

THE

Oak Leaf

A PUBLICATION OF THE WHITE OAK LAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

SPRING 2010

Spring into Action for Vernal Pools

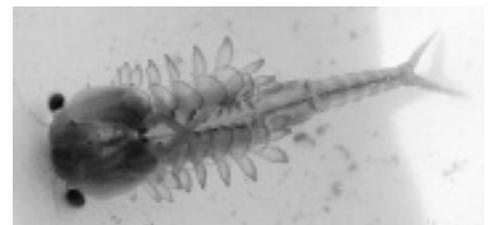
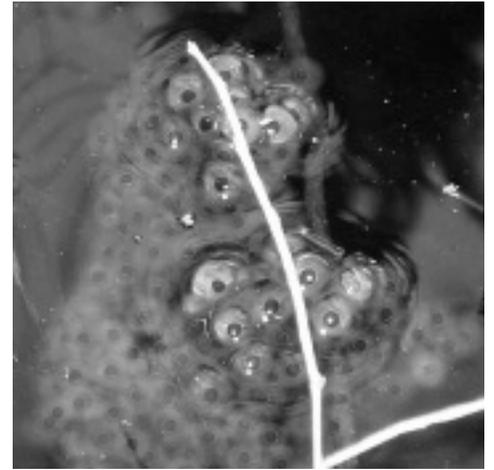
Spring is here, and the frogs are waking up. Have you heard any yet? Not all of them sound like frogs; some actually sound more like quacking ducks.

These are wood frogs, and they are found in vernal pools. If you have heard them, we want to hear from you!

Vernal pools are shallow depressions in woodlands which have water in them only part of the year—they're critical breeding grounds for wood frogs, salamanders and many other creatures. So far, only 12-15 vernal pools have been certified out of a list of over a hundred potential sites in Holden and surrounding towns.

Certification of pools is an easy, three-step process. Pool certification can make a difference in preserving key lands and important habitat areas for endangered species. Learning about vernal pools is fun, especially for kids, and can even be included as part of your home schooling biology instruction.

If you think you may have a vernal pool, or if you hear a strange "quacking" sound coming from a wooded area near you, email info@whiteoaktrust.org and we will help guide you through the certification process. Please remember to respect private property; do not trespass, even in the name of frogs! 🌿



Photos courtesy Paul McManus

Clockwise, from top right: Close-up of wood frog egg mass; several egg mass clusters in a vernal pool; a fairy shrimp, often found in vernal pools; a typical vernal pool, surrounded by woodlands.

Where the Wild Things Are... the Patients

by
NANCY WILSON

It was an ER drama for the audience, but all the patients were wild animals from Central Massachusetts. They were brought, via a slide show, by Dr. Mark Pokras, founding director of the Wildlife Clinic at the Tufts School of Veterinary Medicine in Grafton, who spoke to a White Oak program at Holden's Senior Center on March 6.

Dr. Pokras' clinic has a unique window on wildlife drama, as it gives emergency care to animals wounded or in trouble, and brought in by caring citizens of this area. Local wildlife has a lot to contend with, from natural predators to cars, from habitat loss to toxins in the environment. As the clinic staff treats the animals, they must learn first about their biology and lives. Dr. Pokras commented that there is a lot more lore about the big dramatic creatures on our planet—elephants, whales, great sharks—than about our local fauna. "I don't know of a single medical paper on crows," he lamented.

Through its ER services, Dr. Pokras' clinic learns who lives in the fields, woods, and sometimes backyards of Central Massachusetts. For each animal depicted in a slide, there was an accompanying story shared by Dr. Pokras. The Great Horned Owl, for example, is the fiercest thing in the forest, and knows that it is boss. The foxes are great adapters, able to live well even in developed areas; they often choose golf courses for homes, where their kits chase and collect golf balls as play things. The tiny, short-tailed shrew is like "a tiny tiger armed with toxic venom," explained Dr. Pokras. Woodchucks often nest in hollow trees within "waddling distance" of a water source. Weasels are great hunters and "obligate carnivores," whose biology requires that they eat live meat. Snapping turtles are close in biology to living dinosaurs. These stories and slides kept the audience riveted throughout the presentation.

