

# THE NATURALISTS' CLUB NEWSLETTER

April ~ June 2012 Schedule of Events

## APRIL

- 7 Saturday Spring Nature Walk, West Springfield  
14 Saturday Quabbin Reservation: Gate 30 ~ Rattlesnake Hill, *Orange*  
18 Wednesday APRIL MEETING: FABULOUS SNAKES OF WESTERN  
MASS.  
19 Thursday Rails to Trails, *Southwick*  
21 Saturday Waterfall Journey to Sanderson Falls, *Chester*  
28 Saturday Reading the Ways of Nature, *Palmer*

## MAY

- 5 Saturday Photographing Spring Wildflowers, *Westfield*  
16 Wednesday MAY MEETING: ATLANTIC SALMON RESTORATION  
IN THE CONNECTICUT RIVER BASIN  
17 Thursday Robinson State Park, *Agawam*  
19 Saturday Hubbard River Gorge, *Granville*  
26 Saturday Spring Birding Hike at the Rice Nature Preserve,  
*Wilbraham*  
27 Sunday Connecticut River Canoe Trip, *Gill*

## JUNE

- 5 Tuesday Transit of Venus, *Holyoke*  
10 Sunday Ipswich River Canoe Trip, *Topsfield*  
21 Thursday Fannie Stebbins Wildlife Refuge, *Longmeadow*  
24 Sunday Metacomet Trail Hike, *Simsbury, Connecticut*

*Stanley Park, Laughing Brook, and other events appear on pages 6 and 7.*

The Naturalists' Club  
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## Naturalist's Corner: Viewing the Transit of Venus

*Twice in a Lifetime.* Did you see the last transit of Venus, back in 2004? It was quite something, if you're into those things. I'm referring to the alignment of Earth, Venus and the sun. (No, it does not usher in the Age of Aquarius, and please don't break into song!) If you missed it then, you have another opportunity to see Earth's closest planet pass between us and the sun yet again, but if you miss this one, you will not see another unless you find a way to live for another 105½ years. What is so fun about this alignment is that we can see Venus as a small black dot seemingly moving across the surface of the setting sun. Those of us in North America can set our calendars to the evening of June 5th to see this spectacle. Eastern Africa and Europe will witness it at sunrise on June 6th. So here are some things to remember in order to appreciate the show.

*Protect your Eyes.* Looking into the sun is damaging to your eyes. Even though the sun is setting during the transit and a thick blanket of Earth's atmosphere is filtering its rays, you should still take precautions to see the event safely. Here are some things you can use.

- *A pinhole projector.* Rays shining through a tiny hole project the image of the sun onto a piece of paper, where viewing is safe. This can be as simple as using two pieces of cardboard, one white to act as a screen and another with a pinhole through which the sun will shine. There are more elaborate pinhole projector set-ups available at this website, [www.exploratorium.edu/eclipse/how.html](http://www.exploratorium.edu/eclipse/how.html), yet still within the realm of those willing to play with cardboard boxes and tape.
- *A solar filter on a refracting telescope.* The use of a reflecting telescope is highly discouraged as the sun's concentrated rays can destroy the telescope's mirror holders.
- *#14 or higher welder's glass.* If you happen to have one lying around the house, you can be the most strangely dressed observer at your viewing party.
- *Specially made solar sunglasses.* These are available commercially and look like those 3D glasses you get at the movie theater.
- *A sun funnel.* This is a device you can easily make to attach to the eyepiece of a telescope, allowing a group of people to see the event at the same time.
- *Watch the live webcast.* In the event the weather doesn't allow for outdoor viewing or if you are unwilling to go outside, you can watch from your computer or smartphone. The webcast will be provided by NASA and University of Hawaii Institute for Astronomy and transmitted from Mauna Kea, Hawaii.

*Where to see the Transit of Venus.* Find a clear view of the western horizon during sunset on June 5th of this year. Join other club members at Skinner State Reservation. There will be telescopes and other techniques available for safe viewing of the event. See June 5th write-up for details.

