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Photo: Daniel Sherman

## Nature: Full of Surprises

One of the wonderful gifts that the natural world presents us with is the surprises we find right under our feet, up in the air, or in front of our nose. With each hike I take, the beauty and diversity of life in our preserves continues to amaze me. This month, we're sharing a few surprises with you, including some fascinating finds during our recent participation in Audubon Connecticut's American Kestrel Nest Box Program. In addition, Daniel Sherman, one of our preserve birdwatchers, recently sent us photos of a "blue" green frog (above). Hmmm? The "blue" is caused by a rare genetic mutation which prevents the yellow pigment from forming (think blue plus yellow makes green). Without the yellow pigment, we see a "blue" green frog! This is called axanthism and is definitely rare (occurs in about 1 in every 30,000 frogs). A few years ago, we also documented a leucistic (white) bluebird. See something interesting? Whether you're strolling through our preserves, camping at Steep Rock, volunteering at Judea Garden or helping us build trails, let us know what surprises you find while visiting our preserves. See you our trails!



Brian Hagenbuch, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

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## Featured Highlights



### #3Peaks3WeeksSRA

More than 150 athletes, artists and amblers of all ages joined Steep Rock's first wellness challenge leading to the three highest peaks in our preserves: the Summit at Steep Rock, the Pinnacle at Hidden Valley and Waramaug's Rock at Macricostas. We were blown away by the amazing photos and feedback that we've received! [>more](#)

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### The Gift of Baby Birds

Every year, Steep Rock caringly cleans and prepares nest boxes to provide habitat for birds, and every year, staff and citizen scientists monitor the reproductive success of their tenants. Scientific studies show that our hard work pays off, and one of the greatest gifts for our citizen scientists is to hike, paddle, or climb to open a box and find baby birds inside. The 2021 season has been made extra special, however, by surprises held within American kestrel boxes. [>more](#)

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## StoryWalk® at Macricostas Preserve

Enjoy a reading adventure at Macricostas Preserve with the beautifully illustrated pages of *When Spring Comes* authored by Kevin Henkes and Laura Dronzek. The book is now available for your family along our ½-mile [StoryWalk®](#) trail beginning at the Macricostas Preserve parking area. As always, thank you to the [Gunn Memorial JR Library](#) as they continue to support this project by providing our book each season.

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## Camping is Back

After cancelling our 2020 camping season due to the pandemic, we have opened our three primitive campsites in Steep Rock Preserve for the season. You no longer have to imagine yourself sitting around a crackling fire under a brightly lit night sky with the Shepaug River gurgling downstream and the melodic thrushes offering your evening entertainment. Now, you can live the experience! But hurry, camping sites are going fast. Visit our [Camping](#) page or call 860-868-9131 to make a reservation.

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# Upcoming Events!





## Washington Pollinator Pathway

Do you have pollinators visiting flowers on your property or see them in action on your favorite hiking trails? Document it through this short, on-the-go WEC survey and help to map a pathway of pollinator-friendly sites through the hills and hollows of Washington. [>more](#)

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## Weed & Wine Wednesdays

Enjoy an evening with fellow gardeners weeding the vegetables in Judea Garden, then enjoy a glass of wine on us! Judea Garden, The Giving Garden, grows and distributes organically grown produce to our neighbors in need. [>more](#)

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## Trail Work Party: June 19

Put your hands on the trails by joining Steep Rock's Monthly Trail Work Party. The Monthly Trail Work Party meets at 10:00 a.m. the third Saturday of every month from April through October. [>more](#)

DONATE



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