



## NEWS ROUNDUP

### Land Preservation Grants Awarded

Governor Malloy recently announced that 25 communities will receive \$7.8 million to purchase and preserve 2,237 acres through the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program. "Preservation projects such as these are fundamental to maintaining our high-quality of life, protecting the immense natural beauty of our state, and making Connecticut a great place to live, work and raise a family." In Litchfield County, Goshen, Morris, and Cornwall will receive grants totaling \$1.2 million.

We lack email addresses for many of you, and if there is an alert we wish to send out, information about upcoming events or other announcements, we have no way of contacting you but snail mail. Please send us your email address:

info@colebrooklandconservancy.org

The Colebrook Land Conservancy  
P.O. Box 90 Colebrook, CT 06021

The Colebrook Land Conservancy Newsletter is produced in the public's interest. Comments and suggestions for articles are welcome.



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Yes, I support the purposes of the Colebrook Land Conservancy.

Annual Dues: \$25 family, \$20 individual, \$10 senior.  
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# THE The Colebrook Land Conservancy NEWSLETTER

"In Land We Trust"

Volume 23 Number 1, Fall 2014

## WILD LIFE

# Hidden in Plain Sight?

**A**lthough we live surrounded by wilderness in the northern Litchfield Hills, how many of us know more than a few of the animals and plants that exist right under our noses? Well, now there is a way to find out what is out there: three years ago, ecologist and Colebrook resident Harry White compiled a comprehensive natural history inventory of the Sandy Brook Natural Area Preserve, which can be accessed online at colebrooklandconservancy.org.

Compiled as part of the Management Plan for the preserve and funded by a grant from the Farmington River Coordinating Committee and the Colebrook Land Conservancy, the document relied on White's own work as well as on research provided by a number of other naturalists.

The resulting compendium of plants, insects, amphibians, reptiles, fishes, mammals, and birds provides an impressive demonstration of the rich biodiversity which surrounds us here in the town of Colebrook. Although the list does not perhaps include all of the species found in greater Colebrook, since it pertains specifically to the Sandy Brook watershed, it is nonetheless a fairly comprehensive representation of what wildlife abounds in our town.

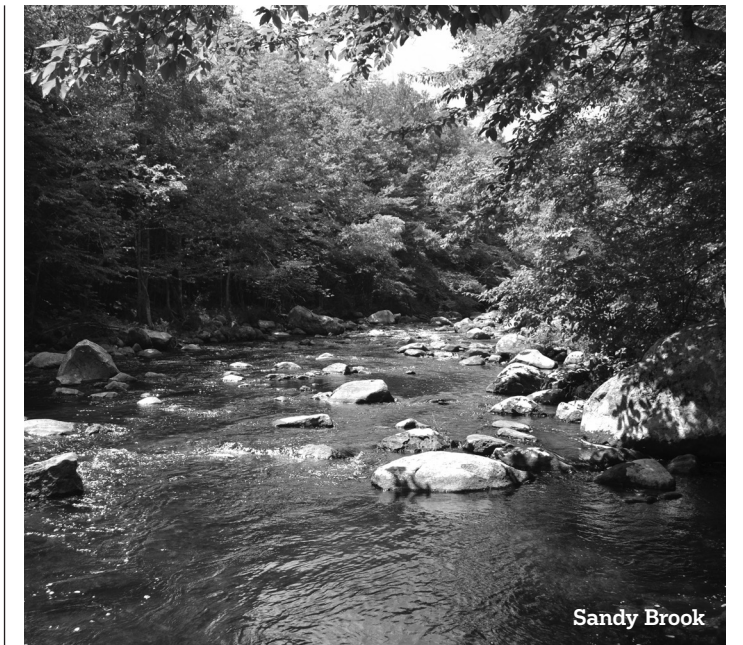
If you are observant, or if you have lived here a long time, you may have seen all of these fauna and flora in your backyard or in your walks around Colebrook. But whether you have or haven't, perhaps it might be interesting to use this guide as a way to look more closely at the world that surrounds you here.

### Trees

There are at least sixteen different tree species growing along and just above Sandy Brook, an area which White characterizes as a riparian woodland environment. This corridor, White observes, "and the surrounding forest harbor many rare, threatened, and endangered plants and animals." It also serves as an ideal environment for Atlantic salmon.

### Plants

But the number of trees pales in comparison to the abundance of native ground story plants: Elizabeth Corrigan, a local botanist who compiled the ground story plant section of White's inventory, recorded 72 native and naturalized non-native plants in the Sandy Brook river basin.



