

HMCA Activity Update for HPC 7/11/22 meeting

Covering HMCA activities in May and June 2022.

From an article in the July/August 2022 edition of the Marlboro Mixer

by Carol Berner

May and June saw several outdoor activities on Hogback.

Marlboro School celebrated Hogback Day, an annual event when the whole school spends the day exploring and learning on the mountain. This year's naturebased activities, led by community members and MES staff, included an insect safari, pencil making, animal tracking, orienteering, fairy houses, birds in spring, trail building, making clay faces for trees and designing Andy Goldsworthy-inspired art installations. Be sure to take a hike on the Tower Trail and check out the woven nest and stone snake sculptures, and see if any clay masks can still be found on the trees.

Allison Turner led a walk and talk on medicinal herbs found on Hogback, sponsored by the Windham Regional Woodlands Association, and cosponsored by HMCA.

The Southern Vermont Natural History Museum planned a Kids Exploration-Insect Safari to search for butterflies, ants, beetles and bees.

Trail maintenance has begun, with Marlboro School students helping to find rocks to harden a section of the White's Loop trail. Some overhanging trees have been limbed on the Tower Trail and the bench at the Rim Run intersection replaced. More work is planned this season on other trails. Volunteers are always welcome.

The Plant Invasives group conducted its third year of working to remove a small section of wild chervil.

The bird banding project provided a fascinating stop for the bird watchers participating in HMCA's Spring Migration Walk, its first Annual Tribute to Bob Engel, led by naturalist Cherrie Corey.

Hogback Mountain Bird Banding Recap Spring 2022

by Eric Slayton

A successful Spring 2022 season came to a close on May 27th with sixteen days of operation all during the month of May, averaging 3 hours per day, with the total of 49 hours of "open" nets. Multiply that by the 12 nets we used this season and the number you end up with represents the "total net/hours". This season that total was 588. With 93 newly banded birds and 15 recaptures from previous seasons the total birds per net/hour was 0.2. That means that each net run would average 2 birds. Sometimes there were more than 2 per net run, but as those diehard

supporters know, sometimes there were less. That is a low number for most banding stations to justify the time and effort, but because community enrichment is one of the primary goals of this project, those numbers are fine because the enjoyment factor makes up for it.

One notable data point though are the number of banded birds recaptured from previous seasons. This includes birds banded during all five previous field seasons going back to Spring 2020. Some of those birds had migrated, round trip, to areas in Central and South America, twice since our first encounter. Remarkable that they not only survived these treacherous journeys, with all the pit falls and obstacles along the way, but they stopped over in the very same woodland down to the same exact modest three-acre study area, where they were first banded.

One trend that I can demonstrate with confidence is the sustained level of community interest, involvement and enrichment. Once again a wonderful group of volunteers came out to lend a hand while enjoying a spring morning unfurl in the woods with fellow bird enthusiasts. More than 30 people participated for one or more visits, which included seasoned veterans and newly joined recruits. Even a couple of school groups came out for a visit.

A special thank you goes out to Laurel Copeland from Halifax who has really taken on a committed interest in this project, where she is involved in all aspects and operations of this project, from data collection to learning the techniques of safe bird extraction from the nets.

The next season will be Autumn 2022 with a startup date in mid September. This will then complete the third year of this study project. There is strong interest to continue for another year or more and I am happy to offer to make this an ongoing project. I will be reaching out to everyone mid August with the planned schedule to sign up for. Enjoy your off season and happy birding.

Additional input from Jack Widness, HMCA Interim President

HMCA continues to monitor and manage terrestrial invasives in the HMC Area. Most recently this has included:

Wild parsley. We continue to manage this along Route 9. As you know, with the road construction there at present, this is a different-we hope ultimately better-situation than in past years. Our impression is that this situation improving as this has required less work this year and we think that there may be fewer plants where in the past there were many.

Wild chervil. A new patch of this was discovered this week on Mt Olga adjacent to the metal communication shed. This is not as large as area as the growth over the septic mound of the Gift Shop that we continue to work on annually and feel we are making progress.