

Upcoming Events

COLEBROOK FAIR Saturday, August 31

We hope to see you at the Fair! Stop by the Conservancy's table on the green and learn more about Colebrook's wildlife. Pick up information about the Conservancy's trails, too.

We lack e-mail 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 e-mail 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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If you'd like to Join Us or Contribute...

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

Annual Dues: \$25 family, \$20 individual, \$10 senior.
To join or contribute, please send this coupon along with your tax deductible annual dues and/or other contribution to:

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PayPal is also available on the Conservancy's web site,
www.colebrooklandconservancy.org

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THE NEWSLETTER

The Colebrook Land Conservancy



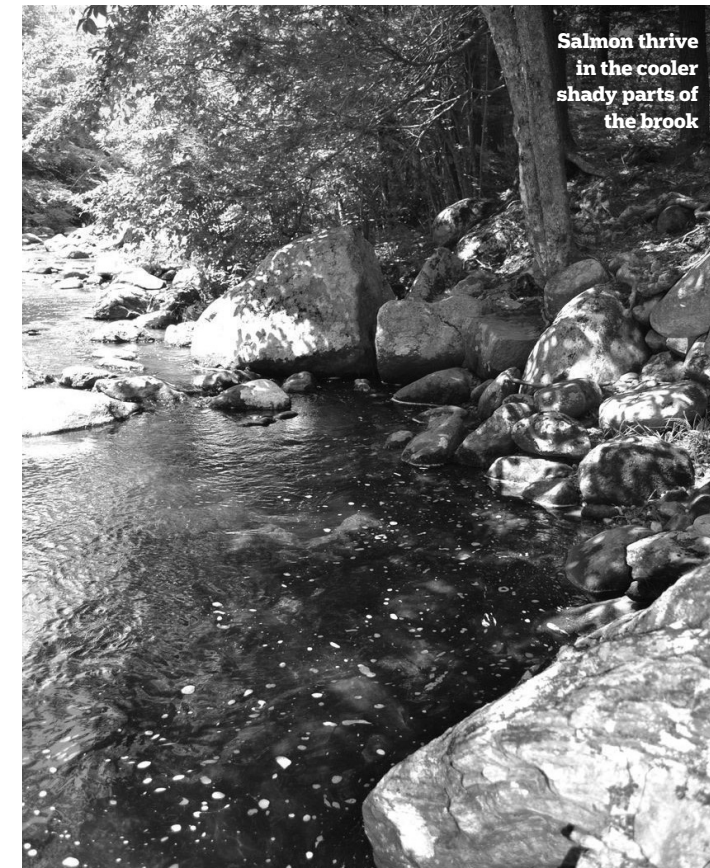
"In Land We Trust"

Volume 22 Number 1, Summer 2013

WILD LIFE

Our Very Own Sandy Brook

ED MACHOWSKI GREW up in North Colebrook, and from the time he was a wee boy he was fascinated with Sandy Brook north of Rte 183 and all its attendant creatures. To this day he can draw a map of tiny tributaries and hidden ponds where the brook trout used to go to spawn. As he got older, he ranged further up and down that stream, and during his high school years was a student volunteer helping to monitor the Atlantic Salmon reintroduction project which commenced, in the State of Connecticut, in Sandy Brook. (Started in 1978, there were brief glimmers of hope in the early years, when somewhere near 500 fish returned. That quickly tapered off to 6 or a couple of dozen. The program was finally discontinued just last year.)



Ed now works for the Inland Fisheries of Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) as a biologist and continues his interest in the waterways of our state. Generally, water temperatures have been getting warmer, a process which has been going on incrementally since the end of the ice age. Presently, more Southern species of plants, crustaceans, and fish are begin-

ning to appear in the state. Brook trout are particularly sensitive to any change in temperature. Brown trout, not native but introduced from Europe, can acclimatize to a much wider range of temperatures and environment. So it is not, as one hears, that the brookes are crowded out by the brown, but that brown trout are more adaptable.