*When to see the Transit of Venus.* The time it takes Venus to transit from edge to edge across the background of the sun differs slightly from various locations on earth. Viewed from Westfield, Mass., Venus will begin its cross-solar trip at 6:03 p.m. and will leave the edge of the sun at 12:51 that night, well after we will be able to see it since the sun will be below our horizon. The event here will be 6 hours and 48 minutes long, whereas in Seattle, Washington, Venus touches the edge of the sun at 3:06 p.m. and departs at 9:48 p.m., 6 hours and 42 minutes later. This 6-minute difference, along with other calculations, allows astronomers to calculate the size of our solar system. The length of this article, as well as my understanding of astrophysics, doesn't allow me to go into detail about this, yet knowing it can be done is still fascinating.

So how will you celebrate this exciting event? Come join the club, or check it out from some other vantage point, because it won't happen again until the year 2117. For all the information you could probably ever need, visit [www.transitofvenus.org](http://www.transitofvenus.org).

~Nancy Condon~

**Spring Nature Walk, West Springfield**

Saturday, April 7, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon

**Leader:** Dietrich Schlobohm

**Registration:** Please call Dietrich to register. (788-4125)

**Meeting Place:** We will at the main entrance to Mittineague Park, off Route 20 in West Springfield by the kiosk. For more specific directions call Dietrich or use Map Quest.

Winter has slowly receded and the human community is getting excited about the signs and sounds of early spring. Nature is moving through its never-ending cycle. Mittineague Park is alive with the calls and songs of returning robins and red-winged blackbirds, and the chorus of peepers and wood frogs. Skunk cabbage, bluets, wood anemone, trout lily, trillium, jack in the pulpit and a host of other wildflowers are or will be making their appearance shortly. Celebrate the arrival of spring by observing and enjoying the debut of new birds, flowers, leafing trees, insects and wildlife. Dress for the weather, wear good footwear, and bring some food and water. The walk will last about two hours. Pets should be left at home. Heavy rain will cancel. Rain date is Sunday, April 8<sup>th</sup> at the same time.

One sees great things from the valley,  
only small things from the peak.

~G.K. Chesterton~

**Quabbin Reservation: Gate 30 ~ Rattlesnake Hill, Orange**

Saturday, April 14, from 10 a.m. till 2 p.m.

**Leader:** Bill Fontaine

**Registration:** Call Bill (533-2153)

**Meeting Place:** Florence Savings Bank parking lot at the Stop & Shop plaza on Route 9 in Belchertown.

This walk takes us along a gated, level paved road through a variety of habitats on the northern end of Quabbin Reservoir, an area featuring abandoned fields and orchards, wetlands, plantation plantings, cellar holes, a hand-laid keystone bridge and a variety of wildlife and wildflowers. We'll take our time as we wind our way toward the reservoir some 2.5 miles away, an easy in and out. Walk the whole 5 miles or any part of it. Wear appropriate footwear. We'll linger a bit at the reservoir to take in the view and have lunch, so bring along something to eat and drink.

APRIL MEETING

**THE FABULOUS SNAKES OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS**

Wednesday, April 18, starting at 7:30 p.m., at the Springfield Science Museum, Tolman Auditorium

**Presenter:** Tom Tynning

This month we welcome back Tom Tynning, professional naturalist and writer and currently professor of environmental science at Berkshire Community College. An old friend whom we saw more often when he was a field herpetologist with Mass Audubon, it's been quite a while since he's given one of his captivating talks to the club. Please join us tonight for a fascinating learning experience! Tom's graduate work at UMass Amherst focused on the biology and conservation of the timber rattlesnake. However, his presentation tonight will outline what is known today about smaller, often inconspicuous species of snakes we might find in our own backyards. It's been nearly forty years he's been watching snakes and recording their behaviors and locations, so it would appear there are still many subtleties to learn about these creatures! While many details of snakes' life histories yet remain unrecorded, Tom will demonstrate how snakes for him have been fantastic "study beasts" whose entire history, from the geologic past to recent glaciation, helps us understand how natural New England came to be as we know it today. Prepare to be mesmerized!

**Rails to Trails, Southwick**

Thursday, April 19, at 9 a.m.

