# SANCTUARY

Newsletter of The White Memorial Conservation Center Vol. XXXX No. 3 Summer 2022

> Museum Hours: Tuesday through Saturday 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Sunday 12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

For Information Phone: 860-567-0857 E-Mail: info@whitememorialcc.org www.whitememorialcc.org



Winter Tales by the Fire, with David K. Leff, February 19, 2022 Photo credit: Leo Kulinski, Jr.

# Farewell, Deep Traveler ~ David K. Leff 1955 - 2022

#### By Gerri Griswold, Director of Administration and Development, White Memorial Conservation Center

The calendar said May 29, but it was chilly. The embers from last evening's fire glowed. It was next to that same fireplace where David K. Leff dazzled us with *Winter Tales by the Fire*, February 19, 2022. David and his wife, Mary, arrived at my home accompanied by a very feisty snow squall. It quickly coated us and the landscape with several inches of sublime white powder, then yielded to brilliant late-afternoon sun. Perhaps that squall foreshadowed things to come. Like a snow squall, sublime people can enter our lives, spread their magic, and in a flash...are gone too soon.

The menu for David's reading included homemade apple cider donuts washed down with warm cider laced with Jack Daniels, Julia Child's Coq au Vin, and apple pie (David LOVES pie), all savored for a moment and gone. On a small table by the fire, Leff placed a tower of books, many priceless first editions, precious selections he had carefully curated especially for this occasion. You would have thought the event might last until dawn. Alas, it did not. We hung on his every word...his Wharton, Whitman, Frost, his Leopold, and Leff...Jack London, his Cremation of Sam McGee, his excerpts from Snowbound, tearful prose, joyful poetry, all as delicious as the meal we consumed beforehand. All gone.

I have collaborated with David for a decade, developing really beautiful programs for the Conservation Center accompanied by luncheons and dinners. Such a diminutive man with a gusto for good food. David was my Epicurean muse.



Ode to an Ash ~ David K. Leff

Back to May 29. As my coffee brewed, I conceived a diabolical plan to cajole David into a reading of *The Raven* this October. I was thinking of our past presentations. Would he agree to give an encore performance of *A Child's Christmas in Wales*? Could we duplicate *Winter Tales by the Fire*? Might we possibly pull off another *Adult Museum Sleep-In* as we did in 2012? *Deep Travel: How to Journey Like Thoreau*, where we ate like Thoreau! *Supernatural Tales of Connecticut* that he delivered by a campfire in the fall of 2015! Wasn't it high time we revisit *Maple Passion*? Maple pancakes, maple bacon, maple scones. He wrote a book about maple sugaring! He has two maple cocktails named after him at *Millwright's Tavern* in Simsbury! *Twilight for Ash Trees*, *Witness Trees*, *Witch Hazel*, *Conservation Inspiration*, and *Poetry for a Greener Earth* developed with Connecticut's Poet Laureate, Margaret Gibson. David's contributions to programming and our quarterly newsletter, *Sanctuary* (three cover stories) were priceless.

The morning of May 29, I was consumed with thoughts of David K. Leff. I poured my French roast, returned to bed, and grabbed my iPad only to find a message from a mutual friend. David K. Leff was gone. In a flash...a fall, a terrible fatal fall, possibly a stroke, crushed his beautiful mind, erased that luminous, ever-present smile, snuffed out the most exuberant spirit, grabbed that pen and notebook from his hand, and robbed us of more memorable times together, more beautiful poetry, more engrossing prose. I was numb.

How does one replace a character like David K. Leff? You don't. If you never had the privilege of spending time with David, my heart aches for you. You can purchase his books and read his words as they truly are his voice. What's that buzz word everyone is using these days? "Authentic." David was the real deal.

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If you did spend time with David, you are in disbelief that he is gone. Folks like David just don't happen. Folks like David K. Leff are forged through the blood, sweat, and tears doled out by life, by physical and mental challenges, by battles they've fought and won or lost. Their spirits have been salvaged, resurrected, and will forever be tethered to Nature.

David K. Leff is the author of twelve books. Volunteerism was his thing. He served for 26 years as a volunteer firefighter for Canton / Collinsville (his home since 1984). He was Chairman of the *Collinsville Historic District Commission*, Canton's poet laureate, Boy Scout merit badge counselor, and in 2016 / 2017 poet-inresidence for the *New England National Scenic Trail*.

