



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE

Sharon Friends of Conservation

SHARE • MAINTAIN • PRESERVE • ENJOY

Exoskeleton Safari - the Giant Ichneumonid Wasp

By Gaurav Shah

Wasps.

There's no greater divergence of opinion between the general public and bug enthusiasts than on the subject of wasps. For most people, the term "wasps" brings to mind the paper wasps, hornets, and yellowjackets -- social wasps that build nests. For these wasps, the nest constitutes a big investment of effort and resources, so the social group that lives there feels that they have to defend it a bit more vigorously than many of us would like.

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Sharon's First Legacy Tree

(Will there be more?)

By Kathy Farrell

Question: What's grayish brown (always), green (sometimes), 15 feet around and 77 feet high?

Answer: The Sharon white walnut tree added in 2023 to the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)'s Legacy Tree list. The list recognizes the largest and most interesting trees of each species, trees of historical origins and other trees of unique and significant importance in Massachusetts. The Sharon white walnut tree was nominated by homeowner Mike Gray due to its unusually large size. There are currently 393 trees on the statewide Legacy list including five huge white walnut trees.

The National Champion white walnut is located in North Carolina. In 2024 its circumference was 22 1/2 ft, the height was 58 ft, and the spread was 104 ft. Historically, white walnut (also known as butternut) trees have been used in furniture making and fabric dyeing. Their nuts are enjoyed by squirrels but not by humans. Their range is eastern North America, generally excluding the southern states. Continued on p. 5

The Newsletter of the Sharon Friends of Conservation

www.sharonfoc.org

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Restoring Habitat, One Box at a Time

By Ashika Reddy SHS Class of '26

When Costco opened in March of 2025, I didn't think much of it at first. New store, more traffic, all the usual buzz. But as the weeks went by, the bog near my house, the one that I had grown up walking and biking alongside, felt different. Quieter. I realized it wasn't just me; something was missing.

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The birds that had always been part of that path seemed to have disappeared. That motivated me to act. I reached out to Josh Philibert at the Sharon Conservation Commission, explaining what I noticed and pitching my idea to build birdhouses near the disrupted area. He immediately connected me with Kurt Buermann and Gaurav Shah from Sharon Friends of Conservation. That one introduction opened up a whole new path for me.

At first, I imagined it would be as simple as putting up a few square wooden boxes. But once I started talking with Kurt, I realized there was a whole world of detail and precision that went behind what I thought was a basic project. That's when he introduced me to Peterson houses. As we walked the bogs together, stopping often so he could explain how a box should face away from the wind, why certain heights matter, or how predators can get inside if you're not careful, I started to become more and more intrigued by these houses. Those discussions became the heart of the project. Each time, I came away with something new: a lesson on cedar, a story about a successful nest, or a tip on how to mount boxes securely in uneven ground.

With their guidance, I built and installed five bluebird houses near the Costco site. They might look simple from the outside, but I now understand how much engineering goes into each one. We also implemented a new mounting mechanism, with U-posts, to serve the dual purpose of added structural support and flexibility to relocate.



Along the way, I also asked Josh about ospreys in the area, since I'd heard they sometimes nested nearby. That thread led me to Eversource. I learned they already had an osprey relief project on Cape Cod, where they built nesting platforms to keep the birds away from dangerous power lines.

I then reached out to Jared Blandino at Eversource, who immediately saw potential in bringing something similar to Sharon.



Photos by: Ashika Reddy

Jared worked with the Eversource team to get approval for the project, and even came out for a site visit to walk the bogs and mark possible locations. With his support, we built a large osprey platform to be mounted with the help of Eversource crews and their bucket trucks.

What started as me noticing a silence in the woods had grown into a collaboration with one of the state's largest utility companies, an effort not

just to bring back bluebirds, but to make space for larger raptors too.

I'm grateful to Josh and Kurt for everything they've taught me and the time they've given. Their patience and deep knowledge made it possible for me not only to build and mount birdhouses, but also to see conservation as something you learn and do together, step by step. Now, when you walk or drive past the bogs near Costco, keep an eye out. The birdhouses are there as quiet reminders that even small efforts can bring life back to places that had fallen silent under the weight of modern infrastructure.





Above: Mike Gray in front of Sharon white walnut tree. Left: Mike Gray admiring the towering white walnut tree in his yard.