Leader: Colette Potter (786-1805)

"Linear greenspaces, including trails and greenways, have all the traditional conservation benefits of preserving greenspace but also have additional benefits by way of their linear nature. As tools for ecology and conservation, greenways and trails help preserve important natural landscapes, provide needed links between fragmented habitats, and offer tremendous opportunities for protecting plant and animal species....In addition, they can allow humans to experience nature with minimal environmental impact." Please call to register and for meeting place. Remember to bring your binoculars. Dress for the weather. Bad weather cancels.

**Waterfall Journey to Sanderson Falls,**

*Chester*

Saturday, April 21, at 10 a.m.

**Meeting Place:** Westfield State University commuter lot

**Leader:** Dave Gallup (525-4697)

Join us for a leisurely spring walk to one of the most enchanting waterfalls in Western Mass. We will enjoy the splendors of the forest in early spring. Hopefully, trillium and Dutchman's breeches will be blooming along the way. When we arrive at the waterfall, we will have lunch at the base of the falls, enjoying its magnificence.

This is an easy walk, about three miles round trip. Those of you who have never been to this waterfall, it is a worthwhile experience. After lunch, for the hardy climbers, we will climb a ridge next to the falls and explore a waterfall above the main waterfall. From there we will hike along a forest trail to take in the grandeur of old growth hemlock and pine. Hope to see you there. Call for any questions. Rain cancels.

**Reading the Ways of Nature,** *Palmer*

Saturday, April 28, from 1 to 3 p.m.

**Leader:** Kevin Kopchynski

**Registration:** Call Kevin (267-4757) for directions and information.

Venturing onto the woodland trail at Miller Tract of Peaked Mountain, we'll explore the area looking for the various stories the land tells us, from deep geologic history up to recent human activity. Heavy rain will cancel.

**Photographing Spring Wildflowers,** *Westfield*

Saturday, May 5, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. (Rain date Sunday, May 6)

**Leader:** Sonya Vickers

**Registration:** Call to register. (566-3406)

Cultivated or wild, flowers are springing up all over! Come to a workshop where you'll not only learn more about your digital camera but also have a chance to photograph some of the flowers at Stanley Park. We'll gather to discuss close-up photography, then venture into the park, where you'll have a chance to practice what you're learning. Both SLR and point-and-shoot type digital cameras are capable of macro photography and will be covered. If you don't have a camera or if you plan to upgrade soon, learn what features are available now in this

fast-changing technological world. Most of all, though, come along to enjoy the flowers!

MAY MEETING

**ATLANTIC SALMON RESTORATION IN THE CONNECTICUT RIVER BASIN**

Wednesday, May 16, starting at 7:30 p.m. at the Springfield Science Museum, Tolman Auditorium  
Presenter: Micky Novak

Micky Novak, who's served as hatchery manager of the Cronin National Salmon Station for the past twenty years, is a man with passion for Atlantic salmon restoration. Prior to this assignment he'd been involved with the Merrimack River Atlantic Salmon Program for eleven years as the assistant manager of the Nashua National Fish Hatchery in New Hampshire.

Using Power Point, Micky will present up-to-date information about the salmon restoration program along the Connecticut River and its tributaries. He reports that last year 111 Atlantic salmon were trapped and transported to the Cronin National Salmon Station, producing 325,000 genetically wild eggs. This spring several hundred thousand young salmon will be stocked into local tributaries. With the lack of snow this winter, one can't help but wonder about the potential impact on out-migration this spring. Find out at the meeting from this friend of the club whose knowledge and experience on this subject runs deep.

Nature will bear the closest inspection.  
She invites us to lay our eye level with  
her smallest leaf, and take an insect  
view of its plain.

~Henry David Thoreau~

**Robinson State Park,** *Agawam*

Thursday, May 17, at 8:30 a.m.

**Leader:** Colette Potter (786-1805)

Spend a morning mid-May with this outgoing group of folks who've kept their eyes on local nature spots over the years. Why not follow along with them, down foot-friendly trails within the 800 acres of this riverfront park, a true retreat from the urban surroundings. Bring your binoculars and dress for the weather. Call to register and for meeting place. Bad weather cancels.