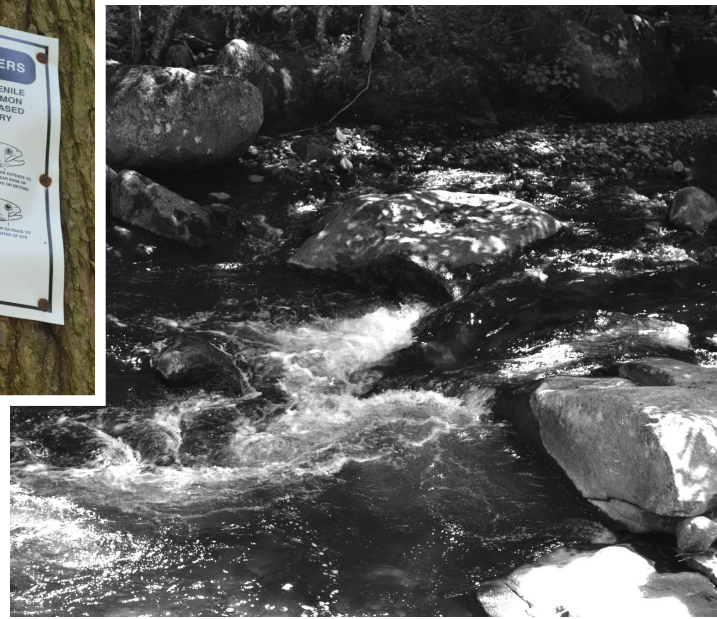
Ed remembers Sandy Brook "teeming with brook trout" particularly north of Rte 183, and a good population even in Center Brook. So why are so few seen now? Environmentally, not much had changed for Sandy Brook - not much northern development, but perhaps a few more beaver dams than before. Data from 1988, for instance, shows a small stream near Rte 8 and Robertsville sheltering Brook trout, black nosed Dace, Slimy Sculpin, and American eels*). All native fish. That same year a rich sampling came from Sandy Brook a quarter mile downstream from Mt Pisgah Rd : 25 black nosed dace, 1 creek chubb, 121 long-nosed dace, 1 largemouth bass, 19 pumpkinseed, 71 Atlantic salmon, 1 small mouthed bass, 1 tessellated darter, 19 white suckers, and 15 American eels, three eels of which were more than two feet long. That kind of

array has been found in fewer and fewer locations throughout the state with each passing year.

So water temperature is a major influence on fish. Still water sitting in the sun warms up. Beaver dams and any "impoundment of water" will slow its movement and cause it to warm. If a stream, such as Center Brook, widens into



All young salmon caught in Sandy Brook must be released.



a marshy area, the water there will flow more slowly causing warming. When a brook enters a wooded area providing shade, the water will cool. If the brook cascades over a fall of rocks, the cooler water will become more oxygenated. Another way to cool or “mitigate” the warming trend is by siphoning water from the middle of a contributing pond where it is cooler than top water. (This is known as “tail water.”) The Farmington River is a classic example of this in Connecticut. Brook trout react to a change of only one or two degrees; they also need more oxygen than brown trout which cooler waters can provide. Of all the stream fish, creek chubb, common shiner and fall fish and minnows are some of the most tolerant. As to which fish are in ponds and which in streams, one determinant is their shape: slender trout and salmon can swim against the current or stay in place despite the moving water. Less aerodynamically (aquadynamically?) designed fish such as bass, sunfish and yellow perch, are fit for ponds.

Among the best fishing streams in our neighborhood, the Blackberry River is prime and very healthy. A “disaster” occurred there in 2003 when tens of thousands of fish were killed; blasting at the lime quarry was followed by a micro burst storm which dumped several inches of water pushing the leftover and airborne blasting agent, ammonium hydroxide, into the river and small tributaries leading to

the Blackberry. Ed just happened to have been there that day doing his usual job. A full assessment of the fish kill was made by Ed and two other biologists that afternoon. The next morning Ed returned with a further biologist, but evidence of the massive fish kill was down to just a few carcasses along the banks, the river already regenerating. A heavy presence of crawfish and insects, as well as raccoon, otter and mink, had worked through the night getting rid of the remains. Since then, the affected sections of the river have rebounded and the Blackberry continues to be some of the finest trout fishing in this area. One wonders how many times this rapid recovery happens, unnoticed.

Surveying the Connecticut streams has changed over time. Some years ago an inventory of fish and insects throughout the State’s streams was the prime focus, then there was a shift to water quality. Now, biologists are taking a more ecosystem approach, tying together water quality, water temperature, fish, insects, and development, within a watershed. If temperatures were recorded 20 years ago, it was done sporadically when someone was working on a particular project. But the approach of DEEP Inland Fisheries has become increasingly scientific. Now there is a plan to revisit every stream in the state, returning between five and ten years later to note and compare water quality, fish species, water temperature and insect species. The monitoring is a

continuing index of the condition and trends. The department is also starting to survey streams for any kind of barrier or water impoundment.

