



# Athol Bird and Nature Club

## *Winter-Spring 2006 Newsletter*

Volume 42, Number 2

### **President's Letter**

This past year's weather has been one of extremes; a cool wet spring, a few weeks of heat in August, the monsoons of autumn, and early December blizzard followed by a warm rainy January. Rivers and streams are running bank full. The Quabbin is over capacity providing a rare winter spectacle as the overflow cascades into the Swift River.

Recent reports have included Green Frogs out and about in New York State, a local incursion of Common Redpolls, and a Boreal chickadee continues in Orange. I suppose that is what makes watching nature so fascinating and keeps our collective interest alive as we try to observe how our favorite plants and animals adapt to the changing conditions.

The activities of the ABNC and our Environmental Center are in full swing. This newsletter is filled with a wide variety of events reflecting the interests of our members and their willingness to share their love of nature with the rest of us. There are more trips and events in the works but if we waited to have everything was finalized the newsletter would never get mailed. If you have a trip in mind that did not make this issue let us know. We can add it on the web and e-mail list at any time and we can mail an update later in the spring to members.

Your generous support of the Annual Appeal is helping defray the high cost of heating oil. Many thanks go to Greg McGuane, Chris Long, and Nichole Sears for the help each week. We can use additional volunteer help at the Center to help with building repairs, general tasks and staffing the desk for more open hours.

We want to acknowledge the continued grant support from Massachusetts Environmental Trust (You can help by selecting to have the Trout or Whale license plates), Greater Worcester Community Foundation, Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (You can help by checking off the support on your state tax form), and the Nonprofit Center at Mount Wachusett Community College that funded technology for the Center. These Grantors, and the school district support, have made possible our school programs with the Athol-Royalston Schools, Warwick Community School and Orange Elementary Schools. Also grant funded are scientific monitoring of our region's lakes and ponds and statewide dragonfly surveys. The Millers River Watershed Council is now taking the lead in conducting volunteer watershed monitoring and I hope that Club members will continue to participate in those programs.

I appreciate everyone's participation and look forward to a New Year of fun in the field..

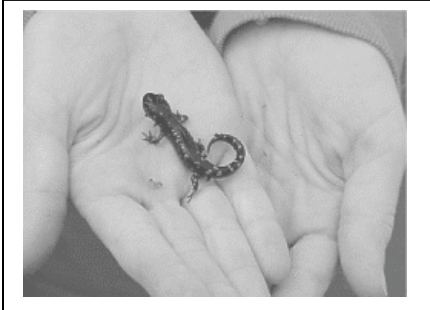
*Dave Small*  
Athol, Ma

## Book Review: *Last Child in the Woods*\* By Richard Louv

In a thoroughly readable format mixing anecdotes with research, renowned child advocate Richard Louv (*Childhood's Future, Fatherhood, ...*) considers the causes and effects of the alienation of today's children from nature.

Louv gives an insightful look at how societal factors such as fear of strangers and insect-borne diseases, as well as more structured schedules, and the lack of access to natural environments have created a "nature deficit disorder."

This deficit manifests in such ills as depression, obesity, and ADD.



Collaborating with parents, children, teachers, environmentalists, and other concerned parties, Louv has created a stirring call to action for a reunion between children and nature and reclamation of the physical, mental, and spiritual well being of children, families, and the community. In its concluding chapters, Louv recommends some solutions that are being carried out in programs that our Center currently provides for schoolchildren and families of the region.

\* Available at **Bruce's Browser**, 1497 Main Street, Athol

## Volunteer Assistance Needed

Please contact Dave Small [dave@dhsml.net] or leave a message at the Millers River Environmental Center [978-248-9491] if you can assist us. We need:

1. A crew to repaint the Center's community meeting room and hallways. Paint will be provided, but we need help with painting and prep work.
2. Additional volunteers to assist us on small office tasks at the Center on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10 am to 2 pm.
3. Volunteers to greet visitors at the Center for our Watershed Open House before the River Rat Race day on Saturday April 8 from 9 am to 1 pm.
4. Help for pulling together the next newsletter.

