



Cathance River Education Alliance
 PO Box 187
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UPCOMING EVENTS:

- 5/23 - Maine's Amazing Sturgeon
- 6/3 - Spring Birding
- 6/24 - Nature & Forest Therapy Walk
- 6/27 - The Secret Lives of Fireflies
- 7/7 - Firefly Walk
- 7/20 - Native Plants Garden Tour



What's Inside: CREA & BTLT | School Collaborations | Earth Day | and more...

'23 Field Trip Season In Full Swing



CREA educators are busy hosting school groups nearly every day until school ends in mid-June, with over 700 elementary school students slated to come for outdoor learning adventures. Some students explore life cycles in the pond, using nets to get an up-close look at pond critters like dragonfly larvae. Other classes visit as part of their Energy Unit, and use tools to measure the amount of wind and solar energy at different locations around the preserve. On nearly every field trip, CREA educators try to squeeze in a side-trip to find frog and salamander eggs— a “first” for many students! Curiosity gets the better of even the most reluctant students, whose squeamish faces soon turn to gentle amazement as they admire the jelly-glob eggs.

“Yes!!!” and “Best field trip ever!” is a shout frequently heard as kids embark on learning activities. We love welcoming these students to the preserve for nearly 4 hours of learning in nature!

What is better than CREA working to educate and engage the community through nature-based education? CREA joining forces with a highly respected local land trust to expand opportunities for education and conservation!

In our fall newsletter, we reported that Cathance River Education Alliance (CREA) and Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust (BTLT) were exploring ways of collaborating more deeply to increase our effectiveness and impact. We are pleased to report that the Boards and memberships of both organizations have voted to unify as a single organization.

CREA and BTLT have been partners for decades, linked through complementary and sometimes shared roles at the Cathance River Nature Preserve. While BTLT has been protecting valued local landscapes and resources, CREA has been educating people about those landscapes and resources. Effective nature-based education is essential to fostering the next generation of conservationists.

“To get to a healthy, sustainable future, we need engaged community members who care about the natural world,” says BTLT Executive Director Angela Twitchell. **“Through this alliance, we gain the opportunity to extend CREA’s educational programs to BTLT lands and reach more people.”**

As CREA Board Member Dave Keffer stated so succinctly during our merger feasibility discussions, “One plus one will equal three.”

This merger presents opportunities for our educational programming to reach larger audiences. CREA summer camp will have the option of expanding to other campuses and meeting the exceedingly high demand for summer youth programs. CREA school programs can also explore expanding place-based field trips to new habitats and features. Once merged, staff will have access to broader in-house expertise, enabling us to provide our community with richer programming — and to do so more effectively and efficiently.

As one member of both BTLT and CREA said, “I support both organizations now and am excited to see all of the exciting things that will be made possible by their combined efforts.”

We are so excited to be joining forces! We are confident that the future will bear out our firm belief that we can do more to strengthen community through conservation and education together than either organization can achieve alone.

SAVE THE DATE - 2023 ANNUAL MEETING

Thursday, June 29, 2023 | 5:00 - 6:30pm

Join us for a round up of the year and celebration of our impending merger with Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust.



Our mission is to deepen ecological awareness through nature-based learning among students, educators, and the public; to promote environmental stewardship; and to foster wise use of the Cathance River Nature Preserve.

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A Message from Our Leadership

Our lead article aptly expresses our enthusiasm for our impending union with BTLT. But even more gratifying has been the outpouring of support that we have heard from members. The unanimity of Board and member support confirms the wisdom of this move.

In the near term, you should experience little or no change in our programs, though our plan is to expand the capacity and types of offerings over time. In the meantime, know that we are working diligently to blend our operations and back-office functions. We will keep you informed about what to expect with respect to membership, websites, and more as we work through logistics.

We are already thinking about opportunities to expand programs, but planning around that will take some time as we first learn to function effectively as a combined organization. We are grateful for your support as we look forward to a bright future in the coming years!



Ellen Bennett,
Board Chair



Caroline Eliot,
Executive Director

CLEANING UP OUR COMMUNITY

One Plastic Cup at a Time



Our Earth Day clean up drew over 50 enthusiastic volunteers!