Legacy Trees continued from p. 1

Mike moved to his property in 1994, partly drawn by this lovely tree which would have been a prominent feature long ago when the property was farmland. While there is no way to know how old the tree is, he guesses it is at least 150 years old. This far exceeds the species' normal maximum age of 75 years. Over the past 30 years, Mike has watched over and taken good care of this special denizen, pruning it as needed to maintain its health.

To learn more about the Legacy Tree program, visit <https://www.mass.gov/guides/massachusetts-legacy-tree-program>. There you'll find the complete list along with nomination information and other details. You might consider a fun road trip to visit some of these memorable and lovely trees. And if a road trip is not in the cards, Sharon is an old town with its own venerable trees. While always respecting private property, you might embrace viewing some of our ancient and large friends.

World Fisheries Day

By Jana Katz

November 21st is World Fisheries Day, an annual tribute to the roles fisheries play on every continent. World Fisheries Day is an international effort dedicated to celebrating the relationship humans have on waterway ecosystems. NOAA Fisheries is a national stewardship program studying and promoting healthy ecosystems and sustainable fisheries which have a direct economic impact on communities sourcing food from public waterways and oceans as well as consumer health. NOAA Fisheries has longstanding local roots in Massachusetts beginning in 1871 in Woods Hole.

At the state level, the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife operates a Coldwater Fish Resources program collaborating with conservation agencies, municipalities, and business partners to prioritize the health of waterbodies throughout the state that sustain coldwater fish.

The program defines these “sensitive habitats” as “a waterbody (stream, river, or tributary thereto) used by reproducing coldwater fish to meet one or more of their life history requirements.” An interactive online map online shows locations throughout Massachusetts where sampling has led to the designation of streams as coldwater fish resources.

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/coldwater-fish-resources>

In Sharon, we have portions of Traphole Brook and Beaver Brook designated as Coldwater Fish Resources.



Fall Scene in Watercolor by Kashmica Sarkar

Finding Sharon's Big Trees

We're on the hunt to find grand old trees in Sharon and create a Big Trees of Sharon list. Join the fun! Send us a photo showing off your biggest tree!

The tree doesn't need to be on your property, but you do need the owner's permission if you are going to submit their tree. You don't need permission to submit trees on Town land. For trees on Audubon or Trustees of Reservation property, respect their rules and only access trees that are in allowed areas.

Sharon has many beautiful big trees, so grab your tape measure and let's build this list!

We'll share results with a link to the list on the SFOC website in the next newsletter.

Read about Mike Gray nominating Sharon's first Legacy Tree due to its size on page 1.

To have your tree included on the list: please **email to bigtree@sharonfoc.org** with **Big Tree as the subject** and include:

Your name

Tree location — be as specific as you can, including who owns the land if not you. GPS coordinates very much appreciated.

Tree species (e.g., white oak, sugar maple, etc.)

Tree circumference — the distance in inches all the way around the tree at a height of 4.5 feet above the ground.

A JPEG photo (most phone photos) **of your tree**. Hint: Including a familiar object in your photo can help show the scale of your tree.

Any interesting historical information you might know about your tree

Moose Hill Journal

Promises to Keep
By Al Molitor

One July years ago, I spent a morning in what had become one of my very favorite Moose Hill spots, the first field along the Billings Loop from Moose Hill Street. At the time, I was admiring a lovely black, or tupelo, gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*) growing in the middle of the field with its glossy dark green leathery leaves and its not-yet-ripe fruit. I promised myself to visit in October when the leaves burst forth in their scarlet autumnal display. This was the day.

The first frost of the season was predicted for that morning, so I was in no particular rush to get out of bed. I made a willful decision to play hooky from some other things I could have been doing that day, knowing that any possible spiritual benefits to be found would be greater in the woods. By the time I woke up, had my first cup of coffee, packed and got on the bike, it was 9:30. The weather was so wonderfully bright, dry, clear and cloudless that my concerns about being cold were baseless and I began to think that I should have started earlier to better enjoy the early light. It was one of those days when everything seems clear.

I was planning a quiet breakfast in my favorite meadow, but upon my arrival I was greeted with a riot of activity. Continued on p. 5

Seeking Hope

By Ellen Schoenfeld Beeks

I remember watching fireflies out the window at night with my children in the early 80's here in Sharon. Where are they now? Why is the front of my car relatively insect-free when in my childhood insects splattered the entire front of the car?