### Officers and Directors of the Athol Bird & Nature Club

**President:** Dave Small

**Vice President:** James Mallet

**Treasurer:** Robert Coyle

**Directors:** David Caldwell, Barbara Coyle, Lula Field, Susan Heinricher, Rick Magee, Robert Mallet, John O'Keefe and Jacob Morris-Siegel

**Membership Secretary:** Susan Bredesen

**Executive Director:** Sue Cloutier

**Millers River Environmental Center**

100 Main Street, Athol, MA 01331

WEB: [www.mrec-athol.org](http://www.mrec-athol.org)

PHONE: (978) 248-9491

## Athol Bird and Nature Club Winter – Spring 2006 Calendar

Most Club events and programs are free and open to the public.

Some events with other collaborating organizations are also listed below.

Reasonable accommodations are available upon request.

For information on program additions, changes due to weather or to register for most or our programs, call 978-248-9491, visit our website at [www.millersriver.net](http://www.millersriver.net) or email [abnc@millersriver.net](mailto:abnc@millersriver.net)

***See the last calendar page for events repeated monthly through May 2006***

January 2006	
January 29 Sunday 10 am-3 pm	<p><b>Quabbin Natural &amp; Cultural History Hike</b> Join Dan Bolton on this exploration of Quabbin. Learn about the old roads, homes, and railway that have left their mark on the landscape and discover more about Quabbin's wildlife today. Registration is required. Please call 978-249-2162 to register and for walk details.</p>

February 2006	
February 4 Saturday All Day	<p><b>Winter Seabirds/Gloucester with Mark Taylor</b> On this trip we'll look for winter seabird specialties from Gloucester harbor to Cape Anne. Meeting Place: MREC 100 Main Street Athol at 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 at the Friendly's Restaurant at the Gloucester Rotary off route 128. <b>Suggestion:</b> Share travel expenses with drivers when carpooling.</p>
February 5 Sunday 9 am- noon	<p><b>Wildlife Tracking Hike with Paul Wanta</b> This is a Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust event held at Skyfields Arboretum, 1461 Old Keene Road, Athol. Hike the fields and forest of Skyfields Arboretum to track wildlife remaining active throughout the winter. Program is suitable for adults as well as adults with children. Wear warm, waterproof footwear and warm clothing. Limited to 20 participants. Please call to reserve a space 978-248-2043.</p>
February 8 Wednesday 7 pm- 9 pm	<p><b>ABNC Monthly Meeting: New Ways to Know the Ferns</b> Elizabeth Farnsworth, co-author of the new <i>Peterson Field Guide to the Ferns</i>, will present a talk on the making of the new book, with special reference to our local ferns of interest. She is a Bullard Research fellow at Harvard University and will be illustrating the forthcoming <i>Flora of New England</i> for the New England Wild Flower Society. Held at the Millers River Environmental Center.</p>
Feb 12 Sunday 2 pm- 4 pm	<p><b>Geology: Understanding Rocks and Minerals</b> Learn basic the rock and mineral identification from Bob Coyle. This will be a hands-on program where you will learn about the foundations of our bedrock. Held at the Millers River Environmental Center, 100 Main Street, Athol. <b><i>In case of bad weather driving conditions</i></b> call 978-249-6083 to see if this is postponed to Sunday, Feb 19.</p>
Feb 14 Tuesday 11 am-1 pm	<p><b>Accessible Birding</b> Join Joe Superchi on this local birding trip open to birders of all abilities. We will travel in an accessible van to the birding sites. If you need wheelchair access, please call ahead and leave a message at the Center 978-248-9491. Meet at the Millers River Environmental Center.</p>
Feb 16 Thursday 7 pm- 9 pm	<p><b>North Quabbin Garden Club: School Gardens: Food for Thought</b> Deb Habib of Seeds of Solidarity, Orange, will present. Garden club members free, nonmembers \$5. Held at the Environmental Center,</p>

	100 Main St. Athol.
Feb 18 Saturday 10 am- Noon	<b>Trees and Shrubs in Winter</b> Botanist Matt Hickler will lead this hike into winter woods and guide participants in discovering features that lead to tree and shrub identification. Meet at the Royalston Common by the library.
Feb 25 Saturday 10 am- Noon	<b>Exploring Winter Wildlife</b> Join Joan Milan and Dave King as they explore winter in north-central Massachusetts. We will look for animals and their tracks, winter insects, and birds that endure the cold winter temperatures of our region. We will discuss the stresses facing plants and animals during the coldest months of the year and the numerous survival strategies and adaptations they employ in response. Experience level will be for beginners. Families and seniors are encouraged. Meet at New Salem General Store on Rt. 202. <b>Call early to reserve, as group size is limited</b> 413-549-4019.

