

The LPS Insider - Spring 2026



We acknowledge that LPS owns land which was once part of the original Pokanoket (Wampanoag) territory when explorers and settlers arrived in the 17th century.

Welcome to the LPS Insider Newsletter Upcoming Events

SPRING BIRD WALK

April 26th at Edith Read Conservation Area. 10 AM (see next page for more information)

NORTON PRIDE FESTIVAL

Look for our table at the Pride event on June 7th at the Norton Outdoor Center, 295 West Main Street in Norton, from 11 AM to 3 PM.

LPS AT THE NORTON SENIOR CENTER

Join us at the Senior Center, 120 Mansfield Avenue, for *Norton's Welcoming Woods*, featuring information about LPS trails and opportunities for volunteers. Refreshments will be served.

Bird Walk at Edith Read

79 N. Worcester Street

Sunday, April 26th

10:00 AM

Led by Naturalist Jean Shea

Meet in the Parking Lot

Bring Your Binoculars

Dress for a Walk in the Woods

Protect Yourself against Ticks



Sponsored by
Land Preservation Society of Norton

*50+ years saving
Norton's wild spaces
and wildlife
nortonlandpreservation.org*



Spotlight on Wild Things & Wild Places

The Wonderful Wood Frog and Other Amphibians of Spring!

Typically, in March, even before the snows of winter have melted and the ice has thawed from the surfaces of our ponds, lakes, and vernal pools, amphibians are among the first animals to announce the coming of spring.



The earliest of these cold-blooded creatures is the beautiful wood frog (*Rana sylvatica*), a handsome little frog in beautiful tans and browns to match the forest floor where it spends most of its summer days. Perhaps its most striking characteristic is a dark chocolate-colored mask across each eye. In early spring, wood frogs leave their hibernacula where they spent the colder days of winter and head for a nearby vernal pool in which to mate and lay their eggs. These intrepid frogs have a system of physiological responses to cold that enables them to withstand the freezing temperatures without sustaining damage to their bodies—a kind of biological antifreeze that allows them to be among the first cold-

blooded animals to move about in a New England spring. If you are out in early spring and walking at dusk near a wetland or vernal pool, you may hear the males calling by the hundreds to attract a mate. Their call sounds a bit like a cross between the quack of a duck and the bleating of a goat and can be loud for such small fellows. But to me, it is one of the first sounds of spring. I have seen and heard wood frogs calling from the surfaces of vernal pools still choked with ice, and it fills me with joy knowing that no matter how gray the skies may yet be, the wood frogs know that the spring is coming!

The next amphibian to make an appearance at this time of year is the yellow-spotted salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*). This is another striking amphibian, deep chocolate brown in color with bright yellow spots along its head, back, and tail, which form a pattern that is unique for each salamander—like a fingerprint! They are surprisingly large—6 to 10” yet we typically only see them in the early spring. These salamanders underground for most of the year, but like the wood frogs, they come to the early spring to find mates and to lay their eggs. To find them, you the first few days in early spring when the daytime temperatures have 40’s-50’s, followed by a warm, soft rain. Grab your flashlights and head out to the nearest vernal pool on such a night, starting at about 9 or 10 o’clock, but walk carefully, lest you tread on some of these creatures as they leave their forest burrows and head across woodland paths to the wetlands they use for breeding. Like the wood frogs, these animals typically return to the same pools year after year to reproduce.



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The last amphibian harbinger of spring to arrive is the spring peeper (*Pseudacris crucifer*). *Crucifer* is from the Latin for “cross-bearing,” a reference to the cross-like pattern on the back of a spring peeper. Despite the loudness of its familiar “peep” call, this frog is a tiny creature, not more than 1” to 1.5” in size. For anyone who has ever ventured near a pond full of these frogs singing their hearts out looking for a date, you know they more than make up for their body size with the sound of their voices. As with the wood frog and most other species of frog and toad, the ladies select their mates by the loudness of his call, so the pressure to sing as loudly as a frog can is intense! And like the wood frog, spring peepers can also withstand freezing temperatures without damaging their bodies—something the yellow-spotted salamander cannot do. Though spring peepers typically show up at our New England vernal pools later than do wood frogs, the two species often overlap in their time spent in these wetlands, and the nighttime forest rings with the sound of ambitious peeping peepers and quacking wood frog males seeking dates. It might make your ears ring to hear all that racket, but for a New Englander, it is the ultimate sound of spring!

By Kathy Morgan

Consider 'No Mow May'

Spring is finally making an appearance after a long and snowy winter and I, for one, am very happy to feel the warm sun and see the early spring flowers. As someone who tries to reduce my impact on the environment by using only organic fertilizer, avoiding pesticides and herbicides, and planting only native species, for the last few years I have also participated in 'No Mow May'. This initiative encourages landowners to refrain from mowing their lawns during May.



Why is this important? Just this week I saw my first two species of bees buzzing around an Andromeda bush, one of the earliest spring blooms. Spring pollinators have 'slim pickins' this time of year. There are very few flowering plants from which they can get the nectar and pollen they need. By delaying the first time you mow your lawn, the pollinators can take advantage of the clover, dandelion, and other wildflowers that will bloom.