He served as Deputy Commissioner for the *Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection.* It was at the CT DEP where he left an indelible mark on the preservation of Connecticut's open space.

Leff focused on rare habitats and fragile species. He authored Connecticut's first green plan. When completed, David K. Leff was responsible for the largest land conservation deal in the history of our state.

On February 2016, he gave testimony to the Connecticut General Assembly in support of a *"Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution Concerning the Environment and Natural Resources of Connecticut.*" He cited egregious acts of taking precious state lands through the Conveyance Act and damaging the public's trust. The



Conservation Inspiration, September 9, 2011 Photo credit: Leo Kulinski, Jr.



Adult Museum Sleep-In , February 10/11, 2012 Photo credit: Leo Kulinski, Jr.



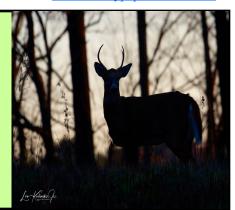
David K. Leff Reads Aldo Leopold: Adult Museum Sleep-In, February 10/11, 2012 Photo credit: Gerri Griswold

closing paragraphs of his testimony state, "We are fortunate in Connecticut. We have a landscape worth protecting and worthy of the protections afforded by a constitutional amendment. 'A countryside of undramatic but exceptional beauty', Witold Rybczynski wrote of Connecticut in his biography of Hartfordborn park-maker Fredrick Law Olmsted. We hear a lot these days about our state's infirmities-from taxes, to weather, to infrastructure. Let's not sacrifice one of our great advantages. A key to Connecticut's success as a place to live and do business is its landscape of natural diversity, cultural proximity and accessibility. To ensure that success in a future of more people and greater development, we need to expand our public open space lands, not contract them. These lands that exist for our pleasure, wonder and economic benefit belong to all the people of Connecticut now and for all time. Only through a constitutional amendment can we guarantee the blessing of these places for our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. In an increasingly urban and frenetic world, they will need these places to challenge their bodies and renew their spirits. The landscape of the future depends on us today. We cannot fail to protect it."

An article published in the Summer 2022 issue of Northern Woodlands magazine is appropriately titled, You Don't Know What You've Got Till It's Gone: Connecticut's Last Ancient Forest. Its author is David K. Leff. <u>Please visit David: https://</u> davidkleff.typepad.com/home/

# Thank You Corporate Members!

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# Secretive Bitterns Investigated at Little Pond Boardwalk

#### By James Fischer, Research Director, White Memorial Conservation Center

The White Memorial Foundation protects many critical wildlife habitats. Several plant and wildlife species indicate that these places are special. These species are rarely observed throughout Connecticut. We rely on these places for many other services including providing clean water and air, as well as beautiful locales where we take a quiet walk away from our busy lives. Little Pond is one of those places that we often associate for these same purposes, and the American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) is one of the feature species that indicates it is especially important.

American Bitterns are recognized as state endangered species and experienced steep population declines recently throughout their breeding range. Birders often hear this bird before seeing this ani-

mal, each with their low booming call. They display cryptic pelage patterns that allow them to blend into their preferred habitats. Connecticut birders observe this species inhabiting diverse wetland complexes, especially those with large amounts of cattails (Typha spp.). Effective camouflage allows them to be effective predators to a wide variety of prey species such as frogs, small mammals, and fish. Conservationists conclude that habitat loss and destruction in breeding and winter habitats is causing the population declines. Invasive species, pollutants, and hydrological changes are impacting how wetlands function. One of the most important factors that often contributes to population declines in wildlife species is the lack of information about the biology of the species.

I am pleased to share with you that White Memorial has permitted Sam Merker Ph.D. from the University of Connecticut and Min Huang Ph.D. from CT DEEP, Wildlife Division to access the American Bitterns that inhabit the property. Drs. Merker and Huang are using advanced tracking technology that allows them to acquire data about their habitat associations in their breeding, migratory stopover, and winter areas. They will learn about timing of major events such as breeding and migrations during their annual cycles. All this information will address the paucity of biological and ecological information about the American Bittern along the east coast. We are looking forward to sharing future developments with you.



Sam Merker uses a remote speaker of an American Bittern calling to attract birds into a trap.



