A male turkey struts his stuff at the Earthplace wildlife sanctuary

Earthplace

Where Science, Conservation, and Education Meet

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Bad Weather Ahead (But Grateful For Today)

Letter from the Executive Director

There is no mistaking the impact of climate change as extreme weather events occur around the globe. Local economies and populations are suffering, and natural ecosystems are being altered in unforeseen ways. So far the northeast has largely been spared, allowing us time to be grateful for our surroundings and nature’s resiliency.

This past spring, we observed multiple pairs of fawns and three broods of wild turkey offspring, called poult, foraging in our sanctuary. Not all of them made it to the fall, due in part to a growing population of coyotes and bobcats in lower Fairfield County. These apex predators help provide nature’s dynamic equilibrium, a needed balancing of supply and demand.

This summer was hot and very dry, and shade became a premium as animals and humans adjusted their movements. At Earthplace, summer camp groups spent more time in the woods, as did our nesting redtail hawks who followed the movements of squirrels, chipmunks, and other prey. All species are adjusting as the air and waters warm seasonally, and annually. At home, our lawn went largely dormant except for those resilient green patches of crabgrass nourishing insects, birds and rabbits, and reminding us that nature finds a way.

Birds of prey like the osprey are now a regular part of shoreline sights and sounds before they make their fall journey back to Central America and beyond. In the same season, millions of other migratory birds will make their way south, looking for rest stops like our 22-acre Partrick Wetlands Preserve where resident herons nest high in the trees overlooking a battle on the ground between native and beneficial cattails and invasive phragmites (pictured at left).

If you’re looking for a quiet oasis, or a place to glimpse wildlife, come visit the Earthplace nature sanctuary or our new Partrick walking trails. There is plenty to be grateful for as nature leads us through a season of change.

See you on the trails,

Tony McDowell

"Nature, with its fragile yet resilient magnificence, models for us what aliveness means and reminds us that we are mortal."

MARIA POPOVA

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All Harbor Watch education programs are FREE to high school students thanks to our generous supporters, including: the Long Island Sound Futures Fund, a donor-advised fund at Fairfield County’s Community Foundation, the New Canaan Community Foundation, and the Elizabeth Raymond Ambler Trust.

Harbor Watch team at Cocktails and Clams 2022

The water quality monitoring season is coming to a close, and what a busy summer it was! Since May, the Harbor Watch staff, interns, and volunteers collected baseline data in our local rivers and harbors, and are working closely with municipal partners to locate detected sources of pollution. Our two annual reports will be released in December with summaries on each of the 19 waterways and 7 harbors tested this summer.

In a research partnership with the Maritime Aquarium, Remote Ecologist, and Northeastern University, our salt marsh restoration study is nearing completion. The data collected over the last two summers will soon be analyzed and shared with the scientific community. A second research study on sediments in the Norwalk and Saugatuck harbors continue in partnership with the University of Connecticut and CT DEEP.

Collecting sediment samples in Norwalk Harbor

Fall education programs for high school students kick-off in October with both in-person, virtual and visiting scientist options. If interested, visit our website for details about those programs and our year-end student symposium.

Animal Hall Matching Gift Fundraiser

Thanks to our friends, donors and supporters, we reached our fundraising goal!
Nest Sighting!

Much to the excitement of campers and staff, our resident juvenile red-tailed hawk has found a mate and built a nest high up in a tree near the Upper Swamp Loop trail. The hawk was spotted drying its wings after a rare rain shower while standing on a trailhead trash can (pictured below).

Did you know?
The eyesight of a red-tailed hawk is eight times stronger than a human’s.

Nature Programs Expand Reach

This fall we are broadening our relationship with Bridgeport schools, adding two new elementary schools for inbound and outbound programming.

In Norwalk, we will continue our partnership with Silvermine Art Center providing science-based education to their curriculum, and we are adding four new public schools, bringing nature home to hundreds of children.

Westport elementary school students will be back at Earthplace this year with nature programs tailored to grade level science curriculums. Our goal is to reach 18 different schools in 6 towns this coming year to go with our weekly afterschool programs.

Where Did The Pond Go?
The busy underwater world of Frog Hollow Pond is now obstructed from view by thick green mats of duckweed, the world’s smallest flowering plant.

Although duckweed is native, it grows aggressively and rapidly covers the surface of slow-moving water. It was likely introduced by birds traveling between ponds with bits of duckweed clinging to their feathers.

The aggressive growth this summer could be from excess nutrients in the water from natural animal or plant sources, or from neighboring fertilizer run-off. Once the pond is covered, animals and plants beneath the surface are deprived of oxygen and sunlight, leading to a decline in fish, frogs and other aquatic life that form a healthy pond ecosystem.

One method of controlling the duckweed growth is to skim it off the surface with nets and rakes, made possible by their shallow floating roots. The occasional skimming exposes patches of open water to sustain life below the surface and promote recovery next spring.

More information can be found on our website.
One of our program objectives is to rethink the effectiveness of each learning environment, including the way that we set up indoor learning spaces and classroom schedules, to best meet the needs of our students.

To support our students and staff in this task, we have engaged the services of early childhood consultant, Rosalie Witt. Her resume includes Director of Early Childhood Education at Temple Israel in Westport, CT, adjunct professor at Goodwin University, and a full-time member of the teaching faculty at Norwalk Community College.

Rosalie will be facilitating our program goals by providing professional development workshops for our teachers and by visiting classrooms to provide ongoing support. This investment in time and training will make a big impact across our program!
A Call for Memberships

Our town is fortunate to have a nature center, and community support is what makes it possible.

With an Earthplace membership, you receive all kinds of exciting benefits and you support our mission to build a passion and respect for the natural world.

It’s a win-win.

Contact us for more information:

- **Visit**: earthplace.org/get-involved/become-member
- **Call**: 203.557.4400
- **Email**: members@earthplace.org

Earthplace’s Annual
Woodside Bash & Fall Festival
October 1 & 2, 2022

Get your tickets today!