



March 2011



Washington Conservation Commission monthly tidbit
Lisa Peltier Outdoor Almanac Winter 2010-2011

Outdoor Almanac is excerpted from Mass Audubon's [Sanctuary magazine](#), which is sent to members three times a year.

March 4 New moon.

March 5 On warm days watch for the flights of mourning cloak Butterflies, are among the few hibernating insects.



March 7 Salamander migrations begin about this time. Watch for them crossing roads in wooded areas on the first warm rainy nights.

March 20 Vernal equinox, first day of spring (yeah!). Days and nights are equal length.

Vernal Pools. Have you ever been driving on a warm, spring night and seen lots of frogs and salamanders in the road? There is probably a vernal pool nearby.

Vernal pools are unique and rare ecosystems that are created by small depressions in the ground that temporarily have water in them, usually from winter through spring. Most pools are dry for at least part of the year. Amphibians and invertebrate animals use these pools to breed.

Because the pools usually only have water in them until summer when they dry out, permanent fish populations do not live in them. This helps many amphibian and invertebrate species survive since there are no fish to eat them. invertebrates are animals without a backbone. Despite being dry sometimes, vernal pools teem with life when filled with water in the spring. The most obvious inhabitants are various species of frogs and toads. There are also salamanders, newts, daphnia and fairyshrimp. Daphnia are small crustaceans between 0.2 and 5 mm

in length and are commonly called water fleas (lobsters, shrimp and crabs are also crustaceans). Many of these amphibians breed only in vernal pools and spend most of their lives in the uplands within hundreds of feet of the vernal pool. Because of that, the area surrounding the vernal pool is critical for the survival of these species, and that is why vernal pools are protected in Massachusetts.

So the next time you are driving on a warm spring night and see lots of frogs in the road, slow down and take a minute to observe them. If you can, stop and help some across. "On rainy nights in early spring, roads between forests and vernal pools are hopping and crawling with activity. On some nights, hundreds of amphibians cross small stretches of asphalt to mate. But many don't make it. Because of the vast numbers of these animals being killed by cars each spring, many people have begun to form groups to help the critters cross roads during their annual migration.

From rural Vermont to urban centers like Philadelphia, human escorts, called bucket brigades in some places, help amphibians make it to their mating areas without getting squashed by cars. Its part education, part conservation, and part science. It's pretty much the one time of year where you get to see a lot of salamanders in abundance and it's just really cool, (Associated Press)

Attention high school seniors The deadline for filing your application for the Washington Scholarship Fund scholarships is April 8. Applications may be obtained by contacting Linda Levernoch 623-8209.

FAMILY FUN DAY REMINDER: The 5th Annual Family Fun Day will be June 25th this year and we are looking for people to participate!

- we need vendors – know anyone who wants to sell crafts, plants, flowers, food, antiques, have a booth to promote their business or organization?
We need people to help: park cars, be in the Dunk Booth, sell throws for the Dunk Booth, monitor the Bounce House(s), sell
- raffle tickets, etc....
- We also need donations for the raffles – do you know anyone who has a business that could donate something for our raffles?

Let's make this the best year ever for this event! The ultimate goal is to make improvements to the park so that all of us can use it more. We want to get electricity installed at the park so that events like the Hilltown Hoot can happen a lot easier; even our Family Fun Day event is limited by the lack of electricity at the Park. Someday, we'd like a pavilion so that events can take place rain or shine. We need your help to achieve these goals, so let's all pitch in and make this work! Please contact RJ Peltier: 413.623.5911, or email Lisa Peltier at: hemigirlone@hotmail.com.

A few words from our Town Clerk, Allison Mikaniewicz...

The Town Clerk will be out of town on the following Monday evenings and will not hold office hours on these dates. If there is anything urgent on these dates, please leave a message with the Select Board. The Town Clerk will respond as soon as possible. Monday, March 7 • Monday, April 25 • Monday, May 2 • Monday, August 22 • Monday, November 7

Town of Washington 2010 Dog Licenses Expire March 31, 2011 The 2010 dog licenses for the Town of Washington will expire on March 31, 2011. The 2011 dog licenses are available now from the Town Clerk. Please see the Town Clerk on Monday evenings at the Town Hall with a current rabies certificate and the applicable fee to obtain a 2011 license and tag for your dog. The fees are \$4.00 each for spayed and neutered dogs and \$10.00 each for unaltered dogs. Licenses and tags can also be obtained by mail. Please send the above to the Town Clerk, 8 Summit Hill Road and a license and tag will be returned to you by mail.

