



The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc. Newsletter

www.friendsofvalleyfalls.org

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FALL

September 2014

VALLEY FALLS FARM

In February we learned that our tenants of six years had purchased their own home and would be leaving the Farm. Fortunately we soon found new tenants, Tom and Barbara Duva, who are thoroughly enjoying living in the picturesque Valley Falls surroundings.

Buildings

Much of our attention during the spring months was focused on the interior of the farmhouse, in preparation for the new tenants. The entire apartment was painted, as well as the front porch. New appliances were installed, and a long list of minor repairs was completed. Finally, a much-needed cleanout was done in the basement, yielding two truckloads of rubbish and debris. It was a busy spring at the farmhouse!

Grounds

Again this year we thank **Ellie Fiske**, our gardener who took detailed care of the grounds around the house and buildings, the **Vernon Garden Club** for the care of the herb garden, and **Betty & Bill Wardrop** for the planting and care of the flower bed in the second cold frame. Our tenants planted the vegetable garden in the third cold frame, and have been enjoying the yields on a daily basis. ☺



New tenant Tom Duva takes a minute to relax on the front porch of the farmhouse.

VALLEY FALLS PARK

Managing Pond Health

The pond in Valley Falls Park is a popular fishing and swimming recreational area, and a key visual attraction in the Park. Unfortunately, it is prone to becoming filled with sediments that run off the steep hillside into Railroad Brook, and are then carried into the pond. In 2008 a weir was installed. A weir is a mechanical device that allows water to pass through, but will “strain” out the sediments, which need to be removed every two or three years. This fall the pond will be lowered, sediments collected and then spread on the field behind the pond. ☺

A SURPRISE GIFT!

Every now and then a good thing happens when you answer the phone. In July, our President received a phone call from Rockville Bank Foundation to tell us that we were one of six organizations chosen to receive \$5,000! Just like that - no grant paperwork, no matching funds to raise - just a very nice donation! The gift was part of a celebration of the merger of Rockville and United Banks, and the re-opening of the Pitkin St. branch. We will use the check to initiate an endowment fund. We are deeply grateful to Bill Crawford, CEO of United Bank, and the Rockville Bank Foundation for this very generous, very welcome gift. ☺

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NEWSLETTER

Lisa Letendre 633-7666

BELDING WILDLFLOWER MEADOW: PLEASE DON'T PICK THE WILDLFLOWERS

We were dismayed to see a recent photograph in the *Journal Inquirer* of a mother and daughter picking wildflowers in the meadow at the Belding Wildlife Management Area on Bread & Milk Road – despite the signs asking that it not be done. Unfortunately, the photo suggests to an unknowing public that picking the wildflowers is OK to do!

Wildflowers should be left in the fields, in their natural environment, for two reasons: first, Belding is a *public* park. The wildflower meadow was planted so that *everyone* could enjoy the flowers in their natural state in the field. It is not meant to be a source of free flower arrangements for a single individual! Secondly, next



year's crop of flowers comes from this year's seeds. Removing the flowers depletes next year's display.

In all our federal, state, and local parks, the mantra is "Take only pictures, leave only footprints". The Belding's wildflower meadow deserves this same respect. Please spread the word!

VERNON VOLUNTEER COLLABORATIVE: MAKING IT EASY FOR YOU TO VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

Vernon is known as the "volunteer community". We are proud of our many successful local organizations that are dependent solely on the generosity of time and talent of Vernon citizens. **Jon Roe**, a long-time resident and active retiree, recognized that many of these organizations could benefit from a sharing of resources and information, especially as we see a slow aging of our volunteer pool! And so the Vernon Volunteer Collaborative was organized, comprised of 12 organizations that share these common goals:

- Preservation or beautification of Vernon's open space, parks and environment.
- Preserving and sharing Vernon's history and historic properties.
- Encouraging appreciation of and participation in the arts.

(collaborative, continued on page 3)

NATURE NOTES

On May 17, the Friends held a “Three-Walk” Day at Valley Falls Park. Here are some sightings that were observed.

