and poetry.

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