



# The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc. NEWSLETTER

Volume VIII Number 2

FALL

October 2009

## “DEER ECOLOGY: CONNECTICUT’S GROWING POPULATIONS”



**A**ndrew LaBonte, Connecticut DEP Wildlife Biologist, will be the featured speaker for the Annual Meeting of the Friends of Valley Falls, Inc., on November 1, 2009. His presentation will start at 7:00 p.m. and is open to the public. The annual business meeting for members will begin at 6:30 p.m.

Connecticut white-tailed deer populations have increased from 12 deer in 1896 to more than 65,000 in 2008. While on one hand the increase is a wildlife management success story, on the other hand it can have detrimental effects on the ecological integrity of landscapes, affect populations of birds and mammals, and can cause health and safety issues for humans. The talk will address public concern with deer populations on local properties, and will offer habitat management initiatives to discourage population growth.

Andy LaBonte heads the DEP’s Deer Program. He has worked for the Program since 1998. He received a B.S. degree in Environmental Science from Unity College in Maine, and is pursuing an M.S. in Wildlife Management from the University of Connecticut. In addition to participation in numerous research programs, he has published several articles, including four manuscripts in *The Wildlife Society Bulletin*, the magazine for the professional organization, *The Wildlife Society*. Andy’s role in managing the deer program also includes monitoring and study of the growing moose populations in Connecticut.

The meeting will be held at the Tolland Agricultural Center, 24 Hyde Avenue on Route 30 in Vernon, across from Northeast School. Park behind the building and enter the door at the rear of the building. Come join us!



## *Artists’ Day at the Farm - 2009*

**T**he second annual Artists Day at the Farm was again a big success! The weather held out, the crowds came, and we met our goals for the event. Twenty-six *plein air* artists from across the state graced the hillsides of Valley Falls Farm on a balmy Sunday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>. Two-hundred people stopped to stroll about the Farm and visit with the artists as they painted scenes of the farm. One-hundred people attended the reception and auction of the paintings at the end of the day. For the most part, we doubled or tripled last year’s numbers, from attendees to sponsors.

We are grateful to the **Vernon Arts Commission**, who provided live music by **Judy Handler and Mark Levesque** during the reception. We also are

*Artists’ Day, continued on next page*

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**Visit Our New Website!**

Thanks to **Tom Tedford**, we now have a website.

[www.friendsofvalleyfalls.org](http://www.friendsofvalleyfalls.org)



**Interested in Joining  
the Friends?**

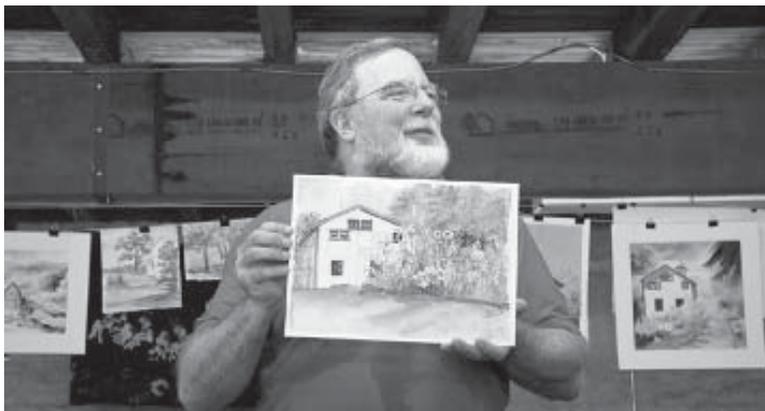
Membership Dues are:

- INDIVIDUAL - \$10
- FAMILY - \$25
- CONTRIBUTING - \$35
- BENEFACTOR - \$100

Please send checks to:

PO Box 2008,  
Vernon, CT 06066

*Artists' Day, continued*



*Volunteer auctioneer Michael Winkler starts the bidding.*

grateful to **Michael Winkler**, who volunteered to take on the role of auctioneer. All were a wonderful addition this year!

It was a yeoman effort by a great committee, and the results were well worth the hours of planning and preparation. Thanks especially to **Betty and Bill Wardrop, Sally and Dennis Sullivan, Ann and Bob Letendre, Sandy Yamarik, Diane Bernier, Ginny Gingras, Paula Passaretti, Jessica Sullivan, Jen Starrett, Mary Cross, Dave Hermann and Hugh**

**Bush** for their dedication and hard work.

*For more Artists' Day photos, visit our website.*



*Artist Linda Lascko paints by the stone wall.*

*Newsletter photos by Tom Griswold and Betty Wardrop.*

**We thank the following Artists' Day sponsors:**

**Monet**

SBM Charitable Foundation

**Van Gogh**

Mrs. Patricia Auclair &  
Mrs. Dorothy Dimock

**Renoir**

Hal & Iby Cummings  
Ginny & Paul Gingras  
Susan & Dave Herrmann  
Gini & Joe King  
Ann & Bob Letendre  
Michael & Paula Passaretti  
Rockville Bank Foundation

