



Dear Connie,

And here we are on the cusp of May. How are you doing? Are you getting outside?

The beginning of the month was cool and deceptively March-like, but now, with the recent warmth and sun, we can almost see the plants growing right before our eyes!

Joy-inspiring plants including some we only see in Spring, like the Red Trillium below. And also: plants whose vigorous, in-your-face green remind us why non-native plants present a risk - they're not bad, *per se*, but they crowd out other plants while providing no useful food, a double-whammy for sustaining biodiversity.

Spring is a great time to understand and bring awareness to some of the challenges facing our environment. It is a time of community action, Earth Day observances, and hands-on landscape management during a period of milder climate.

In April, KLT staff did all of these. We participated in environmental advocacy, received training and passed it along, collected data to improve scientific knowledge of our area, and practiced best land management for wildlife habitat and climate resiliency. We set up for a season of sharing this all with you, so we can all make a positive difference this year.

We welcome you to engage, with your words and your actions, and thank you always for your care and concern for Kent's natural beauty.

Connie Manes, Executive Director

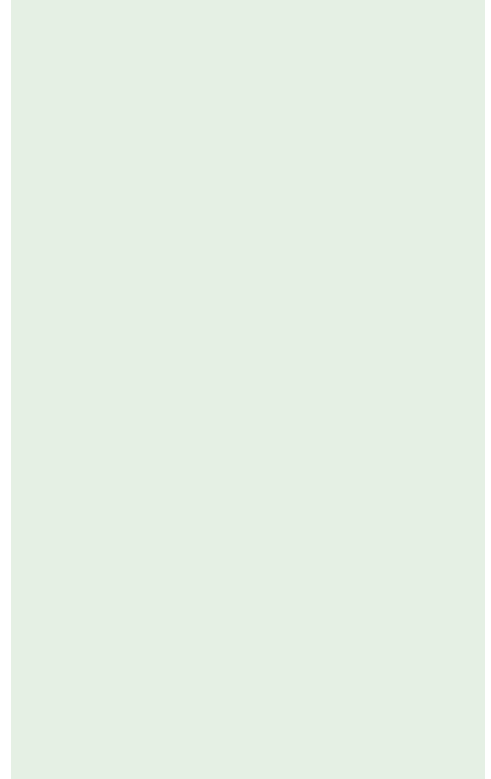
Earth Month Articles:

[Birds, Bees, and Native Trees](#)

[Supporting Your Backyard Habitats](#)

[Get Involved Through Stewardship](#)

[Help Birds! Be a Community Scientist](#)



Birds, Bees, and Native Trees

Alison Robey



"At 5:30pm last Friday, my partner Cody and I were standing in the middle of a quiet New Haven street a few neighborhoods away from our own, staring up into the dense crown of a 40-foot-tall White Pine tree. It was just the two of us at first, smiling and quietly observing through binoculars, intending to stay only a few minutes – but within 30 seconds, we started attracting a crowd.

An older woman with an impatient tan labradoodle marched up to ask what we were looking at. A couple on their evening walk paused to inquire if we worked for the natural history museum. A family of five scrambled out of the house just beneath the tree, the three young boys eager to know what we were doing and if we had found them and could they see?!"

The wonder of what they saw and the resulting talk amongst the crowd demonstrates the power of nature to pull us together. And although it may have been a first for many present, I doubt the scene would become less awesome with frequency. Alison's description of the amazing nature right there in the street, and her suggestions to improve your chances of finding wonderful birds, butterflies, and caterpillars in your backyard environs, is the perfect combination of inspiring, practical - and



Azure Bluets (*Houstonia caerulea*)
photo credit Allison Robey

Supporting Your Backyard Habitats

May starts tomorrow, and as in the past several years KLT is embracing the wild experiment of "No Mow May". It's interesting to note how this movement has morphed over time to signify a bundle of better land use practices to do year-round, as opposed to a month off the machinery. For every day is Earth Day, after all - and the season's first flowers, so necessary to support our native pollinators, and which include weeds that might be chopped down in one's lawn - increasingly emerge in April.

So, while we will continue to participate by leaving our lawn areas to grow shaggy with dear bluets, we have less to "no mow" having "shrunk the lawn" to areas where we want to walk. We've replanted our perennial

beds to be "salads" for caterpillars and other beneficial bugs. We've abandoned pesticides, exchanging them for natural control methods where necessary. All in the spirit of NMM. *Will you give it a try?* We'd love to see your photos and hear about what happened when you did.

Now also, consider joining advocates to encourage Connecticut's legislature to catch up with neighboring states by banning neonicotinoids and rodenticides. These toxins have disturbed our ecosystem, killing countless insects, birds, and mammals far beyond the targeted "pests". This week, Connecticut lawmakers are considering Senate Bill 9 addressing neonics and rodenticides. The [Connecticut League of Conservation Voters](#) has issued a time-sensitive [Action Alert](#) to make it easy for us to let our representatives know what we'd like to see.