<b>March 2006</b>	
Each Saturday in March	Join us as we make parade puppets and plan theatrics for the <b>River Celebration in April</b> . Mark Dannenhauer has more in store for us this year. Don't miss out! Meet at the Millers River Environmental Center. Details will be announced on the web at <a href="http://www.millersriver.net">www.millersriver.net</a> and in the Athol Daily News, or call 978-248-9491.
March 5 Sunday 10 am- 4 pm	<b>AMC Outdoor Expo</b> Come find out about recreational resources in our region; Appalachian Mountain Club has organized this event so that the public can find out about trails, boating, and recreational gear. Area businesses and non-profits will have displays and programs. Call Don Fly for more information 978-724-3318. Held at the Millers River Environmental Center.
March 8 Wednesday 7 pm- 9pm	<b>ABNC Monthly Meeting: Moose In Central Mass</b> Moose-forest Dynamics in the Quabbin and Ware River Reservations Ed Faison, graduate student at Harvard Forest in Petersham, will present his findings on moose in the local area. Has the population reached its peak in our region? What are issues facing moose? Learn the answers to these questions and more. Held at the Millers River Environmental Center.
March 11 Saturday All Day	<b>Birding Newburyport and Vicinity</b> Join in the car caravan to various sites targeting late winter specialties: Rough-legged Hawk, Snowy Owl, Bald Eagles, Barrows Goldeneye, Glaucous Gull, as well as other late wintering ducks and wintering finches, and possibly early spring migrants. Note: Entrance fee or duck stamp required for possible Plum Island visit. Return time 7 PM. Bring lunch and FRS's (2-way radios). Meet at 7 am at MREC. Alternate meeting place and time 8:30 am at Burger King on Rt. 110, exit 55 off Rt. 495, the first Salisbury exit. <b>Call leaders</b> Joan and Larry Duprey 978-249-4964 <b>if meeting at alternate location.</b> <b>Suggestion:</b> Share travel expenses with drivers when carpooling.
March 14 Tuesday 11 am- 1 pm	<b>Accessible Birding</b> Join Joe Superchi on this local birding trip open to birders of all abilities. We will travel in an accessible van to the birding sites. If you need wheelchair access, please call ahead and leave a message at the Center 978-248-9491. Meet at the Millers River Environmental Center.
March 16 Thursday 7 pm- 9 pm	<b>North Quabbin Garden Club: Pruning Workshop—How to Prune &amp; When</b> , with Denise Bennett, of Maple Hill Nursery, West Swanzee, NH. Garden club members free, nonmembers \$5. Held at the Millers River Environmental Center.

