



Farmington River Coordinating Committee  
P.O. Box 395  
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[www.farmingtonriver.org](http://www.farmingtonriver.org)



## Nancy L. Johnson Scholarship

FRCC is pleased to request submissions for the second round of Nancy L. Johnson scholarships. The scholarships award \$1,000 to graduating high school seniors or to college students from the Wild & Scenic towns (Barkhamsted, Canton, Colebrook, Hartland, New Hartford) who plan to study or are currently studying an environmental science.

**Please call 379-0282 for more information.**

## Kids Korner

*By Erin Keener, age 7*

I like the Farmington River because I like to put my feet in the water in the summer.

I also like to see the ducks in the river. They look very pretty.

**FRCC welcomes contributions from children of all ages for our newsletter.**

**Who is FRCC?** The Farmington River Coordinating Committee was established when fourteen miles of the upper Farmington River were designated as a National Wild & Scenic River on August 26, 1994. The FRCC comprises representatives from each of the five towns adjacent to the Farmington River and from groups noted below. The FRCC embodies an important partnership among the riverfront towns and others to provide stewardship of the Farmington River and its upper watershed. Visit us at [www.FarmingtonRiver.org](http://www.FarmingtonRiver.org). Current representatives are:

**Barkhamsted** – Jean Miller; Mario Santoro, alt.

**Canton** – Alis Ohlheiser; Terri Tracy, alt.

**Colebrook** – Tom Stanton

**Hartland** – Fred Jones; Nicki Hall and Sam Slater, alts.

**New Hartford** – Pat Keener; Mark Lindquist, alt.

**CT DEP** – Sally Snyder, alt.

**Farmington River Anglers Association** – Dick Reynolds; Dan Busa, alt.

**Farmington River Watershed Association** – David Sinish; Eric Hammerling, alt.

**Metropolitan District Commission** – Tim Anthony; Carol Youell, alt.

**National Park Service** – Jamie Fosburgh; Liz Lacy, alt.

**Thank you** to Chris Williams of Framemakers for a donation of framing for our office.



# Wild & Scenic News

Volume 5, Issue 1

Winter 2008

## Study Finds Exemplary Habitat for Freshwater Mussels, Snails and Crayfish in the Upper Farmington River Watershed

**A**s part of the Upper Farmington River Management Plan, FRCC continues to collect baseline data on the biodiversity of the Wild & Scenic section of the river. Last spring and summer Ethan Nedeau from Biodiversity LLC was contracted to collect data on the distribution and habitat of mussels, snails and crayfish in the river. With additional funding from the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (MNHESP), the study area was extended to include the lower Still River (Winchester, Colebrook, Barkhamsted) and Sandy Brook (Colebrook and Sandisfield, MA). Freshwater mussels are viewed as “indicator species” because of their sensitivity to habitat alteration and water quality; they are often used to assess the health of the water. Nedeau views the Farmington as a “jewel” of New England



*Freshwater mussel*

*Photo by Ethan Nedeau*

in terms of freshwater mussel diversity. There are 12 species of mussels in southern New England; 11 can be found in the Farmington River.

During the study period, 56 sites were sampled between May and September.

At each site the following was recorded: distribution, abundance, demographics, shell condition and habitat. Six species of mussels were identified in the study area. The highest number of species (five) was found in the Massachusetts portion of the West Branch; four species were found in the Connecticut portion of the West Branch and Still River; two were found in Sandy

Brook. Together the Eastern Pearlshell (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) and Eastern Elliptio (*Elliptio companata*) comprised 96.9 percent of all mussels encountered

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## SIGHTINGS IN THE WATERSHED —

### Winter Finches

*By Nicki Hall, wildlife reporter*

**N**orthwest Connecticut is well-known by birders for its “winter finches.” In most years, in this neck of the woods, Purple Finches, House Finches and American Goldfinches can be frequent visitors at our bird feeders. On occasion, we’ll be lucky enough to have a Pine Siskin or Common Redpoll adding welcome variety to the mix. This winter, however, was a different story. We were treated to a whole new array of birds. As forecast by Ron Pittaway, a Field Ornithologist from Ontario, Canada, who has been tracking winter irruptions of finches for the past seven years, huge

flocks of Pine Grosbeaks and Common Redpolls were reported daily in northern Connecticut in December and January. Due to a scarcity of typical food crops in the northern boreal forests, these birds had wandered south in search of more plentiful fruits, berries and seeds. Other birds who also joined this migration were White-winged Crossbills, Pine Siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks, a bird that was once more common in the state but has been in decline over the last few years.



