

RATTLESNAKE GUTTER TRUST NEWSLETTER

KEEPING TRACK

"Phenology, the observation of the first flowering and fruiting of plants, the foliation and defoliation of trees, the arrival, nesting, and departure of birds, and such like, has attracted the attention of naturalists from time to time for nearly 150 years."

—*Nature*

October 8, 1884

For many years, in March, I marked the date when I heard the redwing blackbirds for the first time. Their call meant spring, the world puddle-wonderful, winter-tamped brown grasses soon to give way to fresh shoots of green.

But beyond the surge of happiness that inspired me to rush to mark the redwing's first song next to a calendar date, I wasn't very conscientious about comparing their arrival year to year.

I was no phenologist, but my lackadaisical approach may remind you of natural occurrences you enjoy noting and, from one year to the next, wish you had kept some comparative record of.

A multi-year diary/calendar is best, but a one-year calendar will work if you save past years with more care than I did. If you use a wall calendar, it may be easier for all household members to jot down notes, as well as to read what others have noted. A desk diary can be kept handy on the kitchen counter, and it gives more room for special observations.

There is so much activity in the natural world. We mark time by the sun and moon, by the tilt of the earth, as do all plants and animals. Keeping a good record of our observations is a comfortable and interesting way to study and appreciate the world around us.

Start your own phenology now. It's spring—the robins' pretty song has returned, the mayflowers will perfuming the air soon, the lady's slippers will suddenly appear, and a thousand other significant things will be happening outside our windows, in the woods, along the roadsides, in our own gardens.

—R.B. and K.A.

(Continued on page 4)

From the Trust...

Rattlesnake Gutter Trust celebrates its fourth anniversary in 1992. These four years have been filled with challenge and replete with deliberate study of the various situations and issues that confront all of us. Our by-laws delineate these goals: to preserve Rattlesnake Gutter and other land in Leverett and vicinity for the appreciation and use of the public by acquiring rights in land, developing measures to support and preserve the land and educating the public in the use, appreciation and conservation of the land.

As a fledgling organization, the Trust dealt with the immediate issue at hand, the 40 acre Koski-Benben parcel in the Gutter. We realized some measure of success with the town's acquisition and preservation of this unique and utterly beautiful area. Our annual report certainly verifies our continued activity in the Gutter.

As we move on, our concerns and responsibilities have expanded. Long Hill, both its preservation and its future management, has taken much time, thought, and funding. The conservation easement at Laurel Hill required study and debate before the Trust accepted it.

We are dealing with a range of properties and issues that, we think, should concern our entire membership, if not the entire town, the entire valley. You hear of us as we raise funds—selling tee-shirts, reminding you of your membership dues. This newsletter will keep you informed of what those dues and tee-shirt sales are doing for you, of the direction in which your Trust is moving.

At present, the Trust, is in the process of an important discussion and assessment of its direction and its role in an expanded process of preservation and development of a land ethic. These are issues of local importance and they are primary. But we must all remind ourselves that we are part of a greater whole, that decisions of national policy and earth-wide impact affect us all.

As members of the Friends of Rattlesnake Gutter, you are our constituency. We solicit your ideas, your concerns, and your involvement.

Priscilla Greeley	1993
Matthew Kelty	1993
Gordon King	1993
Annette Gibavic	1993
Kathy Addelson	1993
Albert Shane	1993
David Palmer	1994
David Field	1994
Steven Weiss	1994
Jean Bergstrom	1994

Working closely with the Conservation Commission, a subcommittee has been appointed to make management suggestions on the use of the Rattlesnake Gutter Conservation Area:

Steven Weiss	William Stratford
Roberta Bannister	Eva Gibavic
Fred Feldman	Jean Bergstrom
Adeline Call	

RECOGNITION OF CONSULTANTS: In addition to the work of the Trustees and the subcommittees, we are fortunate to have been assisted again this year by the following:

Richard Howland, Legal Advisor
Julie Shively, Treasurer
Gail Alt, Oxbow Press

HONORARY MEMBERS

Roberta Bannister
Mary Catherine Phinney
Betsy Douglas

TREASURER'S REPORT

January 1, 1991 to December 31, 1991

Balance January 1, 1991 \$9,899.99

INCOME

Life Memberships	\$200.00
Membership/Contributions	2,069.03
Donations, Long Hill	1,042.00
Donation, Pole Mole	2,000.00
T-shirt sales	471.40
Can Recycling	2,865.90
Canvas bag sales	536.00
Leverett Calendar sales	2,060.50
Interest	461.67
	\$11,706.50

