

## Celebrating Spring in My Garden

The plants in my small flower garden along the south side of the house can barely wait for the snow to be off the soil. Crocuses, quickly followed by Daffodils begin to greet you with their bright colors. Leaves from Bearded Iris, dug up where they had been discarded from the woods are already peeking out. I can hardly wait for their light, heady scent and showy blooms. Soon the young plants of the ubiquitous Evening Primrose will start to carpet any bare ground.

One of the earliest wildflowers I look forward to arrives first in the appearance of the young leaves of Trout Lily or Dogtooth Violet, because I know what delightful little blooms come next. The bluish-green leaves are spotted like Brook Trout. As the weather warms, delicate and beautiful miniature yellow lilies are everywhere amongst the leaves, a feast for the discerning eye! Keep your eyes peeled; this precious wildflower cannot fail to enchant you. It is worth getting down on hands and knees to examine their shy, modestly bowed faces.

April 18th, 2011 marks the Full Pink Moon, named for Grass Pink, the wild Ground Phlox of early spring. Among coastal tribes it was known as the Full Fish Moon, noting the time when the shad

make their journey upstream to spawn. Each year thousands of American shad enter the Connecticut River watershed. I never tire of looking at the moon and feeling filled with wonder at the benevolent silky glow of a moonlit night. It seems the shad revel in the light of the moon, too, as many folks have observed them spawning on such nights later in spring.

In other corners of the yard, peeping out from under last year's leaves, I look for Lemon Balm, Valerian, and Pulmonaria. Lemon Balm leaves, with their heady lemon scent make a calming tea, and are said to relieve depression. Valerian root is used as a sedative and to reduce anxiety. Pulmonaria or Lungwort, once believed to cure pulmonary disorders, provides color and interest to a garden with its white spotted leaves and deep pink blossoms.

Before long it will be time to take a trip to a river or stream near you to look for ramps, fiddleheads, and wildflowers! How lucky we are to have these botanical treasures as we stroll through the seasons.

- Terry Atkinson

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Trout Lily - Pat Serrentino

## Don't Miss Riverfest - June 11th in Shelburne Falls

On Saturday, June 11, the Village will host the Deerfield River Watershed Association's 23<sup>rd</sup> annual celebration of the waterway that flows through town and the surrounding countryside.

Folks from all over New England and beyond will be drawn here for RiverFest's entertaining education displays and demonstrations, live music,



*Riverfest 2010: David Fresch*

singing, storytelling, and children's games. Other activities and events include making puppets for the colorful "Frog and Flower Parade," arts and crafts, food vendors, and book, plant, and bake sales.

Visitors of all ages will have opportunities to meet some of the birds of prey that soar through local skies; see selected movies at Pothole Pictures; try out a paddle board or take a quiet-water raft ride; join a guided hike on one of the watershed's scenic trails; participate in a fly fishing clinic (Sunday); and ride a historic trolley car (all weekend).

We are in need of volunteers to help before RiverFest (particularly with helping to make the puppets to be colored at RiverFest) and the day of the event. This is a way to have fun while meeting others interested in helping make RiverFest the memorable occasion it has become. To find out how to become a volunteer, get additional information or share your ideas and comments, please contact Polly

Bartlett (625-6628), Ellen Eller (625-9933), or Mary Vilbon (625-2526).

## Mahican-Mohawk Trail Update

The spring flowers along the Mahican-Mohawk Trail will be in abundance, especially in May. Please remember that the trail is open for 1.5 miles from east of the Shelburne Police Barracks on Route 2 and going down-stream past Wilcox Hollow. The trail is closed for 1.5 miles from where the trail used to go under the powerlines and into the woods because of landowner issues. The rest of the trail is accessible from Bardwell Ferry by walking on the road adjacent to the railroad tracks until just before the bridge the trail cuts back into the woods. This is a very nice trail for 3 miles with a crossing of Dragon Brook. Hikers must turn around and retrace their steps when they come to the "Trail Closed, No Trespassing" signs. There is also the Conway-Deerfield portion of the trail that includes the beautiful fiberglass bridge over the South River.

Hikers should buy the trail map, for a \$1.00 donation, available at the Shelburne Falls Information Center, Sawyer's News, or Boswell's Books on Bridge Street in Shelburne Falls. Maps are also available by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Polly Bartlett, 44 Ashfield Rd., Shelburne Falls, MA 01370.

There will be a chance for folks who love the M-M Trail to help with spring cleanup on Sat., April 16; see details under Hikes.



## South River Erosion Study to Begin this Spring

Parts of the South River have recently suffered from excessive streambank erosion and sedimentation, resulting in loss of landowner property as well as habitat for fish. A recent study of nonpoint source pollution in the Deerfield River watershed identified areas of significant streambank erosion in the South River, some of which extend for hundreds of feet. Significant amounts of local and state money have already been spent to repair damaged infrastructure and these repairs are not always successful. For example, in March 2010, a gabion retaining wall that had been installed along the South River collapsed following heavy rains and high flows in the river.

The Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) is partnering with the Deerfield River Watershed Association (DRWA) to assess this issue and will use 604b grant funds to hire a qualified fluvial geomorphology consultant to develop a restoration strategy. Fluvial geomorphology refers to the study of the physical characteristics of stream channels. The DRWA will perform fish community and physical habitat surveys in the South River and its tributaries to characterize the current habitat conditions and provide data that will inform the work of the fluvial geomorphologist. The fluvial geomorphologist will conduct a geomorphic assessment of the South River to provide information on the causes of erosion, channel instability and habitat degradation. Once the causes for channel instabilities are understood, long-term cost-effective solutions can be identified that will minimize the need for further costly repairs in adjacent reaches while improving aquatic habitat, which will benefit fish and other aquatic life. This project will also help fill significant water quality data gaps for the South River watershed and provide conceptual restoration designs for 4 reaches and a final engineering design for the highest priority restoration site.

This project is scheduled to begin in spring 2011, following the selection of a professional fluvial geomorphologist. DRWA will be performing fish and



*South River - Mike Cole*

physical habitat surveys later this summer. For more information on how to get involved, any interested volunteers can call Mike Cole, DRWA's water quality monitoring program chairperson at 413-475-3610.  
- Mike Cole

## Herald of Spring – The Mourning Cloak Butterfly

One of the first butterflies I see during a spring walk is the Mourning Cloak. Its dark wings make a strange contrast against the drab browns and grays of early spring as it flies through the forest before the trees have leafed out. However, when resting on a tree, this butterfly is camouflaged by its dark gray wing coloration and white and gray border.

The Mourning Cloak is a large butterfly (about 3-3.25 in) with dark brown or maroon colored wings from above. The combination of dark wings with a yellowish band on the edges and blue spots inside the yellow border makes the Mourning Cloak easy to identify.

Mourning Cloaks are found throughout large areas of North America except the arctic regions, and south to northern South America. The adults have a long lifespan for a butterfly – almost a year. They overwinter as adults in a sheltered place, such as a hollow tree, shed, or woodpile. After emerging from their overwintering site in April, their primary purpose is to find a mate. During April and May the adult female lays eggs on twigs and hatching occurs in about 11 days. Caterpillars feed together in their communal web on the leaves of willows, elms, hackberries, birches and cottonwoods until pupating. The caterpillar can be up to 2 inches long, and its  
(continued on next page)

black body is scattered with small white spots with a row of large red spots on its back. The rows of black bristles can make the larvae look somewhat fierce.

Adults typically emerge from their chrysalis in July. At this point, the butterflies aestivate (become dormant) for the remainder of the summer to avoid the driest and hottest part of the summer. When fall arrives they become active again. Some individuals migrate south; however, others spend the fall stocking up on food before overwintering. The following spring the cycle begins anew.

If you want to see a Mourning Cloak butterfly this spring, look along rivers and streams, and in forests, parks, gardens, and sunny openings. The adults are not overly fond of flower nectar;



*Mourning Cloak adult - Alex Haro*

they prefer sap, like we do, except that instead of sugar maple sap they favor oak. Fermented fruit is also eaten.

We've had a long, snowy winter this year but spring is here and with it comes the frenzy of activity as animals and plants grow, eat and reproduce before the cold weather returns. This spring, look for the dark silhouette of the Mourning Cloak and enjoy the warm, spring sunshine.

- Patricia Serrentino

## **Brookfield Renewable Power Urges Caution When Recreating on Water this Time of Year: Spring Showers Bring Flooding**

Brookfield Renewable Power reminds the public to use caution when recreating on or near water as spring showers, melting snow, and runoff can lead to flooding of rivers. Whether boating or fishing, Brookfield encourages everyone to enjoy the spectacle of spring safely.

While the icy waters above or below a dam may look safe for recreation, churning waters underneath can pose a hidden danger. In addition, Brookfield urges water recreationists to observe all signage, warning signals, sirens and barriers and to wear a United States Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device - regardless of the season.

According to the National Water Safety Congress ([www.suite101.com/content/cold-water-boot-camp-a203437](http://www.suite101.com/content/cold-water-boot-camp-a203437)), "Inadvertent cold water immersion from a fall overboard can quickly become deadly. In reality, a person wearing a life jacket has a much better chance of surviving immersion in cold water for up to an hour."

