

The 85th Annual Gathering of the Thoreau Society
Living Well: Thoreau, Health, and Flourishing
July 8-12, 2026

REGISTRATION

Registration includes all in-person sessions except where otherwise noted.

[Register Online](#) OR [Download the Mail-In Form](#)

One-Day Registration is walk-in only and \$90/person. NOTE: Saturday's programs are all free.

[Registration for Virtual Access](#) includes only the panels and talks at Trinity Episcopal Church.

We welcome all family, friends, and colleagues **interested in a single presentation**. Guests must check-in at the registration desk and make a donation *of any size* in support of the program.

The Thoreau Alliance does not exclude anyone because of the inability to pay. Please contact rebecca@thoreaualliance.org to request reduced rates. If you'd like to help keep this event financially accessible to all, please consider making a donation to support attendance for others. [Donate Here](#).

VENUE

Most of the conference events take place at **Trinity Episcopal Church at 81 Elm St, Concord, MA 01742**.

Learn more about the Parish History [here](#).

ACCOMMODATIONS

If securing accommodations presents a hardship, we have a limited number of **homestay options** available.

Please email us at info@thoreaualliance.org and we will be happy to coordinate with one of our hosts.

Concord's Colonial Inn, 48 Monument Square, Concord, MA 01742 (1 mile to Trinity Episcopal Church)
Reservations: 800.370.9200. Mention the Thoreau Alliance when booking. www.concordscolonialinn.com

Residence Inn by Marriott, 320 Baker Avenue Extension, Concord, MA 01742 (1.6 miles to Trinity Episcopal) 978-341-0003 [BOOK WITH THIS LINK](#)

CARPOOLING & ROOM SHARES

Interested in coordinating with other attendees for carpooling or room shares? Please check the box in your registration form that permits us to add you and your contact information to the shared Google Sheet.

THOREAU FARM, THE BIRTHPLACE OF HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Free public tours are available on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, and Mondays at 11am, 1pm, and 3pm. To schedule a special tour, please email. Learn more at: thoreaufarm.org

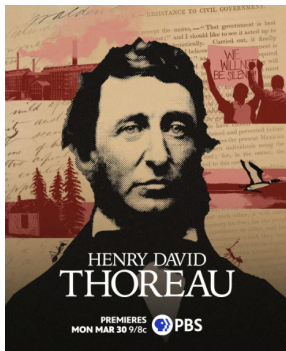
SHOP AT WALDEN POND

Located at 915 Walden Street and open year-round and follows seasonal park hours. Thoreau Society members get a 10% discount in-person, over the phone at 978-287-5477, and online at: shopatwaldenpond.org/

QUESTIONS?

Reach out to rebecca@thoreaualliance.org or 978-369-5321 with any questions or concerns.

PRE-CONFERENCE EVENTS



THOREAU DOCUMENTARY: TALK WITH THE EXPERTS

Leading Thoreau scholars featured in the film discuss the new documentary. You are encouraged to watch the documentary before attending as only clips will be shown.

April 12, 2-3 pm on Zoom [Recording Available](#)

May 7, 6-7:30 pm at Concord Free Public Library [Recording Available](#)

May 13, 7-8 pm on Zoom [Recording Available](#)

June 11, 6:00-7:30 at Concord Free Public Library [Recording Available](#)

June 14, 2-3 pm on Zoom [Recording Available](#)

Free and open to all.



Presented in partnership with



THOREAU PRIZE HONORING ROSS GAY

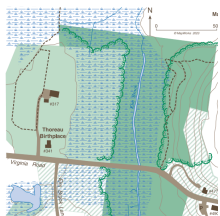
June 14, 2026 at 7:00pm

TriCon Church, Walden Street, Concord

The Thoreau Alliance is delighted to honor **Ross Gay**, acclaimed poet and essayist, with the **2026 Henry David Thoreau Prize for Literary Excellence in Nature Writing**.

Gay is the author of four books of poetry—including *Against Which*, *Bringing the Shovel Down*, *Be Holding* (winner of the PEN/Jean Stein Award), and *Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude* (winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award)—as well as three essay collections: *The Book of Delights*, *Inciting Joy*, and *The Book of (More) Delights*. Through his writing, Gay celebrates curiosity, gratitude,

and delight in everyday life, inviting readers to slow down, notice the small wonders, and engage the world with care—an approach that resonates deeply with Thoreau's attentiveness to nature and daily life. **Students and educators may attend for free.**



WETLANDS TALK & WALK

NEW DATE! Saturday, June 13, 2026. 1:00-3:00pm

At Thoreau Farm, 341 Virginia Rd, Concord, MA

An all-levels presentation on wetlands ecology followed by a guided walk with OARS' wetlands scientist, Ingeborg Hegemann, and Concord Land Conservation Trust's Manager of Land Stewardship, Alexi Dart-Padover, at CLCT's Elm Brook property. **Registration is free and required.**



Presented in partnership with

INFO SESSION FOR CONFERENCE PRESENTERS

Sunday, June 7, at 4pm on Zoom

[Recording Available Here](#)

Join conference committee members for an overview of presentation guidelines and conference expectations. It is a chance to ask questions and meet fellow presenters. This session will help ensure new and seasoned presenters feel prepared.