Dr. Pokras also brought some warnings to share with the audience. The clinic sees many "orphan" birds, picked up by humans who think the bird has been abandoned, he said. Instead, well-wishers should leave the bird where it is, as usually the mother is nearby



Photo by Jo-Anne Crystoff

Dr. Mark Pokras educates the youth of Holden about local wildlife.

watching. Wildlife lovers should also drive slowly, he advised, especially near natural bodies of water, where animals go to drink. Dr. Pokras suggested using moderation when applying chemicals, which damage animals as well as people. D-CON, for example, is deadly for all animals, not just the mice or rats for which it is intended. Lastly, he said, be aware when interacting with wild animals that rabies is common in the wildlife population, and is highly dangerous to humans. For additional interesting information on Dr. Pokras, visit www.tufts.edu/home/feature/?p=pokras.

Long-time White Oak board member Nancy Wilson is also a long-time animal lover, who personally brought an injured fawn to the Tufts Wildlife Clinic for rehabilitation. If you find an animal that you think needs help, call the Clinic at 508-839-7918 before bringing it in. 🌿



WHITE OAK
LAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

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White Oak is a member of the Land Trust Alliance and the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition.

Accreditation? White Oak Is in Good Company

The Land Trust Alliance, a national non-profit organization devoted to strengthening land conservation across America, recently issued a press release about land trust accreditation. Since 2008, 93 land trusts have been awarded accreditation, three of these in Massachusetts. White Oak seeks to join this elite group.

What does it mean to be accredited? Accreditation means that the land trust has gone through a lengthy process of reviewing—and usually revising—its standards and practices, bylaws, and procedures, to bring them up to a nationally established standard.

For White Oak, gaining accreditation

would afford us greater status within the land trust community, and would prove to prospective donors that we are an organization that operates at the highest standards for land conservation. The standards and practices that we adopt would show the IRS and the Senate Finance Committee that we, and land trusts in general, are properly run non-profits.

In addition to firming up our credibility with potential donors and oversight agencies, the process has helped our Board of Directors and our Administrator improve our understanding of how best to fund, acquire, and manage land, and to run an efficient and ef-

fective land trust. Our learning never stops.

Unfortunately, the process for attaining accreditation is very serious and time consuming. As a result, our progress since we began in 2003 has been steady, but slow. To address these issues, White Oak has recently applied for an Accreditation Acceleration Grant. If we are awarded this grant, the funds would help pay for an employee to take over our accreditation project, and would speed up the timeline to where White Oak could anticipate applying for accreditation within two years. We should find out this spring whether we are awarded this grant; in the meantime, keep your fingers crossed!

Busy Bee Nursery

White Oak recently began partnering with local businesses to offer discounts to our members. One of those is Busy Bee Nursery, located at 57 Broad Street, Route 68, in Holden, which offers a 10% discount to members who present their White Oak membership cards at purchase.

Busy Bee Nursery has been in operation since 1975, and has long promoted a “green”

lifestyle! Knowledgeable Busy Bee staff members are available to help customers determine the best choices for their yards, including a good selection of native plants, such as winterberry, serviceberry, ground cover, and perennials. We hope White Oak members will help support this local business, and spread the word about how a White Oak membership can really pay off!

Other businesses offering discounts to

members include Whitney Street Books, Edible Arrangements of Holden, and Ideal Landscape Maintenance and Construction. For more information, please visit our website, at www.whiteoaktrust.org. If you are a current member and have not yet received your membership card, please email us at info@whiteoaktrust.org and we will send one to you. 🐝



Photo courtesy Busy Bee Nursery

A landscape created by the folks at Busy Bee.

“We can never have enough of nature.”

— Henry David Thoreau



POND AND SHORE LIFE AT EAGLE LAKE

Sunday, April 25, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

(New England Backpacker will be present from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.)

Holden Town Beach, off Causeway Street.

FREE!

White Oak and New England Backpacker team up to offer you and your family a test-drive in a kayak, an introduction to the lake's plants and animals, an explanation of how the dam works, and a walk along the shore. Make it a midday spring outing; a simple lunch will be available for purchase!



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