Merrimack Conservation Chronicle

Summer 2026

Protecting natural spaces, enriching our community.

Hello! We're back with the summer edition of the Conservation Chronicle. Summertime brings long, sun-filled days and plenty of opportunities to enjoy favorite outdoor activities—swimming, hiking, gardening, and backyard barbecues among them. As the season settles in, spring plantings are hitting their stride, gardens are bursting with color, and vegetables are beginning to bear fruit. Whatever your summer plans may be, we hope you'll take some time to explore Merrimack's beautiful trails, rivers, and lakes. There's no better season to enjoy the natural spaces that make our community so special.

Upcoming Events

Sklar Riverfront Park trail workdays are coming on the following dates from 1:00-3:00 for trail cleanup. If you would like to volunteer, please see the Town of Merrimack's Volunteer Agreement and sign up in Community Development.

- 7/12
- 8/9
- 9/13
- 10/11
- 11/8

Featured Trail

Trail of the Season: Falls Loop Trail, Wildcat Conservation Area

The Falls Loop Trail winds through the Wildcat Conservation Area, 87 acres of managed pine and hardwood forest hugging the banks of the Souhegan River. At 1.4 miles, the loop offers surprising variety — wide, flat stretches give way to steep and narrow passages — but the sense of calm that comes from walking alongside the river stays with you the whole way through. A PSNH power line corridor cuts across the property, and what might seem like an interruption in the forest is actually one of the trail's hidden highlights. The open canopy creates prime habitat for birds and, in season, an abundance of wild blueberries ripe for the picking. A section of the trail also passes through an area cleared by a past forest fire, opening up broad views of the Souhegan and offering patient visitors a chance to spot the elusive American kestrel.

The falls themselves are the centerpiece — when the river runs high, they are genuinely impressive. But the trail rewards those who slow down and notice the quieter details: a riverside bench tucked into the trees, the white blossoms of native maple leaf viburnum, and the songs of ovenbirds, phoebes, and hermit thrushes drifting through the understory. This is a trail that offers something different every season, and something worth returning to.

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WANTED

Robert Vidéki, Doronicum Kft., Bugwood.org

Japanese Knotweed

Known Offenses

- Spreads aggressively through underground roots that can extend 10 feet deep and 65 feet outward
- Destroys native plant communities, leaving nothing behind
- Damages foundations, pavement, and drainage systems
- Crowds out streamside vegetation, destabilizing riverbanks
- Extremely difficult to eradicate once established

Description

Hollow bamboo-like stems. Spade-shaped leaves. Clusters of small white flowers in late summer. Grows up to 10 feet tall. Often found along roadsides, riverbanks, and disturbed areas.

Last Seen

Roadsides, stream banks, and disturbed areas throughout Merrimack.

If spotted, do not ignore! Click here for identification and management tips.

Once Upon a Trail

Wasserman Park: Former Summer Home of the Boston Celtics

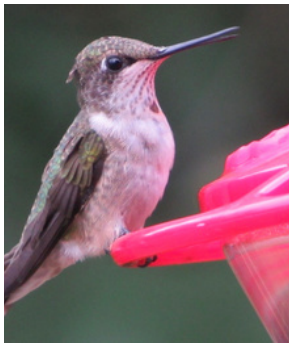
In the 1950's, the NBA was not the juggernaut it is today. Players had side jobs, teams went bankrupt, and the finals aired on tape delay. Even successful teams like the Boston Celtics could not afford a full-time practice facility in the offseason. When Red Auerbach began coaching the Celtics in 1950, the Celtics would hop around between Boston-area gyms for training camps. As the decade rolled on, they upgraded to using local college gyms. But by the late 50s, Auerbach began looking at New England summer camps as potential hosts.

As luck would have it, Red Auerbach's dentist, Joshua Wasserman, had just bought a campground in Merrimack, New Hampshire, then called Camp Naticook, which he offered to the Celtics. And so, for a week or two each summer, the Boston Celtics travelled to what is now Wasserman Park, where they played on those courts and slept in those cabins. Which years exactly the Celtics were there is a bit spotty, but we know at least one of these training camps occurred between 1957 and 1959. That means those courts saw the likes of Bill Russell, Bob Cousy, and Tommy Heinsohn.

So, next time you are at Wasserman Park, please remember to pay homage to basketball royalty.

Quarterly Creature

The Ruby-throated Hummingbird



Each year, the Ruby-throated Hummingbird brings a spark of summer to New Hampshire. This tiny bird spends roughly four months here, using our region as its breeding ground before embarking on an astonishing journey thousands of miles back to its wintering habitat in Central America and Mexico. Despite their size, many make a nonstop flight across the Gulf of Mexico during migration—an impressive feat for a bird that weighs less than a nickel.

The Ruby-throat is the only hummingbird species that nests in New Hampshire, making its arrival a true seasonal marker. While many of us enjoy watching them visit backyard feeders filled with sugar water, these birds depend heavily on natural sources of nectar and on protein-rich insects to fuel their high-energy lifestyle.

If you want to support hummingbirds in a meaningful, sustainable way, consider adding native plants to your summer garden. Some excellent nectar-producing options they love include: Red columbine, Cardinal flower and Scarlet bee balm. Planting native species not only attracts these dazzling birds but also supports the broader ecosystem they rely on. As you plan your summer perennials, think about incorporating a few natives to help keep these tiny gems thriving in New Hampshire.