**Hubbard River Gorge, Granville**

Saturday, May 19, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**Leader:** Bill Fontaine

**Registration:** Call Bill (533-2153)

**Meeting Place:** Dunkin' Donuts parking lot, Southwick, on Route 10/202.

Come explore the Hubbard River Gorge! On this walk/hike, we'll explore the Hubbard River Gorge in Granville State Forest, Granville, formerly the hunting and fishing grounds of the Tunxis Native Americans. In 1749 the first white settler in the area, Samuel Hubbard, made his home along the banks of the river that now bears his name. This pristine, high-quality waterway is home to one of Massachusetts' native fish species, the brook trout. The river begins its journey to the sea in the hills surrounding Cobble Mountain, then drops 450 feet over some 2.5 miles as it makes its way to Barkhamsted Reservoir in Connecticut. For much of its course the river flows through Granville State Forest, an underappreciated jewel among Western Massachusetts state forests. We'll begin our walk along a gated forest road and then follow the river south toward Connecticut. When we've had our fill, we'll go back the way we came. Wear sturdy footwear and bring along something to eat and drink if you'd like.

**Spring Birding Hike at the Rice Nature Preserve, Wilbraham**

Saturday, May 26, starting at 8 a.m.

**Meeting Place:** Five Town Plaza, Burlington Coat Factory, Springfield

**Leaders:** Dave & Suzy Gallup (525-4697)

Grab your binoculars and let's go hiking along the Wilbraham mountain range on a trail leading through forest, meadows and field, a range of environments perfect for many species of birds. Vistas along the way will take your breath away, yet this preserve is right in your backyard! This hike is about a two-mile round trip. Wear appropriate hiking shoes, and don't forget your bird book and binoculars. Hopefully it will be a beautiful spring morning. Rain cancels.

Let us permit nature to have her way. She understands her business better than we do.

~Michel de Montaigne~

**Connecticut River Canoe Trip, Gill**

VT Line to Barton's Cove ~ 15 miles

Sunday, May 27, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Leaders:** Tom & Nancy Condon

**Registration:** Space is limited, so please call to sign up. (564-0895)

**Meeting Place:** McDonald's parking lot, Exit 26 off I-91, Greenfield

Join Tom and Nancy Condon to canoe this tranquil portion of the Connecticut River through Massachusetts. We start near the Vermont State line and end at Barton's Cove. Along the way, we'll paddle through bucolic landscapes and float beneath cottonwood forests. The river will take us under the French King Bridge where we'll get a great view of the geology of plate tectonics. Birdlife abounds along the river, so don't forget your binoculars. At Barton's Cove, we'll check out the new eagle's nest and see if anyone is in residence. Come prepared for the weather, bring along a lunch and plenty of water, and of course, be prepared to enjoy this special section of our Connecticut River.

I'll tell you how the sun rose a ribbon at a time.

~Emily Dickinson~

**Transit of Venus, Holyoke**

Tuesday, June 5, from 5 p.m. to sunset

**Leaders:** Tom Condon (564-0895) and Dave & Suzy Gallup

**Meeting Place, to be announced** ~ Likely the Summit House at Skinner Reservation

Because of the eccentricities of planetary orbits, the Earth, sun, and Venus rarely align themselves so we can see Venus cross the fiery disk of the sun. It'll be 105½ years before this happens again, which means if you missed it four years ago, you're probably never going to see the transit of Venus! Our plans are to set up telescopes with solar filters and other sun observation tools to allow you to safely view Venus' transit across the face of the sun. The transit will start at 6 p.m. and continues for a few hours until the sun is ensconced below the horizon. Assuming good weather, we should see some of the passing before the sun sets at around 8:20 p.m. To learn more about the transit of Venus, check out the Naturalist's Corner in this issue.

**Ipswich River Canoe Trip, Topsfield**

Sunday, June 10, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**Leaders:** Tom & Nancy Condon

**Registration:** Space is limited, so please call to sign up. (564-0895)

**Meeting Place:** AMC Lanes Parking Lot at intersection of I-291 and Mass Pike

A popular canoeing river in eastern Mass, the Ipswich River empties into Plum Island Sound. The paddle will follow an intriguing portion of the river through Wenham Swamp, Mass Audubon's Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary, and Bradley Palmer State Park. We'll enjoy vibrant stands of trees, islands, knolls, glacial deposits, and have a good chance of seeing turtles and shorebirds like herons and bitterns. Stream gradient is low, typical of a coastal river, so the current should not be fast. Our put-in will be at the Mass 97 bridge in Topsfield and take-out near Foote's Canoe Livery by Ipswich Road. Canoes can be rented here. Our journey will cover 8 river miles and take about 3 hours.

