



The Steep Rock VISTA

Summer 2012



Threadfoot



Violet Wood Sorrel

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Steep Rock Launches Inventory of Critical Habitats

What do Threadfoot and Violet Wood Sorrel have in common? They're both listed by the Connecticut DEEP as species of "special concern", and they're both found in our nature preserves! This designation means that these species are imperiled because their natural habitat is limited and their population levels are low. How do we know these two inconspicuous plants are out there? Because in April the Steep Rock Association launched an exciting two-year project to identify and map the critical habitats and natural communities on our properties that host these and other plant and wildlife species in need of special conservation protection.

Bill Moorhead, a local botanist and field ecologist, was hired to spearhead this project. The data he collects and assimilates over the next two years will be the first important step in identifying those areas in the preserves that are of highest significance for conserving biodiversity. Steep Rock will use the results of this inventory to establish land management priorities: Which portions of the preserves are most in need of invasive species control, forest management, wildlife habitat enhancement practices, or protection from excessive visitor impacts? Which habitats require further surveys to determine if other imperiled plants or animals are present? The completed inventory will enable us to channel our finite land management resources in directions that are pivotal to sustaining vulnerable wildlife and plant species in Connecticut, many of which are also regionally and globally imperiled.

Want to help? The next time you are hiking along the Shepaug River in Steep Rock Preserve, keep a watchful eye out for an erect plant with large elliptical leaves and conspicuous 5-petaled, yellow flowers. It might be Great St. Johnswort, another species of "special concern", which was last documented in the preserve in 2002. Bill hopes to rediscover this plant and verify its continued presence at Steep Rock. If you see this plant, please let us know.



Great St. Johnswort



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From the Executive Director...“*Learning in Nature*”

“Tell me and I’ll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I’ll understand.”

— CHINESE PROVERB

These profound words are as true today as they were when first expressed centuries ago. How we learn is an amazing process. Years of research has confirmed that we all learn differently and that we often rely on a combination of learning styles...visual, auditory and tactile. Countless studies have documented the correlation between experiential (or “hands-on”) learning and the ability to gain a deeper understanding of the studied material. That is why the environmental education community has embraced experiential learning as the most effective technique for engaging people in nature. Whether it’s a stream walk to examine the mysterious world of aquatic insects, the thrill of catching and tagging a Monarch butterfly to help scientists track its migration route, or simply a leisurely hike to a feature of historical or cultural significance, there is no substitute for being in nature while learning about nature. That is what Steep Rock is now prepared to share with you.

I am pleased to announce the launching of Steep Rock Association’s new education initiative. Beginning in July, you will have an opportunity to explore our preserves in a new light...experiencing nature as a living laboratory while learning from some of our most talented local naturalists, photographers, writers, historians and other environmental experts. I invite you to join us...get involved...and gain a deeper understanding of and appreciation for our spectacular resources. Please see “Explorations in Nature” below for program descriptions and schedules. — *Steve*

Explorations in Nature

Join us as we explore various facets of nature through guided hikes and educational programs. You’ll see the nature preserves as you have never seen them before. All programs are free; however, pre-registration is required. Enrollment is limited and registration is on a first come – first serve basis. To register for a program, please complete and return the enclosed registration form. If a program is cancelled due to inclement weather, registered participants will be notified. Participants should dress appropriately for the outdoors and bring a bottle of water to drink. All programs are approximately two hours in length.

NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY

Saturday, July 14 | 8:00 a.m.

LOCATION: Macricostas Preserve Parking Lot (Christian Street)

AUDIENCE: All ages; children under age 13 must be accompanied by an adult

If you want to put more pizzazz in your photos, join us for an early morning session photographing the splendors of nature at Macricostas Preserve. Regardless of the type of equipment you use...from iPhones to point and shoot to DSLR cameras... you’ll learn how to create more artistic pictures. Be sure the battery in your camera is fully charged and bring an extra empty, formatted memory card if you have one. You may also want to bring a small towel to kneel on for those ground-level shots.

PROGRAM LEADER: Richard Wanderman has been involved in various forms of photography for over forty years. Many of Richard’s photos appear on the Steep Rock Association website.

QUARTZ MINE HIKE

Saturday, July 28 | 9:30 a.m.

LOCATION: Hidden Valley Preserve Parking Lot (Bee Brook Road/Hwy 47)

AUDIENCE: All ages; children under age 13 must be accompanied by an adult

Is it silica, silex or quartz? The first two are simply other names for what mineralogists call quartz – the most common mineral in the earth. Normally, quartz forms beautiful hexagonal crystals, but at the Hidden Valley mine, the mineral developed as a massive white vein. Quartz has been, and continues to be, an important and useful mineral. Hike with us to the quartz mine as we discuss the geology of the area, the mining of quartz and its historical and present-day uses.

PROGRAM LEADER: John Pawloski is a geologist, a retired teacher and the Founder and Director of the Connecticut Museum of Mining and Mineral Science located in Kent.

Explorations in Nature | *continued*

NATURE WRITING Saturday, August 11 | 10:00 a.m.

LOCATION: Hidden Valley Preserve Parking Lot

(Bee Brook Road/Hwy 47)

AUDIENCE: Adults

If you like to write, join us and let the sights and sounds of Hidden Valley Preserve inspire your next masterpiece. After sharing a few ideas about nature writing, we'll disperse and let nature guide our pens. At the end of the session, we'll reconvene to share our writings and thoughts about the experience. Be sure to bring a pad of paper or journal and a pen.