*Pine Grosbeak*

I had a couple of occasions to see some of these birds in large numbers. On December 22nd, while doing the Barkhamsted Christmas Bird Count, I saw 20-30 Pine Grosbeaks feeding on

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In 2001, FRCC Chair Pat Keener met Fred Jones in the parking lot of a shopping mall and recruited him to be FRCC's alternate Hartland representative. Pat knew Fred was nearing the end of his teaching career and he seemed open to a new challenge. The FRCC and other conservation efforts in the area have been very lucky that he agreed to become a part of the committee.

Fred taught Tech Ed (it used to be called shop or IA) for 35 years at Northwest Regional High School. He taught photography, among other "tech" courses, and has maintained his interest taking professional quality wildlife and river pictures. Since his retirement, Fred spends more time with his wife, Jane, his daughters and, especially, his three grandchildren. He has also made a job of being a volunteer.

Volunteering has always been

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT—

### Fred Jones



important to Fred. He has been a director with the Greenwood Scholarship Foundation for 12 years and is now the vice-chair of FRCC. But, Fred's role as the Hartland representative has led to a new and important volunteer job. Fred became instrumental in developing the

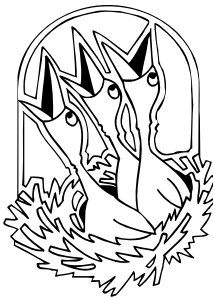
Hartland Land Trust, and he is now an incorporator and president of the two-year-old organization. FRCC was helpful with some start up funding for that effort. The missions of the two organizations complement one another as protection of land along the Wild and Scenic corridor is of vital mutual concern.

When asked about environmental issues, Fred said, "The native Americans were right. We have no right to own the land or the rivers. We are only guests and caretakers for a brief moment in history, and we need to be concerned about future generations." He feels that the partnership river model is a powerful tool to conserve and protect the watershed because, "the river does not flow through Washington. It flows through our local towns, and solutions (to issues) need to occur at the local level."

FRCC is indeed fortunate that Fred Jones said, "Yes" in that parking lot.

## Winter Finches

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the ornamental crab tree right behind our own Squires Tavern. As this fruit is one of their favorites, the flock was energetically making quick work of the berries. The males were an overall beautiful pinky-red with two distinct white wing bars which displayed dramatically against the snow-covered branches. The females, although less colorful than the males, showed a soft olive hue on their heads and rumps that contrasted with their otherwise gray bodies. As that was my first Pine Warbler sighting in Connecticut, it was a real treat.

Just the other day (mid-February), an enormous flock of about 100 redpolls came into my feeder. Edgy birds, they'd feed voraciously for only a couple of minutes before something would set them up. The large cloud of birds would rise, swirl about in the air and then suddenly settle again in another tree. Before long they'd be back at the feeder. Flocks of redpolls can be exciting for hard-core birders as there is always the chance that a much rarer species, the Hoary Redpoll,

## INTRODUCING— Lower Farmington & Salmon Brook Study's New Staff Person Joyce Kennedy Raymes

Joyce Kennedy Raymes is the Community Planner working for the National Park Service (NPS) to coordinate the Lower Farmington and Salmon Brook Wild & Scenic Study. Joyce formerly served as the Water Quality Coordinator for the Farmington River Watershed Association (FRWA). At FRWA, Joyce was primary author of the "State of the Farmington River Watershed" report, and she launched FRWA's bacteria,



chemical, and macro-invertebrate water quality monitoring programs. Joyce helped develop a "Pocket Guide to Erosion and Sedimentation Controls" for the Connecticut DEP. Joyce lives with her family in East Granby and is a former member of the town's

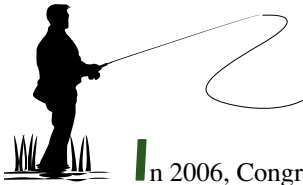
Conservation Commission where she has developed expertise in reviewing stormwater designs and wetlands proposals. Welcome aboard!

will be in the mix. The Hoary Redpoll looks very similar to the Common Redpoll and is often described as a "frosted version" of the latter. However, identification is tricky as both birds have darker and lighter versions. Hoary Redpolls are much less common although a couple of confirmed sightings have been

noted in Connecticut this winter.

