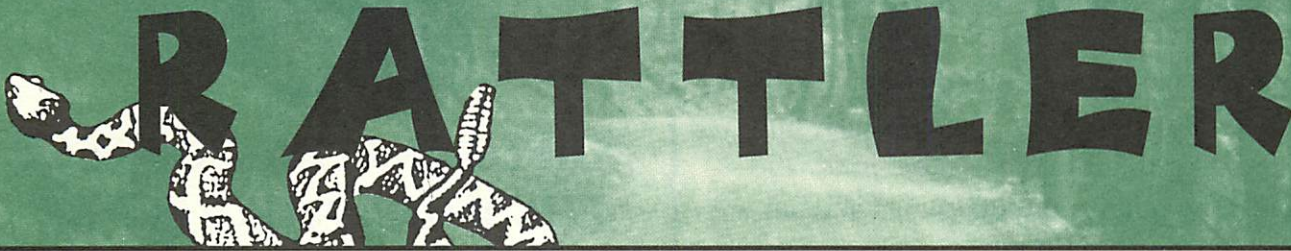


RATTLESNAKE GUTTER TRUST

THE



RATTLER

BIKING ON THE ROADS OF LEVERETT

by Ravenna Wilson

No matter where you are in Leverett, you must admit that biking is the ultimate way of travel. Some of it is the fact that when bike-riding, you get very nice leg muscles. But another part of it is that the roads around here are rarely victimized by traffic and potholes, making them rather safe to ride. Although sadly, Jackson Hill road was demolished after the huge storm last June.

But all the other roads around here do very nicely when you want a simple hour of pleasure. Almost every week I find myself strapping on my helmet, filling up my water bottle and setting off along Cushman road. Birds fly past me and I feel as if I was going as fast as an Olympic cyclist. However, my wonderful cruise down Cushman Road is short-lived as I soon turn onto January Hills road.

I pedal up a small hill and stop. I've forgotten my money. I turn around, go back to my house and quickly run into my room to grab a wrinkled dollar bill. I jam it into my pocket, run back downstairs and pedal as fast as I can to make up for the lost time.

Once I'm back to the small hill, I go more slowly. When I reach the top of the hill, I come to a dirt road. There are many houses and of all the years I've biked along this road, I have never met anyone who lives in one of these houses. I hold my breath as I bike past a house where a big, black dog lives. It's not that I'm afraid of dogs, it's just that this dog is really big and really fast. I pedal faster as I look over my right shoulder. The dog's heard me. The black dog chases me down the road until I'm

forced to stop. The dog barks and jumps at me. I put out the back of my hand to let him sniff it. Fortunately, he sniffs my hand instead of biting it off as I had half expected him to do. I bike down the road, but the dog just sits in the middle of the street barking his head off.

I keep pedaling down the road until I come to one of my favorite places, the Amherst Reservoir. Just the very sight of it makes my mind fill with joy. Don't ask me why I'm so fond of this particular place, but I am. I bike on past the reservoir, sad to leave. But when I think of what's ahead, my pace quickens.

I come to the end of January Hills road and make a left onto Market Hill road. I'm greatly relieved to be back on a paved street and I pedal on a nice, flat stretch of road. I pass some farms and a kennel full of howling dogs. I start to wonder if I have enough money to buy a Snapple at the Cushman General Store.

I then remember that I have my water bottle stored away under my seat. I take it out and drink only a small amount of the cool, refreshing liquid, for I know I'm going to need the rest for the almost entirely up-hill trip back.

I bike on this flat terrain for about five more minutes. I then come to one of my other favorite spots, a small, no-name farm. I like this farm for one reason, the exceptionally cute goats that live there. There are only about four or five goats there, but they all have the same markings: a gray body with a white band around their stomachs, a white face with a gray mask and the smallest horns I've ever

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THE RATTLER

Welcome to **THE RATTLER**, a special kids' edition of Rattlesnake Gutter Trust's NEWSLETTER.

Leverett's newest newspaper intends to give kids and grownups a chance to write, draw, study, and think about the world around us—the hills, the rivers, the fields, the ponds, and the plants and animals that share the world with us.

Each issue will contain articles, stories, photos, drawings, cartoons, letters, or anything else that YOU would like to have in **THE RATTLER**.

There could be a picture or a story about a place in Leverett that is special to you. There could be an article about the way farms and forests have changed during Leverett's history. There could be a letter about an environmental problem that's important to you like water pollution. There could be a map showing what parts of Leverett are woods and what parts are open fields. There could be ANYTHING that YOU want to talk about or share with other kids about the place we all live in.

We hope that you will like this first issue of **THE RATTLER** and that you will want to have something of your own in one of the next issues.

Anyone interested in putting something in the next issue of **THE RATTLER** can talk with a teacher or call Steve Weiss at 548-8172. Or you can send your article, photo, drawing, cartoon—or suggestions—to:

THE RATTLER
Rattlesnake Gutter Trust
P.O. Box 195



Do you have a favorite tree? What kind is it? Does it have leaves or needles? Watch your tree closely if it has leaves. When it has only one leaf left, write down the date. Watch next year to compare.



PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST *THE WORLD AROUND US*

THE RATTLER invites all LES students to submit a photo for the first annual "*The World Around Us*" photography contest.

What We Want: The best nature photo you've ever taken in Leverett.

It could be a picture of a field or a flower, a cliff or a rock, a river or a stream, a mountain or a field, a tree or a leaf, a duck, the Pond, a deer, or a ladybug. ANY picture taken by you of the outdoor world in Leverett may be submitted.