Drs. Nicole (left) and Sam Merker (right) handle an American Bittern.



Sam Merker measures the leg of an American Bittern captured at Little Pond.



Sam Merker photographs the wing of an American Bittern to record plumage patterns.



### September 9 – 23, 2022 <u>The 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Nature Day</u> <u>Upscale Tag Sale Online Auction!</u>

Our upscale tag sale includes something for everybody... mixtures of old and new! Beautiful pottery, antiques, books, nature themed collectibles for adults and children, cozy wool blankets from Iceland, an Owl Prowl with Fran Zygmont, and tickets to *The Black Bear Americana Music Festival*. Bidding begins September 9 at 7:00 a.m. and ends September 23 at 7:00 p.m.

Visit <u>https://www.32auctions.com/whitememorialnatureday</u>. Donations will be accepted through September 1, 2022. If you would like to donate to the auction, please contact Gerri Griswold: <u>gerri@whitememorialcc.org</u> Donations are tax-deductible.

# SUMMER FUN FOR KIDS

Some classes still have openings, and some may be sold out. Call 860-567-0857 or visit www.whitememorialcc.org to check availability and to register. Financial aid, generously provided by the Litchfield Health and Wellness Council, is available on a first-come, first-serve basis – inquire by calling.



<u>Wonder Nature Camp</u> Tuesdays, July 12, 19, 26, August 2 & 9

For Ages 4 & 5 9:30am - 11:30am Members: \$15/session Non-members: \$25/session Drop-off program Join us on one Thursday per month for an hourlong program designed just for children 3-6 years old. Every session will include a story, an encounter with a live animal, and an activity or craft. Bring your young nature lovers out to White Memorial for a jam-packed hour of hands-on learning. Parents, we ask that you stay for the duration of the program. *Pre-registration and prepayment are required. Subject to availability.* 

> This weekly two-hour series for 4 & 5 yearolds features stories, songs, crafts, games, and outdoor adventures that introduce young ones to the wonders of nature! Sign up by session. *Pre-registration and pre-payment are required. Subject to availability.*

Kids entering grades 1 & 2 can join us for one, two, or three weeks of outdoor discovery, games, books, songs, and crafts that help them learn more about the natural world around them. *Pre-registration and pre-payment are required. Subject to availability.* 

Kids entering grades 3 – 9 can join us for week-long sessions that immerse them in nature! Our adventures take us into the nooks and crannies of White Memorial's property, as well as off-site to natural locations all over northwestern Connecticut. *Pre-registration and pre-payment are required. Subject to availability.*  <u>Nature's Nursery Series</u> Thursdays, July 14, August 11, & September 8

For Ages 3-6 Meet in the A. B. Ceder Room. 4:00pm - 5:00pm Members: \$9/child per session Non-Members: \$13/child per session



<u>Discovery Nature Camp</u> July 11-29 (weekdays only)

For Kids Entering Grades 1 & 2 9:30am - 3:30pm each day Members: \$130/week Non-members: \$190/week Drop-off program Sign up by week.





<u>Exploration Nature Camp</u> July 11-August 12 (weekdays only)

9:30am - 3:30pm each day Members: \$160/week Non-members: \$220/week Grades 3 & 4: July 11-15 & 18-22 Grades 5 & 6: July 25-29 & Aug. 1-5 Grades 7, 8, & 9: August 8-12 Drop-off program

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#### Make a Difference In her continuing series, Zoë Greenwood helps you find small ways to help the environment.

Shopping. Few things inspire more dread or elation in the heart of humankind. Personally, I always used to love a good shopping trip with a girlfriend...get up early, shop all day, lunch out, come home tired and exhausted and with hurting feet but oh, the bargains! I don't know if it was the actual act of shopping, or of finding a bargain, or poking around, or being with a friend that caused the happiness. Maybe it was a bit of everything. I haven't been shopping like that since long before the pandemic. I don't imagine you have either. Part of the reason might be that we've changed our shopping habits. Maybe we are heeding the "less is more" advice. Who knows?

I was helping a longtime friend with her massive moving tag sale last weekend. There were droves of people and they carted away a goodly amount of goodies. She and her husband were deep in discussion over what to do with the leftovers when we left. Rest assured, they were all going to be donated somewhere, somehow. Nothing was going into the landfill. Some were being picked up by AmVets; some by Salvation Army. Goodwill and Susan B. Anthony were getting their share. Some were being left out by the roadside for free. These are good, environmentally minded people. They make a difference all of the time.