As you probably know, many species - animal and plant - have disappeared or sharply declined. The causes are many, of course, but the consequences are simple: decreased wildlife habitat leading to limited biodiversity. We have altered the web of life of which we are all a part.

Why does this matter? According to E.O. Wilson, biologist, naturalist, ecologists and entomologist, "If insects were to vanish, the environment would collapse into chaos." I remember when I first heard statistics on insect and bird decline, I did not want to believe it. Turns out, denial is a stage of grief. (Remember Elizabeth Kubler-Ross and the five stages of grief?) What happens in this state? Inertia. No action is taken, no changes made. Problems cannot be addressed. Eventually, I acknowledged that there was a problem, actually a crisis. With acknowledgement and acceptance, I began learning about the problem and actions I could take. In acting, there is hope! I don't know if this is one of the reasons we are slow to change, to take action, but I wonder. Continued on p. 6

As I approached the field I heard and then saw scores of robins clucking, chuckling and cackling excitedly as they flew back and forth from the woods to the scattered trees in the meadow. It seemed most were attracted there by the same tree that brought me. There are a few black gums in this field, and most were practically leafless, but the one I was coming to see still wore its rich orangish-red coat as if it was clinging to its leaves while waiting for my return. The robins were gorging on its bounty of ripe juicy dark purplish-blue sour-sweet fruits.

Other migrants seemed to be caught up in the excitement. Yellow-rumped warblers flitted about the trees along the edge of the field and white-throated sparrows in the brushy tangles seemed unimpressed by my poorly whistled lispy imitation of their “poor Sam Peabody” song.

Even some non-migrating locals seemed to be feeling the buzz. Chickadees, titmice and a nice red-bellied woodpecker were working the transition between field and forest. Chipmunks were scampering along the old stone walls and gray squirrels were working the leaves under the oaks. Both were celebrating the steady thwack of heavy acorns hitting the ground.

A lone monarch was drifting over the goldenrod. I wondered if its tardiness would lead to an icy death while its cousins were sipping margaritas in Mexico. A solitary big dragonfly flew an aggressive patrol in the air above the frost-tinged ferns of the old field.

I was on sensory overload. There was so much activity and so much beauty that it was nearly an hour before I could settle down in my favorite spot in the sun for breakfast. This is a small field, but it is magical. It is bordered by old gravel roads and stone walls. There is a swamp at one end and hardwood forest around the rest. With its scattered trees, bird boxes and brushy edges there is always something to see while sitting in my choice of sunny or shady spots. The maples were yellow and red. The elms were yellow. The white pines wore cuffs of yellow where their inner needles were turning. All these colors were nicely set off by the oaks that were still mostly deep green. There was a new flurry of falling leaves with every gust of the dry breeze. I wanted to freeze the moment in time.

After breakfast, I wandered up the dirt road to the old barn. I thanked the old long-gone farmer that shaped this land. This old farm may be reverting to a wild state, but it is by no means wilderness. Continued on p. 6

But most wasps are *not* social in nature at all. The solitary wasps will typically not sting you. More importantly, they are stunningly, incredibly diverse, probably even more than beetles. There are more than 100,000 species of wasps that have been described so far, but most estimates say that in actuality there are more than ten times as many – at least a million species, most waiting to be discovered. Of these, there are only about 1,000 known species of social wasps. (For comparison, there are about 10,000 species of birds in total.)

Along with this diversity of species, there’s a ridiculous diversity of lifestyles. If you look for the spectacular, the bizarre, and the unbelievable in nature – you’ll probably find it in wasps. And this is especially true with the star of our article, *Megarhyssa macrurus*, the Giant Ichneumonid Wasp. She has abilities that are nothing less than superpowers, in my opinion.

What superpowers does she have? And, *what is that huge appendage behind the wasp?*

Well, to answer those questions, let’s first talk a bit about the life cycles of Ichneumonid wasps. Ichneumonid wasp mommas want the best for their babies, and that means provisioning them with food when they’re born. The food of choice for discerning *Megarhyssa* moms is the larvae of the pigeon horntail (which is related to wasps).

Pigeon horntail moms, on the other hand, want their *own* babies to be safe. They try to accomplish by laying their eggs in dead tree trunks, where the horntail larvae can hatch and immediately chew their way deeper into the tree, towards safety.

