



# The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc. NEWSLETTER

Volume VII Number 1

Spring

April 2008

## FOND MEMORIES - BETTY TEDFORD



Above:  
Betty at the  
Friends tag  
sale, 2002.



The Friends of Valley Falls and the town of Vernon have lost a special person who contributed much to the quality of life in our midst. Her passing in December has left a hole in the fabric of our community.

Betty was an original member of the Friends when it organized in 1970. She served many years on the Board of Directors, and most recently as the organization's Vice President. She worked tirelessly to care for Valley Falls Park, Valley Falls Farm and to educate people about wildflowers, birds and the park's history. Betty was in tune with the natural world and loved to share that precious gift with others.

In remembrance of the nurturing she gave to the world around her, Betty's family chose the Friends of Valley Falls to receive memorial gifts from those who wanted to honor her life. We are grateful to the Tedford family for thinking of us, and to the many who sent a gift in Betty's memory.

We miss our dear friend's thoughtful, insightful, calm and cheerful presence. How lucky we were to have had Betty in our lives. She is missed.

## VALLEY FALLS FARM

### *The Renovations Continue...*

Last fall we began the major effort of repairing and painting the exterior of the stable, the most prominent building on the site. Removal of rotting boards exposed the infestation of wasps nests and rodent nests. Half the building was completed in the fall and the remaining half will be finished in the coming months. The cupola windows were re-caulked, painted and covered with protective glass.

### *Focus on the Farmhouse Buildings – The Woodshed*

The woodshed is the last of the six farm outbuildings that we have been featuring in the newsletter. This long, low structure is located immediately to the left of the farmhouse.



It is characterized by two sliding barn doors on the front, and a gable roof with unequal pitch at front and rear. We believe that the woodshed may be the oldest of the six farm outbuildings, constructed at about the same time as the farmhouse (1850). A historic map of that period in Town Hall indicates the presence of only two buildings on the site, located adjacent to each other.

### *New Sign for the Farm!*

We recently installed a sign that proudly announces "Valley Falls Farm." The new sign was recreated in the same format as the sign that had been hung by the Charles Beach family in the 1915 – 1958 era of the farm. Many thanks go to **Bob Letendre** for artfully carrying out this task. Thanks also to Bob and to

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*(Continued from page 1)*

**Hugh Bush** for installing the sign, a very difficult chore on that rocky hillside!

***And Signs of Spring...***

**Jane Seymour** reports that the phoebe and the bluebirds have started singing at the farm. A pair of house finches looked like they were going to build a nest under the gutter, but they seem to have changed their minds. A woodcock was displaying at the farm a few weeks ago and flocks of robins

have been hopping about, plucking worms. At Belding, Jane has seen a hermit thrush, Louisiana waterthrush, red-winged blackbird, and one of the foresters saw a bald eagle circling. Jane says she also heard a field sparrow one day at the edge of the field.

**VALLEY FALLS PARK**

***New Grant Award for the Multi-Access Trail!***

The Friends has received another Recreational Trail Grant from the Department of Environmental Protection. The grant will pay for metal signs to replace the wood Braille signs currently in place on the trail that have been damaged by weather and time. It will also fund trail improvements, including dealing with the continual erosion of the area on the slope as you start the trail.

**WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBER**

The Friends of Valley Falls is pleased to welcome **Dave Herrmann** to the Board of Directors. Dave is an attorney, residing on Bolton Road in Vernon. We look forward to working with him! ★



**SHADBUSH,  
SERVICEBERRY  
(Amelanchier  
arboorea)**

Usually a large shrub or small tree. Common in dry woodlands, chiefly on hillsides. Flowers appear ahead of leaves and at the time in spring (April and May) when the **shad** ascend the New England rivers to spawn; hence the common name. The fruits are small, red or purple, sweet and nutritious, ripen from June through August.

They are known to be eaten by 40 species of birds. The bark is smooth and bluish gray. To recognize the tree, look at the terminal bud, which is long and tapered like that of the beech. (Remember: when the shadbush blooms in the Connecticut woodlands, the shad is running in the rivers).

**JACK-IN-THE-PULPIT (Arisaema triphyllum)**

Well known plants of moist woods. The flaplike spathe is green or purplish brown, often striped, and curves gracefully over the club-shaped spadix (the "Jack" or preacher in his canopied pulpit). The tiny flowers are at

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NOTES**

the base of the spadix. They are designed to capture the

attention of small flies, who crawl down over the spadix and over the flowers, pollinating them as they go. Fruit is a cluster of scarlet berries. The leaves, 1 or 2, are long-stalked, 3-parted. Height: 1-3 ft.



**EASTERN PHOEBE (Sayornis phoebe)**

A sparrow-sized bird, gray-brown above and whitish below, with no conspicuous wing-bars. This lack of wing-bars, its upright posture, and its persistent tail-wagging habit are all good points of identification. Voice: a well-enunciated phoe-be or fi-bree (second note alternately higher or lower than first). It is not whistled like the 'phoebe' song of Chickadees. Its food is almost wholly of destructive insects (gypsy moths, cucumber beetles, ants, ticks, and others).