**Matisse**

Anonymous  
Phyllis Baltaks  
Charlie's  
Garden Barn Nursery  
Ladd & Hall  
Joyce Millikin

Monet \$500 Van Gogh \$250  
Renoir \$100 Matisse \$50

## VALLEY FALLS FARM

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Renovation work continued on the vacant front apartment of the farmhouse during late spring and into the summer. Replacement of an interior wall and the addition of a laundry room greatly enhanced the living space. In fact, the space was looking so great that Jessica and Jen, our tenants in the rear apartment, decided to move to the front apartment! We then found a perfect tenant for the rear apartment, Jennifer, who moved in during June. We are grateful to **Sally and Dennis Sullivan** for their timely help with readying the rear apartment for Jennifer's move-in.



We thank **Schneider's Flooring America** at 400 Talcottville Road in Vernon for their willingness to work with our low budget. Their able and cooperative team was especially helpful.



Scraping and painting has continued throughout the summer and fall on the exterior of the farmhouse, the woodshed, and the icehouse. We are again grateful for the care given to the herb garden by the **Vernon Garden Club**, and for the hours of time spent planning and managing the flower gardens by **Betty Wardrop**.

In the fields and lawn areas, we focused on removal of invasives and clearing of debris from the trees that were taken down last fall.

We would like to point out that nearly all of this renovation work has been done by community service workers. These often talented and knowledgeable workers are referred to us by the court system. We estimate that the value of their service over the last two years has amounted to well over \$16,000. We thank former Board member, **Carol Burke**, for having the foresight to enlist the Friends in the program several years ago.

Our beekeeper, **Dermot Jones**, reported that unfortunately one of the two hives did not survive the summer. He called upon Ira Kettle, the state bee inspector, to determine the cause. We are awaiting test results. Mr. Kettle was the guest speaker at our annual meeting last fall. At that time he reported the problems that have been plaguing honey bee populations in Connecticut. Hopefully, the problems with our hive will be resolved.

Lastly, we are pleased to report that we have made the last payment on our mortgage! With both apartments now refurbished and fully rented, we can move forward more quickly with renovation goals. All of the rental income is put back into the maintenance and renovation of the property.

## VALLEY FALLS PARK

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### *Braille Trail*

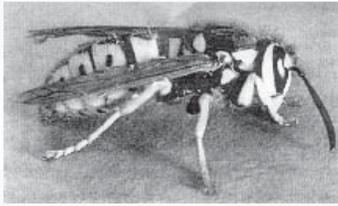
Work on the Braille Trail, funded by a DEP Recreational Trails grant to the Friends, continued through the summer and fall. The new concrete surface has been installed, and the new metal Braille signs are on order. Many thanks again go to **Don Bellingham** and the **Vernon Greenway Volunteers** for their continuing – and dedicated – work on this trail. Over 100 plantings were installed by this wonderful volunteer group in May, followed by many hours of painstaking care of the plants after the installation.

### *Barn Grant*

We're one step closer to realizing the goal of a nature education and interpretive center in the bottom floor of the red barn! The **Vernon Parks and Recreation Department** applied for a \$96,000 grant to DEP Recreational Trails program to fund installation of the septic system, a new well, and interior construction. The Friends pledged matching support of \$5,000 in both cash and in-kind labor. **Ann Letendre** provided assistance and information for the grant application. Awards will be announced in the spring.

# Nature Notes

## YELLOWJACKETS - *VESPULA THOMPSON*



YELLOWJACKETS are wasps in the family Vespidae. They are social insects. Their colonies consist of queens, workers

(sterile females) and males. The females can sting, while the males cannot. They do not lose their stingers when they sting as honey bees do. Nests can occur beneath the soil surface, in tree cavities and in building walls. Yellowjackets are considered beneficial. As predators, they prey on many pest insects including blow flies, house flies and caterpillars. In one study, wasps in one colony collected 225 flies and hour. As scavengers, they collect various sweet and protein foods, and water up to a mile from the nest.

## PLEASE JOIN US FOR OUR ANNUAL MEETING & FEATURED SPEAKER

November 1, 2009 at 6:30 p.m.  
Tolland Agricultural Center  
24 Hyde Avenue, Vernon

### “DEER ECOLOGY: CONNECTICUT’S GROWING POPULATIONS”

**Andrew LaBonte**, Connecticut DEP Wildlife Biologist, will address public concern with deer populations on local properties, and will offer habitat management initiatives to discourage population growth.

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