### **Safety Tips:**

- (1) Use extreme caution when recreating on naturally-formed ice, as moving water can affect the thickness and strength of ice. Weather and ice conditions can change rapidly, so remember to check for known thickness of ice.
- (2) Be prepared for runoff and flooding as water flow is greatest in the late winter and early spring when heavy rainfall and melting snow cause waters to rise and frequently overflow banks and levees. Wading into rivers is not recommended.
- (3) Avoid areas such as dams, intake structures, gates, water conveyance structures, powerhouses and substations.
- (4) Stay away from overhead power lines at all times, as these bare conductors are very dangerous. (continued on next page)

- (5) Respect all warning signs, sirens, buoys, booms, barriers and fences. Areas inside these barrier are dangerous and are designated as no-entry zones.
- (6) Use only designated recreation areas. Do not trespass on private properties that are excluded from public access.
- (7) Always use a U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device.
- (8) Never recreate near a river alone; always tell someone where you are going to be and when you are expected to return.
- (9) Take time to learn about daily river conditions before recreating. If you are unfamiliar with the river, ask someone with local knowledge.
- (10) Be aware that high water levels may persist days after rain or snow fall or snow melt. Visit the Waterline website ([www.h2oline.com/default.htm](http://www.h2oline.com/default.htm)) for up to date levels for the Deerfield River ([www.h2oline.com/255123.asp](http://www.h2oline.com/255123.asp)).

- Tom Mapletoft, Water Resource Manager,  
Brookfield Renewable Power

## Spring Hike Schedule: Cure Cabin Fever!

A variety of hikes is scheduled for Spring, 2011. The first one was the annual Pancake Breakfast at Davenport's Sugar House after a hike to the High Ledges in Shelburne.

**Saturday, April 16:** Join us and those who have enjoyed the Mahican-Mohawk Trail to help with spring maintenance. Limbs and trees have fallen, water needs to be diverted off the trail, and steps need improving. Please contact our trail steward, Chris Dodson, at (413) 773-1986 and let him know what kind of work you'd like to do and he will find a job for you. Many hands make light work!

**Saturday, April 23:** Muriel Russell will be leading a hike in the Catamounts specifically to see vernal pools. Hikers should meet at 10 am at the end of East Catamount Road. This is a loop hike so hikers should be prepared to walk the 4.5 miles of easy terrain. Directions: From Rte. 112 in Griswoldville,

Colrain, take Adamsville Rd. to Lively Rd., take a quick left onto East Catamount Rd. (steep and dirt) to the end of the road where there's parking. Please bring unscented bug repellent and lunch to enjoy at McLeod Pond. Please register with Muriel (413) 624-3311.

**Saturday, May 14:** Muriel Russell will lead a hike in the Catamounts focusing on spring wildflowers and Catamount history. Hikers will have the opportunity to explore a set of caves and enjoy lunch at MacLeod Pond. The meeting place and time will be the same as for the April 23rd hike (see above). Please register with Muriel (413) 624-3311.

**Saturday, June 4:** This will be a hike to the three-state-line boundary markers in the northwest corner of Colrain and is co-sponsored with the DRWA and Colrain Town 250th celebration committee. The hike will be in the afternoon and evening, ending with a cookout and campfire with songs and stories by Davis Bates. More information will be on our website ([deerfieldriver.org](http://deerfieldriver.org)) and in newspapers.

**Sunday, June 12:** There will be hikes in different parts of the watershed. Please watch the DRWA's website for details. There will also be a fly fishing clinic on the Upper Deerfield River on a sign up basis. Watch for details later.

**Sunday, June 12:** Early summer birding trip in the valley. We'll start at the West Leyden Wildlife Management Area and visit other sites as time allows. Meet at the Staples parking lot on Rte. 2 at 8 am. Please register with Pat Serrentino (413-772-0520 or [pserr@crocker.com](mailto:pserr@crocker.com)).

## Attention Members!

If there is a date on your address label, that is your membership's expiration date. If it has passed, please renew today, using the form to the right. Thank you!

### Become a DRWA Member!

Name.....  
Street.....  
Town.....  
Zip.....  
Email.....

Individual: \$15  
Family/Business: \$25 Contributing: \$50  
Patron: \$500 Sustaining: \$100

**Send to:**  
**DRWA, 15 Bank Row, Suite A**  
**Greenfield, MA 01301**

## News from the Friends of the Green River

The DRWA and Friends of the Green River will have an educational booth at the Green River Music Festival, July 16th and 17th, 2011. Stop by and say hello! Also, the Source To Sea and Green River Cleanup will be Oct 1st, 2011 this year. To find out more information or report a potential cleanup site, call David Boles at 413 522-2102. See you at the festival and cleanup!

- David Boles



*Enjoying the view at the High Ledges - Tiger Waterman*

## **DEERFIELD RIVER CURRENT**

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The Deerfield River Watershed Association is a non-profit organization with the mission to preserve, protect, and enhance the natural resources of the Deerfield River watershed in southeastern Vermont and northwestern Massachusetts. Its activities include water quality monitoring, educational programs, administration of volunteer programs and participation in regulatory matters.

### **Board Members:**

Terry Atkinson, Polly Bartlett, David Boles, Johanna Castilla,  
Michael Cole, Marie Françoise Hatte, Dina Kail, Robert May,  
Richard Quinn, Patricia Serrentino

**[www.deerfieldriver.org](http://www.deerfieldriver.org)**



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