Take advantage of being near the coast and join us afterwards for a fresh lobster and clam meal in Essex. Bring all your canoe gear, including lunch and a drink. Don't forget to consider camera, binoculars, sun protection, rain gear, and maybe even a change of clothes to go out and eat. And of course, bring along your spirit of adventure.

**Fannie Stebbins Wildlife Refuge, Longmeadow**

Thursday, June 21, at 8 a.m.

**Leader:** Colette Potter (786-1805)

Start off this first full day of summer right: sauntering through Fannie Stebbins Memorial Wildlife Refuge, a setting favored by birds and birders alike. This sanctuary along the eastern bank of the Connecticut River also shelters the largest and highest-quality expanse of floodplain forest known in Massachusetts. Please call to register and for meeting place. Bring your binoculars and dress for the weather. Bad weather cancels.

**Metacomet Trail Hike, Simsbury, Conn.**

Sunday, June 24, from 10 a.m. to midafternoon

**Leader:** Dave Lovejoy (572-5307)

**Meeting place:** McLean Wildlife Refuge parking lot, just off Route 202 a little south of the center of Granby, Conn., for car-pooling to Simsbury

This hike on the Metacomet Trail in Talcott Mountain State Park will have gradual climbing and views of the Farmington River Valley. If the group prefers, we may continue to the Heublein Tower, which provides a panoramic view and would result in a 4.8 mile round trip. Heavy rain cancels.

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**LAUGHING BROOK, Hampden**

Find more details at Mass Audubon online or call Arcadia at 800-710-4550. A fee may be charged.

*Saturday, April 21*, from 10 to 11:30 a.m. **Vernal Pools**, with Kevin Kopchynski. We will sample for pond life. Usually, frog and salamander eggs are found.

*Saturday, May 5*, from 9 a.m. to noon. **Spring Wildflowers at Laughing Brook**, with Connie Parks.

Find spring ephemerals blooming on this early May walk led by Connie, who's quite a good botanist.

*Saturday, May 19*, from 10 a.m. to noon. **Turtles and Pond Life**, with Kevin Kopchynski and Patti Steinman. Come visit Laughing Brook and learn about turtles. Meet a live turtle, learn about the turtle species in the state and their status, and take a natural history walk at Laughing Brook. Bring a picnic lunch if you choose! This is a free program.

*Sundays, June 3rd and 10th*, between 1 and 5 p.m. **Introduction to Digital Nature Photography**, with Kevin Kopchynski. Initial class meets at Hampden Town Hall, with field sessions at Laughing Brook.

**KEEP HOMESTEAD MUSEUM, Monson**

Sunday, May 6, from 1:30 to 3 p.m. A talk on nature photography by Kevin Kopchynski, followed by a walk on trail through open meadow and woodland. Part of the Keep's First Sunday Open House series. Free. The museum is at 37 Ely Road in Monson. Call 267-4137. www.keephomesteadmuseum.org

**NATURE WORKSHOP SERIES, Stanley Park, Westfield**

For further information on the Nature Workshop Series, please call the Stanley Park Office 413-568-9312, ext. 100. All walks and workshops will meet at the entrance sign to the Frank Stanley Beveridge Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary, and will cancel if there is heavy rain.

**Enjoy the Birds of Spring, with Janice Zepko**

Saturday, May 5, starting at 9 a.m., for two hours

This workshop will focus on identifying birds by sight and sound. Beginners will learn how to use binoculars effectively and how to focus on the important characteristics of different groups of birds. Participants at all skill levels will benefit from discussions on the fine points of plumage and song that clinch a bird's identity. We will walk through a variety of habitats in the Sanctuary during the early part of spring migration, stopping to enjoy both resident songbirds and tropical migrants as they feed and sing. We may encounter as many as fifty different species, including rose-breasted grosbeak, Baltimore oriole, and several species of warblers. Bring a pair of binoculars if you have one, for a "bird's eye" view. Janice has a master's degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Conservation from UMass and is very active in the Allen Bird Club.