EXPENSES

Long Hill Contributions	\$5,942.00
Long Hill Loan	3,000.00
Pole Mole (Pole burying)	4,259.62
Rattlesnake Gutter cleanup	100.00
Leverett Calendars	8.75

Newsletter	24.00
P.O. Box rent	7.25
Postage	99.77
Printing	19.43
Safe Deposit	20.00
Supplies	9.80
	\$13,490.62

Balance December 31, 1991 \$8,115.87

Respectfully submitted,
Julie Shively, Treasurer

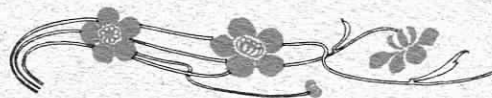
The RGT Newsletter is published four times a year by the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust in order to keep the Friends of Rattlesnake Gutter informed of the various activities and concerns of the Trust. Evolving issues of both local and global concern to all of us who wish to preserve and protect our natural environment will be presented and debated.

The newsletter is mailed to every member of Friends of Rattlesnake Gutter. The annual membership dues are \$5.00 for adults, \$1.00 for children.

Letters to the editor should be sent to RGT, P.O. Box 195, Leverett, Massachusetts 01054

1993 CALENDAR DEADLINE

Photos must be entered this year by July 31 in order for calendars to be available for sale at Harvest Festival. Submit your photos to RGT, P.O. Box 195, Leverett or to Roberta Bannister, 106 Hemenway Road.



Join now!

If you wish to become a Friend, complete the application below, clip and send with your annual dues (\$5.00 for adults, \$1.00 for children) to:

Friends of Rattlesnake Gutter
P.O. Box 195
Leverett, MA 01054

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

FRIENDS OF RATTLESNAKE GUTTER TRUST

FIFTH ANNUAL MEETING

7:30 pm, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15, 1992

LEVERETT TOWN HALL

Election of Trustees • Refreshments

RATTLESNAKE GUTTER TRUST ANNUAL REPORT TO MEMBERS

April 15, 1992

LAND PRESERVATION ACTIVITIES

LAUREL HILL: A deed was signed in July, conveying a conservation easement to Rattlesnake Gutter Trust of a 140 acre parcel on Laurel Hill, assuring that this large tract will remain forever undeveloped. Our thanks to Sidney Poritz for this significant contribution.

LONG HILL NATURAL AREA: At the request of the Long Hill Alliance, the Trust assisted their efforts to purchase and agreed to accept ownership of the 35 acre parcel which forms a backdrop for Leverett Pond in Leverett Center. This parcel, when conveyed to the Trust by interim holder Valley Land Trust, will be managed by a Trust subcommittee which includes community members who live close to the area as well as those from other parts of town. We commend the work of the many people who made this purchase a reality.

"POLE MOLES": The Trust accepted as an ad hoc committee the group concerned with preserving the town center view by burying utility lines along Putney Road, where installation of a heavier power line would have added more poles. This work has been completed, except for removal of the telephone line and original poles. Our appreciation to Portia Weiskel, Barbara Alfange, Bill Rivers and the Congregational Church for their efforts.

CO-HOUSING: Although this project now is withdrawn, initial steps were taken to obtain a setback restriction along Old Cave Hill and Whitney roads.

GUTTER CLEANUP: A mammoth cleanup of many years' trash accumulation in Rattlesnake Gutter was successfully engineered by Jean Bergstrom in two stages: first a community effort resulting in removal in several truckloads of small trash, followed by professional removal of large items.

LIBRARY CORNER: Approval was obtained

from library trustees to add conservation/preservation materials for public information and use.

NEWSLETTER: Increased communication and participation with our membership is anticipated with the introduction of this Newsletter, to be published quarterly.

WAYS AND MEANS

MEMBERSHIPS—RENEW NOW!: We depend heavily on the annual contributions of our members, whether large or small. Although our dues remain small,—\$5 an individual, \$1 for children, \$100 for life membership—to enable everyone in Leverett to participate, large amounts are never refused and are greatly appreciated!

REFUNDABLE CAN/BOTTLE BOOTH: Our best moneymaker continues to be this booth at the landfill which benefits everyone. Let's keep it going!

LEVERETT CALENDARS: Already a Leverett tradition, this year's change in format, which adds more space for writing and more pictures, was in response to your requests. Next year's calendars will be *on sale* at the Harvest Festival, so get your photo entries in any time before July 31.