But that got me thinking, what happens to stuff other people buy and no longer want. Sometimes the things you order online are not the right color or you don't like the quality or just find that you don't really need it after all. Things that you return to the store are in the same category. What happens to those things? Really? I assumed always, that when you return something to a company, the items were restocked for someone else to buy. That probably happens just that way with small, local companies, at least most of the time. Bigger retailers often don't want



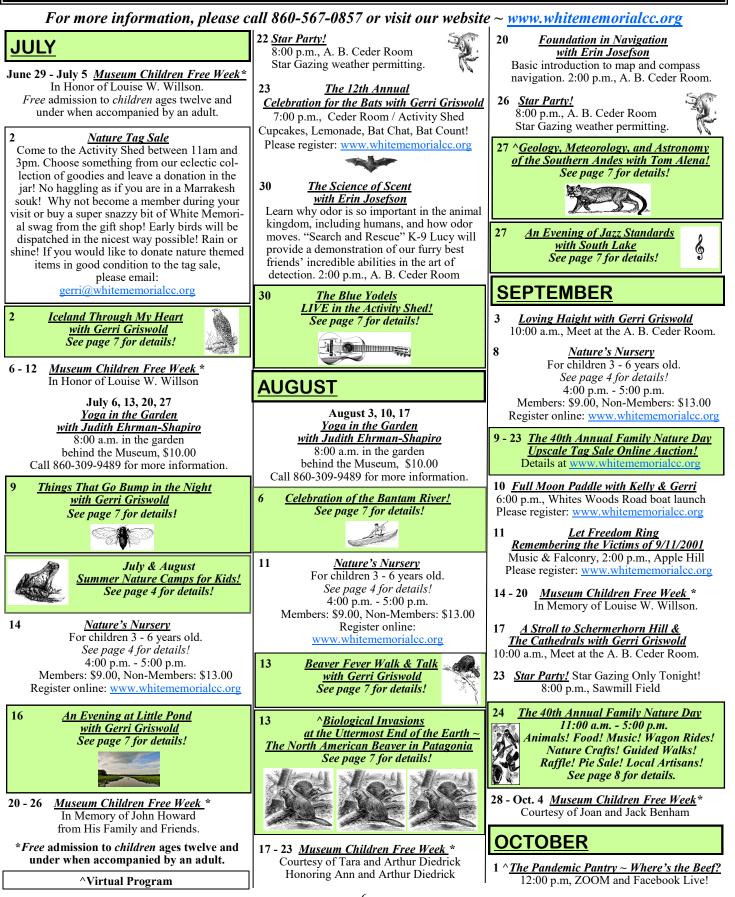
to bother or it just costs them too much to evaluate, test and repackage so they pass off the stuff to liquidation warehouses where they are resold. Amazon, Target and Walmart resell a portion of the goods returned to them in the clearance sections or in their warehouse section, online. Some other major retailers do as well. However, and this is the really scary part for those of us who are trying to make a difference, easily 25% of all returned purchases end up in the landfill or burned. IN THE LANDFILL!! OR BURNED!! About six BILLION pounds of returned items end up in landfills. SIX BILLION- that's 6 with nine zeros. That does not even take into consideration the amount of fuel burned to get the item back to the retailer or the amount of methane produced when it is disposed of in a landfill. If you buy three items, in different sizes, to find the one that fits best and then return the two that you can't use, often times the company will just trash the others. Yikes!

So, what do you do instead? Well, in several past articles I have discussed really deciding how much is enough and how much is too much. Want versus need. You can buy used at your local thrift store. You can gift it to someone else. You can donate it to a thrift company. You can try to fix it yourself or have it repaired. Or you can sell it yourself on Ebay or Facebook Marketplace or Craig's List. You can check out the aforementioned online warehouses of your favorite retailer. I'm sure there are lots of other places, too. But maybe the most important and perhaps most long term rewarding thing to do is not shop for it in the first place. In other words, put more thought into anything that you purchase. Do you really NEED it or simply want it? Do you already have one like it? What are you going to do with it after it no longer fills the bill? It is practical as well as somewhat overwhelming perhaps to have to think of what to do with something at the end of its life as well as at the beginning. But, that's the whole point. We all have to do more thinking about our actions and habits every day. All day. We need to be thoughtful consumers in order to really make a difference.