CONFERENCE EXHIBITION

A PALACE OF TREES: THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF HENRY DAVID THOREAU

AN EXHIBITION BY
PHOTOGRAPHER
JEFFREY STEEN



"Stairway" - Mr. Thoreau's birth-house

JULY & AUGUST 2026
TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH
81 ELM STREET, CONCORD

An invitation to see, anew, places important
to Thoreau's life and reconsider his themes:
the wonderment of nature and intricacies
of the human condition.

This exhibition of more than 20 works by photographer Jeffrey Steen is an effort to re-imagine Thoreau's efforts to understand himself and the world around him and, in that effort, to uplift and expand the understanding of others. Presented in collaboration with the Robbins House and the Art Committee of Trinity Episcopal Church.



WEDNESDAY, JULY 8

9:00 am - 11:00 am Alumni Reunion for Barbara Mossberg's Memoirists Thoreau Farm
Free and open to alumni of Barbara's past programs. Seasoned participants from Barbara Mossberg's iconic memoir "joy"shops will regroup for a special reunion, check in, and workshop at Thoreau Farm—and PIE! Donations encouraged in support of future workshops. RSVP to info@thoreaualliance.org

10:00am - 12:00pm Volunteering at Gaining Ground Thoreau Farm, 341 Virginia Rd.
Free. Pre-registration required; limited to twelve participants.
Join us for two-hours of volunteering at Gaining Ground, the organic, no-till farm behind Thoreau's Birthplace. We'll help with farm tasks under the guidance of professional farmers.



Our mission is to provide free, sustainably grown, fresh organic produce to people experiencing food insecurity. We do this with the helping hands of a diverse community of volunteers who work and learn with us on our farm. Production has risen from 2,500 pounds at the start to 127,000 pounds in 2020, all of which is donated to over fifteen hunger relief organizations.

WEDNESDAY WORKSHOPS

(Pre-registration required, except Open Forum. Contact the Alliance office for reduced/waived fees.)

10:30pm - 12:00pm Then & Now: Peaceful Activism & Practical Action Wright Tavern
FREE. Registration encouraged.
Learn from a panel of local activists about current causes and initiatives then break into groups for taking action. Learn from: Jen Hurley-Wales, on forming and effectively sustaining a team's energy; Marsha Turin on the role music plays in activism; Julia Gengster, on organizing and supporting stand-outs and their value to the community; Chris Miara on Build Back Blue, a postcarding organizational effort; Julie Hirschler on supporting standouts against ICE and its allies at Hanscom; and a representative from SPJE (Stop Private Jet Expansion) addressing the strategies needed to thwart private jet expansion at Hanscom.



Dedicated to preserving our democracy and promoting progressive values. concordindivisible.org/

**STOP PRIVATE
JET EXPANSION**
at Hanscom or Anywhere

*A coalition of state and local organizations standing against the plan to **expand** private jet capacity at Hanscom. stopprivatejetexpansion.org/*



Wright's Tavern is a historic tavern located in the center of Concord. It is now a National Historic Landmark owned by the Society of the First Parish, Concord, with important associations with the Battle of Lexington and Concord at the start of the American Revolution. www.wrighttavern.org/

12:00 pm – 2:00 pm **Memoir Workshop with Barbara Mossberg** Thoreau Farm
\$15/person; limited to 12 participants.
Calling new and seasoned memoirists to the woods for a three-hour transformational writing workshop with Barbara Mossberg. Explore your own woods with Thoreau as a model for memoir as a life-changing, life-saving act.

~~12:00 pm – 2:00 pm **Leave No Trace Trail Training at the Concord Scout House** CANCELED~~

12:00pm – 2:00 pm **Workshop: Teaching with the Documentary** Parish Hall, Trinity Episcopal
FREE. Presented by Kristen Case, Frank Cronin, John Kucich & Lucy Salib with support from the Thoreau Alliance Education Committee.
The new Ken Burns / Ewers Brothers documentary offers an incredible opportunity to bring Thoreau to new audiences. This workshop will share our experiences with the documentary in a variety of settings, from universities and community colleges to libraries and community centers, using a range of strategies. You will leave with various tools and resources to help teach with the documentary yourself.

12:00 pm – 2:00 pm **Whole-Brain Journaling with Sarah Gothe** Room TBD, Trinity Episcopal
FREE; Limited to 12 participants. Pre-registration encouraged.
This pre-conference workshop explores the integration of writing and drawing through Thoreau's bilateral stimulation technique, engaging both left- and right-brain processes. By alternating and combining written and visual expression, participants are invited into a more holistic, embodied creative practice. The workshop will include a balance of group and individual activities, such as guided writing, drawing, and walking—both together and independently. These varied modes are designed to support reflection, creativity, and fresh ways of thinking and making meaning.