<b>April 2006</b>	
April 8 Saturday 9 am- Noon	<b>Vernal Pool Trip</b> Join Lynn Harper for this look at the wonders of our local vernal pools. Meet at the Millers River Environmental Center.
April 8 Saturday 10 am- 1 pm	<b>Athol River Festival and River Rat Race Start</b> Come to the Millers River Environmental Center Open House and Show, Watch the parade and participate by carrying one of the parade puppet characters. Volunteers Needed. Leave a message at 978-248-9491.
April 11 Tuesday 8 am- 10 am	<b>Accessible Birding</b> Join Joe Superchi on this local birding trip open to birders of all abilities. We will travel in an accessible van to the birding sites. If you need wheelchair access, please call ahead and leave a message at the Center 978-248-9491. Meet at the Millers River Environmental Center.
April 12 Wednesday 7 pm- 9 pm	<b>ABNC Monthly Meeting: Member Night Presentation</b> Travel through this slide presentation to some of the best birding and wildlife areas of our country.
April 20 Thursday 7 pm	<b>North Quabbin Garden Club: Growing and Using Herbs—Culinary, Medicinal and Ornamental</b> , with Lynn Hartman, of Hartman’s Herb Farm, Barre. Garden club members free, nonmembers \$5. Held at the Millers River Environmental Center.
April 22 Saturday 10 am – 2 pm	<b>Explore the Tully Trail on Earth Day</b> Join Allen Young and Clare Green on this hike along a wild and beautiful section of the Tully Trail. We will meet at the intersection of Butterworth and Tully Roads, hike to Fish Brook Gorge and end at the Newton Cemetery where people can picnic if they wish. Limited registration. <b>Please call</b> 978-248-9491 <b>and leave a message to reserve</b> you place on this adventure.
April 27 Thursday 6pm – 8 pm	<b>May Basket Making</b> Join friends and neighbors at Clare Green’s home Warwick to make May Baskets from natural and recycled materials. Tradition is that you make a surprise delivery of a May Basket to the doorstep of a friend on May 1 <sup>st</sup> ! Call Clare at 978-544-7421 for more information on this spring event.
April 28 Friday 7 am	<b>Friday Series of Early Morning Birdwalks: April 28 through May 26</b> Join Jeff Johnstone on these popular local area explorations for migrating birds. Meet at the Millers River Environmental Center.

<b>May 2006</b>	
May 5 Friday 7 am	<b>Friday Series of Early Morning Birdwalks: Fridays through May 26</b> Join Jeff Johnstone on these popular local area explorations for migrating birds. Meet at the Millers River Environmental Center.
May 6 Saturday 10 am- 1 pm	<b>Early Season Leps and Odes</b> Join walk leader Tom Murray on this nature walk in search of early season butterflies and dragonflies and other wildlife at the Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge in Harvard, MA. Meet at the main parking lot.
May 7 Sunday 11am- 1 pm	<b>Backyard Wild Edible Walk</b> Join Clare Green and Carol Joyce of White Buffalo Herbs. We'll walk the yard, discover, enjoy and nibble (and hopefully the blackflies won't nibble us!) Bring a picnic lunch. Fresh herbal teas and treats provided. Participants are welcomed to stay a bit later and visit Carol's homestead in Warwick and ramble along a nature trail on her property. Heavy rains will