If you're interested in finding out more about what birds are in Connecticut at any time of the year, a great resource is the Connecticut Ornithological Association. If you look online at [ctbirding.org](http://ctbirding.org), you'll get its Web page and a link to its daily listing of unusual bird sightings in the state.

# Update: the Lower Farmington and Salmon Brook W&S Study



In 2006, Congress enacted the “Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook Wild & Scenic Study Act” to determine whether these waterbodies are eligible for the Wild & Scenic designation. The 3-year Wild & Scenic Study is conducted by representatives from 10 towns (Avon, Bloomfield, Burlington, Canton, East Granby, Farmington, Granby, Hartland, Simsbury, and Windsor), Connecticut DEP, Salmon Brook Watershed Association (SBWA), and FRWA, with funding and coordination by the National Park Service.

To date, the Study Committee has identified 5 categories of Outstanding Resource Values (ORVs) that are described in greater detail below.

**Geology** The geology of the study area is highly diverse. Lying at the junction of the Western Highlands and the

Central Lowlands, the area has a variety of geological features such as traprock ridges, river gorges and prime agricultural soils, and also has features from a wide span of geological eras.

**Water Quality** The water quality in Salmon Brook is excellent. Salmon Brook is “one of the last true cold water fisheries in Connecticut” according to the DEP. The Lower Farmington River has very high water quality for most of its length.



**Biological Diversity** For six of the ten Wild and Scenic study towns, the Farmington Valley Biodiversity Project has developed a solid data base on unique species and special natural communities in the river corridor. Aware that the study area supports regionally- and globally-rare species and communities of plants and animals, more research will be conducted in the other four towns.

**Cultural Landscape** The Farmington River and Salmon Brook corridors hold important evidence of Native American settlements, trading sites, and agricultural fields that predate European arrival. Colonial history and the development of industry in New England are closely connected to both Salmon Brook and the lower Farmington River, as are present-day farms, concert venues, and various river-related businesses.

**Recreation** The rivers and their scenic corridors provide many varied recreational opportunities. Fishing, canoeing, kayaking, picnicking in the towns’ riverside parks, hiking, birding and biking along the Rails-to-Trails paths are just some of the activities the public enjoys.

To learn more about the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook Wild & Scenic Study, please visit either [www.lowerfarmingtonriver.org](http://www.lowerfarmingtonriver.org) or [www.salmonbrookwildandscenic.org](http://www.salmonbrookwildandscenic.org), or contact Joyce Kennedy Raymes at (860) 658-4442, ext. 203.

## Exemplary Habitat in Upper Farmington

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during the survey, according to Nedeau. Eight species of snails were identified in the study area. *Amnicola Limosa* and *Ferrissia rivularis* proved to be the two most common snails being found in ten out of nineteen sites. The remaining six species were rarely encountered. Three species of Crayfish were collected during the survey. “*Cambarus robustus* was the most common species; it was collected at seven of the nineteen sites but was noted at fifteen sites and probably occurred at many more,” said Nedeau.

“The study area provides exemplary habitat and water quality, and biological diversity is less ‘threatened’ here than in many other rivers in southern New England,” Nedeau said. Flow regime, dams, non-point source pollution (NPS), non-native species and beaver dams are viewed as “threats” to the mussel populations in this river. Several healthy

## FRCC Retreat Moves Us Forward!



*FRCC held a retreat on December 1 at Ski Sundown to evaluate the past and plan for the future. From left to right, back row: Eric Hammerling, Mario Santoro, Tom Stanton. Middle row: Fred Jones, Jean Miller, Sally Snyder, and Carol Youell. First row: Liz Lacy, Alis Ohlheiser, Pat Keener, Terri Tracy, and David Sinish.*

populations of Eastern Pearlshell (a species of concern in Connecticut) and Brook Floater (an endangered species in Massachusetts and Connecticut) can be found in the West Branch. Nedeau concludes that although species diversity in the West Branch is low, those that are

found here are important. However, they are sensitive to environmental stressors and will require long-term monitoring. The identification of “sensitive areas” and factors that threaten them should be a priority for the protection of these unique species.