PLENARY SESSIONS

2:30 pm – 2:45 pm **Conference Welcome and Announcements** TEC, Main Hall

2:45 pm – 4:00 pm **FEATURED OPENING PANEL: Critical Health Comes to Concord *Highlights from the Paris Conference Exploring Feminist Perspectives on Health and Well-Being in the Nineteenth-Century United States***

Moderator: Alice De Galzain

Main Hall

Ariel Silver, *Labor Pains*": *Economics, Medicine, and Motherhood for Nineteenth-Century American Women*

Phyllis Cole, *Illness and Health in the Personal Writing of Two Transcendentalist Women*

Kate Culkin, *Enthroned Cheerfulness: Illness and Optimism in the Life of Edith Emerson Forbes*

4:00 pm – 5:45 pm **"Worth the Postage": Thoreau's Correspondence** Main Hall

Presider: Kathleen Kelly

Celebrate the publication of the third and final volume of Thoreau's correspondence (*The Correspondence of Henry D. Thoreau: Volume 3: 1857–1862*), edited by Robert N. Hudspeth, Elizabeth Hall Witherell, and Lihong Xie.

Beth Witherell, *Second-class Letters: Thoreau Reuses his Mail*.
Michael Jonik, *Correspondences: Stoic Ethics and the Eco-Politics of Friendship*

Kristen Case, Cristin Ellis, Rebecca Kneale Gould, Marc Jolley, Jake McGinnis, and Geoff Wisner have each chosen a letter to discuss briefly (letters supplied before the Gathering, TBA) We invite the audience to discuss a letter of their choosing—please bring a few copies to share. We will also have selected letters that we can give to folks who would like to participate, but did not bring a letter.

This session riffs on this year’s AG theme, “Living Well: Thoreau, Health, and Flourishing,” by highlighting the (lost) art of letter writing as a way to affirm connection and community in spite of distance and absence.

Dinner on your own.

6:45 pm – 8:00 pm **Screening: *Henry David Thoreau, Episode 1*** Concord Free Public Library
Conference participants and the public are invited to this free viewing in the Goodwin Forum.
Experience **episode one** of *Henry David Thoreau*, a film by Erik Ewers and Christopher Loren Ewers that traces Thoreau’s journey from his early life in Concord, Massachusetts, to his deep engagement with the moral crises of the 19th century, including industrialization, slavery, war, and environmental degradation.

THURSDAY, JULY 9

6:30 am – 8:30 am Walk in Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge with Peter Alden

Meet at the Municipal Parking Lot on Keyes Road for car-pooling.



Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge is roughly 85% composed of valuable freshwater wetlands, alongside the Sudbury and Concord Rivers. The Sudbury unit includes tranquil trails around wetlands and through woodlands and features a non-motorized boat launch on the Sudbury River. The Eastern MA Complex headquarters is located at this unit and you can purchase America the Beautiful Passes here. The Concord unit has excellent birding, and noted ornithologists consider this unit to be one of the best inland birding areas in the state. This site has a wildlife observational tower, observational platform and direct access to the Concord River. <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/great-meadows>

7:30 – 8:30 am A Walking Conversation on Eudaimonia, Flourishing & Thoreau with Marc Martorana

Meet at the Walden Street Parking lot at the Hapgood-Wright Town Forest end of the Ramble.

What does it mean to live well—not just happily, but deeply and purposefully? Join us for a gentle, guided walk through the Thoreau-Emerson Ramble as we explore the idea of *eudaimonia*, an ancient Greek concept of human flourishing that asks how we might live a full and meaningful life.

Inspired by the spirit and writings of Thoreau, this experience blends conversation, reflection, and movement. Along the way, participants discuss how attention, virtue, and connection—to ourselves, each other, and the natural world—shape a life well lived.

This free program offers a welcoming space for conference attendees to slow down, connect, and think together—on foot. No preparation needed, just curiosity and comfortable shoes.



The Emerson-Thoreau Amble is a 1.7-mile walking path, over public and private property, blazed throughout with trail markers bearing a silhouette of the two famed authors. This trail represents an approximate walking route used by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau from Emerson's "Bush" house to Thoreau's cabin on Walden Pond. The natural beauty and tranquility of the forest, combined with the cultural and historical features rooted here makes the Amble a unique walking experience. The Emerson-Thoreau Amble is maintained by Concord's Division of Natural Resources and the Concord Trails Committee.

concordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/27909/Emerson-Thoreau-Amble-Trail-Map