	cancel this event. Meet at 71 Athol Rd in Warwick.
May 9 Tuesday 8 am- 10 am	<b>Accessible Birding</b> Join Joe Superchi on this local birding trip open to birders of all abilities. We will travel in an accessible van to the birding sites. If you need wheelchair access, please call ahead and leave a message at the Center 978-248-9491. Meet at the Millers River Environmental Center.
May 10 Wednesday 7 pm- 9 pm	<b>ABNC Monthly Meeting: Wings over Massachusetts</b> Dave Small will give us an up close look at some of our favorite birds, butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies. Learn about how we are keeping track of these beauties.
May 12 Friday 7 am	<b>Friday Series of Early Morning Birdwalks:</b> <i>Fridays through May 26</i> Join Jeff Johnstone on these popular local area explorations for migrating birds. Meet at the Millers River Environmental Center.
May 12 Friday 7-9 pm and 13 Saturday 9 am-noon	<b>Discovering Wildflowers: A Guide to Using a Field Guide.’’</b> Participants will learn how to use Newcomb’s Wildflower Guide, by Lawrence Newcomb (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1977) to identify wildflowers and shrubs in bloom. Taught by naturalist Christine Beckert Long, the class will also include an introduction to other field guides. <i>Pre-registration and a copy of the book are required-</i> call 978-248-9491 and leave a message. Fee: \$15.
May 13 Saturday 6 am- 3 pm	<b>Birding Mt. Auburn Cemetery</b> Travel to Boston's most Historic cemetery and one of Massachusetts top birding hotspots to enjoy the gems of spring migration - warblers, tanagers, orioles, vireos, thrushes and others. Meet at 6 am at the Millers River Environmental Center. Bring snacks and water. Alternate meeting place and time 7:15 am at the front gate of Mt. Auburn Cemetery, 580 Mt Auburn St., Cambridge. <i>Call leaders if meeting at alternate location:</i> Joan and Larry Duprey 978-249-4964. <a href="mailto:Joanduprey@hotmail.com">Joanduprey@hotmail.com</a> . <i>Suggestion:</i> Share travel expenses with drivers when carpooling.
May 18 Thursday 7 pm	<b>North Quabbin Garden Club: Dividing Workshop—How to Tame Rambunctious Perennials and Gain New Plants in the Bargain</b> Presentation by Nola Shepardson, of Shepardson’s Garden, Athol. Garden club members free, nonmembers \$5. Held at the Millers River Environmental Center.
May 19 Friday 7 am	<b>Friday Series of Early Morning Birdwalks: April 28 through May 26</b> Join Jeff Johnstone on these popular local area explorations for migrating birds. Meet at the Millers River Environmental Center.
May 20 Saturday 9 am- Noon	<b>Cass Meadow Workday</b> Join Jill Liske-Clark, Upland Program Coordinator, and others from the Club on a workday removing glossy buckthorn from Cass Meadow. As is usual for these workdays, it will be an event filled with energy and will end with an ice cream treat. <i>Email Dave Small for project details</i> ( <a href="mailto:dave@dhsml.net">dave@dhsml.net</a> ) <i>or leave a message at</i> 978-248-9491.
May 26 Friday 7 am	<b>Friday Series of Early Morning Birdwalks:</b> <i>Last One of the Season</i> Join Jeff Johnstone on these popular local area explorations for migrating birds. Meet at the Millers River Environmental Center.
May 25 Thursday 7 pm- 9:30 pm	<b>Whip-poor-wills</b> Dave Small will give a talk and lead a walk for the public on these unusual birds: Whip-poor-wills. Co-sponsored by partners of the Great Falls Discovery Center and ABNC. Meet at Great Falls Discovery Center, 2 Avenue A in Turners Falls for the talk and then hike through the Montague sand plains property owned and managed by the State Division

	of Fish and Wildlife to see and hear these unusual birds.
May 28 Sunday 1pm- 4 pm	<b>Beavers 'n' Bogs</b> Join naturalist Christine Beckert Long for a 3-hour, 1-mile exploration of abandoned and active beaver areas, plus a variety of freshwater wetlands at Erving State Forest. Explore the effects and value of beaver activity and the beauty and value of swamp and bog. Meet at the parking area near the causeway on Laurel Lake Rd. Free.

<b>June 2006</b>	
June 1-4	<b>North American Butterfly Association Meeting in West Springfield</b> <i>Volunteers needed!</i> Leave a message at 978-248-9491.
June 9-12 Thursday- Monday	<b>Connecticut Lakes Weekend</b> Join us on this trip to the beautiful Connecticut Lakes in northern White Mountains of NH for northern specialties such as Boreal Chickadee, Black Backed and 3-toed Woodpeckers, Gray Jay, Canada, Mourning, and Cape May Warblers, Spruce Grouse, Yellow-bellied and Olive-sided Flycatchers, Grosbeaks and Crossbills, and Loons calling at night, (enough already!) as well as thousands of migrating Canada Tiger Swallowtails. Participants can arrive Friday and/or leave on Sunday if they need to make a shorter weekend. We would travel on Thursday, caravanning with other participants, with a stop for birding in the Whitefield/Pondicherry area on the way north. <b><i>Details will be arranged with pre-registered participants;</i></b> please call and leave a message at 978-248-4991 or email <a href="mailto:abnc@millersriver.net">abnc@millersriver.net</a> <b><i>Suggestion:</i></b> Share travel expenses with drivers when carpooling.
June 13 Tuesday 8 am- 10 am	<b>Accessible Birding</b> Join Joe Superchi on this local birding trip open to birders of all abilities. We will travel in an accessible van to the birding sites. If you need wheelchair access, please call ahead and leave a message at the Center 978-248-9491. Meet at the Millers River Environmental Center.
June 15 Thursday 7 pm	<b>North Quabbin Garden Club: Perennials with a Minimum of Fuss,</b> with Diane Salcedo, of Maple Valley Farm, North Orange. Garden club members free, nonmembers \$5. Held at Millers River Environmental Center.
June 17 Saturday All Day	<b>River Celebration</b> Join The Town of Athol, Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife – Public Access Board, the Millers River Environmental Center and our many partners as we celebrate the construction of the Alan Rich Environmental Park on Main Street in Athol. Events will include a canoe Kayak trip to Orange, Filed trips exploring the Cass Meadow for Birds, Butterflies and Dragonflies and much more. Stay tuned for details...
June 18 Sunday 10 am- 1 pm	<b>Spring Butterflies in Athol</b> Join Carl Kamp president of the Mass Butterfly Club for a look at Butterflies around the area including a visit to the recently restored Cass Meadow Wildlife Management Area in Athol. Meet at the Millers River Environmental Center 100 Main Street Athol.
June 23-25 Fri.- Sun.	<b>Northeastern Regional Meeting of the Dragonfly Society of the Americas</b> This event is happening in NH at Twin Mountain near the heart of the White Mountains. A block of rooms has been set-aside at the Four Seasons Motor Inn (1-800-228-5708). Let Pam Hunt know if you are making reservations- email: <a href="mailto:biodiva@fcgnetworks.net">biodiva@fcgnetworks.net</a> . For those on a tighter budget or looking for nature, there are two White Mountain National Forest campgrounds just down the road and several private campgrounds.

