
FROM JENNIFER'S DESK



Have you ever come across an old black & white photo and wondered what it would have looked like in color?

When I was a kid, I remember thinking that things back then must have been quite dull; the landscape was a mix of grey and sepia tones similar to the beginning of the Wizard of Oz. The landscape was, of course, rich in color, but we didn't have the technology to record it. The palette hidden in old photos will be a secret forever.

That is, however, not the case if you know Anna Ozolins. On March 24th Anna, a Brimfield artist, will be unveiling her watercolor painting of Old East Brimfield at our annual meeting. Her painting is based upon an old photo of the community as seen from Quinebaug Cove. We are thrilled that Anna has chosen to share her work with us and I hope that you will stop in to see it. Her painting truly brings the grey images of this lost village, our own "mini-Quabbin", to life.

The landscape is constantly changing, weaving a song through time. Speaking of song, we have another special guest lined up for the 24th. Gary Blanchard, a folk singer from West Brookfield, will be performing original and traditional music on his 12-string guitar and a

long-neck, 5-string banjo. Gary's music has a positive vibe, one you will greatly enjoy.

We hope to have some very positive news for you at the meeting as well. Opacum is very close to its goal for the Flynt Quarry Lands, the 165-acre conservation project that we have been working on over the past year with the Town of Monson. We have less than \$2,000 to raise!

Please consider making a donation of any amount so we can announce this a success!

As for the changing landscape: Think about this not only in a natural context; think about our town centers as well. The granite mined from the Flynt Quarry is now the walls of the most beautiful buildings in Monson. Think about East Brimfield, forever

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A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE GRAY


KATHLEEN HUNT

AS spring arrives in New England, the sun shines higher in the sky and the air becomes warmer. What better way to spend the day than pursuing the elusive gray fox? I know many of you (including most of my family and friends) feel strongly otherwise, but I implore you step away from the "Jersey Shore" reruns and take a look in your own back yard.

The hard frozen snow is starting to soften and it is a great time to observe the tracks of wildlife that may wander through your property in search of a tasty morsel. One such critter could be the gray fox. Some of you may have encountered the more flamboyant red variety but with a little knowledge and patience, you may notice that the grays are comparably abundant in New England.

Your first step is to identify gray fox tracks; easy enough, right? A good way to start is to beg, borrow, or simply buy a tracking guide. Next, open to the canine section and head outside. The tracks of the gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*) appear smaller than their red counterpart (*Vulpes fulva* - actually of an entirely different genus). Gray fox prints are

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LESLIE'S VIEW:

A FLYNT QUARRY UPDATE



A "star" drill hole at the Former Flynt Quarry in Monson. This is a rare find, but quite common at this site where granite was quarried to build the beautiful stone buildings in Monson and beyond.

I am so pleased to be able to announce that the Flynt Quarry Project is almost complete! The Opacum Land Trust has been very successful with its local fundraising strategy and grant applications and is now within only a few thousand dollars of its goal. I would like to thank some of our local supporters in this project:

The Monson Savings Bank donated \$2,000 (\$1,000 in 2010 and \$1,000 in 2011). Opacum was one of the top voted charities in their charity challenge – check out the Monson Savings Facebook page!

The **Country Bank for Savings** joined in and contributed \$1,000.

The **Monson Small Animal clinic** has pledged \$1,000, and

Mastrianni's Auto Body shop in Springfield was also a donor.

Opacum received over \$40,000 in grants and over \$6,000 from local contributions. WOW!

Thank you all for your support. Our last round of grant requests went in the mail last month. We expect to wrap up this project by the end of March. When spring comes, we will begin work on marking trails and improving signage.

Please contact Leslie if you are interested in volunteering. Email at Leslie@Opacumlt.org.

We will celebrate our success with all of you soon!

Leslie

Leslie Duthie
Vice President



iMapMyFITNESS

MAPMYFITNESS.COM

HOWIE FIFE, STEWARDSHIP DIRECTOR

Do you run, bike or hike on off the road, on trails? Do you use trails established and maintained by the many conservation organizations throughout Massachusetts? Did you map your routes with your cell phone?