PLENARY SESSIONS

- 9:00 am – 9:15 am **Conference Welcome, Reprise** Main Hall
- 9:15 am – 10:30 am **Panel: Spiritual Health**
Moderator: John Kucich Main Hall
Xiujuan Yao, *Like Corn in the Night*: On Thoreau's "Goods of the Soul"
Richard Smith, *The Saintly Life; Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Muscular Christianity*
Barry Andrews, *Thoreau and the Art of Life*
Thomas Moore, *The Way to your Natural Self: Walden as a Model for Becoming an Original Person*
- 10:30 am – 10:45 am Break
- 10:45 am – 11:30 am **Panel: Walking and Health**
Moderator: Beverly Pittman Main Hall
Todd Richardson, *Teaching Thoreau's Art of Walking in the Age of AI*
Karla Hailer, *Confessions of an Accidental Saunterer*
- 11:30 am – 12:00 pm **Talk on Special Topic** Main Hall
Brent Ranalli, *Celia P.R. Frease, Henry David Thoreau, and the Water Cure*
- 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm **OPEN LUNCH DISCUSSIONS** Main Hall
(Boxed lunches available for pre-order in registration form. **Ordering closes June 26**)
Bring your lunch, or pick up your pre-ordered boxed lunch, and join a discussion table. Topics include:
Body (Diet, Exercise, Sleep) *Did Thoreau's eating choices have health implications that resonate today? How do his observations about sleep and waking speak to modern challenges with rest?*
Mind (Attention, Solitude, Technology) *What role does attention play in both intellectual and physical health according to Thoreau's writings? Are there lessons in Thoreau's resistance to convenience?*
Environment (Nature, Public Health) *What can Thoreau teach about the effects of green spaces and natural rhythms? How could his era of epidemics and sanitation challenges inform public health today?*
Society (Relationships, Community) *How did Thoreau understand the impact of relationships and deep feelings (ex. love, grief) on a person's overall well-being? How did he envision healthy communities?*
Spirit (Meaning, Simplicity) *How did Thoreau seek purpose in everyday life? What practices did he use to cultivate spiritual well-being? How can reflecting on personal values improve health and resilience?*
- 1:30 pm – 2:45 pm **CONCURRENT SESSIONS**
- | | |
|---|---|
| <u>Panel: Wellness & Thoreau Across Cultures</u> | <u>Panel: Health in Thoreau's Texts</u> |
| Moderator: Catherine Staples Chapel | Moderator: Marc Jolley Main Hall |
| Richard Piccarreto, <i>Soul Matters: Thoreau's Soul-Health Illuminated by Advaita Vedanta</i> | Paul Schacht and Beth Witherell, <i>Following "Higher Laws"</i> |
| Shelley Hawks, <i>The Finishing Stroke of the Artist of Kouroo in Walden: How does it compare to Chinese painter Shitao's concept of the Single Stroke?</i> | Freya Riebling, <i>The Picture of Health: Therien in Walden</i> |
| Julia Du, <i>Thoreau's Enduring Popularity in China</i> | John Kucich, <i>Thoreau's Native Medicine</i> |
| John Terence Hyland, <i>Dare to be Daniel</i> | Charmion Gustke, <i>From East to West: A Thoreauvian Guide Through the River of Grief</i> |

4:30 pm - 5:45 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Panel: Joy and Despair

Moderator: Court Booth Chapel
Michael Schleifer, *Surely Joy is the Condition of Life*
Don Jewler, *Acceptance, Optimism, and the Song of
Blackbirds: Thoreau's Tonic for Well-Being*
Joan Spinazola, *Healing with Humor*
William Fusfield, "Moments in Time" and "Eternal
Instants": *Some Thoughts on Henry Thoreau's
Transcendental Epistemology*

Panel: Economic Health

Moderator: Molly Eberle Main Hall
Alissa O'Brien, *Voluntary Poverty: Being Poor with
Purpose* ([2026 Fellowship Awardee](#))
Eric C. Miller, *The Prophet of Degrowth: Thoreau,
Simplicity, and Economy*
Ken Lizotte, *The Market Value of Henry's Cabin:
Affordable? Sunk Cost? ... or Ongoing Profit!*
Paul Carr, *Economics to Heal our Ecology*

6:00 pm - 6:30 pm Conference Social (No-host)

Colonial Inn, Merchant's Row

6:30 pm - 8:30 pm Conference Dinner (Pre-registration required.)

Colonial Inn, Merchant's Row

You are welcome to continue the evening's festivities at the Forge Tavern at the Colonial Inn after dinner.

FRIDAY, JULY 10

6:30 am – 8:30 am Walk Around Walden with Robert Thorson & Catherine Staples

Meet at the Walden Pond Visitor Center

We hope you'll be engaged by the possibility of the geologist and poet taking a rain-or-shine walk around Walden pond, stopping in three or four places for the physical phenomena and the poetic take. The silent walk, in between stops, will allow participants to take in sensory detail—pines, wind, light—as well as ponder the geology of deep time, the poetry of spring turnover, radial lake breezes, the readiness to see things. (Detour to beaver lodge, perhaps?!) At our last stop, everyone will have a chance to begin writing something of their own in **small notebooks which we'll provide**, each with a different passage from *Walden* or the *Journal*.