PROGRAM LEADER: Nicholas Benson teaches at The Gunnery. His writings and translations have appeared widely in numerous journals.

BOTANICAL FORAY ON THE RIDGE

Saturday, August 18 | 9:30 a.m.

LOCATION: Macricostas Preserve Parking Lot (Christian Street)

AUDIENCE: Adults

Explore the dry, rocky ridge of Macricostas Preserve and discover how plants have adapted to this harsh environment. Other habitats will be explored as encountered. Some stretches of this hike will be moderately strenuous. Participants should wear sturdy hiking boots.

PROGRAM LEADER: Betsy Corrigan is a biological consultant whose work primarily focuses on non-native invasive plant surveys and native plant and natural community inventories.

MONARCH BUTTERFLY TAGGING

Sunday, September 16 | 10:00 a.m.

LOCATION: Macricostas Preserve Parking Lot (Christian Street)

AUDIENCE: All ages; children under age 13 must be accompanied by an adult



Each fall, Monarch butterflies undertake an amazing migration of several thousand miles to their overwintering sites

in Mexico and California. Scientists are still trying to learn more about this incredible feat, and you can help! Join us for an exciting morning of capturing, tagging and releasing Monarchs as they prepare for their long journey. Tagging enables scientists to learn more about the Monarch's migration routes, their final destinations and how they navigate.

PROGRAM LEADER: Peary Stafford is a Steep Rock Association Trustee and a life-long naturalist with a particular interest in birds, butterflies, dragonflies and plants. Rich Chyinski has tagged thousands of Monarchs since 1997, some of which have been recovered in Mexico.

MAMMALS OF NEW ENGLAND

Saturday, October 6 | 9:00 a.m.

LOCATION: Macricostas Preserve Parking Lot (Christian Street)

AUDIENCE: All ages; children under age 13 must be accompanied by an adult



Each mammal species has developed specific adaptations which enable it to thrive and survive in its environment. Come explore the world of mammals as we look

at a variety of mammal skulls, search for tracks in a nearby track pad and finally discover our catch for the day in our small "no-kill" Havahart traps. All captured animals will be identified and then released.

PROGRAM LEADER: Wendy Welshans, a science teacher at The Forman School in Litchfield, is the Director of The Rain Forest Project, a field-based project in Costa Rica gathering data on endangered species with gifted local high school students.

FORESTRY PRACTICES FOR WILDLIFE DIVERSITY

Saturday, October 20 | 10:00 a.m.

LOCATION: Hidden Valley Preserve (Sabbaday Lane)

AUDIENCE: All ages; children under age 13 must be accompanied by an adult

Forest health, wildlife habitat and biodiversity can all be enhanced through proper forest management. Join us for a short hike in Hidden Valley Preserve to discuss the goals and results of a small timber harvest conducted in 2010 designed to support threatened and endangered wildlife species by creating early-successional habitat. Time permitting, we'll also talk about leaf color change and hike to the "old growth" hemlock forest below the harvest area.

PROGRAM LEADER: Ian Branson is a certified forestry consultant who works with numerous land trusts and private land owners on a variety of land conservation projects.

Goshawks Return

They're back! A pair of nesting Northern Goshawks has once again taken up residency at Steep Rock Preserve. To avoid disturbing the Goshawks during this nesting period and to protect hikers from the birds' territorial behavior, the loop trail just north of the Hauser Bridge has been closed for the summer. The trail will be reopened once the young birds have fledged. Additional information is posted at the trailhead kiosks.

Help us Reach our Goal

With just several months remaining in our 2011-2012 fiscal year, which ends September 30th, we are facing a budget deficit of \$25,000. If you have not yet contributed to Steep Rock this fiscal year, please help us now.

Steep Rock is supported solely by private contributions. Your tax-deductible donation is what enables us to maintain our preserves for the enjoyment of hikers, equestrians, paddlers, campers and other outdoor enthusiasts. It also funds our new biodiversity management plan to enhance wildlife habitat and a strategic land conservation plan that allows us to be more proactive in preserving lands critical to the protection of our rivers, ridgelines, forests, farms and wildlife. Please give as generously as possible. Donations may be made by check or on-line at www.steeprockassoc.org.

Save the Date

Steep Rock Annual Picnic **FREE**
Saturday, September 8th; 12:00 noon; Steep Rock Preserve.

Plenty of food and fun for everyone! Bring the entire family and enjoy the great outdoors! Afterwards, join us for a choice of leisurely hikes.

Changing of the Guard

The Board of Trustees and Staff wish to extend special thanks to Larry Gendron, Peter Houldin, John Potter and Virginia Reynolds who “retired” from the Board in May. Your dedication and years of service were a precious gift! At the same time, it is our pleasure to welcome back returning Trustee, Bill Fairbairn and new Trustees: Linda Allard, Peggy Anderson, Tom Rickart and Allison Rubler.

Volunteers Wanted

Like most non-profit organizations, Steep Rock Association relies on volunteers to help us achieve our goals. So, we are reaching out to you in an attempt to bolster our volunteer corps. We’ve recently reorganized and expanded our volunteer program and are now ready to welcome new volunteers. If you can share your skills and talents, time and interests, please complete and return the Volunteer Form located on our website (www.steeprockassoc.org – click on the “Get Involved” page). We’re looking forward to working with you!

www.steeprockassoc.org

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