



NEWSLETTER

February - March 2022

“Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.” Harriet Tubman

This month we are adding a new feature that shines a light on someone who cares deeply about our town. Our first spotlight guest is *Robyn Lafata*, a photographer who turns to nature for her inspiration.



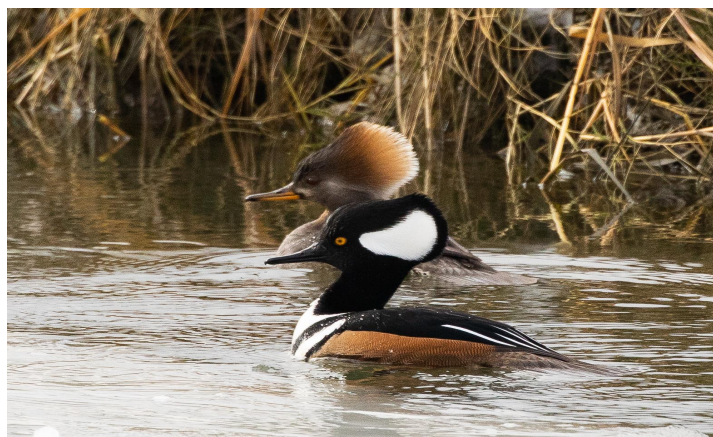
What do you love about living in Essex and what makes it so special?

My family grew up here, so I have deep roots. Having lived here for 33 years, I take advantage of every opportunity to kayak on our beautiful river or hike quiet trails. There are so many unspoiled areas in our town that people can enjoy and visit. Every day that I am out, it seems like a present that I just unwrapped — especially when I see a new bird or animal to photograph. The marshes and the woods are

unaltered beauty. I walk daily at the Greenbelt properties. Essex County Greenbelt is a huge steward for protecting the land from any development for future generations.

How did you get involved in photography?

I have always been involved in the arts — painting, drawing, creating gardens, and, yes, photography. My husband bought me my first Canon camera, the film kind. I got away from it for a while, but about four years ago I started birding with a friend. I was actually just taking pictures to help identify the birds at first, then it became a huge passion for me. I wanted to capture everything I saw after that.



Where are your favorite places in Essex to take photographs?

My favorite places are the Cox Reservation, along the river and marshes. And, of course, everyone's favorite: the Burnham house. I also enjoy Manchester-Essex Woods, where I've had some pretty neat encounters with animals.



A lot of your pictures are of birds. Which one is your favorite?

Oh, this is such a hard one to answer. I love capturing them all! The native species, as well as the rare visitors. My favorite in this area is certainly the bald eagle, which has been making a huge comeback in our area. Also with the Greenbelt's help, the osprey is nesting along the coast of Massachusetts.

In your years of photographing and documenting the Great Marsh, have you noticed any significant changes to the environment?

I have noticed subtle changes. For example, the water level of tides seems to be getting higher, which in turn affects life on the marsh, and river banks falling in with time. There is a certain ebb and flow to different species visiting the area. In one year, you may see an eruption, and the next year you might not see but one or two of the species. Our area is pretty diverse with birds and animals, such a delicate balance. It is usually by man's hand that nature becomes off-balance — sometimes by accident, other times by development.



What do you think are the biggest threats to the wildlife and natural resources you love to photograph?

In your experience, what are solutions to those threats?



We have yet to learn to coexist with wildlife and to remember that every human action has a consequence for nature. A good example is rat traps, which many businesses and homes use. Bald eagles, snowy owls, red-tailed hawks, and foxes are dying because of secondary rodenticide poisoning. A safer alternative is using corn gluten-based traps, which do not hurt any other animal beyond the target animal.

(For more information about safer alternatives:

https://www.mspca.org/animal_protection/rodenticidebill/)

What do you think the most important message your photography conveys?

Nature! If people just take a few moments to walk through a park, or step out into their backyards, just stop and observe. You may see something that you've never realized was there before. Nature is amazing. Nature is beauty.

Where can we purchase your prints, calendar, and honey?

Most of my photos can be purchased on my Facebook page Ebens Creek Photography, where there is a link for Fine Arts America. You can buy anything from prints to pillows to bags. I also have some framed prints at the Essex Exchange (101 John Wise Avenue). My honey can be purchased at the Essex Bird & Pet Supply (121R Eastern Avenue) or through me.



** All photographs are by Robyn Lafata.*

*In memory of Richard (Rick) Heuser,
who passed away in early February 2022.*

Rick lived on Essex Reach Road for more than thirty years, where he could easily enjoy the beauty of Essex and the Great Marsh. One could often catch him early in the morning kayaking on the Essex River, often with his camera in tow to document his great love for nature. Rick was an editor for law journals, and was the president of several condominium associations. Save Essex Landscape is incredibly grateful for the support, wisdom, and guidance that he shared with us. We will miss his sweet spirit, gentle soul, and his quiet, but assured presence that kept us moving forward in this journey. Rest in peace, Rick.

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