Then, if you'd like to explore adding native perennials to your landscape (and how else are you going to fill the space where your lawn used to be?), head out to a local source to view and purchase some! New to Kent and a boon to the pollinators living right here is Conundrum Farm - on site at the former Marble Valley Farm (and KLT's office!). Farmer Sarah Lang is growing a number of species including some from seed harvested from the healthy habitats of KLT's nature preserves! She expects to have plants for sale in June - follow Conundrum's social accounts including [Facebook \(Conundrum Farm CT\)](#) and [Instagram \(@ConundrumFarmCT\)](#) to stay up to date. You can also see native perennials in action by visiting KLT's properties highlighted below.



New England Blazing Star
(*Liatris novae-angliae*)

Still More Native Plants: Get Involved!

Earlier this month KLT's volunteer Stewardship Committee gathered at the [Claire Murphy Riverwalk](#) in honor of Earth Day. For the past several years we've been clearing invasive privet and honeysuckle bordering the trail, and this year were finally in the position to replant with native shrubs including *Ilex verticillata*

“Common winterberry,” *Cornus Sericea* “Red-Twig Dogwood,” *Rhododendron Viscosum* “Swamp Azalea,” and *Kalmia Angustifolia* “Sheep Laurel”.

The newly resurfaced trail continues to delight all visitors, who come for a quick and easy walk out to the river, to watch and photograph birds including plentiful waterfowl and songbirds, and for views of the farm fields. Thanks so much to our volunteers for their hard work to make this pathway so wonderful!



KLT Stewardship Committee Chair Darrell Cherniske assembles protective cages for native perennial plantings



Stewardship Manager Angus Gracey uses a vinegar solution to naturally treat plants that have grown on the trail

KLT's Stewardship Volunteers gather once per month from March through November to do projects in various KLT preserves.

May's Volunteer Workday continues on the theme of restoring habitat with native plantings - this time moving to the [East Kent Hamlet Nature Preserve](#), where we'll learn from KLT Stewardship Manager Angus Gracey about the three-year plan to transform the meadow and lend our hands to the effort. This event is free and open to the public (10yrs and up) - we hope you will join us! See the flyer below and [Register here.](#)

Funding for KLT's meadow restoration project was paid for by the Climate Smart Farming: Agriculture and Forestry Grant. Funding awarded and administered by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture and the Connecticut Land Conservation Council.



VOLUNTEER WORKDAY

EAST KENT HAMLET NATURE PRESERVE

Join Stewardship Manager Angus Gracey to learn about and help accomplish our meadow restoration project.

Saturday, May 24th
9 AM -11 AM

Free and open to the public.

Registration is required to communicate weather related changes.

<https://bit.ly/KLTactivities>
info@kentlandtrust.org or 860-488-9185

*This activity is for ages 10 and up.

Funded through a a Climate Smart Farming Agriculture and Forestry grant from Connecticut Land Conservation Council, to restore early successional habitat.

REGISTER HERE



A map to the preserve can be found at:

<https://www.kentlandtrust.org/anchor-page-for-ekhnp>

Please bring if you have them: spades, buckets, pruners, gloves, and a garden knife. Extra equipment will be available. Dress in long pants and long sleeves.

The (Perilous) State of Birds What We're Doing, and What You Can Do

In March, the U.S. Committee of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative released the [2025 State of the Birds Report](#). The report, produced by a coalition of leading science and conservation organizations, reveals continued widespread declines in American bird populations across all mainland and marine habitats,

with 229 species requiring urgent conservation action.

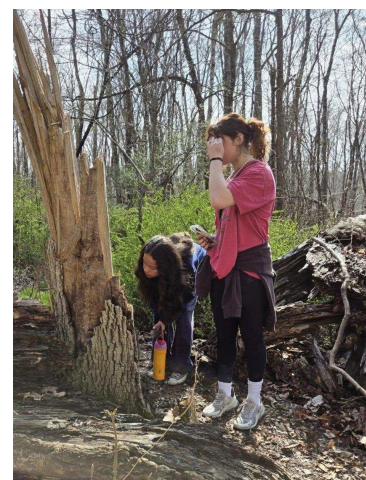
Five years after a landmark 2019 study that documented the loss of 3 billion birds in North America over 50 years, the report shows that more than one-third of U.S. bird species continue to be of high or moderate conservation concern. Bird populations in nearly every habitat type are declining, including a 27% decrease in eastern forest bird populations. On a hopeful note, the report emphasizes that conservation efforts can succeed when adequately supported by science-based planning and collaborative investment.



Cerulean Warblers and Wood Thrush - both species of interior forest birds on the report's "Yellow Alert" list, are the focal point of KLT's work in coordinating conservation partners within the regionally significant Macedonia Forest Block Important Bird Area (MFBIBA), a 22,580-acre landscape encompassing parts of Kent and Sharon. Last week KLT received confirmation of grant funding to continue our collaborative partnership in the MFBIBA. This next phase of the project focuses on enlarging the network to include and offer technical assistance to private landowners while continuing to implement forest management practices with birds in mind.