# PITCH PINE RESTORATION AT BELDING WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

by Jane Seymour

In an effort to save one of the last remaining pitch pine stands in the state, DEP personnel initiated a project at the Belding Wildlife Management Area to promote regeneration of this disappearing species. The project began with the removal of competing trees, such as oaks, black birch and white pine, on a 2-acre site near Bolton Road. The trees that have been cut will be removed and the ground will be then be scraped to expose the soil. The seeds require exposed soil to germinate.

Pitch pine woodland is a globally rare forest type, found only in the northeastern United States. Pitch pines were once abundant in Connecticut due to frequent wildfires across the landscape. Many species and habitats are dependent on disturbances such as wildfires. Fire burns off the layer of leaf litter and causes the pitch pine cones to open and release their seeds on the exposed soil. As the landscape became settled, forest fires, which usually started with lightning strikes, were no longer allowed to burn. But with fire suppression came the decline of disturbance-dependent species such as the pitch pine. Foresters estimate that more than 95 percent of the pitch pine habitat in the state has been lost to development and fire suppression.

Belding Wildlife Management Area contains a viable population of mature pitch pines, but there has been no new growth for over 50 years. Without new growth, this species will eventually disappear. This project will create conditions that will allow a new generation of pitch pines to become established. Wildlife species that use regenerating stands of pitch pine include prairie warbler, whip-poor-will, eastern towhee and brown thrasher, a species of special concern in Connecticut.

Pitch pines also grow in Valley Falls Park along the rocky outcrops. They can be distinguished from other pines by their needles. Pitch pines have three big needles per bundle, white pines have five smaller needles per bundle and red pines have 2 large needles per bundle. You can also find pitch pines at Hopeville Pond State Park and Cockaponset State Forest, where controlled fires have been set by DEP personnel to manage these unique and valuable habitats.

— Jane Seymour is a DEP Wildlife Technician, and steward of the Belding Wildlife Management Area.

## OUTDOOR ALMANAC 2008

### April

**April 20** Full moon. The Pink Moon.

**April 21** Shadbush blooms; look for the white flowers against the brown leafless trees.

**April 24** Watch the wooded swamps for nesting wood ducks.

**April 27** Listen for spring peepers from nearby swamps and marshes.

**April 29** Watch for returning towhees, brown thrashers, house wrens, barn swallows and chimney swifts.

### May

**May 5** New moon.

**May 6** Trout lilies, columbine, trillium and other woodland wildflowers are in bloom. Watch them now before the trees leaf out.

**May 7** Northern orioles and catbirds come back. Watch for spring azure butterflies in the garden.

**May 13** Bobolinks are active in hayfields and meadows.

**May 15** This is generally the height of the spring warbler migration. Watch the treetops and shrubbery at dawn

and dusk for migrating birds. Listen for the dawn chorus.

**May 19** Full moon. The flower moon.

**May 23** Watch for painted turtles and snapping turtles as they move onto dry land to lay their eggs.

**May 25** Broad-winged hawks return, along with the scarlet tanagers and rose-breasted grosbeaks.

**May 27** Dogwood flowers.

### June

**June 3** New moon.

**June 6** Listen for the bullfrog chorus from freshwater marshes and ponds.

**June 9** Field wildflowers begin to bloom around now. Sulphur butterflies emerge.

**June 18** Full moon. The Strawberry moon.

**June 19** Baby birds appear about this time; look for them on lawns and in shrubbery. (Most seemingly lost babies are not orphans; parents are nearby.)

**June 21** Summer solstice.

# SPRING HAPPENINGS

PLEASE JOIN US FOR SOME FUN EVENTS!

◆ **SPRING CLEAN UP AND WORK DAY AT THE FARM!**

**Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.** Come for the day – or any time during the day. All hands will be welcome – any help will be appreciated. Spend time outdoors in this lovely landscape!

◆ **ANNUAL FISHING DERBY AT VALLEY FALLS PARK!**

**May 3rd, 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.** The event is for 15-year olds and under. It's free to Vernon residents, non-residents pay a \$3.00 fee. The event is sponsored by Rockville Glass and Crystal Lake Bait & Tackle.

◆ **CELEBRATE SPRING - JOIN US FOR SPRING NATURE WALKS IN VALLEY FALLS PARK!**

All walks begin in the parking lot at Valley Falls Park.

**May 10, Saturday 2:00 p.m. WILDFLOWER WALK** – led by Ginny Gingras

**May 17, Saturday 7:00 a.m. BIRD WALK** – led by Denise Anamani

(Rain will cancel both walks)

◆ **SAVE THE DATE: ARTIST DAY AT THE FARM – AUGUST 8<sup>TH</sup>**

SPRING NEWS 2008



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