8:30 am – 11:00 am Registration

TEC, Entryway

EXCURSIONS IN THOREAU COUNTRY

By popular demand, we are providing time to explore places and ideas.

8:30 am – 11:00 am Canoe the Concord River

Meet at the South Bridge Boathouse

\$25/person. Pre-registration required. Limited to 20 people.

A favorite for many Thoreauvians and a great way to explore the Concord River. Launching from South Bridge Boathouse, close to Trinity Episcopal Church, it takes about 45 minutes to reach the North Bridge, where the “shot heard round the world” was fired, April 19, 1775.

8:30am – 10:30 am Walk part of the Henry David Thoreau Leave No Trace Trail with the Boy Scouts

FREE. Pre-registration encouraged, but you can join at any point.

Step outside and into Thoreau's beloved landscape on a walk along a portion of the Henry David Thoreau Leave No Trace Trail in Concord. The group will begin at the Concord Train Station, follow Main Street to Monument Square, and continue north to Sleepy Hollow Cemetery for a roughly 3 mile walk. Individuals may continue on to Great Meadows and the rest of the Thoreau LNT Trail, or return along the same or different path to the station or to Robbins House for the Picnic and Reading event.

The Thoreau Leave No Trace Trail was created in 2017 to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Henry David Thoreau's birthday through a partnership among The Thoreau Society, Thoreau Farm, Concord Scout House and the Boy Scouts Spirit of Adventure Council. It was approved by the Boy Scouts of America to be an official BSA “National Historic Trail,” which Scouts can hike and earn patches and medals.



The Concord Scout House

The Concord Scout House is an 18th-century barn that was completely renovated in 1930 and became a community meeting resource with a dance floor and stage. It is located in downtown Concord, Massachusetts.

<http://concordscouthouse.org/>

9:30 am – 10:30 am Meet the New Curator!

Walden Woods Project

FREE. Pre-registration required. Limited to 40 people.

Join **Jenifer Ishee**, the new Walden Woods Project Curator of Collections (including our Thoreau Society Collections) at the Higginson House at WWP for an informal program during which she is eager to meet Gathering attendees, talk about the Library and collections, and provide a chance to tour the current exhibition.

Rooted in the Woods: The Boundless Life and Writings of Henry David Thoreau

A two-part exhibition curated by The Walden Woods Project Library in collaboration with The Thoreau Alliance, in connection with the Ewers Brothers Production, Henry David Thoreau, Executive Producers, Ken Burns and Don Henley, which premiered on March 30, 2026 on PBS stations nationwide.

Henry David Thoreau lived a boundless life, yet one that was deeply connected to nature, in particular, the woods surrounding Walden Pond. The Walden Woods Project library is positioned in that same forest where Thoreau discovered his love of the natural world. Utilizing the rich primary materials mined from The Walden Woods Project Library Collections and The Thoreau Society Collections, **Part I, “Who he was, what he stood for” (On view May 1, 2026 to March 31, 2027)** focuses on Thoreau’s early adulthood, his emergence as a writer, how the forces of society, family, friends, and the Transcendentalist movement helped shape who he was and what he stood for, including the time he spent living at Walden Pond.



The Walden Woods Project Library holds more than 60,000 items that include books, manuscripts, periodicals, art, music, maps, pamphlets, correspondence, and personal histories about the lives and writings of the Transcendentalists. In particular, it provides the most comprehensive body of Thoreau-related material available in one place.

<https://www.walden.org/what-we-do/library/>

9:30am -10:30 am **Tour of Emerson House with Kate Culkin**

Emerson House

\$10/person; limited to 15 people. Pre-registration required. **SOLD OUT**

Join Kate Culkin, author of *Emerson’s Daughters*, for this special tour that celebrates sisterhood and highlights Ellen and Edith's private lives and their behind the scenes role in their father's career. This tour will appeal to visitors interested in women's history, and may be a perfect weekend outing to share with your sister or best friend.



RALPH WALDO EMERSON
MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

Founded in 1930 by members of the Emerson family, the Ralph Waldo Emerson Memorial Association—RWEMA—is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization guided by its mission to promote interest in and access to Ralph Waldo Emerson’s literary works and to preserve the home surroundings in which they were written.

To this end, the RWEMA manages the historic Ralph Waldo Emerson House in Concord, open to the public as a seasonal museum from late April through October. The RWEMA also owns the contents of the Emerson Study at the Concord Museum, a replica of Emerson’s home study that contains his original working library. The majority of Emerson’s archival materials are held at Harvard University’s Houghton Library and the Concord Free Public Library.

<https://rwema.org/>

10:00am - 11:00am "Thoreau Society Reads" Thoreau Prize Winner Ross Gay

Thoreau Farm



Free. Pre-registration required. Limited to 15 people.

Lead by Catherine Staples.