Sandy Brook

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### Fauna

Beyond the list of flora to be found in the Sandy Brook Natural Area Preserve, White provided an inventory of the fauna that he had observed in the Sandy Brook area over the previous ten years, including 12 species of fishes, 28 species of mammals, 44 species of birds, 10 species of amphibians, and 4 species of reptiles.

White notes that there is a particularly healthy ecosystem in and along Sandy Brook, which has made it an ideal habitat, particularly for mammals, and more are moving in; in addition to White's own list, he notes that sightings of Mountain lions and Canada lynx have also been reported by area residents over the last few years.



Many different types of birds flourish in the vicinity of Sandy Brook, and a couple of them are on the State threatened species list: the American eagle and the Sharp-shinned hawk. Some are less common than others, such as the Eastern bluebird, and one bird has only recently been seen for the first time: the Rose-breasted grosbeak.

Among the reptiles and amphibians found in or near Sandy Brook, some species have declining populations in other parts of the state, but have been able to thrive so far in this environment.

As for the fishes in Sandy Brook, due to the existence of dams downstream, there are no longer any adult Atlantic salmon returning to Sandy Brook. But there is a restocking program for salmon as well as for a number of other fishes, such as various kinds of trout. The reason all these fishes do so well in Sandy Brook is due to the richness of insects and macroinvertebrates.

...

This extraordinary collection of plants and animals is the result of decades of allowing nature to take its course, particularly in the adjacent Kitchel Wilderness where the woods are progressing toward the old-growth stage of forest maturation. As time goes on, unlogged forests become more natively diverse than logged forests. Already, a number of species that we see in our neighborhood are threatened in other parts of the state. As White notes,

*“Eastern old-growth forests have been dramatically reduced from their historic abundance and are now considered to be one of the most endangered ecosystems in the country. In the East, less than one percent of the historic old-growth forest is estimated to remain. The loss and degradation of old growth and other forest types threaten the existence of many plant and animal species. Two recent reports on the status of U.S. ecosystems concluded that many ecosystem types are simply disappearing throughout the country, along with the native animal and plant species that are sustained by them.”*

Colebrook residents are fortunate to live in an area that harbors unique natural habitats like those found in and around Sandy Brook.

—Amy Bernstein



Trout lily

## Sandy Brook's Species

### Native and Naturalized Plants

Tall scouring rush  
Red baneberry  
Agrimony  
Wood anemone  
Dogbane  
Wild sarsaparilla  
Spikenard  
Jack-in-the-pulpit  
Common wormwood  
White milkweed  
Lady fern  
Toothwort  
Spotted wintergreen  
Virgin's bower  
Wild basil  
Bluebead lily  
Hay-scented fern  
Silvery glade fern  
Northern bush-honeysuckle  
Helleborine  
Trout lily  
Boneset  
White wood aster  
Joe-pye weed  
Climbing false buckwheat  
Oak fern  
American witchhazel  
Bluets

Shining firmoss  
Sedum  
Common juniper  
Mountain laurel  
Cardinal flower  
Fly honeysuckle  
White campion  
Star flower  
Canada mayflower  
False Solomon's-seal  
Indian cucumber-root  
White sweet clover  
Partridgeberry  
Sensitive fern  
Interrupted fern  
Royal fern  
Common wood-sorrel  
New York fern  
Long beech fern



Wake robin

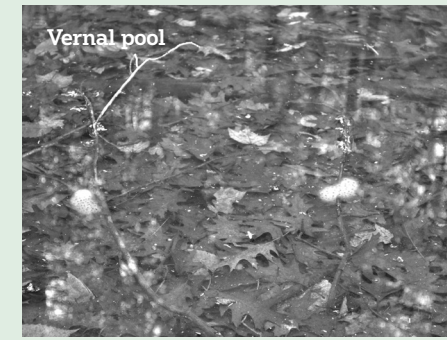
Mayapple  
Long-bristled smartweed  
Common polypody  
Wild lettuce  
Shinleaf  
Purple-flowering raspberry  
Bloodroot  
Bouncing bet  
Smooth carrion flower  
Meadowsweet  
Rose twisted-stalk  
Tall meadow rue  
Foamflower  
Oysterplant  
White clover  
Wake robin  
Coltsfoot  
Maple-leaved viburnum  
Hobblebush  
Cow vetch  
Lesser periwinkle  
Yellow forest violet  
Fox grape  
Golden Alexander

### Trees

Red oak  
American beech  
Sugar maple  
Red maple  
Black birch  
Yellow birch  
Paper birch  
Hickory  
White ash  
Basswood  
Eastern hemlock  
Eastern white pine  
American elm  
Witch hazel  
Hophornbeam  
Striped maple