While I know many of you enjoy the solace of not having an electronic device with you while you hike, for those of you who do take that phone with you, this is a small way you can help your local land trust and others. Not only can you record your workout details, including duration, distance, pace, speed, elevation, calories burned, and route traveled but you can help us to map and promote our trails. You can help get the word out about all the beautiful locations that you enjoy and spread the word about those organizations that protect them.

If you have an iPhone, Blackberry, or Android, visit www.MapMyFitness.com to get started. The application enables you to use the built-in GPS of your mobile device to track all your fitness activities.

Put this app on your phone, and Opacum on your map!



iMapMyHIKE



iMapMyWALK



iMapMyRUN+



iMapMyRIDE+

JOIN US THURSDAY, MARCH 24TH FOR OUR 2011 ANNUAL MEETING

Opacum's eleventh annual meeting will be held on Thursday, March 24th at Fins & Tales Restaurant & Bar, located at 858 Main Street in the beautifully restored Alden-Delahanty building.

Join us from 6:00 – 8:00 pm as we enjoy a sampling of Fins' delicious menu and catch up on the latest happenings with Opacum Land Trust.

We will be entertained by a local folk musician, Gary Blanchard of West Brookfield, who specializes in 5-string banjo and 12-string guitar—sure to put a smile on your face!

Brimfield artist Anna Ozolins will unveil her watercolor painting of *The Lost Village of East Brimfield* (see sidebar).

Remember to get your Door Prize ticket as you come in, we have a

selection of prizes from our supporters, including a limited edition print of Michelle DeMarco's *Bhumisparsha*, autographed works by local authors, as well as an assortment of other surprises. There will also be a special package from Opacum up for grabs!

PLEASE RSVP by Sunday, March 20th so we will be able to provide a delicious selection of food for everyone. Leave a message at 508-347-9144 or e-mail us at info@opacumlt.org.

Want to preview Fins & Tales Menu? Visit them online at www.finsandtales858.com

If you would like to hear a bit of Gary Blanchard's music, visit www.GaryBlanchard.info



Local Artist Anna Ozolins to Unveil Her Watercolor: *The Lost Village of East Brimfield*

"When I sat and viewed the history of East Brimfield, there was a sadness about the loss of this quaint village. Children playing, women doing their many tasks and men working long hours in the factory. The rolling hills that sit in the background. How could all of this been taken away from them. Were they given a better future?"

As I am committed to my home village of Brimfield and its needs on Lake Sherman, I offered to paint this memory and bring back to those who remember their families and friends, times that have passed. I am grateful to have had this opportunity to present this painting to Larry Lowenthal in his quest to save our precious land."

Anna M. Ozolins
The Little Gallery in the Woods
www.annaozolins.com

A limited number of prints of Anna's painting will be on sale to benefit Opacum Land Trust.

Every bit helps! Tips for going GREEN.

Contributed by Monica Morin

Energy Eaters - They are everywhere in your home, sucking dollars out of your walls. Many of us don't realize the vast amount of energy that cell phones, computers, mp3 players, etc. are consuming. To reduce your energy costs, think about these tips:

Unplug: Electronics that are left on or plugged in are continuously consuming electricity even if they are turned OFF.

The Solution: Unplug them when not in use.

Switch: More detailed computer screen savers consume more energy.

The Solution: Don't use a screen saver! Better yet, shut down the computer when not in use.

Invest: Power strips are a great way to turn off multiple electronics with one switch. Smart strips can actually detect when appliances are shut down and can inhibit the consumption of energy from outlets.

JENNIFER'S DESK...

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under the waters of Long Pond. Think about those places in black and white photographs.

That is one reason I am excited to be having the annual meeting at Fins & Tales in Southbridge. The restaurant is located in the old Delahanty building in the Globe section of town. Having traveled by this site millions of times growing up (no kidding - I attended grammar school at St. Mary's, I went by at least twice a day!) I watched as it sunk into "oblivion's obliterating, destructive grasp."* It is truly amazing to see this building come back to life; wait till you see the interior!

I hope to see you at our eleventh Annual Meeting on March 24!

Jennifer

Jennifer Ohop
President

** Quote from Absalom Gardner's History of Wales, a cool tidbit of history from another Opacum town.*

First a howling blizzard
woke us,
Then the rain came down
to soak us,
And now before the eye
can focus -
Crocus.

