



*Hooded Mergansers - Photo by Rory Larson*

## Nature Celebrates Valentine's Day

While the bitter cold, wind, and icy conditions may have temporarily grounded your forays into the natural world, life is heating up under the gray skies and blanket of snow. As daylight stretches past 10 hours, many species are actively stirring. Listen for courtship calls of screech owls after dark. Midwinter is breeding season for coyotes, fox, and bobcats. Small mammals like shrews and voles are foraging for food and black bears are giving birth in their dens. Look for mourning cloak butterflies flitting in the forests on sunny warm days and the early bird return of red-winged blackbirds and turkey vultures. In nature, February is all about relationships. Perhaps that's why we celebrate Valentine's Day in the middle of the month too. Time to enjoy the natural world regardless the season. See you on our trails...

Brian Hagenbuch, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

*PS: Be sure to tag us @steeprockassociation during your trail adventures!*

# Featured Highlights



## Love is in the Night Air

Rory Larson

The expression of love is not limited to humans in February. Step outside after sunset and you're likely to hear the sincerity of our wild inhabitants whose breeding season is underway. Hoots of barred and great-horned owls ring deeply through the thin air and screams of red fox and raccoon pierce the great silence of winter. It is truly something to behold and share with your special someone this month of love.



## And the Award for Best Trails Goes to...

Mike Giapponi

For the second year running, Steep Rock Preserve and Macricostas Preserve were respectively ranked the #1 and #3 best hiking spots in [Litchfield Magazine's Readers Choice Awards](#). A heartfelt thank-you to our donors, volunteers and poll voters, whose tireless support enables us to continue to grow upon our successes.



## Surveying for Shepaug Eagles

Rory Larson

Another Midwinter Eagle Survey is in the books, and we are incredibly thankful for the tremendous enthusiasm and effort put forth by our community scientists! Enduring a downright frigid morning and snow-covered trails, they collectively spent 52 hours scanning the entirety of the Shepaug River for bald

Photo by Mark Wantroba

eagles, from the Shepaug Reservoir in Warren all the way down through Roxbury. [>more](#)



## Love nature and want to do more?

**Monica Roberto**

I'm working with several donors who tell me they would like to do more to save land but are not in a position to do that right now. There are many ways you can support our work, including planned gifts. By planning a future gift to Steep Rock, you can make a lasting conservation impact without affecting your cash flow, retirement plans or family obligations. Here's how [>more](#)

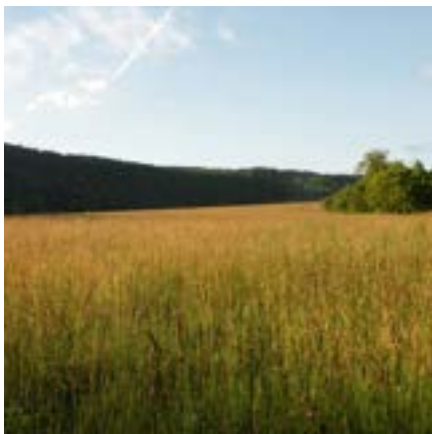


Steep Rock Honey



## Treat Your "Honey" to Steep Rock Honey

This Valentine's Day, give Steep Rock Honey to that special someone in your life--or pick up a jar for yourself. Our honey is made from the hives at Macricostas Preserves, and 100% of proceeds go to help care for and maintain the trails you love! Available at local retailers [J Seitz and Co.](#), [Hickory Stick Bookshop](#), [The Po Cafe](#), and the [Steep Rock Office](#).



## Steep Rock is Hiring!

Do you love working outdoors? Steep Rock is hiring a part-time, seasonal Trails and Grounds Assistant to perform a range of landscaping, trail maintenance, and stewardship activities.

[>more](#)

DONATE



Steep Rock Association

PO Box 279, Washington Depot, Connecticut 06794

860-868-9131 • [info@steeprocksoc.org](mailto:info@steeprocksoc.org)



[Unsubscribe](#) or [Manage Your Preferences](#)