Birds fly; bugs fly - and crawl as well. Time, too.

Keeping up with everything that has been happening at Foxfire Farm has indeed been challenging. The Nesting Bird Survey has filled my thoughts for much of the summer, while my attention to the Backyard Safari species inventory has lapsed shamefully! So let's catch up.

Russell Holden, Doug Williams, Ann Hanscom, Susan Speers, Patrice Murphy, Barbara MacNamee, and Beth and Paul Milke have shared in the effort of species counting during this past summer at the farm. We have had seven visits between April and September, focusing on different species communities each time. It must be admitted that often we were rendered unfocused by things that flew, crawled, swam, floated, slithered or emerged into view as we went along.

All our findings are (or soon will be) posted on an app called iNaturalist. Having myself emerged when one listened to the radio, and rang up the telephone operator to connect with friends, using an app constitutes a high learning curve! Russ has been most patient and helpful in dragging me into the current century. And its fun! Each visit has yielded so many species, I feel the need to write about the connections between just a few of them and the landscape they live within.

Consider: 20,000 years ago, the Laurentide Ice Sheet sat 2.5 miles thick over eastern North America, as far south as the then-nameless Mason-Dixon Line. Beneath it, very, very few life forms existed. When I look out my back door at the fullness of life there now, I think of that GREAT ABSENCE! I think of that slow trickle of ice melt passing through the glacial carvings, inviting all manner of living things to colonize my back yard! Water + sunlight = opportunity: a life insurance policy for the planet, whose dividend is growth. Soil sets the terms.

Accrual, over time, of fungi and mosses, algae and bacteria, build the capital of roots and spores and grass blades and leaf litter; pollen and seeds, stems and twigs, bugs and birds, frogs and fish, worms and mammals; all memorizing experience and building on possibility. Today, right now, 2018, I am amazed and grateful to be witness to the result: 120 feet of enduring and endearing Eastern White Pine.