The *Megarhyssa* moms have responded by evolving longer and longer “ovipositors”. The ovipositor is the egg-laying organ, and it’s what we see in the photo behind the wasp, roughly. To be more precise, what we see behind the wasp is the sheath covering the ovipositor – the ovipositor itself is inside the sheath, and is about as thin as a hair.

Remarkably, the wasp is able to somehow pinpoint the location of the horntail larva several inches deep in the wood of the trunk

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The hand of man is visible everywhere, but it was work on a human scale, not the scale demanded by big machines and big money. Maybe that's why the farm failed in the first place, but its present value to wild creatures and over-civilized suburbanites is, as they say, priceless.

I promised myself I would explore these woods and explore my own mind. I walked by the tattered remains of a vireo nest I discovered in a birch tree back in May. I saw the field where my son and I watched fireflies after a summer solstice run. I thought about the frogs and peepers that welcomed me to this place on a visit in April. At the time I had lived practically in the shadow of Moose Hill for 20 years but had been paying close attention for only a few months. My relationship with this wonderful local resource was quickly deepening.

As I walked back down the road, I saw a father sitting in the sun, sharing an apple with his two young daughters. One of the little girls was wearing a pair of toy binoculars around her neck. I fondly recalled walks in the country as a very young boy with my own father. I promised myself to be true to those old memories and hoped that little girl would grow up with a deep love for nature as she remembered this wonderful day.

By the time I got back to the field and sat down to finish my coffee and eat my own apple I was overwhelmed with emotion. Can the simple beauty of nature bring tears to the eyes? Or is it beauty combined with memories recalled, promises kept and promises broken. A bumblebee landed on my hand. Had she come to say goodbye as the season was ending, or was she reminding me that another chapter of my own life was coming to a close? She flew away and I prepared to head home.

On the way out of the woods, I passed a sassafras tree (*Sassafras albidum*), its mitten-shaped leaves now yellow, and I remembered teaching my son how to make tea by boiling the roots. Thinking of my boyhood and those little girls, I wished I had spent more time with my own kids in these forests and fields 15 or 20 years before. I hope they will remember the little time we did spend together. Perhaps I was too busy trying to figure out what I was going to be while forgetting who I already was. I felt better as I coasted rapidly down the hill on my bicycle through the crisp October air. My spirit was buoyed by a hope that it isn't too late to start remembering who I am and by a promise to return to Moose Hill to prod those memories.

So, what can we do? According to Douglas Tallamy, author, entomologist, and co-founder of Home Grown National Parks, we can each play a role in bringing nature home. "The suburban landscape is a highly simplified community consisting of a few species of alien ornamental plants that provide neither food nor shelter for animals. Our challenge is to redesign our living spaces in ways that provide both." And to do this? We introduce more native trees, shrubs, wild flowers and ground covers into our gardens. I see more attempts at this redesign every year. Exciting! But more is needed!

So why does this challenge matter? Tallamy's message to gardeners is that we can slow the rate of extinction by planting native plants at home. He closes his compelling book, *Bringing Nature Home*, with this analogy: "...if we designed our buildings the way we design our gardens, with only aesthetics in mind, they would fall down. Just as buildings need support structures...to hold the graceful arches and beautiful lines of fine architecture in place, our gardens need native plants to support a diverse and balanced food web essential to all sustainable ecosystems." To do this, I hope we can acknowledge our grief, accept the problem, learn, and move into action because what we plant matters. Continued on p. 8

**Small Jewel Fungi Photos
Captured by Kathy Farrell**



Top right: Crown-tipped coral fungus *Artomyces pyxidatus*
Top left: Ringless honey mushroom *Desarmillaria caespitosa* (formerly *Armillaria tabescens*)
Bottom left: Shaggy legged ringless amanita *Amanita rhacopus*

Trail Maintenance Notes

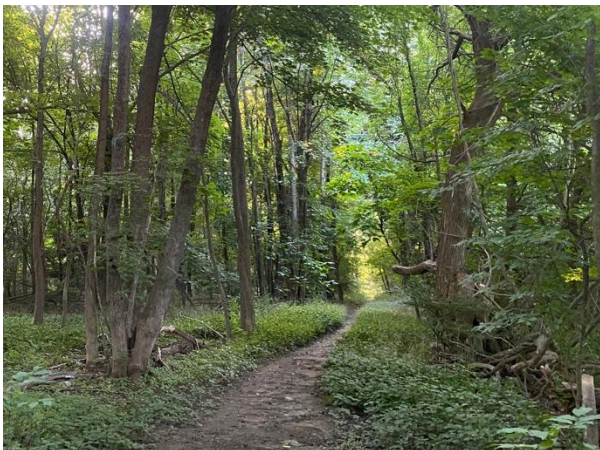
By Josh Simons

Our SFOC volunteer trail stewards have been working to maintain the Town of Sharon's trails; trimming vegetation, removing trash and debris, and reporting larger problems like downed trees, boardwalk and bridge issues, etc. If you run into someone trimming vegetation on your trail walks, please show your appreciation!