T-SHIRT AND CANVAS BAGS: Time for new ones? Buy them at the Co-op.

RATTLESNAKE GUTTER FOLLIES: This year's talent extravaganza helped our treasury and entertained our friends, thanks to Jean Bergstrom and her committee.

TRUSTEES OF THE RATTLESNAKE GUTTER TRUST

The Board of Trustees (no less than five nor more than fifteen), is elected at the annual meeting from the membership to serve a term of three years, from which a chair, vice-chair, treasurer and secretary are chosen. A nominating committee of three trustees is appointed at a Trustee meeting prior to the Annual Meeting to prepare a slate of candidates. Other nominations may be made from the floor. Current trustees and their terms are.

Evelyn Schuyler	1992
Roberta Bannister	1992
Charlotte Abbott	1992
Brooke Thomas	1992

	1st Week	2nd Week	3rd Week	4th Week
APRIL	<p>1985: Sarah and I saw first swallow.</p> <p>1989: Tree swallows.</p> <p>1991: Sharp-shinned hawk took chickadee. Forsythia bloomed.</p> <p>Woodcock flights; phoebes arrive; peepers calling.</p>	<p>1981: White throated sparrow.</p> <p>1989: Swallows return. Palm warbler at pond.</p> <p>Toads sing.</p>	<p>1985: Hawk chased by cowbirds and robins. Ruby-crowned kinglet.</p> <p>1988: Flickers. Woodthrush sings.</p> <p>1990: Yellow-rumped warbler at pond. Sapsucker in pitch pine.</p> <p>1991: Yearling deer browsing in meadow.</p> <p>Ducks migrate; spring azure butterflies; fiddleheads up.</p>	<p>1991: Rich saw wren in swamp; marsh marigolds bloom. False lily of the valley, skunk cabbage, fiddleheads. Trees with pale veil of green.</p> <p>Turtles active. Dandelions bloom, Quaker-ladies bloom; tadpoles appear.</p>
MAY	<p>1981: First swallows. Phoebe started nest in porch eave.</p> <p>1985: First barn swallows</p> <p>1991: First catbird.</p> <p>Ferns unfurl. Dogwood blooms. Catbirds, thrashers, and thrush returns.</p>	<p>1985: Rosebreasted grosbeak!</p> <p>1988: Wren is back.</p> <p>1990: Catbird, two ovenbirds, warblers, towhee.</p> <p>Bloodroot flowers, warbler migration, gypsy moth caterpillars hatch, orioles call.</p>	<p>1981: Myrtle warbler, three scarlet tanagers, northern oriole. Lilacs in bloom. Blueberries in flower.</p> <p>Honeysuckle. Bad blackflies and mosquitos.</p> <p>1991: Woodcock flew over in courtship flight.</p> <p>Sulfur and tiger swallowtails, flycatchers return, lilacs bloom.</p>	<p>1985: Phoebes and tree swallows nesting. Flying squirrel in bird-house. many ladyslippers.</p> <p>1988: Blackbird fledgling at pond. Mountain azalea in bloom.</p> <p>1990: Lilacs almost in bloom. Hermit thrushes, veeries, robins, cardinals sing.</p>
JUNE	<p>1988: Purple finches bathe in bird-bath. Robins nest in pitch pine. Goldfinches.</p> <p>Monarch butterflies migrate, bats in evening sky, wild geraniums bloom, mosquitos hatch.</p>	<p>1985: Small hawk in tree across from kitchen.</p> <p>1988: Kingbird and rediving fledglings.</p> <p>1990: Mountain azalea still in bloom. Roses and spiderwort beginning.</p> <p>All ferns open, bullfrogs call, cinquefoil blooms, june bugs active, leaf eating-insects feed.</p>	<p>1982: Robin feeds fledgling in the copse. Golden-cheeked warbler in lilac.</p> <p>1986: Finches gathering nesting material.</p> <p>1991: Day lilies in bloom.</p> <p>Wild strawberries are ripe; lady's slippers bloom; first hay cutting.</p> <p>June 21: Summer Solstice, longest day of year.</p>	<p>1986: Wrens fledged. Swallows in NW and NE houses still being fed. Fringed orchids in bloom.</p>

To help you start your own phenology, we've created this calendar. The italicized notations are selections from a desk diary phenology kept by a North Leverett Friend of the Trust. Undated notations, not italicized, are general observations taken from an Audubon calendar to give some ideas about what to look for.

Friends of Rattlesnake Gutter
P.O. Box 195
Leverett, MA 01054

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Permit No. 3

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