

Join Us Bird and Botany Walk

Saturday, May 19th at 7:00am

Suckfish Brook Conservation Area

Come explore the treasures of the Spring season with a naturalist-led walk in Suckfish Brook Conservation Area, Falmouth's newest conservation parcel. We'll experience upland forests, a beaver pond, and Falmouth's only northern peat bog. Bring your binoculars and wear boots-it will be wet!

Directions: Meet at the TD North office building parking lot on Rte 100 (across from Hannaford's)

For More Information Visit

www.falmouthlandtrust.org



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The purpose of the Falmouth Land Trust is to permanently protect field, forest, shoreline, and wildlife lands; to maintain the historical character and natural beauty of Falmouth; and to educate its citizens regarding the values of donation, stewardship, and enjoyment of protected lands.

a falmouth land trust newsletter to the community > spring 2012

Spring

Spring comes early to Falmouth's vernal pools

by Mila Plavsic

The chorus of spring peepers, a sure harbinger of spring, began earlier than usual this year after a mild winter and record-shattering high temperatures in March. Quacking wood frogs soon added their voices to the seasonal soundscape as they staked out territories in the evanescent forested wetlands known as vernal pools. Vernal pools are a favored habitat of wood frogs and other creatures because they do not support breeding populations of fish, which eat eggs and young. The trade-off is that once adult amphibians have laid eggs in a vernal pool, the race is on for the eggs to hatch and the young to fully develop before the pool dries out.

Some organisms are "obligate" vernal pool species, so called because they must use a vernal pool for various parts of their life cycle. If the obligate species are using a body of water, then that water is a vernal pool. In New England, the easily recognizable obligate species are the fairy shrimp, the mole salamanders and the wood frog. Falmouth has a good amount of this important habitat, and FLT properties are great places to experience vernal pools first-hand.

In April, Caleb Hemphill (FLT's resident vernal pool expert) and Analiese Larson, FLT's Executive Director, led a very successful outing to a vernal pool with the newly formed Falmouth High School Ocean Studies Club. This club, under the direction of science teacher Kim Blenk, just formed and this was their inaugural event. The enthusiastic group of students learned all about vernal pools, the indicator species found within these pools and the proper methods for recording data (using a

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207-699-2989
www.falmouthlandtrust.org
Falmouth ME 04105
PO Box 6172

www.falmouthlandtrust.org



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Letter from the President: John Adelman *The Passing of the Baton*


As with all good institutions, especially not for profit ones, it is critical to change leadership on a regular basis so the organization continues to grow and be vibrant for the long-term. As President of the Board for the past few years, I have had a lot of fun working with my fellow Trustees as we guided the Trust through a period of tremendous growth. There certainly were many issues to deal with and lots of good conversations around the table as we sought to make the best possible decisions for the Trust today and for its future. Looking back over this period, I am most pleased by the high level of engagement all Trustees brought to this work and their willingness to take on some of the tasks that are so critical for the success of an organization like this. Too many times not for profits are run by one or two seriously dedicated individuals and there isn't room for others to get involved in a meaningful way so it is hard to maintain a committed group. This was and continues to not be true for the Falmouth Land Trust (FLT). This is a group of very motivated individuals who work together in a collegial fashion supporting each other to get the work done.

I have been involved with the Trust since 1997 and have seen a lot of change on the Board over the years and a lot of change in Town as Falmouth felt the effect of development pressure that was prevalent throughout Southern Maine. I experienced the Trust as an all-volunteer organization responding when individuals wanted to donate their property or developers gave a certain amount of their land so they could receive preferential variances; when it decided to raise more money than it ever had in its history to make an actual purchase of property, creating Blackstrap Hill Preserve; when it decided to join forces with two local Trusts to create the Portland North Land Trust Collaborative, its first attempt to bring in professionals to administer its affairs; when a select group of us assisted in the town wide referendum regarding

the purchase of Open Space that beneficially changed our relationship with the Town forever; and most recently when the Trust decided its best approach was to concentrate on the work here in Falmouth and open its first office and hire its first Executive Director to help lead the organization.

As many of you who have been involved with FLT or other similar not for profits know, it is not without frustrations, setbacks and the minutiae that make this work less than thrilling at times but I can honestly say that I am proud and excited by the work FLT has done and I look forward to staying involved with the organization in a new role as it continues to grow and be even more successful in the future.

FLT's new President Jed Harris brings a great deal of talent and experience to the position, and he has established very good relationships with both private land owners as well as with town officials. He will do a great job leading the Trust and by working with an Executive Director on a regular basis will be able to bring the Trust to a new level of visibility within the community. He and the other Trustees are keenly aware of their responsibility as the stewards of 1300 acres of land in Falmouth and continue to work passionately to get the work of the Trust done in a timely and meaningful manner. It has been a wonderful and rewarding experience to have led this organization and I am proud that I am leaving it in better shape than when I started. It is now time to pass the baton and let someone else lead the charge. I know the Trust is poised for great things and the Town of Falmouth will be the better for it.



John Adelman

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Spring comes early to Falmouth's vernal pools Continued from pg. 1

vernal pool assessment data form). Caleb showed the students egg masses for some of the indicator species and students witnessed a caddisfly munching on some salamander eggs.

The ocean studies club plans to use FLT land as outdoor lab space. Kim recently was awarded a grant by the Falmouth Education Foundation (FEF) to purchase field equipment for students to collect year round data from several fresh and salt water sites in Falmouth. The Trust welcomes this educational use of its properties and looks forward to future collaboration with Falmouth schools.

Species that rely on vernal pools need large tracts of forest and a network of vernal pools to persist over time, especially as vernal pools are subject to boom and bust cycles depending on water levels. The State of Maine and the Town of Falmouth have regulations in place to protect significant vernal pools so it is important to check with town officials before the area around a potential vernal pool

is altered. Enjoy the frog chorus while it lasts and don't forget to get out and explore the vernal pools protected by the Falmouth Land Trust.



For more information: Vernal Pool Association (<http://www.vernalpool.org>); Maine Vernal Pools Project (<http://www.umaine.edu/vernalpools/>).

Update from Bob Shafto, Town Ombudsman

Falmouth's newest open space acquisition is the Suckfish Bog Conservation Area, a 94-acre parcel that lies between Mast Road and the western side of Blackstrap ridge. It includes the town's only northern peat bog, a 3.5-acre beaver pond, several hundred feet of shoreline along Suckfish Brook, forested wetlands, and ±39-acres of upland hardwood forest. In addition to its valuable wildlife habitat, the property allows helps protect the water quality of Highland Lake.



While there are no trails on the property as yet, the public is welcome to explore it. It can be accessed via Upland Way off of Mast Road (park on the gravel portion of that road) or from the southern end via a woods road on the Falmouth-Westbrook town line. Bring

your binoculars and field guide to the unique bog plants that can be found here. You could even canoe on the beaver pond. We hope to establish trails on the property in the coming year, including a section of raised trail into the bog itself. If you would like to help with that work, or on other trail building and conservation projects in town, please contact me at openspace@maine.rr.com.

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 Falmouth ME 04105
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