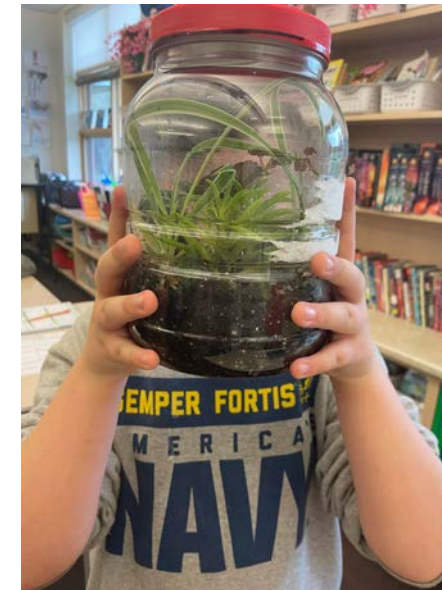
This Earth Day in April, over 50 people came together to pick up trash at seven separate sites, filling THREE dumpsters with trash! The creatures that inhabit these natural areas will surely be healthier in the weeks and months to come.

Teams spread out to cover areas at Brunswick Landing, assorted BTLT properties, and Brunswick's Maine St and Town Green. Folks found some interesting oddities along with the usual coffee cups, cigarette butts, and sadly, way too much plastic and Styrofoam.

It can take hundreds of years for plastics to break down, so look for ways to cut down on your plastic consumption at home and work. Why is reducing plastics important? Most plastic doesn't get recycled — only 5-6%. We can't recycle our way out of the plastics problem.

Learn what you can do to reduce plastics at home from our talk with GoGo Refill owner Laura Marsden last December at www.creamaine.org/sustainable-gift-giving/.

CREA Collaborates on Science Units with Local Schools



Fifth grade students in Brunswick are building terrariums to explore the way Earth's systems interact. The hydrosphere, geosphere, atmosphere and biosphere are made simpler to understand and see in action through this hands-on exploration.

Following a similar collaboration with SAD75 schools, CREA is excited to be partnering with Brunswick elementary schools to support teachers as they transition to the NGSS federal science standards. Building on CREA's long-standing partnership with the district, CREA was invited to collaborate with teachers to design engaging, hands-on science units that will help students develop the skills to "be a scientist". CREA contracted with local educator Molly Kellogg who brought expertise in literacy connections and differentiation for all levels of learners, as part of this work.

The team has worked to create units that get students asking questions, designing investigations, and making observations— to dive into

the science that is happening in the world around them. First graders will choose a "class tree" to observe throughout spring, noticing and documenting the ways it is changing. Fifth graders are building terrariums, seeing if they can simulate the well-balanced systems interactions that allow Earth to thrive. Second graders will look for places where erosion is happening on their playground, and test the effectiveness of different materials to prevent it.

CREA is honored to partner with Brunswick teachers to create these units that encourage hands-on exploration and inquiry-based learning. The science kits have been delivered to all 53 classrooms in K-5. We're excited to hear how the new units go this spring!

Volunteer Spotlight: Kermit Smyth



Kermit, card-carrying member of the Maine Mineralogical and Geological Society (MMGS) and Brunswick resident, has spent countless hours helping us understand and manage an extensive mineral collection that was donated to CREA by Sharon MacCallum. Kermit cataloged and sorted 417 specimens, then curated a wonderful display for the Ecology Center complete with fun facts about how each mineral is used. Specimens on display range from local (Topsham!) to distant Zimbabwe, and include a number of specimens donated by Kermit and MMGS.

Some of what we couldn't use for education, he prepped for sale at MMGS's annual mineral show, where they garnered \$1800 that will go toward nature-based education. Even better than the income were the smiles on the faces of people who walked away delighted with the newest additions to their mineral collections. We are grateful for Kermit's time and expertise and inspired by his devotion to the art and science of mineral collecting. Thank you, Kermit!



Left: Kermit Smyth, showing off some blue Tourmaline in feldspar he collected. Above: Caroline Eliot, CREA Executive Director at the MMGS annual mineral show this April.

THANK YOU BUSINESS SUPPORTERS & GRANTORS



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