**Signs of Spring, with Art O'Leary**

Saturday, May 12, from 2 to 4 p.m.

We'll seek out the early signs of a long-awaited spring as we explore the Frank Stanley Beveridge Wildlife Sanctuary looking for subtle transformations from winter into spring ~ vernal pools, awakening plants, shrubs, trees, and returning bird and animal species. Art will help you complete blooming reports, bird censuses, and phenology charts to compare to previous years' records.

**Spring Wildflowers, with David Lovejoy**

Sunday, May 20, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

A casual walk through the various habitats found in the Frank Stanley Beveridge Wildlife Sanctuary in search of wildflowers. A mixture of native and naturalized species will be on view, with more than thirty species likely to be found in bloom. Bring a field guide if you like, though one is not necessary to enjoy the walk. Binoculars and camera are optional as well.

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**Delaware Water Gap Overnight Paddling Trip**

Monday, July 16, through Thursday, July 19  
Come paddle with us to the Delaware Water Gap, one of the cleanest and most scenic rivers on the East Coast. The Delaware Water Gap lies in a national recreation area established by Congress in 1965 to preserve and protect this unspoiled natural and historic area. The trip will consist of 2½ days of paddling and three nights camping. We will paddle between 40 and 50 miles, depending on conditions. Openings are limited, so if you are interested call Bob Cantin at 536-4126 after 3 p.m.

**Nominating Committee and Upcoming Election**

Elections are held at the May meeting. Anytime prior, members may contact the Nominating Committee to make additional nominations. Committee members are Karen Daniels (786-8228), Delores Gentile (783-6113), and Colette Potter (786-1805). The following incumbents are running for office:

- President ~ Dave Gallup
- Vice President ~ Nancy Condon
- Treasurer ~ Dave Lovejoy
- Corresponding Secretary ~ Suzanne Gallup
- Recording Secretary ~ Sonya Vickers
- Directors ~ Tom Condon, Bill Fontaine, Jack Megas, Dietrich Schlobohm

Nominations may also be made from the floor at the May meeting.

By June our brook's run out of song and speed. Sought for much after that, it will be found either to have gone groping underground...or flourished and come up in jewel-weed, weak foliage that is blown upon and bent even against the way its waters went... ~ Robert Frost ~

## FROM THE TREASURER

Members with an "11-12" (or later) on their newsletter mailing label are paid up for (at least) the current year. Otherwise, unless you remit dues for the current year, this is the last issue you will receive and in April you will be sent a final reminder to continue your membership. Please save us the time and expense of mailing these April reminders by sending your check now, payable to the Naturalists' Club and mailed to Dave Lovejoy, Department of Biology, Westfield State University, Westfield MA 01086. *Note:* If your address and contact information have not changed, the form below need not be completed. We would, however, like your email address if you haven't sent it previously. Thanks. *Please note: Since Dave Lovejoy maintains the Naturalists' Club mailing list, please direct special requests or changes to him.*

## MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

\$15 per year Individual/Family Membership  
\$25 per year Supporting Membership  
\$50 per year Sustaining Members

Just a reminder... Please be mindful of the environment and fuel costs. If possible, please:

- carpool to destinations
- share costs with your driver.

Thank you.

~ Naturalists' Club Board of Directors ~

The NATURALISTS' CLUB was founded in 1969 for the purpose of actively promoting knowledge, appreciation, and preservation of our natural environment. It is an all-volunteer non-profit organization.

Education is a main focus of The NATURALISTS' CLUB.

Programming with an emphasis on local natural history is designed to create camaraderie among people of diverse interests, through experiences

deepening appreciation of nature. Activities are geared to acquaint the layperson with the natural world, mostly through field trips.

Monthly meetings are held at the Science Museum at the Quadrangle in Springfield, Mass. Most field trips and programs are free.

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*Sorry, but due to computer issues this spring issue has been produced without Loren's finesse.*

## RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP NOW

Name

Address

Phone Number

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Requests for programs/trips