Join in our second "Thoreau Society Reads" event, a discussion of 2026 Thoreau Prize Winner Ross Gay's book *Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude*. We will consider: Where do we find the wild in this book of poems? Is it to be found in the fig tree on 9th and Christian? What vigor does the city fig bring to the community that builds around it? Is Ross Gay redefining wilderness as the ecological, as the community garden, perhaps even as wild attention to small things like buttoning a shirt or pushing a seed into the earth? We'll also explore the notion of kinship and the braid of sorrow and joy in his poems as well as excerpts and links from his essays in *Inciting Joy*.

Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude is available through the Shop at Walden Pond [HERE](#). Bring your copies to Thoreau Farm for this book group experience.

11 am - 12:30 pm Picnic & Reading of Thoreau's "Walking"

Robbins House

Free and open to all (no pre-registration required for reading.)

Pick up your pre-ordered boxed lunch (available for conference registrants until online registration closes) or bring your own picnic lunch to Robbins House lawn for public reading of one of Thoreau's most famous essays.



The Robbins House is a Concord-based nonprofit organization focused on raising awareness of Concord's African, African American, and antislavery history from the 17th through the 19th centuries. Our mission is to reveal the little known African American history of Concord and its regional and national importance. Our vision is to inspire conversation, expand understanding and contribute to a better society. <https://robbinshouse.org/>

1:00 pm - 4:30 pm Registration

TEC, Entryway

1:15 pm - 2:30 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Panel: Contemporary Health

Moderator: Nicole Palmer

Beverly Pittman, *Germ Theory: The Gateway from HDT to RFK, Jr.*

Elizabeth Scofield, *Comparing Elements of Contemporary "Blue Zones" to the Flourishing Lifestyles in Thoreau's Concord*

Katrina Byrd, *Dancing in the Storm*

Monica Kucich, *Bringing the Outdoors In: A Nature-Based Program for Wellness*

Panel: Philosophical Approaches to Flourishing

Moderator: David Gordon

Main Hall

Gary Ricketts, *Thoreau's Tranquility: Walden and the Hellenistic Ideal of Ataraxia*

William Homestead, *Thoreau and Philosophy as a Way of Life*

Marc Jolley, *Thoreau and Flourishing*

Josephine Doucette, *Worship as a Power of Healing and Action: Thoreau's Natural Sabbath*

2:30 pm - 2:45 pm Break

2:45 pm – 4:00 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Panel: Place & Health

Moderator: Robert Thorson Chapel
Dale Potts, *Naturalists Olaus & Mardie Murie, the Health of the Landscape and Peoples of Alaska in the Mid-20th Century*
Sonia Paradis, *Representations of the North as a Site of Learning in Thoreau* ([2026 Fellowship Awardee](#))
Jason Giannetti, *Thoreau and the Emerging Discipline of Geography*

Panel: Transcendentally Well: How the Alcotts and Their Circle Conceived of a Healthy Life

Moderator: Chrissa Ventrelle Main Hall
Sponsored by the Louisa May Alcott Society
Daniela Daniele, *Vegetarian Diets and Liberal Pedagogy: Bronson Alcott in the Transatlantic network of Utopian Abolitionists*
Tracey A. Cummings, *Louisa May Alcott's Thoreauvian Characters: Reflections on their Good Lives ... & Deaths*
Roberta Pardi-Oláh, *Health Education by Bronson Alcott and Its Representation in Louisa May Alcott's Juvenile Fiction*
Jan Turnquist, *Bumps, Brains, and Belief: The Place of Phrenology in 19th Century Health*



The LMA Society allows Alcott scholars and others to share in the study and appreciation of her life and works. Through scholarly panels, special symposia, and more, it connects scholars and expands the possibilities for Alcott studies. louisamayalcottsociety.org/

4:00 pm – 4:15 pm Break

4:15 pm – 5:30 pm CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Panel: Healthy Education

Moderator: Lydia Willsky-Ciollo Chapel
Marc Martorana, *Revisiting Thoreauvian Flourishing for Civic Education: A Tribute to Jason Scorza*
Frank Cronin, *Growing the Society: A New Kind of Huckleberry Party*
Jacob Hundt, *6 Years of Living Deliberately at Thoreau College: The Making of a Microcollege*

Panel: Ethics of Flourishing

Moderator: Lois Brown Main Hall
Christopher Ulloa Chaves, *Emerson's Thoreau and the Art of Living Well*
Donna Marie Przybojewski, *Thoreau's and St. Pope John Paul II's Perspectives for a Spiritually Healthy and Moral Marriage*
Michael Frederick, *Ethics of Personal Agency*
David Gordon, *Environmental Ethics is Bioethics*

Following these sessions, Michael Frederick will be presented the Thoreau Society Distinguished Service Award, in recognition of substantial dedication to the Thoreau Society and its mission.

Dinner on your own.

5:45 pm – 7:00 pm Young Scholars Social at Village Forge Tavern in the Colonial Inn

An informal gathering for students, early-career researchers, and emerging scholars attending the Annual Gathering. Connect with peers, exchange ideas, and enjoy conversation in a relaxed setting.