Other benefits. Long grass retains moisture leading to improved soil health and a longer root system. Blooms from the wildflowers increase insect populations. Insect populations have declined dramatically worldwide in the last few decades, resulting in disruptions in food webs and nutrient recycling. Importantly, insects are a food source for birds, amphibians, and small mammals. Many insects prey on other pests helping to control the pest populations. The loss in biodiversity from low insect populations can have negative economic impacts on food production, forestry, and even tourism. And finally, less mowing reduces emissions from gas mowers, and you have less work to do.

Is 'No Mow May' right for you? There are some concerns. There might be some worry about how your lawn looks, or perhaps you belong to an HOA that requires regular mowing. Other downsides include long grass that can encourage unwanted weeds and be good habitat for ticks. And when June comes around it will be more of a challenge to mow through that longer grass. If these are your concerns, consider not mowing just a portion of your grass in May. When you do mow, set the mower to remove only the top third of the blades of grass. It's easier on you and the lawn mower. Good luck with your ecological experiment. The bees, butterflies, and I will thank you. **By Deb Cato**

Beware! Tick Season is in Full Swing

Ticks and tick born illnesses are common and increasing in New England. Many factors contribute to this increase; our winters are warmer due to climate change, populations of deer and mice, hosts for ticks, have increased, the agricultural fields of New England are now suburban lawns and deep woods that are ideal habitat for ticks. The result in an increase in the number of ticks and an expansion of their range.

Peak Season is Now

Tick concentrations are highest in the northeast and Midwest. April to July is peak tick season, though ticks can be found all year long. They are most active when the temperature is above 40°F. Exposure to a tick bite can cause disease, the most common in New England is Lyme Disease, carried by the small deer ticks, also called black-legged ticks. Lyme disease is caused by a bacterium and can be treated with antibiotics. If you find an embedded tick, save or photograph the tick and call your primary care physician. A newcomer to this region, though it has been found on the Cape and Islands for the last decade, is the Lone Star tick. These ticks are named for the white spot found on the back of females. Lone Star tick populations are increasing and are increasingly found throughout MA. These ticks can cause Alpha-gal syndrome, resulting in a serious allergy to a sugar, Alpha-gal, found in dairy, red meat, pork, and lamb. The allergy can cause hives, stomach pain and anaphylaxis 2-12 hours after the meat is eaten.

Prevent Tick Bites

There are many ways to reduce your exposure to ticks. Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants, tucking your socks into your pants. Choose light colored clothes so that it's easier to see small ticks. Spray an insect repellent such as DEET before going out. Spray your clothes with permethrin, it kills ticks on contact. Keep to the center of trails when walking in the woods. Ticks are 'sit and wait' predators, they hang out on that tall blade of grass or bush and wait for you to brush past it. Do a tick check after possible exposure and take a shower. It takes a while for a tick to find just the right warm, moist place to embed in your skin so a shower might rinse it off before it embeds. Putting your clothes in a hot dryer for 15 minutes will kill a tick. Don't forget to check any pets who venture out. Remove any ticks immediately by gently pulling straight out with tweezers. Then clean the area with rubbing alcohol. Even if you don't find a tick, if you develop a bull's eye rash, fever, and joint pain, signs of Lyme Disease, see a doctor immediately.

You can reduce the population of ticks in your area, but infusing cotton balls with permethrin, placing the cotton in small tubes like toilet paper tubes, and placing them around your property. Small mammals, such as mice, will take the cotton to make a nest. The permethrin will kill the ticks found on mice without harming the mice. For more information go to



https://wayne.osu.edu/sites/wayne/files/imce/Program_Pages/ANR/Making%20Tick%20Tubes%20-%20Final,%20Gary%20Graham.pdf

With a little precaution, we can enjoy all the outdoors New England has to offer. Have a great summer. **By Deb Cato**

The Land Preservation Society of Norton is an all-volunteer organization which owns nearly 1100 acres of land in Norton. We work to protect and preserve natural resources, natural areas and historic sites, and to provide open space and educational opportunities for the public.

We would love some help with publicity, graphic design, fund raising, trail maintenance, and educational activities. If you enjoy walking our trails and/or attending our events you might like to support our efforts by volunteering your skills and talents.

Contact us at nortonlandpreservation.org or by email admin@nortonlandpreservation.org if you would like to help.

Support LPS by Becoming a Member

Donate online at www.nortonlandpreservation.org or use the QR code.



POWERED BY Givebutter

Or mail a check to:

Land Preservation Society of Norton, Inc. PO Box 204 Norton MA 02766

Individual

\$20 for a one-year membership.

Household

\$40 for a one-year membership.

Seniors (65 years and up) and Students

\$10 for a one-year membership

Life Membership

\$300 for an individual and \$500 for a couple gives you a lifetime membership.

Become a Trail Blazer

With a \$500 donation, you can name a trail after yourself, a family member or a friend.