We maintain a list of current trail repair issues that can be viewed here: <https://tinyurl.com/trailissues>. If you'd like to report an issue not on the list or learn more about becoming a trail steward, please send email to trailrepair@sharonfoc.org. In addition to routine maintenance, some trail stewards along with members of the SFOC Board have been working on longer term issues. Projects include:

- Creating a new connector trail between Trowel Shop Pond Park and the Massapoag Trail, which has its own article written by Norm Allaire on p. 10.
- Trail marking. We've made the decision to transition from using metal medallions nailed to trees to traditional painted blazes for marking trails. The paint generally lasts a long time and this method is more maintainable than the medallions. It also does not impact the trees at all. As part of this very large project, the orange trail markings on the Massapoag Trail have been refreshed. In addition, you will start to see new blazing appear in the Rattlesnake Hill area. For example, the main trail to the Rattlesnake Hill Summit has been blazed in orange.
- Trail signage. We are updating old signs and will be adding additional way-finding aids over time.
- Digital mapping of previously unmapped trails. Several trails in the Rattlesnake Hill area have been mapped and added to the OpenStreetMap database, which is like a Wikipedia for mapping the Earth; its map data is used by most of the hiking trail apps. Documenting the trails will also help us with future trail planning and marking.

In addition, SFOC is at the very start of working with the Town and other entities to create a comprehensive trail plan for Rattlesnake Hill and the adjoining Inter Lochen Park. The plan will propose any needed changes (re-routed trails, new boardwalks, etc.) that are needed to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for hikers while also conforming to conservation requirements. Once completed, the proposal will be presented to the Conservation Commission for approval and then to the Massachusetts Audubon and to the Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) for approval since these organizations hold the conservation restrictions for Inter Lochen Park and Rattlesnake Hill, respectively.



Massapoag Trail at the Crest Rd. Entrance

Sharon Friends of Conservation Board

President: Gaurav Shah

Vice President: Paul Lauenstein

Treasurer: Leo Waters

Board Members:

Kurt Buermann Kathy Farrell
Rita Corey Judy Karlin Al Mollitor
Hana Jenner Josh Simons

Jeff Rose, Website Support

Send submissions for the newsletter to:
newsletter@sharonfoc.org

Keystone Plants are native to New England that support the most Lepidoptera (Moths and Butterflies) species, forming the foundation of the food web.

Trees are the #1 important plant — one oak can host/feed over 400 species of lepidoptera.
Oak, Willow, Birch, Maple (make sure these are not cultivars with Asian species), Wild cherry, and Poplar.

Shrubs: Bayberry, Red chokeberry, Blueberry, Sweet Fern, Low-bush Blueberries

Wildflowers: Goldenrod (Downy, Sweet, Bluestem or Zigzag and Gray are not aggressive), Asters (New England, New York, Smooth, Aromatic, Calico, Eastern Showy, Large-leaved), Milkweeds

Grasses: Switchgrass, Little Bluestem, Big Bluestem, Indian Grass, Prairie Dropseed

Ferns: Lady fern, Christmas fern (evergreen)

Edibles: Ramps, Swamp thistle and blueberries

Gardening Tips: Plant to decrease lawn. Plant in layers - trees, shrubs, ground covers to avoid using mulch. Leave the leaves in your beds. Don't use pesticides. Leave the spent flower heads (seeds) and stems (house insect larvae) until late spring. Don't spray for mosquitos; use the Bucket of Doom to kill all and ONLY mosquito larvae. Enjoy your garden and a new garden ethic.

Each garden matters; what you plant matters!

Winter Naturalist Class at Moose Hill

By Jana Katz

Mass Audubon is hosting a three-part class beginning Friday, December 5th. The seminar will cover local natural history with much time spend outside. The second class will be held Thursday, January 8, 2026 and the last class will be Friday, February 6th. Geared towards adults, each session will be held from 10 AM - 12PM. Registration required. Please visit massaudubon.org.