# Summer 2022 Calendar of Events

Programs will be In Person or ^Virtual via ZOOM and Facebook Live!



# <u>Nature Study Workshops</u> Saturday Live and **^Virtual Programs: Summer 2022** Call 860-567-0857 or register online: <u>www.whitememorialcc.org</u>



# <u>Iceland Through My Heart</u>

Saturday, July 2, 2021, 2:00 pm A. B. Ceder Room Members: FREE Non-members: \$5.00



# Things That Go Bump in the Night

Saturday, July 9, 2022, 8:00 pm Meet in the A. B. Ceder Room. Members: FREE Non-members: \$5.00



# An Evening at Little Pond

Saturday, July 16, 2022, 7:00 pm Meet at the Whites Woods Road entrance. Members: FREE Non-members: \$5.00



# **Concert: The Blue Yodels**

Saturday, July 30, 2022, 7:00 pm Activity Shed All Tickets: \$10.00



# **Celebration of the Bantam River!**

Saturday, August 6, 2022, 6:30 am Whites Woods Road boat launch Members: \$15.00 Non-members: \$30.00



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Saturday, August 13, 2022, 6:00 am Meet in the A. B. Ceder Room. Members: FREE Non-members: \$10.00



### <u>^The Case of the North American Beaver</u> in Southern Patagonia

Saturday, August 13, 2022, 12:00 pm ZOOM Members: FREE Non-members: \$10.00

### <u>^Geology, Meteorology, and Astronomy of</u> the Southern Andes with Tom Alena

Saturday, August 27, 2022, 3:00 pm ZOOM Members: FREE Non-members: \$10.00

# Concert: South Lake Jazz

Saturday, August 27, 2022, 7:00 pm Activity Shed All Tickets: \$10.00 Gerri Griswold recently returned from her 53<sup>rd</sup> visit to her adopted homeland with more stories from the elves and Huldfolk. Take a pictorial journey through the Land of Fire and Ice. You will leave with an understanding as to why this island nation is touted as one of the most beautiful places on our planet.

Join Gerri Griswold for a night walk. Learn to identify all of those insect, owl, and frog voices that lend such beautiful ambience to a summer evening. Watch for beavers at Little Left and LISTEN to bats (with a sonar detector of course!).

Join Gerri Griswold in search of Wood Ducks, herons, shorebirds, muskrats, beavers, frogs and whatever else Mother Nature decides to dish out at dusk on Little Pond! *This hike is limited to 15 participants.* 

They are a little torch and a little twang, a little country and a little rock, and a LOT of fun. The Blue Yodels will satisfy all your musical cravings in a superb concert, LIVE from our Activity Shed! Pack a picnic and BYOB!

Meet for an early morning paddle down the Bantam River led by Kelly Orr! Look out for herons, beavers, otters, turtles and so much more! End at Litchfield Town Beach where you will be treated to a delicious breakfast prepared for you by Gerri Griswold. Pray for perfect weather!

Gather in the Museum for coffee and muffins in front of our spectacular Beaver Lodge and learn a bit about North America's largest rodent. Although beavers are abundant today, their story was quite different in the 1800's. Then head out to visit a few of our resident beaver haunts!

In 1946, the Argentine government brought 20 beavers from Canada to Tierra del Fuego to 'enrich' the local fauna. The effort to create a fur industry failed. Since then the biological invasion caused by beavers in both Argentine and Chilean portions of southern Patagonia has created the largest alteration to sub-Antarctic forests since the retreat of the last ice age. Dr. Christopher Anderson explains.

What caused the Andes mountain range to form? Tom will discuss the rock formations and specimens observed on his recent trip. Why do storms spin the opposite way down there? And then there are the stars! To observe the rotation of a different set of star constellations around the earth's southern axis will seem like we are on a different planet.

Settle down for a sultry summer evening of soothing jazz standards from the American Songbook and more. South Lake is: Jon Concilio: Double Bass, Brendan Walsh: Guitar, Mik Mitnik: Drums, and Allan Becker: Soprano, Alto, and Tenor Sax, Flute, and Keyboards. Nobody writes music like this anymore! Bring a picnic and BYOB.





ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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