### Sandy Brook Natural Area Preserve Birds

American eagle  
Sharp-shinned hawk  
Cooper's hawk  
Red-tailed hawk  
Northern saw whet owl  
Barred owl  
Great horned owl  
Turkey vulture  
Raven  
American crow



Vernal pool

Wild turkey  
Ruffed grouse  
Belted kingfisher  
Great blue heron  
Wood duck  
Common merganser  
Mallard  
Spotted sandpiper  
Pileated woodpecker  
Common flicker  
Downy woodpecker  
Rock dove  
Mourning dove  
Ruby-throated hummingbird  
Gray catbird  
Eastern phoebe  
Bluejay  
Tufted titmouse  
Black-capped chickadee  
White-breasted nuthatch  
American robin  
Eastern bluebird  
Veery  
Wood thrush  
Tree swallow  
Cedar waxwing  
Black-and-white warbler  
Pine warbler  
Evening grosbeak  
Chipping sparrow  
Slate-colored junco  
Northern cardinal  
American goldfinch  
Rose-breasted grosbeak

### Fishes

Brook trout  
Atlantic salmon  
Brown trout  
Rainbow trout  
Blacknose dace  
Bridled shiner  
American eel

White sucker  
Tesselated darter  
Pumpkinseed  
Largemouth bass

### Mammals

Black bear  
Moose  
White-tailed deer  
Bobcat  
Coyote  
Red fox  
Gray fox  
Mink  
River otter  
Fisher  
Raccoon  
Striped skunk  
North American beaver  
Woodchuck  
North American porcupine  
Muskrat  
Little brown bat  
Eastern chipmunk  
White-footed mouse  
Deer mouse  
Woodland jumping mouse  
Red-backed vole  
Woodland vole  
Eastern gray squirrel  
Northern flying squirrel  
Star-nosed mole

New England cottontail  
Eastern cottontail

### Amphibians

Jefferson salamander complex  
Spotted salamander  
Northern two-lined salamander  
Northern redback salamander  
Red-spotted newt



Northern spring peeper

Gray treefrog  
Northern spring peeper  
Pickerel frog  
Wood frog  
Eastern American toad

### Reptiles

Eastern ribbon snake  
Northern water snake  
Eastern milk snake  
Common snapping turtle

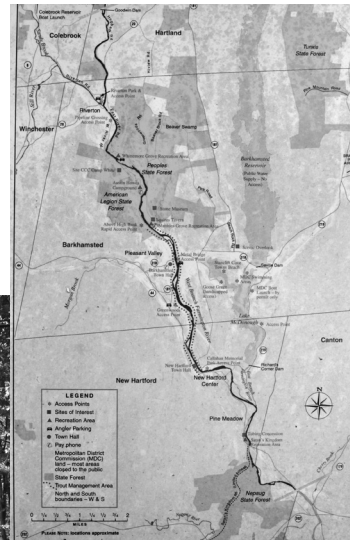


# What is the FRCC and what does it do?

**I**n June, the Farmington River Coordinating Committee (FRCC) celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Farmington River's designation as a Wild and Scenic River at an event at the Pavilion overlooking the river in Barkhamsted. For Colebrook, too, there was cause for celebration, since the oversight of the FRCC has a direct impact on the rivers that flow through our town, and a representative from Colebrook serves on its committee.

representatives from the five towns through which the river flows – Colebrook, Hartland, Barkhamsted, New Hartford and Canton. Colebrook's portion of the river includes the West Branch Reservoir. Sandy Brook, one of the Farmington's most important tributaries, flows through Colebrook as well.

to evaluate and eradicate invasive plants along the river, and identification of vernal pools in all five towns, as well as work in several of the tributaries to the river, such as Sandy Brook and the Still River. This has included stream crossing studies, assessment of culverts, and watershed analyses. Moreover, every year FRCC awards two scholarships -- named for river advocates Nancy Johnson and Pat Keener -- to students from one of the five towns who wish to study environmental related subjects.



