

MASSACHUSETTS WILDLIFE

No. 2, 2019

\$3.00



**Milkweeds,
Frog Hunting,
Nightingaling Ducks**

MASSACHUSETTS WILDLIFE

Vol. 69

No. 2

FEATURES

MARVELOUS MILKWEEDS 4

— Robert Wernerehl

Meet our native milkweeds, all eight species, and find out what is so special about this intriguing group of plants.

PHOTO ESSAY: NIGHTLIGHTING DUCKS 14

— Troy Gipps

Crashing through aquatic vegetation with bright lights to the tune of a roaring engine might seem like an odd way to sneak up on a duck but it is, in fact, the most efficient way to capture ducks for banding.

JOURNAL OF A FROG HUNTER 18

— Troy Gipps

While the buzz surrounding opening day of frog season may currently be falling on deaf ears, the aggressive nature of the American bullfrog, and its oh-so-delicious legs, may prompt you to buy a fishing license and make a beeline to the nearest wetland.

A GOOD MAN. A GOOD HUNT. 33

— Dan Hayner

A hunter who befriended an elderly man and gained permission to hunt his north shore property discovered everything that a deer hunt should be.

Tracking the Eastern Whip-poor-will 2

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On the Cover: A monarch butterfly feeds on the nectar of a common milkweed. Monarchs require milkweed for all stages of their life cycle, yet shifting land management practices have resulted in the loss of habitat for our native milkweeds. You can help us conserve milkweeds and the pollinators that depend on them by donating to MassWildlife's Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Fund, mass.gov/support/NHESP. Photo © Troy Gipps

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Photo © Robert Wernerehl



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Photo by Troy Gipps/MassWildlife



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Photo © Troy Gipps



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Photo by Troy Gipps/MassWildlife

FACES OF CONSERVATION



Massachusetts Envirothon

High school students huddle around a table covered with leafy branches and tree field guides, stand waist-deep in a freshly dug soil pit, collect and analyze water from a nearby pond, and examine live turtles and mounted birds. A murmur of voices permeates the air as the students scribble notes on their clipboards. Nearby, under tents, student teams give oral presentations to a panel of judges. It is the culmination of a year-long natural-resource program and team competition called the Massachusetts Envirothon that has introduced high school-aged youth to environmental careers and active citizen engagement for over 30 years.

The Envirothon is the only natural-resource-oriented, competition-based program in Massachusetts; focusing on the conservation of forest, water, wildlife, and soil resources. Each year, Envirothon establishes a Current Issue and teams must investigate how it affects their community. Past topics included Agricultural Soil and Water Conservation, Managing Invasive Species, Climate Crisis: Taking Action in Massachusetts Communities, and Sustainable Local Agriculture.

Each year, the program draws approximately 300

high school students and their coaches from 30-40 communities statewide. For some teams, the Envirothon is incorporated into a high school science curriculum. For others, it is an after-school club led by a teacher, local conservation-minded official, or land trust staff member or volunteer. Homeschoolers and youth groups like 4-H or Scouts have also fielded Envirothon teams.

During the school year, teams prepare for the competition both in the classroom and outdoors. Teams and their coaches can attend workshops conducted by natural resource professionals from government agencies, colleges and universities, and the private sector. They also meet with local officials, conservation groups, and other topic experts to study the Current Issue's relevance to their community.

In early May, teams descend on a state or municipal park or conservation organization property. The locations are chosen to feature a variety of local ecosystems. During the competition, teams visit eco-stations, where they are tested on their knowledge and skills in soil, forestry, water, and wildlife. They also present their Current Issue findings and recommended actions or solutions in an





businesses, organizations, and donors who have provided significant multi-year in-kind support that includes time, staff, and funding services. Contributors support travel to workshops and the competition, team prizes, and meals. Anyone can be involved to help create the next generation of conservationists. Visit massenvirothon.org to learn how!

In the end, the Massachusetts Envirothon is a network of scientists, educators, local officials, policy-makers, business people, resource managers, community activists, and parents committed to preparing the next generation of environmentally-literate citizens.

“These teams work hard getting to know their local ecosystems and how their communities depend on them,” said Kelley Freda, chair of the Envirothon Steering Committee. “We test their scientific knowledge, but we also like hearing their stories about how they have gotten muddy, cold, and tired, and had fun and fallen in love with nature in their neighborhood. Our best hope for the future comes from engaged, scientifically literate citizens who care about their communities and the environment.”

Faces of Conservation salutes the energy and enthusiasm of the upcoming generation of conservation-minded citizens and the support of Massachusetts Envirothon partners!



oral presentation to a group of judges consisting of natural resource managers; local, state, and federal officials; scientists; and environmental advocates. They rank the presentations on demonstrated knowledge, proposed solutions, and presentation skills. Teams also share their stories of ecosystem exploration and community action at an EnviroTrek Lunch. Scores are calculated and winners are announced in several categories. The overall state team winner is eligible to compete in the National Envirothon in the summer. This spring, Lexington High School won the state competition and will be representing Massachusetts at the national competition in North Carolina.

The Massachusetts Envirothon has evolved from a Conservation District initiative to a structured program overseen by the Massachusetts State Commission for the Conservation of Soil, Water, and Related Resources. Organizing workshops, running the competition, and seeking out partners and contributions is a huge undertaking that is led by the Massachusetts Envirothon Steering Committee and the Massachusetts Envirothon Council. The Envirothon would not be possible without the involvement of agencies,



Photos courtesy Massachusetts Envirothon

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To protect and manage habitat for the endangered Northern Copperhead, MassWildlife is working to control invasive swallow-wort plants. These plants grow quickly, smother native vegetation, and can take over important habitat for copperheads and limit access to den sites and basking areas. Additional threats to copperheads include development, habitat fragmentation, roadway mortality, unauthorized trail development, intentional killing, and collection. Through collaboration with our conservation partners, we protect and manage critical copperhead habitat, support research, and monitor all known population sites that occur in Connecticut River Valley and the Boston area. This juvenile was photographed by Liam Griffin, MassWildlife Intern.



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