What We Need: A print (color or black and white). You may submit only one photo so choose your favorite carefully.

When We Need It: Photos must be submitted by Monday, November 18, 1996.

How to Enter: Put your photograph in an envelope with your name, your grade, and your teacher's name printed on the front of the envelope. Leave your entry in the Photo Contest Box in the school office.

Prizes: A \$25.00 savings bond will be awarded for the best picture in each grade.

Photo Exhibit: All photographs entered in the contest will be part of a special exhibit at the school in December. Your teacher will return your photo to you at the end of the exhibit.

For More Information: Call Steve Schmidt (367-2841) or Steve Weiss (548-8172).

Listen to field crickets. See if you can note the last day you hear them this year. Record the weather, especially the temperature, on that day.

BIKING ON THE ROADS OF LEVERETT

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seen. I stop my bike to look at them.

When I continue my journey to the General Store, I bike down the largest hill of my trip.

My hair flies into my face and I carefully lift up my hand from the handlebar to tuck it back behind my ear. I then think how hard it's going to be to bike back up this hill. I give a small groan at the very thought of it.

I then get to a much busier section of the road. A large truck passes and leaves me in a cloud of smoke and dust. "I'm almost there," I think to myself, when I meet up with some railroad tracks. I gingerly cross them, remembering my fear of trains and train tracks. (Please don't laugh at me, but it's true, I am afraid of trains and tracks.) I then glance up at the sign. Cushman General Store, it says.

I prop my bike against the wall, take off my helmet and walk into the store. The air-conditioned room hits me like cold water. Although I know that I want candy, I walk around the store just to cool off. I come back to the front of the store where a big shelf is full of an assortment of delicious candies. I decide on a Snickers candy bar, but then I change my mind and take a package of Twizzlers. But I'm still not satisfied, so I throw in some bubble gum. The lady at the cash register tells me how much all of it is. I pull out the wrinkled dollar bill and realize it's not enough. I tell her I'm five cents short. She smiles at me and tells me that it's okay.

I take my stuff and give her an awkward smile. I walk out of the store and eat my candy on the steps. I save the bubble gum in my pocket and start the long trip home.



Watch cattails and milkweed. When do the pods open?

PHENOLOGY

Phew! What a word to be using as a title! Do you know what it means?

Well, it's an old word, and it's not used very often these days. Most words with an *-logy* on the end are the study of something. Astrology, for instance, is the study of the stars because the *astro-* part comes from the Latin word for stars.

So phenology is the study of what? The simplest way to put it is that the first part, *pheno-*, means "come to light" or "appear". So, phenology is a bulky word that means the study of the times of recurring natural events, like the first snowfall in December or the first pussywillows in March, especially as they relate to climate, the weather in a specific place over a long period of time.

The study part is paying attention to the world around us and noting when events like the first snowfall happen. The easiest way to do this is to keep a diary or a calendar in which you write down observations. If you keep at it for a long time, you'll learn lots of interesting things. You'll start to notice other things that happen around the same time as certain events.

We all pay attention to a lot of things that happen each and every year. We know that the leaves begin to turn red and yellow and brown in September, just after school starts, that goldenrod begins to bloom in August, that fireflies first appear in June. Wouldn't it be fun to keep a diary in which you mark down the date and place the first time you notice a firefly? You could record the first sound of peepers in the spring or the first flock of geese you see flying south. You might note the first crocus bloom you see or the first morning frost coats your lawn or your deck.

If your family belongs to the Massachusetts Audubon Society, you receive a magazine called *Sanctuary*. Every issue, the back cover has a calendar called "Outdoor Almanac". Natural events are listed on this calendar, which is a good model for you to use when you start your own phenology.

Have fun!

(To help you get started, there are little suggestions spread throughout this issue of **THE RATTLER**.)



ECOCOMIC

by Jed Mitchell

THE LES ENVIRONMENTAL CLASSROOM

Your Environment Right in Your Backyard

Remember those yellow plastic tapes across the woods in back of the school last year? Well, they're gone now. The town has bought the land.

And some people have come up with a very cool idea.

The idea is called an "environmental classroom." What it means is using the woods and the stream to find out more about how our environment works. What it means is learning about the plants and animals and rocks and water all around us. What it means is doing experiments. What it means is writing down what we learn about the woods so we can see what changes and what stays the same from year to year.

What can you do there? Well...

- You could make a map. Where does the stream go? Where are the big rocks? Where are different kinds of trees located?

- You could study how the dirt under some trees is a whole lot different than the dirt under other trees.

- You could blaze a trail.

- You could find out how fast the stream flows in the Fall. Does it flow just as fast in the Winter? How about in the Spring?

- You could learn about the birds that live in the woods. When do they come? When do they leave? Which ones stay all year long?

- You could build weather stations. You could keep track of temperature and rainfall in different parts of the woods and the field.

- You could study what happens to a part of the woods when the trees have been cut down. Do new trees come up? What happens to the branches left on the ground?

- You could find out what lives under rocks.

- And you could do about a million other things too.

During the rest of the year, students and teachers and other people in Leverett will be working hard to make the woods a place where you can learn about the *thousands* of things that are happening every single day all around you and how it all works together.

If you would like to find out what's going on in the woods, or if you have an idea about something neat to study, talk to your teacher or to Mrs. Godsey.

Remember, the whole world is out there, right in your backyard.