When a 14-mile section of the Upper Farmington River was declared by Congress in 1994 to be a "Wild and Scenic" River, it was the first in the country to be denominated as a "partnership river." That meant that it would be managed by a committee of interested people representing stakeholders along the river who would work together as partners. The National Park Service, the Farmington River Watershed Association, the MDC, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), and the Farmington River Anglers were all represented on the Committee. Most importantly for Colebrook, the Committee also included

The group meets on a regular basis at Squire's Tavern in Barkhamsted. It concerns itself with preserving the qualities for which the river was designated as Wild and Scenic: it is a free-flowing river, with excellent bird and fish habitat, many recreational opportunities, and interesting historical sites. Each town is represented by a full member and an alternate. Tom Stanton was the original Colebrook representative. The current representative is Ross Delaney. The group administers funds from the National Park Service, annually funding a number of projects to further its goals. For example, over the years it has funded regular water quality monitoring, studies

FRCC also gives grants to applicants with specific projects that might benefit the river. In the past Colebrook has received a number of grants that you may not even know about: in 2007 the Farmington River Anglers received a grant for its Salmon in the School program, and in 2008 a grant was given to Camp Jewell for watershed education in the after school program. Since then, grants have been given to Marc Banks and volunteers at the Richard Smith Forge archeological site, and to the Colebrook Land Conservancy for its acquisition of property abutting the Kitchel Wilderness along Sandy Brook and to pay for a management plan for the Sandy Brook Natural Preserve, an area that received state designation several years ago.

Although you may not have realized it, you can see from this article that this organization with the strange name plays an important role in preserving Colebrook as the town we all know and love.

Log onto the web site at: [www.farmingtonriver.org](http://www.farmingtonriver.org) for more information.

By Edna Travis



# The Importance of Shrublands

**A**t the annual meeting of the New Hartford Land Trust, guest speaker Shannon Kearney-McGee made the case for creating and maintaining “Ugly Places for Pretty Birds.” Shannon works for the Wildlife Division of the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and studies the effect of disappearing habitat on bird populations. Throughout New England as family farms close down, much of the open land is developed or reverts to forest. During the transition to trees, an unruly tangle of shrubs may move in, providing roughly 5-10 year’s worth of the habitat some birds prefer. Thirty species in our state are “shrubland obligate,” meaning they only nest in shrublands. Examples are the Golden-winged warbler (state endangered), Yellow-breasted chat (state endangered), Brown thrasher (State special concern), Blue-winged warbler, Eastern Towhee, Prairie warbler and Field sparrow.

About 25% of our forest birds are decreasing compared to 78% of shrubland birds. Data from the CT Bird Breeding Survey shows the alarming rate of decrease in population numbers for birds that use shrublands for nesting. Southern New England hosts 10% of the world’s population of Blue-winged warblers, but they are declining about 3% annually. Our state has 20% of the New England population of Eastern towhee, which is projected to lose half its population in the next decade. Connecticut also hosts a significant portion of the world population of Prairie warblers, declining at 4.5% annually.

Shrubland is an ephemeral habitat here in New England, where trees seem to move in overnight. Nature’s ways of creating open space – fires and tornadoes – can’t keep up with the loss of habitat



to development. DEEP’s Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy includes the goal to “conserve and increase” the number of breeding populations of shrubland birds. On state-owned property, the department has tried several methods to increase shrublands – keeping old fields mowed, cutting forests or creating clear cuts within forests. However, these may not

prove cost effective for the number of birds actually using them.

Habitat loss has been determined to be the primary cause of population declines of shrubland birds. Other threats to these birds include stress during migration from places as far away as Central America, or for birds that nest on the ground, because of egg predation by cats, chipmunks, and even deer. You can help all our ground nesting birds by keeping cats indoors, especially during the sensitive nesting season from May 1 to August 30.

Those of us whose property consists of a typical house lot can help by undertaking “back yard” habitat management – various ways to improve wildlife habitat, just on a smaller scale. We can

usually provide a variety of food, cover, water and living space for wildlife. Look around to understand what your land has to offer, and then enhance its features. Several resources that may be useful:

Wildlife Habitat informational sheets in the Wildlife Publication Library at the Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) Wildlife Division’s website cover butterfly gardening; rejuvenating old apple trees; plus brush piles, nesting sites, mast, openings and snags for wildlife.

The booklet, *Managing Grasslands, Shrublands and Young Forest for Wildlife: A Guide to the Northeast*, can be ordered from the Wildlife Division website or downloaded free as a series of chapters. Although written for large landowners, the ideas in the booklet can be adapted to smaller properties.

The UConn Cooperative Extension Service, along with DEEP, the CT Forest and Park Association and others, sponsors the COVERTS program every September. During a free 3-day seminar at Great Mountain Forest in Norfolk, landowners learn about forests, wildlife and habitat management in exchange for a commitment to volunteer some time sharing information with others in their community.

For further details, see [http://www.ctforestry.uconn.edu/Coverts\\_000.html](http://www.ctforestry.uconn.edu/Coverts_000.html).