

Lynn Levine
 Consulting Forester,
 Environmental Educator

My big love is the woods. I spend lots of time looking at trees and tracks and enjoy taking students and school groups into the woods. I'm also a writer and write about the forest, especially focusing on tracking.

I came here in a bizarre way. I was working for the Environmental Defense Fund in Manhattan and decided I didn't want to be a grant writer anymore. I'd been skiing at Stratton and Mount Snow and fell in love with Vermont.

So, when I got home, I closed my eyes and picked Brattleboro off a map of Vermont. I got on a bus to visit and found wonderful things. First of all, one look at Mount Wantastiquet and I knew I was home... it felt like "Heidi." I discovered Brooks Memorial Library, The Common Ground Restaurant, The Good Life grocery and met lots of "back to the landers." We just had so much in common. I went back to the City, packed my things, rented a U-Haul and moved here. And, I've been here ever since.

I stay because this area is such a wonderful combination of rural and creative. There's a lot of open space to be in, but there's also a lot of culture. I really enjoy theater and dance. I was a dancer for years. There are many opportunities to see dance performances—at the Brattleboro School of Dance, Marlboro College and nearby (an hour away) is the Hopkins Center for the Arts in Hanover. Contra dancing is another favorite thing to do...and it's everywhere and on almost every weekend. My favorite callers are Fred Breuning and Andy Davis.

The area is filled with craftspeople and galleries, along with theaters, like the Latchis that shows off-beat independent films along with the Hollywood blockbusters. Then there's Actors Theater Playhouse (N.H.), the Weston Playhouse in the summer and the Opera Theater of Weston in the winter, and Vermont Theatre Company.

After I moved here I went back to school and discovered I could become a forester and have my own business working for myself. There's a lot of land that is privately owned and people need a forester to manage it. I help people manage their land in a sustainable manner with the future of the trees, wildlife and streams in mind.

The outdoors is now my life and my work. I'm helping various groups create interpretive walks to encourage people to get outdoors and appreciate nature. These are easy trails that the whole family can

enjoy. There's one at Fair Winds Farm in Brattleboro and one in Newfare up Sunset Lake Road. It's called Manitou and the sign is up the road on the right. It's located just 1.1 miles from Williamsville and 5.8 miles from Brattleboro. There's a kiosk and trail guide and it's open to the public. It's less than a mile long, yet gives a great woodland experience.

All of the trees are pointed out with cultural stories about them. For example, the oak tree was chosen by the Druids for all of their spiritual rituals. The trail takes you around a fen (a wetland), and during the early spring season, when it is 41 degrees and rainy at night, the wood frog and several species of salamanders come to mate. For a few

nights, it's really an orgy!

Another interesting walk is the "Treasured Trees: A Walk Thru Brattleboro." People throughout our region were asked to nominate trees that were special to them. Working as a consultant for the Brattleboro Tree Advisory Board, we put together a self-guided trail guide that is available at tourism locations and Chambers of Commerce. It's a 1.9-mile-long, flat walk that points out special trees along the way with stories from the person who nominated the tree and what it means to them.

One of my own favorite hikes is up Black Mountain trail. It's an easy trail—only minutes to the top—you can get a quick view. I used to take my daughter to watch the fireworks in Brattleboro from the top on July 4th. To find it, you take a left on East West Road at the Higgins Farm sign; follow Black Mountain road until you see a wooden rail fence on the right. There is a sign that says Nature Conservancy.

Happy tracking!



Photo Credit: Jason R. Hencke

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Dummerston Center

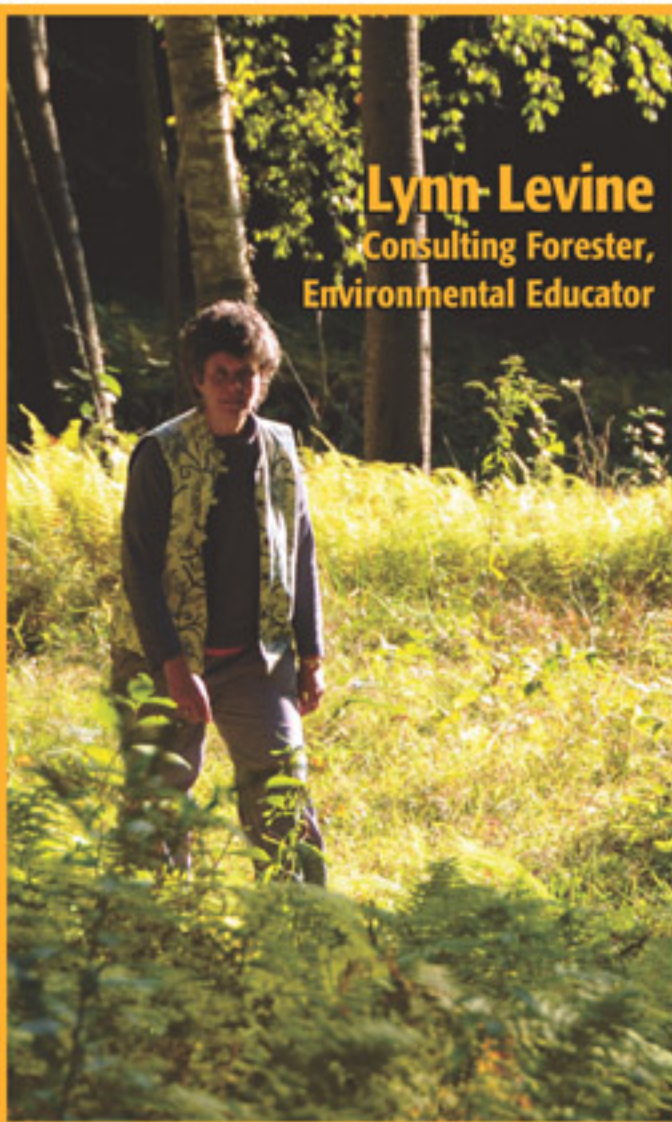


Photo Credit: Jason R. Hencke

Lynn Levine has written *Mammal Tracks and Scat* with illustrator and naturalist Martha Mitchell. This handy waterproof year-round field guide, with life-size illustrations, is designed to be carried through brush, bramble and snow banks and emerge unscathed. It uses a novel three-step process to identify tracks of 29 different animals that are commonly encountered in the field. First, a movement pattern is determined by walker, trotter, hopper, waddler or bouncer. Then, the group is identified (e.g., rodent or cat family) and, finally, the species is pinpointed using clues under the heading "species differences."

For scat, first, a shape is identified (round or cylinder). Then the categories are divided into more detailed shapes. Finally, the species is identified using other tracking signs.

According to expert tracker Paul Rezendes, this quick and easy-to-use tracking guide is a great starter for young and old. *Mammal Tracks and Scat: Life-Size Tracking Guide* can be ordered at Heartwoodpress.com.

Lynn Levine has also co-authored *Working with your Woodland*. Happy tracking!