Creamy White Bean Soup with Kale

By Laura Wright

Ingredients

1 tablespoon olive oil
1 medium yellow onion, small dice
1 medium carrot, small dice
1 stick celery, small dice
2 cloves garlic, minced
chili flakes or aleppo pepper, to taste
1 sprig fresh rosemary, minced
4 cups cooked navy beans, drained and rinsed
4 cups vegetable stock
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
sea salt and ground black pepper, to taste
3 cups packed chopped lacinato kale (roughly 1 small bunch)
¼ cup flat leaf parsley leaves, chopped

Instructions

Heat the oil in a medium-large soup pot over medium heat. Add the onions, carrots, and celery to the pot and stir. Sauté the vegetables until lightly softened and translucent, about 5 minutes.

To the pot, add the garlic, chili flakes, and rosemary. Stir and cook until garlic is fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the navy beans to the pot and stir. Add the vegetable stock to the pot and stir once more. Bring the soup to a boil.

Once boiling, ladle half of the soup into an upright blender. Add the lemon juice to the blender as well. Carefully bring the speed of the blender up to high and blend until this portion of the soup is totally liquified. Pour this liquified portion back into the pot. Season the soup with salt and pepper.

Add the kale to the pot and bring the soup to a boil. Once the kale is slightly wilted and bright green, season the soup once more with salt and pepper, if you find it necessary. Stir in the chopped parsley as well. Serve the soup hot.

Equipment

Blender

Other recipes available at www.thefirstmess.com.

Wildlife Sightings at the Bogs

Photos Courtesy of Colin Regan



Walpole resident and Stonehill College graduating senior Colin Regan served as the Conservation Department's intern.

Colin utilized footage obtained from trail cams generously loaned for the season from the Environmental Science Department at Stonehill to write the baseline report documenting wildlife returning to the bogs.

Wasps continued from p. 5

by detecting the chemicals that the larva uses to decompose the wood, and by listening to the sounds it makes. I'll call that superpower #1! Once she's remote sensed the location of that larva, she's somehow able to maneuver her ovipositor into the trunk of the tree, right to that location. Can you imagine how difficult that is? First of all, she has to somehow keep track of where the tip is in the tree trunk without looking.

Furthermore, as we mentioned, the ovipositor is about as thin as a human hair. This makes it difficult to control, since it's not very stiff at all. Just try to imagine taking a hair and pushing it several inches into a tree trunk! And yet – she finds a way. Studies have shown that the amount of force that the wasps are somehow able to transmit through the ovipositor is *ten times more* than what naive theoretical calculations say is the maximum possible!

Evolution has further helped in this task by reinforcing the ovipositor with the metals manganese and zinc, so in addition to everything else, we may call the wasps bionic.

Once she's maneuvered the ovipositor to the horntail larva, she lays one egg from her abdomen, through the hair-thin ovipositor, onto the horntail larva. As her own larva grows, it will feed on the horntail, ensuring its success, and incidentally ensuring the demise of the horntail larva. (From a selfish human perspective, by the way, control of horntails can sometimes be useful, as they can do some damage to forests.)

So it's not easy for a Megarhyssa wasp. She has to accomplish multiple impossible tasks before breakfast just to give her babies a chance. And life is certainly not easy for a horntail, either.

It can be tempting for humans to choose sides in this competition, and wasps often come out the loser in public opinion. But I hope that the reader can learn to appreciate all aspects of nature, and instead of revulsion, to react with wonder and love.

Upcoming Events at Borderland State Park

Holiday Hand Bell Concert
Sunday, Dec. 7 2PM

Klezamir Band Concert
Sunday, Dec. 21 2 PM

Pictured at the right: the naturalized bogs on S. Main St. Photo taken by Jana Katz.



Trail Vision Becomes Reality: Connecting Trowel Shop Pond to the Massapoag Trail

by Norm Allaire



Aerial photo shows portions of trail adjacent to Trowel Shop Pond. There is a small park located at 287R N. Main St. with area for parking as well as an ADA accessible picnic table.

Red circles indicates places where boardwalks may be needed.