~ Lilja Rogers

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE GRAY... CONTINUED

more "cat-like" in appearance than other canines as they retain the feline characteristic of semi-retractable claws. For this reason, the gray fox prints in snow often lack the presence of claw marks found in other canine tracks. This trait enables them to climb trees in pursuit of prey or escape other predators. As with most wild canines, foxes most frequently travel in a trot-like gait where their hind prints step directly (direct register) into the tracks of their front feet, giving the appearance of a single line of tracks. Coyote and domestic dog also inhabit the New England area, and though coyote direct register their tracks, their prints are noticeably larger than a gray fox and they have a measurably longer stride length (the length between each footprint- read the introduction to your field guide). Domestic dogs have a broad range of track sizes because of the size variations within species, but they travel in an entirely different manner than their wild relatives. All you have to do is watch man's best friend in action to notice the ADD-like pattern to its travel in comparison to the more direct route of a wild canine.

Should you luck upon a pristine track, the front heel pad is a good way to differentiate between members of the canine family. The red fox tends to have a boomerang-shaped bar on its heel pad, while the gray fox has a pad with a larger ball shape between two smaller ball shapes melded into a triangle. Canine species scent-mark their territory with urine and this can help in identifying of the animal being tracked. The urine of a red fox has a skunk-like odor where as the gray

fox has a milder scent. If you are trying to decide whether you are on the trail of a red fox or a gray fox a quick sniff of the scent post (a rock, snow pile or small bush) will likely help you to differentiate between the two. Canines tend to scent on top of one another so enjoying the aroma of the urine is not always reliable, or pleasant for that matter.

Once you have somewhat/almost definitely established that the tracks you have been inspecting for the last hour are those of a gray fox, it is well worth your while to spend some time following its daily ritual. I find that if you are uncertain which animal made the tracks you have found, following the trail will almost always disclose its origin through behavior, scat (poop) or urine. Prepare to be taken on a journey through a typical day in its hectic life. It will frequent mixed wooded areas with thick brush, dash across open fields, meander along brooks swollen with snow runoff, ascend trees, teeter along fallen logs, investigate orchards, farmlands, and even suburban neighborhoods.

Through its gallivants, it will disclose its favorite foraging venues; brushy thicket tangles replete with cottontail rabbit, snow caves rimmed with squirrel middens, over wintering gardens harboring small mammals under the snow cover, a well picked carcass and the unsecured garbage bin of a neighbor. Be prepared to use your common sense for this surreptitious canid will try enticing you onto thin ice or over the posted property line of that reclusive neighbor with the large gun collection.

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Diligence will not necessarily guarantee a glimpse of the particular fox you have been pursuing, but don't be discouraged. Grays are primarily nocturnal (active mainly at night), or crepuscular (active at dawn and dusk). For this reason, it can be difficult to spot one during the daylight hours. They can occasionally be seen foraging by day in areas of dense brush. Should you be lucky enough to catch sight of a gray fox you will notice a variation in appearance from its red relative. Its coat is mainly a salt-and-pepper gray with reddish patches on the back of its head and neck. Its tail has a black streak with a black tip, and its throat and belly are white. They are roughly the same size, length and weight as a red fox. Its home range can be up to 50 square miles, so you may be in store for a longer day of tracking than you had initially planned upon. Look for scat along their route, which can have a varied appearance depending on their diet at that time. It can be full of hair and small crushed bones during winter when the majority of their diet is animal. In contrast, summer and fall scat may consist of a more omnivorous diet and contain fruit, seeds, nuts, insects and eggs.

Following one gray fox in particular through the winter months and into spring may allow you to identify potential den sites.

Look for frequent visits to an old wood chuck den, hollow tree, cave, rock crevice, or woodpile. Grays do not excavate dens like the red fox, so the best way to determine the maternal den is to look for bone fragments or fresh fur and feathers around the entrance. Gray fox mate January to April and the female carries her babies for just less than two months. She gives birth to a



litter of up to seven dark brown pups between the months of March and May. Her mate will help tend to the young but does not share the den. Should you happen upon the primary maternal den, spend some time sitting quietly a few yards away, and wait to see if pups emerge to investigate their environment. Revel in the serendipity of this experience, for in about three to four months they will be off to hunt for themselves and establish their own territories. If you are fortunate, their daily route will include your yard as they tend to be good mousers, keep small furry garden pests in control, and rarely invade chicken coops. A gray fox life span has been observed to be up to 10 years in captivity but less in the wild. I hope you are able to find a gray fox in your neighborhood for spring is a splendid time to put down the remote, step outside, and spend a day in the life of a gray.