<b>July 2006</b>	
TBA Check the web	<b>Rhodies in Bloom</b> Join Chris Long on this exploration of Rhododendron State Park in Fitzwilliam, NH, plus a look at the wildflower trail and the herb garden.
July 15 Saturday 9:30 am- 3:30 pm	<b>Norcross Odonates</b> Join an exploration of the wilds of Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary in an effort to discover what kinds of dragonflies and damselflies it harbors. This is a joint effort of the Athol Bird and Nature Club (ABNC) and Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary, led by Dave Small, President of the ABNC, and Norcross naturalist, Jennifer Ohop. Dave is a renowned MA odonate tracker. Last year he organized and led a statewide hunt for locations of the beautiful American Rubyspot damselfly, <i>Hetaerina americana</i> . Jennifer has worked as Norcross' sole naturalist for eight years. Her vast knowledge of wildlife, and natural ability to teach and entertain, together with Dave's innate ability to do the same, is sure to make this inventory outing a pleasurable one. Bring lunch, and a net if you have one. <b>Pre-registration required.</b> Call the Norcross Sanctuary at 413-267-4859. Enroll soon. <b>Attendees are limited to 10.</b> Athol contingent will leave from the Millers River Environmental Center at 8:15 am.

### **School Program**

Every month, on the first Tuesday of the month, we host a discussion group for educators who are interested in community-based projects. Meetings are held in the Community Room at the Millers River Environmental Center. We start at 3:30 pm with a presentation on a topic of interest and include time for a potluck meal at 5:30 pm. In February, we will be discussing Quest development. Quests are treasure hunts where constructing the hunt is promotes learning about the natural and cultural resources of the region. Quests are published so that the community can participate.

### **Stewardship Program**

Every month the Millers River Watershed Team holds a public meeting at the Center to discuss watershed issues. These meetings alternate between daytime meetings at 1 pm and evening meetings at 6 pm. In January the meeting will be at 6 pm on the 24<sup>th</sup> with Aquatic Ecologist Michael Cole presenting plans for a Macro-Invertebrate Sampling Protocol for volunteers in the Millers River Watershed in 2006.

### **Community Program**

Every month many organizations use the Center for their meetings. Check out our Facilities Use on the website ([www.millersriver.net](http://www.millersriver.net)) and click on Room Use to see how busy the Center has become. Join the many who take advantage of this fine old school building by visiting us during open hours or participating in the many public events we host.

Land trusts are important partners in keeping our region's natural beauty. Please support this new program of the Ashburnham Conservation Trust by joining in on their monthly Open Mike nights on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of each month held at the Stevens Public Library from 7:30 to 9:30 pm. First hour is open mike; second hour is a presentation (February 17 is Jack Webber). For more information, call 978-827-6327 or visit their website [www.ashburnhamconservationtrust.org](http://www.ashburnhamconservationtrust.org)