Birding around town March 2011

Edwin Neumuth

We may have the lion's share of snow still on the ground this winter, but the lengthening days and increasingly intense sunlight have our local birds stirring. Step outside on a sunny March day and give a good listen. Have you noticed that the Chickadees have changed their winter "chickadee-dee" to a much more romantic, "Hey-Baa—by? Wood peckers are drumming out their territory boundaries and Tufted titmice and Cardinals are trying to outdo each other for the whistling award. Before the month is over, Bluebirds and Tree swallows will have checked out the available nest boxes around town and rated them for next month's issue of Tracks as to whether they've been cleaned from last year and if they need any minor repairs before nest building begins in April. But if you ask me, the month of March really belongs to the Timberdoodle (yes, Lisa) I've had him appear in town as early as March 9 but with this year's snow cover, it's more likely to be closer to the end of the month before he arrives to set up his dance floor for a most intriguing courtship. Describing him is almost as comical as his colloquial name. He's chubby, waddles when he walks and has a beak (a long thin bill with a fleshy tip that can locate earthworms a few inches below the surface then slurp them up like a strand of spaghetti) that would make Pinocchio turn his head. His eyes are disproportionately large, centered on each side of his head-not in front like most everyone else-so he's able to see almost completely around himself-including directly above without moving at all. He's so plainly camouflaged that if you take your eyes off him for more than an instant, he's almost impossible to relocate. So, if you want to see this little fellow, it's best to watch him during his courtship display. Find an open field bordered by wet woods after the snow has melted enough to reveal some bare ground. An ideal spot is the town property on Washington Mt. Rd. across from the old Town Hall. He'll be busy from his arrival, almost daily, until mid May. Appear at dusk on a calm evening, he doesn't particularly care for rain or wind. The low level of light is what sets him off, and his display will begin later and later as spring advances. Listen for a nasal buzzy sound-beeent----beeent that he makes while on the ground. It will increase and decrease in intensity as he slowly circles around advertising his presence to, fortunately for him, an equally comical looking prospective mate. After a few minutes of this, he's ready to really impress her with his "sky dance". He launches himself into the air flying in rising spirals until he gets to be about 200-300 feet of the ground all the while using specially designed wing feathers to produce a whistling sound. When he reaches the apex, it's as if his heart bursts and he drops like a stuntman in a series of unbridled zig-zags while chirping out what sound like the last kisses of a true lover. He drops to the ground softly, takes a few moments to catch his breath, and he's ready to start all over again. It appears that darkness, not exhaustion, shuts him off, for on a moonlit night he may perform this ritual right until dawn. If you want to find out more about this remarkable fellow, his more common name is the American Woodcock, and there is a much more poetic description of his courtship in the landmark conservation book A Sand County Almanac by Aldo Leopold. Enjoy the Woodcock, he's a true sign of spring!

To our fellow Washington residents: Thanks to Michelle Lampro for taking the job of Transfer Station Attendant.

Michelle is planning to use assistants to spread the work around, so you might see several different faces on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Zina Jayne of The Becket Athenaeum gave a presentation to the Board on 2/14. She reminded us of all the Athenaeum's available materials (10,000+ books, 1500+ movies, hundreds of book and music CDs, magazines) and services (6 computers for public use, wireless internet for those who bring their own computers, a children's section of books, movies, games and toys, free coffee on Saturdays and tea any time). We encourage our residents to consider the Athenaeum their town library and to take advantage of it as much as possible. (www.becketathenaeum.org; 413-623-5483)

We are looking for volunteers to serve on the Conservation Commission. Anyone interested in this or any of the other appointed positions in town please let our Administrative Assistant, Jodie Hostetter, know. Also, we have not yet found a back-up for Jodie while she has her second child, so anyone interested in helping her out with the Select Board minutes for a few months, please let her know. (413-464-6656). The town also has an open Assessor position which pays \$2265 per year. Anyone interested in becoming an Assessor please let our Consultant Assessor, Tim Taylor, know.

Tim is usually at the Town Hall on Monday evenings. Finally, we have open elected positions on both the Planning Board and the Finance Committee (Finance Committee – one 1 year unexpired term, Finance Committee – two 3 year terms, Auditor – 2 year unexpired term, Planning Board – one 2 year unexpired term, Select Board – one 3 year term) . If anyone is interested in running, nomination papers must be submitted back to the Town Clerk with a minimum of 25 signatures, from registered voters who reside in Washington, by Friday, March 25, 2011.

Speaking of the Town Hall, the Select Board and Finance Committee are discussing the use of space at the Town Hall. We have grant money for insulation and siding and are considering other changes. If anyone has any ideas or concerns please let us know. Our next meeting on this and other Capital Assets will be on 3/21.

Some updates: Overhead Door will be installing the new insulated doors at the Town Garage the first week in March.

We amended our Request for Bid on the new boiler for the Town Hall to include on-demand hot water for even greater energy efficiency. We received two bids and are waiting for a further site review by Berkshire Regional Planning before formally awarding the bid.

We reported last month that MEMA (Massachusetts Emergency Management) might provide money to cover some of our snow removal costs. Governor Patrick has now formally requested a Federal Major Disaster Declaration for the January 11-12 snowstorm which, if granted, would mean that 75% of our equipment and overtime costs for that storm would be repaid through FEMA (Federal Emergency Management).

The Select Board and the Finance Committee are starting work on next year's budget. Please get any budget requests or suggestions to us as soon as possible.

Welcome to March! Only three more weeks of Winter? Wouldn't bet on it.

Jim Huebner,
Select Board Chair

Shaun Lennon,
Select Board Clerk

RABIES CLINIC

Sponsored by the Becket Fire Department

Tuesday,

March 15,

2011 \$10

Station 2 (Route 20) - 6:00

6:45 PM Station 1 (Route 8)

- 7:15 - 8:00 PM

2011 Dog Licenses for Becket & Washington will be available

Happy St. Patrick's Day!

Washington Tracks

Town Hall

8 Summit Hill Rd.

Washington, Ma. 01223

The St. Andrews Chapel Committee will meet on March 22 at 6:30PM we also have a new e-mail address:
StAndrewsChapelChairman@gmail.com Rose Borgnis St Andrews Chapel Chairman (413)394-0003

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Washington Street Becket,
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623.5707

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atmosphere 885 Washington Mt. Rd
Washington, MA
(413)623.5535 The Bucksteep
Pub will be open with light
fare Friday 11am-4pm Saturday
11am-4pm Sunday 11am-4pm

Horace Mann Insurance Agency Po

Box 772 Becket Ma. 01223. Phone 413)
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parties for you and your friends in
your home or mine.

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appointment only

Send your Tracks info to mrsabeski@mac.com or if you do not have email, call Lisa
at 623.5088

Please visit Washington on line at: <http://www.washington-ma.com>
A new feature has been added. Now there is a comment page.