KAY HUNT, CLERK
OPACUM LAND TRUST



Mark Your Calendars!

Saturday, April 16th Vernal Pool Program

Matt Burne of www.vernalpool.org and co-author of **MA Vernal Pool Guide** will be with us on April 16 to explore a vernal pool as it wakes up in spring! Join us!

Call or email to register and receive more details. Family friendly program!
508-347-9144;
info@opacumlt.org



Sunday, May 22nd - Opacum's Perennial Plant Sale

8:00 am - Noon on the Southbridge Town Common, rain or shine!
Watch for more details!

Q: Can February March? A: No, but April May!



OPACUM

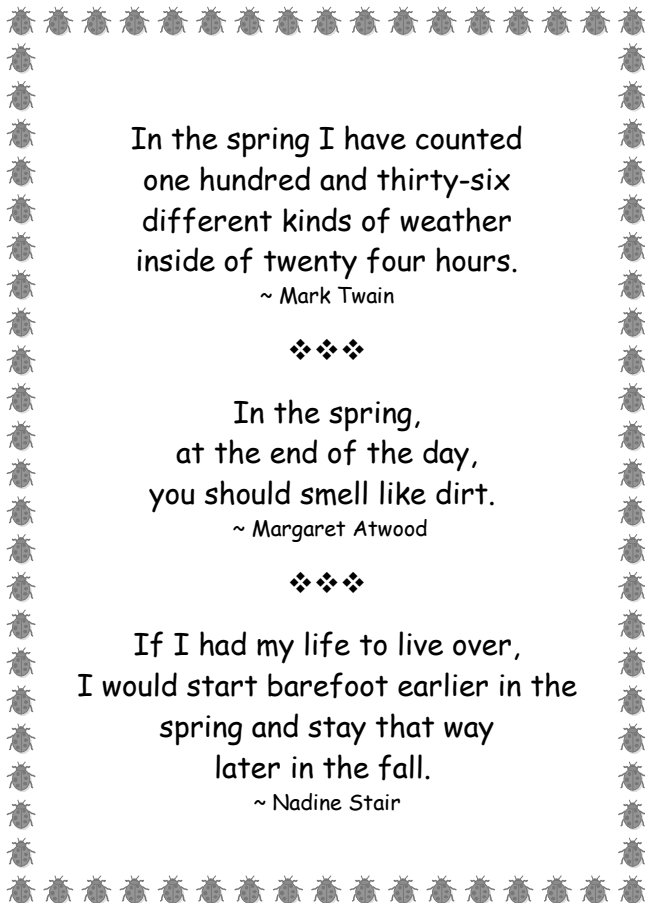
L A N D T R U S T

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Opacum Land Trust is a non-profit conservation organization. Founded in 2000, our mission is to conserve, protect and preserve, in their natural condition, the lands and waters of South Central Massachusetts for the benefit of present and future generations. All donations are fully tax deductible, annual memberships start at \$25.

For more information, please visit our website: www.opacumlt.org



In the spring I have counted
one hundred and thirty-six
different kinds of weather
inside of twenty four hours.

~ Mark Twain



In the spring,
at the end of the day,
you should smell like dirt.

~ Margaret Atwood



If I had my life to live over,
I would start barefoot earlier in the
spring and stay that way
later in the fall.

~ Nadine Stair

JOIN US FOR OUR 2011 ANNUAL MEETING THURSDAY, MARCH 24TH

Join us on Thursday, March 24th

from 6:00 to 8:00 pm

at Fins & Tales,

858 Main Street in Southbridge.

Enjoy a sampling of delicious food, enjoy
the music of a wonderful local folk singer,

AND enjoy the company
of fellow Opacums!

Be sure to RSVP!

See more details inside.