6:30 pm - 9:00 pm Special Reception at Barrow Bookstore

Attendees of the Thoreau Society Annual Gathering are cordially invited to an evening at the Barrow Bookstore. Stop by anytime for light refreshments and a chance to visit with fellow Thoreauvians. Weather permitting we will be outside, but the air conditioning will also be on in the store. Barrow Bookstore is located at 79 Main Street, behind the Fritz and Gigi clothing store in the yellow building.

Barrow Bookstore specializes in Concord history and authors (including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Bronson and Louisa May Alcott, Henry David Thoreau, and more) and a wide array of genres for readers of all ages and interests. From first editions to fine condition reading copies, to an assortment of book-inspired gifts, literary delights await.

6:30 pm - 9:30 pm Documentary Screening: *Henry David Thoreau*, Episodes 2 & 3 TEC, Main Hall

Attendees and the public are invited to experience the second and third parts of *Henry David Thoreau*. Concessions will be available, but all are also welcome to BYO dinner for the screening.



SATURDAY, JULY 11

All Saturday events are free and open to the public.

7:00 am – 8:30 am Memorial Walk at Walden Pond with Richard Smith Walden Pond

Meet at the Thoreau Cabin replica at Walden Pond State Reservation, 915 Walden Street

Begun in 1996 as a tribute to both Henry Thoreau and Walter Harding, this silent early morning saunter along the pond's shoreline offers a chance for individual contemplation. Witness the special morning atmosphere as we practice Pradakshina, an Eastern routine of honoring our mentors.

8:30 am – 4pm Registration

9:00 am – 10:00 am ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Please plan to attend this annual business meeting, during which we discuss current and future initiatives, hear from partner organizations, hear election results, and honor individuals with awards.

During this meeting, Jane Bennett receives the Thoreau Society Medal, the Thoreau Society's highest honor, in recognition of sustained, essential contributions to the legacy and vitality of Thoreauvian studies and ideals through extraordinary scholarship or service. Erik Ewers and Christopher Loren Ewers receive the Walter Harding Distinguished Achievement Award, in recognition of significant achievement that furthers the mission of the Thoreau Society.

[At other points in the program Michael Berger will be presented with the Walter Harding Distinguished Achievement Award and Michael Frederick will be presented with the Thoreau Society Distinguished Service Award.]

10:00 am – 10:15 am Break

10:15 am – 11:15 am DANA S. BRIGHAM MEMORIAL KEYNOTE LECTURE



“Thoreauvian Enchantments as Ecological Action”

Thoreau was enchanted by natural beings, atmospheres, and processes; nature cast a spell on him. And, what is more, Thoreau's own practice of “mythologizing” his encounters with animals, vegetables, and minerals also, like nonhuman nature, has an enchanting power. My talk will explore how the experience of enchantment can propel and support efforts to live ecologically, even amidst a society that is organized around exploitation of the earth and the impossible idea of endless (economic) “growth.”

Jane Bennett is Andrew W. Mellon Professor of the Humanities at Johns Hopkins University, where she holds a joint appointment in Political Science and Comparative Thought and Literature. A leading voice in environmental humanities and political philosophy, her work bridges nature-writing, American romanticism, political theory, and contemporary social thought. She is the author of influential books including *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*—translated into 13 languages—as well as *Influx & Efflux*, *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, and *Thoreau's Nature*. A founder of *Theory & Event* and former editor of *Political Theory*, Bennett is currently exploring ideas of a creative cosmos in ancient Greek and classical Daoist thought. Her work has been widely recognized, including a 2023 profile in *The New Yorker*.

11:15 am – 11:45 am Discussion in Response to Keynote

11:45 am – 1:15 pm STEWARDSHIP LUNCH DISCUSSIONS

(Boxed lunches available for pre-order in registration form. **Ordering closes June 26**)

Bring your lunch, or pick up your pre-ordered boxed lunch, and join a discussion. Topics focus on how our scholarly activities can be supported and how they might evolve over the next 5 or 10 years and include: Annual Gathering, Collections, Fellowships, Fundraising, Programs, Publications.

1:30 pm – 2:30 pm Erik Ewers & Christopher Loren Ewers Discuss *Henry David Thoreau* Main Hall

The filmmakers discuss the documentary, its research and production, and Thoreau's continuing relevance. *Please note: that this session is a discussion only; the film will not be shown during this time.*

2:30 pm – 2:45 pm Break

2:45 pm – 4:00 pm **Panel: Flourishing Differently**

Chapel

Moderator: Kristen Case

Lois Brown, *Flourishing Women and the Common Good in Thoreau's New England*

Kathy Fedorko, *From Desperation to Joy: Mental Health and Henry Thoreau*

David Emblidge, *Solitude and Visitors: No Smartphones at Walden Pond*

4:00 pm – 4:15 pm Break

4:15 pm – 5:30 pm **Panel: Natural Health & the Commons**

Chapel

Sponsored by the Associations for the Study of Literature and the Environment

Moderator: Cristin Ellis

Robert Thorson, *Hunting-Gathering for Health*

Katherine Stebbins, *Discovering a Huckleberry Cosmos on Cape Cod*

Jym St. Pierre, *Make Parks, Not War*

Jake McGinnis, *"Health & Happiness & Inspiration" in the Huckleberry Commons*



The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) seeks to inspire and promote intellectual work in the environmental humanities and arts. Our vision is an inclusive community whose members are committed to environmental research, education, literature, art and service, environmental justice, and ecological sustainability.