In 2009, Will Ostrow completed his Eagle Scout project by revitalizing the Trowel Shop Pond parking area, removing trash and overgrowth, and installing benches, signage, and fencing. As part of his project, he imagined a future trail linking the pond to Sharon's broader trail network. That vision is now coming to life, thanks to a committed group of volunteers who have contributed their time, labor, and in some cases, access to their properties. Easton residents Chris Patrick, Don Bennett, and Michael Ganshirt, along with Sharon residents David and Irenia Straus, Charlie Walker, Kurt Buermann, Matt Moses, Irene Stern Frielich, Seth Frielich, Kathy Farrell, Al Mollitor, Jana Katz, Gaurav Shah, and Norm Allaire along with Sharon Conservation Administrator, Josh Philibert, have all played a role in developing the Massapoag Connector Trail.

Special thanks go to the Sharon Conservation Commission and the Sharon Friends of Conservation for their generous funding and support, which have made this project possible. The trail begins at the Trowel Shop Pond parking area and heads south through town conservation land east of Cheryl Drive, eventually connecting to the Blue Dot and Massapoag Trails. Additional access points are planned via town-owned rights-of-way on Pond View Circle and Bella Road.

Trail Construction: Two Phases

Phase I – Fall 2025

This phase connects Trowel Shop Pond to the Pond View Circle right-of-way. It includes rebuilding two footbridges over the pond's spillways, constructing a 50-foot boardwalk, and adding another footbridge. Completion is expected by October 2025.



Pictured at the left, a segment of the new boardwalk. Pictured below: Norm Allaire installs a handrail on the boardwalk.

Phase II – Spring 2026

The second phase will extend the trail from Pond View Circle to the Massapoag Trail via the Blue Dot Trail. It will require two additional boardwalks to cross wetlands, pending final planning and funding.



Progress and Natural Beauty

Construction is already underway. Volunteers have rebuilt two spillway footbridges, installed temporary trail markers, and taken measurements for future boardwalks. By the end of 2025, new crossings will link the parking area to Pond View Circle. In 2026, the trail will continue to the Blue Dot Trail.

The route offers scenic views of wetlands and supports a rich diversity of plant and animal life. Hikers will enjoy stands of oak and maple, rocky outcrops, and seasonal mushrooms such as Hen of the Woods. This project is a testament to long-term vision and strong community collaboration. Once completed, the Massapoag Connector Trail will be a valuable addition to the town's trail system enhancing access to nature for generations to come.

Dan Brielmann Eulogy

By Kurt Buermann

This month the environment lost a good friend. Dan Brielmann passed away on September 23. For his whole life Daniel was passionate about nature. He and his wife, Marilyn, he created a website, *e-Awakening.com* to which he brought stories and music featuring people doing positive things for the environment. Dan did presentations in numerous Massachusetts libraries about the Bay Circuit Trail, and the importance of preserving natural resources and open spaces. Dan lived his love of nature. As he became less mobile, he loved and enjoyed his own backyard wildlife sanctuary .

Back in 2018, when I was president of Sharon Friends of Conservation, I met Dan. He had retired from being a news videographer and was now using his talents to support and document environmental issues. When Dan heard of Sharon's ongoing (20 year, but successful!) effort to preserve Sharon's 328-acre Rattlesnake Hill land, he jumped into the fray. He did interviews with proponents of protection. He walked the land with them. He even wrote a song about Rattlesnake Hill! Best of all he created a superb video which was instrumental in convincing audiences to support the Rattlesnake Hill preservation effort:

<https://eawakening.wistia.com/medias/c8iypmpv0j>

Dan was very interested in networking and communicating with environmental groups in other towns. He encouraged me to talk with them about creating groups which can serve as conservation rallying sites, similar to our Sharon Friends of Conservation. Apart from Sharon, Dan would travel to other towns to avail them of his talents.

In addition to creating a video about Rattlesnake Hill, Dan and botanist Michael Acciavatti created a video about Sharon's Botanical trail. It is well worth a watch:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=FeDIStoJlkg

Besides being an excellent videographer, Dan was a musician. He composed many songs about protecting and preserving nature. You can watch his video-taped hike of the 200 mile Bay Circuit Trail.

Please make a pilgrimage to Dan and Marilyn's website: www.e-awakening.com

Rest in Peace, Dan!



Sharon Friends of Conservation
45 Furnace St.
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 reaction and enjoyment of the town’s 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 also welcome artwork, stories, and poetry.

SFOC Newsletter
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