Inland fisheries stocks Sandy Brook all the way up to Beech Hill with 10 to 13 inches. In this state, 650,000 fish are replaced each year, and the Farmington River, says Ed, is our “crown Jewel,” primarily because the water remains cool throughout the year. He also notes that the brooks and streams of small towns like Norfolk and Colebrook benefit from having a responsive citizenry and aggressive wetland control. What happens in our smaller streams and rivers greatly effects conditions much further downstream. By protecting the waters in our small towns, we can greatly buffer changes in environmental and man-made influences in other areas of the watershed for years to come.

In Praise of EELS

Did you know that eels are the only North American fish to be born at sea and spend its life in fresh water (“catadromous”)? They start life as a tiny egg on the Sargasso Sea, south of Bermuda, ride the gulf stream for nearly a year while developing, turning into “glass eels”, translucent, to work their way back “home” to fresh waters like Sandy Brook. Under some conditions, females can grow to 5 feet and males to 3. Eels can absorb oxygen through their skin, not only their gills, enabling them to travel short distances over mud or wet grass. Hence they can be found in landlocked ponds. In fresh water they stay from 10 years to 40, before heading back out to the Sargasso Sea. Unfortunately, eels are overfished. They are protected in Canada which even has an eel fishery. Google James Prosek’s “Eels” and watch a fascinating PBS ‘Nature’ documentary.

First Responders for Wild life

HAVE YOU EVER FOUND AN injured bird or other wild animal and wondered what to do? Call the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) dispatch number: 860-424-3333. Trained, licensed volunteers across the State are ready to help and can provide the best assessment, rescue and treatment for animals that are injured or appear to be lost.

If you have Internet access, the following link lists all rehabilitators, their specialties, town, and contact information: <http://www.ct.gov/dep/cwp/view>.

Here are important tips from the DEEP web site:

- Never touch any wild animal if it can be avoided. Always keep children and pets away. If you must touch an animal, always wear gloves. This will protect both you and the animal. In many cases, an animal that bites or scratches a person will need to be killed to test it for rabies.
- If an animal appears to be sick, it may not be safe to handle it! If an animal is stumbling, staggering, walking in circles, dragging a limb or the hind end, or if it is acting strangely (approaching people or pets in an aggressive manner) never attempt to handle the animal.
- Wild animals can be dangerous! Their behavior is often unpredictable. Do not attempt to rescue a potentially dangerous animal without assistance from someone with experience.

Assess the situation before picking up an animal!

- Wild animals often leave their young unattended for several hours or more. Be aware that animals thought to be orphans may not need your assistance. Do not intervene unless you are certain that the animal is orphaned, it is obviously injured or it is in immediate danger. If you suspect that an animal is orphaned, watch from a distance for a minimum of several hours and attempt to reunite the orphan with its mother.

Remember that it is illegal for any per-



son, other than a state appointed rehabilitator, to care for wildlife. If you think an animal needs help, make sure to contact a wildlife rehabilitator. There are rehabilitators who specialize in small birds, hawks and owls, ducks and geese, other birds, bats, small mammals, raccoons, skunks, foxes, deer, bears, bobcats and coyotes, and reptiles and amphibians.

In June, when a snapping turtle chose my vegetable garden as a site to lay eggs, but was still concealed under rhubarb leaves two days later, I contacted wildlife rehabilitator Linda Bowen of Canaan through the DEEP web site. She said the turtle may simply need more time and explained the process further:

“The incubation period should be anywhere from 55-125 days, depending on the ambient temperatures. I would say for the northeast it will probably be closer to 90 days. Depending on her age, she could

lay from 6 to well over 100 eggs, average in the northeast is probably more like 30 or so. It is at this time that the eggs are the most vulnerable. Skunks and raccoons in particular will love to dig them up and eat them. If you want to protect the eggs you could put a piece of wire mesh over top of where the eggs are, making sure to make the piece several inches larger than the area that she disturbed. Weigh it down or put stakes in it and that may keep predators from getting them. As the 90 day mark starts to near, you may (or may not) see some of the hatchlings poke their heads up out of the dirt (some remain in the nest throughout the winter and will emerge early the next spring). At any point on or after the 90 days, you should remove the wire mesh and they will instinctively head towards the body of water that they will live in, you will not have to take them there.”

—Joyce Hemingson