

Merrimack Conservation Chronicle

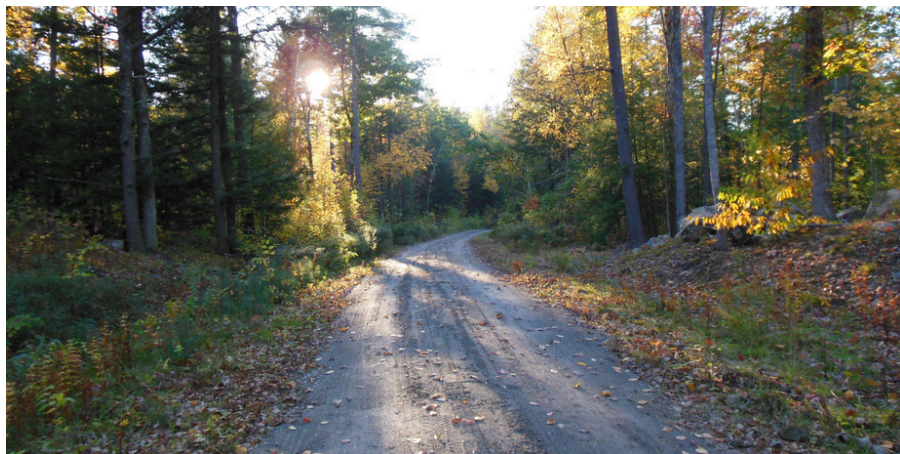
April 2026

Protecting natural spaces, enriching our community.

Welcome to the Conservation Chronicle. Merrimack is home to something worth protecting – and that’s exactly what we’re here to do. The Merrimack Conservation Commission (MCC) has been working to preserve the natural character of the town, the streams and rivers, forests and wetlands, wildlife habitats, open spaces and drinking water resources we all depend on. Our mission is both simple and vital – to ensure that future generations inherit a Merrimack that is just as wild, clean, and active as the one we enjoy today.

This newsletter is our way of bringing that work to you. Each quarter, we’ll share trail features, wildlife spotlights, conservation updates, and ways you can get involved. Whether you’re a lifelong naturalist or simply someone who loves a good walk in the woods, there’s a place for you in this community.

Welcome to the Conservation Chronicle, we’re glad you’re here.



Featured Trail

Trail of the Season: Gateway Trail, Grater Woods

What better way to kick off our very first newsletter than with the perfect first hike? Welcome to Gateway Trail — and if you’ve never explored Grater Woods before, consider this your invitation.

Grater Woods is one of Merrimack’s hidden gems. This 480-acre conservation parcel, assembled through years of land acquisitions by the MCC, has a story written into its landscape. Once cleared for pastures and logged multiple times over the centuries, the land has quietly reclaimed itself. Those old logging roads? They’re now beloved trails used by hikers, bikers, runners, hunters, snowshoers, horseback riders, and birdwatchers alike — a living testament to what thoughtful conservation can do.

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Upcoming Events



The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) is hosting multiple soilSHOP events this April, giving community members the opportunity to drop off yard or garden soil samples for free lead screening.

There will be NHDES soilSHOP tables at Discover Wild New Hampshire Day in Concord on April 18 and at the Nashua Public Library’s Sustainability Fair on April 25.

For any questions about the upcoming soilSHOP events, please email: NH-APPLETREE@des.nh.gov.

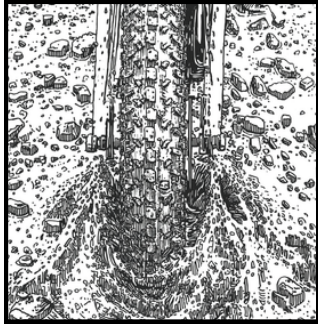


Sklar Riverfront Park trail workdays are coming. See Town of Merrimack Volunteer Agreement and join us on the following dates from 1:00-3:00 for trail cleanup.

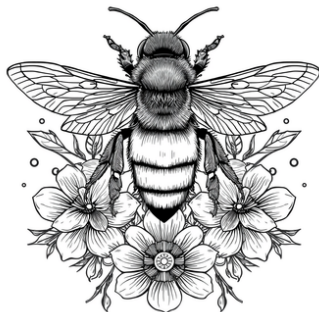
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What's the Buzz?



As spring arrives and the ground thaws, please consider your impact on local trails – especially with wheeled vehicles like bikes – to prevent deep ruts and lasting damage to the trail surface and surrounding vegetation. Please be aware that motorized vehicles are not allowed on Conservation property per [Town Code Chapter 111:1:d.](#)



Hold off on garden cleanup until the daytime temperatures consistently reach 50°F. Many beneficial insects, including native bees and beetles, overwinter in leaf litter, hollow stems, and soil. They need warmth to safely emerge before their habitat is disturbed.

Featured Trail, continued

Gateway Trail is where most adventures here begin. At 2.6 miles out and back, with a wide gravel path and connections to the rest of the trail network, it's approachable for first-timers and satisfying for seasoned hikers. Lace up your shoes — spring is putting on a show.

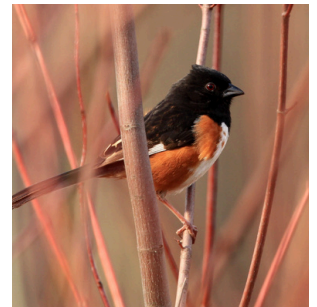


As you climb the hill across from the athletic fields, wild mountain laurel line your path and a song sparrow's melody floats through the trees — your unofficial welcome into the woods. Keep your eyes and ears open, because spring doesn't wait. Red-winged blackbirds are staking out territory along the water's edge. Spring peepers are singing their hearts out from the wetlands. Chipmunks are darting across the trail, shaking off winter and stocking up for the season ahead.

About three-quarters of a mile in, a bench overlooks a quiet pond. Sit down. Take a breath. This is where the magic gets subtle — a chickadee gathering moss for her nest, the first insects lifting off the water's surface, a turtle sunning themselves on an exposed log. Spring in Merrimack isn't just something you see, it's something you feel when you slow down long enough to notice it. Gateway Trail is waiting. We'll see you out there.

Quarterly Creature

This quarter's highlighted wildlife features the Eastern Towhee, known for its striking black, white and rufous coloring and its distinctive "drink-your-tea" song. Once a reliable but fleeting spring and summer visitor, the towhee is now being spotted into the winter in New Hampshire with increasing frequency – a shift linked to warming temperatures. Its presence depends on shrubby, early successional habitats created by changes in land use and forest management, making thoughtful conservation of these environments especially important. They offer birdwatchers a welcome song in the area's spring Chorus!



Conservation Updates: Fields Farm

The MCC manages [Fields Farm Conservation Area](#), an oak-pine forest along the Merrimack River. The MCC formally adopted a Forest Stewardship Plan in August 2025. Early phases of the plan includes selective tree harvesting to promote forest regeneration, improve tree health, and enhance wildlife habitat. The MCC and a licensed forester will oversee all work, with efforts made to minimize impact on neighboring properties and recreational users. Work is on track as scheduled to begin in June.