We are fortunate in that we can increasingly look to data to help guide our land management strategies. We love resources such as [eBird](#) and [iNaturalist](#), which allow us to tap the observations of a giant and diverse group of experts and laypeople.

Data collection may sound tedious at first - but apps like eBird and iNaturalist make it easy and fun! Consider the recent school-wide BioBlitz conducted by KLT in partnership with the Marvelwood School: Students in each of the four class years competed in a scientific showdown at four KLT nature preserves, earning points for their iNaturalist entries and photos - all while contributing valuable information about local biodiversity.



Please consider harnessing the practical power of your environmental passion and curiosity by contributing to these scientific datasets!

Not an eBird or iNaturalist user...yet? [Reach out!](#) We're available to answer your questions and can help you build confidence in your identifications. This summer, look for new signs at our kiosks with helpful hints about using Merlin to support your birding, and how to use eBird.

FLY FURTHER WITH MERLIN

A SMARTPHONE APP TO HELP YOU BE A BETTER BIRDER!

WHAT IS MERLIN?

Merlin Bird ID App is a free App from Cornell Lab of Ornithology that helps bird watchers of all skill levels identify birds they encounter! It provides an information bank of over 6200 species worldwide for you to explore, and helps narrow down the possible birds you'll see in your geographic area with its trusty Bird Packs!

Merlin Bird ID App gives people confirmation and confidence to identify and contribute to the global database eBird. There are three ways Merlin can help you figure out what you are observing. Use these together for even better confidence in your ID:

BIRD ID OPTION

This option is used when you clearly saw the bird but didn't take a photo or sound recording of it. Merlin asks five questions to determine what type of bird you're looking at:

- Where did you see the bird?
- When did you see the bird?
- What else was the bird?
- What were the main colors?
- What was the bird doing?

The answers to these questions narrow down the possible identification options for you to choose from. **Merlin** gives you a list of potential matches that may be your mystery bird. All you have to do then is match the bird you saw with the possible options!

PHOTO ID OPTION

If you get a picture of the bird, then **Merlin's Photo ID** option is the tool for you! You can take a picture using the App or simply let it access your photo library and choose the pictures you've already taken.

Make sure your entire bird fills the box, log the location and date, and Merlin will provide the best match for the bird you've photographed!

SOUND ID OPTION

What about when you can't see the bird at all? Sound ID keeps you covered as you don't even need to see the bird to identify it!

No matter what type of device you've got, the super-sensitive sound recording system can easily pick up bird chirps from the tallest of trees, though that means that you have to be very quiet when using it.

HOW DO I GET MERLIN?

Merlin can be downloaded on your phone from the app store, completely free!

You can find out more about Merlin and how to obtain the App using the QR Code below:

[GET TO LEARN MORE ABOUT MERLIN HERE!](#)

Use the QR Code above to learn more about birds documented at Kent Land Trust's Claire Murphy Riverwalk using Merlin and eBird.

ENGAGE IN eBIRD

eBIRD HELPS YOU

eBird is for everyone! No matter how much or little experience you have birding, eBird is equipped to help you along your journey to discover birds, no matter what level you're at!

- TRACK** → Track your birding adventures and life lists
- LOCATE** → Record the location of the birds you see
- EXPLORE** → Allow others to explore your sightings and find some of the birds you discovered.

WHAT IS AN eBIRD HOTSPOT?

An **eBird Hotspot** represents a public place, where people regularly visit to find birds. It also lets multiple users enter checklists into the same location to help track observations and species lists over time. Scan below to check out a few of KLT's Hotspots!

How you help when you use eBird

eBIRD AND LAND TRUSTS

For people involved with Land Trusts, eBird can help:

- Catalog birds on conservation land
- Inform land management on how to make bird habitat
- Access Data about birds using conservation land—useful for grants, public outreach, and ongoing stewardship.

EVERY OBSERVATION COUNTS!

We're discovering new things about birds every day. Researchers use eBird to learn more about:

- Migration patterns
- Symbiotic Relationships
- Hybrids
- Rare birds
- New species

Spread awareness, attract more volunteers and visitors

[Scan here to learn how to sign up for eBird](#)

*All images used in this infographic were taken by eBird users visiting the Kent Land Trust's Claire Murphy River Walk Trail.

Are you a member?

The Kent Land Trust safeguards an ecosystem which in turn supports us all, at the most basic level: integrity of the air we breathe and water we drink. We envision a community where treasured landscapes are protected for today and the future. Where diverse living things continue in healthy coexistence, supported through the challenges of a changing environment. And where iconic outdoor spaces inspire people to connect. Our role is daunting, but compelling. We promise assiduous focus on Kent's distinct needs even as we join colleagues doing the same throughout our region and beyond. Your membership each year directly advances this vision.

Thank you sincerely for your generous support!



[Visit our website to donate online](#)



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