Bird Walk, led by Denise Anamani

Birds sighted /or heard: Yellow Throat, Cedar Wax-wing, Baltimore Oriole, Scarlet Tanager, Warbling Vireo, Red Wing Blackbird, Broad-winged Hawk, Robins (and a nest in the top of a tall tree), Blue Jay, Tree Swallow, Gold Finch, Veery, Mallards, Flicker, Eastern Kingbird, Eastern Wood PeWee, Red Tail Hawk.

The area near the pond and pavilion and the fields to the right of the wood road provide most of the sightings. Denise leads the walk calling attention to the habitat that the birds are likely to frequent.

Wildflower Walk, led by Ginny Gingras

Flowers sighted during the walk: Partridgeberry, Trillium, Trailing Arbutus, Lady Slippers (in a few areas of the Park) - they are found in great numbers along the Rails to Trails. Hepatica was not found this year in an area that has had several plants in the past. Star Flower, Wild Cucumber, Wild Ginseng, Sarsaparilla, and Fringed Polygala (Gaywings).

(collaborative, continued from page 2)

The 12 organizations that comprise the collaborative are the Friends of Valley Falls, Friends of the Hockanum River Linear Park, Strong Family Farm, Vernon Historical Society, New England Civil War Museum, Vernon Garden Club, Northern CT Land Trust, Friends of Vernon Arts Commission, Vernon Education Foundation, Tolland Agricultural Center, Vernon Greenways Volunteers and Vernon Community Arts Center.

Representatives from each organization meet monthly, and have initiated processes to address common challenges, such as co-ordinating event schedules, creating and maintaining websites, increasing membership, recruiting volunteers, and fundraising.

Many thanks to Jon Roe for putting in the detailed effort it takes to successfully make this collaborative effort work. Jon has established a website that serves

Many patches of the dreaded, invasive Garlic Mustard, were found which must be cut or pulled by volunteers in May before they flower. The plant will over spread the native wildflowers.

Bee Swarm at Valley Falls Farm

In early July, residents in the Farm House noticed that bees were swarming. Indeed, bees in one of the hives had swarmed and formed a column hanging from a branch in the pear tree near the Stable. Our beekeeper, Allen Valli, was called. He donned his gear, climbed the small tree, cut the branch where the bees were clustered and put them in a pail, covered them with row cover cloth, and transported them to a hive at his home on Skinner Road. He bought a new queen bee for the hive and for the hive that they had left. Why did they swarm? Allen said it is the nature of bees to swarm. The hives are now weaker with fewer bees, but the queens are laying eggs to increase the population of the hives. The hive farthest from the Stable is very strong. That particular hive yielded nine pounds of honey in August. Allen noted that mid-August through mid-September is a high nectar and pollen flow, producing a better honey, mainly from ragweed and goldenrod pollen. ☺

as a central “workhorse” for co-ordinating activities. It’s “one-stop shopping” for potential volunteers, a place to learn about Vernon’s volunteer organizations AND become a participant. Check out the website: <http://vernonvolunteers.org/volunteering/>. ☺

MEMBERSHIP: DUES ARE DUE!

Dues for fiscal year starting July 1, 2014 are due. If you haven’t received your annual renewal letter, please call Ann Letendre, 875-4623. The list of committees is added to the membership form – help is needed, just check the form. We thank you for your continuing support!

THE FRIENDS OF VALLEY FALLS ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday Afternoon, October 19th

1:00 PM, in the Red Barn, 350 Valley Falls Rd.



“Valley Falls After Dark: The Nocturnal Creatures We Seldom See”

*by Jane Seymour, Wildlife Biologist,
Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection*

- Did you ever wonder what makes those strange noises often heard in the woods at night? Come learn about the creatures that roam the forest at night. Hear the strange sounds they make!
- Learn why we no longer see some of the wildlife that once lived in our fields and woodlands, and why other critters are now seen more frequently. 🌱



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