

Meeting Minutes

**Town of New Haven
Conservation Commission Meeting
Virtual Meeting
Wednesday, February 15, 2023 7:00 P.M.**

Members Present - Dave Lewis, Mary Pratt, Ellie de Villiers, Rhiannon Johnson, Mark Krawczyk

Approval of January 18 Meeting Minutes

Minutes were approved unanimously with the exception of the addition of Ellie de Villiers and Mark Krawczyk who were both present.

NEW BUSINESS:

Sophie Mazowita, wildlife tracking specialist discussing our wildlife corridor project.

Sophie can help train up community members

She recommended keeping a larger list of potential sites to monitor over time

Often even more 'urbanized' crossings can lead to surprising results for wildlife presence

Mary had a great experience on a recent field walk with Sophie and was very impressed with her knowledge and ability to convey what she observed

Cameras as tools to monitor?

Can be complementary with on the ground tracking surveys

You don't necessarily want to lure animals off their natural travel paths - especially when near road crossings

In-the-field tracking is a great complement but is limited to times of year when conditions are good

For security, python cable locks and high quality cameras without plastic mounts will likely prevent most theft.

Browning cameras offer a good balance between quality, durability and economy.

Roughly \$200 should be adequate to purchase a quality set up.

Rhiannon - If Sophie were to come down for a training, would it be possible to invite neighboring towns?

Ellie - What's the largest group she could reasonably work with?

More than 15 people tends to become a bit unwieldy. 10-15 is manageable, smaller is great, but with larger groups, it's more difficult for people to feel engaged.

It's also possible to set up remote, on line training, although it's obviously limited in the depth than can be offered when not actually in the field

The ideal would be to train up a core of dedicated trackers who know how to set up a trail camera and know when to look for to identify quality, valuable sign.

Ellie - Do you have any advice on how to attract the right mix of people to cover the identified areas of interest?

Easy access makes people more likely as well as the idea of 'adopting' a valuable area so that ideally 2 people would be motivated to visit an area after snowfalls.

Ellie - Do you have any examples/samples of specifically what we ought to ask of the community so that we're clear on our goals and can articulate the commitment to the community.

Sophie can share some documentation to assist with this.

It's equally important to teach proper documentation alongside informed identification and tracking skills

Sophie also recommended having someone local to provide an encouraging nudge to volunteers to prepare for optimal weather and observation conditions.

Armchair Naturalist: Ethan Tapper presentation is scheduled for 3/14/2023 at 7:00 PM.

He will cover ecological forestry including information about legacy trees. This will be a Zoom presentation. More on that as the date approaches.

Ethan Tapper will not accept an honorarium from the NHCC but he suggested we make a donation to the Vermont Land Trust.

Previous presenters received anywhere between \$0-\$300 depending on their specific request.

We unanimously agreed to make a \$100 donation to the Vermont Land Trust on his behalf.

We will also plan to record the presentation and Mark will assist Dave Lewis with figuring out how and where to upload the video so it can be viewed by community members.

Armchair Event: Book review of, FINDING THE MOTHER TREE. Susan. March 23rd

The books have arrived for the reading
The Virtual meeting will be hosted on line on March 23rd
Rhiannon offered to facilitate a discussion

A Green-Up project - Susan and Rhiannon

Susan and Rhiannon discussed whether the NHCC would like to collectively focus on trash removal along a specific section in town.

Some members are already focused on particular parts of town near where they live.

We will have to continue this discussion at a future meeting

Beaver program presentation

After noticing the beaver damage to trees along the New Haven River, a discussion developed around a possible future NHCC Armchair event on the theme of "Living with Beavers"

We discussed how we'd like to respect beavers and their behaviors

but there may also be a need to limit the damage they may do to mature trees, etc. Perhaps educating community members about how to respectfully coexist could build more awareness about their presence and processes.

Select Board renewal of Commission members.

Many current members are due for renewed appointments.

Final Business

Mary Pratt mentioned looking to pair potential partnerships with Sophie Mazowita as well as the students from Middlebury College that we spoke about during the previous meeting.

Developing a final plan for a wildlife tracking project -

Rhiannon - Do we need the entire commission to work on this or would a subgroup be adequate

Mary Pratt, Ellie de Villiers and Rhiannon all volunteered to be part of a working group

Ellie mentioned reaching out to the NHCC members not present to make sure they're aware of this initiative and have an opportunity to participate if interested.

Meeting adjourned at 8pm.