<https://www.asle.org/discover-asle/vision-history/>

5:30 pm – 7:30 pm **HAPPY HOUR BOOK SALE AND CELEBRATION**

Members and friends sell and sign their books during this active social event. Meet fellow conference attendees, catch up on recent Thoreau-related titles, and enjoy heavy hors d'oeuvres & desserts from NOSH/Concord Market. Free & open to all. Cash Bar.

Dinner on your own. No more conference events.

SUNDAY, JULY 12

6:30 am – 8:30 am Walk at Fairhaven Bay to Walden with Peter Alden

Meet at the Municipal Parking Lot on Keyes Road for car-pooling.

9:00 am – 10:00 am Coffee & Donuts for Educators

Thoreau Farm

This informal session will be an opportunity for teachers at all levels and contexts to discuss the opportunities and challenges of teaching Thoreau in our challenging times. Led by John Kucich, this session will include a special introduction to Michael Berger's *Henry David Thoreau: A Companion*.

10:00 am – 11:00 am CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Panel: "Give me Health and a Day": Emerson and Health, Illness, and Unity Thoreau Farm

Moderator: Austin Bailey

Ross Martin, *"Grows by decays": Physiology, Counter-Philosophy, and the Laws of Disease in Emerson*

Austin Bailey, *The Unclouded Eye/I: Vision as Vital Sympathy in Emerson*



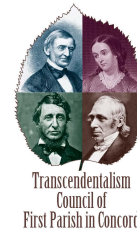
The Ralph Waldo Emerson Society, Inc. is dedicated to fostering scholarship on and appreciation of the life and writings of one of America's greatest authors. The Society, which has about 200 members in eleven countries, publishes the biannual [Emerson Society Papers \(ESP\)](#), featuring original scholarly articles, current book reviews, notes and queries, an annual Emerson bibliography, abstracts of conference papers, reflections on "My Emerson," and announcements of interest to Emersonians.

Sermon: "Living Transcendentally"

First Parish Church

Rev. Dr. Jim Sherblom, Preacher

This service is sponsored by the First Parish Transcendentalism Council and encourages any participants at the Thoreau Society Annual Gathering to attend.



First Parish in Concord

Unitarian Universalist | ALL ARE WELCOME!

<https://firstparish.org/wp/>

PLENARY SESSIONS

11:00am – 12:00pm Open Forum: Future of the Thoreau Alliance

Thoreau Farm

Last year, we gathered to explore the possibilities of a merger. In December, we voted. Now, we turn to the work ahead: building the strong, vibrant, and sustainable organization we imagined together. Join us for an informal discussion on the future of the Thoreau Alliance, including an update on merger implementation and what's coming next. This session is an opportunity to ask questions, share ideas, and help shape how we continue to move forward together.

11:00 pm, 1:00 pm, and 3:00 pm Tours of Thoreau Farm

12:00 pm – 2:00 pm Thoreau Farm Picnic (BYO)

Thoreau Farm

Bring your lunch and enjoy conversation among conference attendees while exploring the grounds of Thoreau Farm and Gaining Ground. Birthday cake and other refreshments will be served.

At the picnic, Michael Berger will be presented the Walter Harding Distinguished Achievement Award in recognition of significant scholarly achievement that furthers the mission of the Thoreau Society.

As we have for several years now, we invite all conference participants to attend the first session of the Orchard House Summer Conversational Series. The focus of the 2026 Conversation Series is “Creativity.”

2:30 pm - 4:00 pm “Artificial Intelligence Could Not Make THESE Mistakes: Creativity and the Correct Errors.” School of Philosophy at Orchard House

William J. Healey III, Jason Giannetti, and Alice Kenney

This panel explores creativity in the Alcott circle alongside contemporary questions about AI. Drawing on ideas from James Russell Lowell and James Joyce, it frames creativity as a process of transformation shaped by error, revision, and growth—central to the Alcotts’ ethos and to human experience more broadly. Speakers will consider why meaningful mistakes are essential to human creativity and how this differs from AI. Alice Kenney will address imitation and experimentation in development; William Healey will examine the role of the unconscious; and Jason Giannetti will explore Nietzsche’s perspective, together highlighting creativity as an evolving, distinctly human practice.

Louisa May Alcott’s Orchard House

Orchard House, purchased by Amos Bronson Alcott in 1857, became the Alcotts’ long-sought permanent home after decades of moving, with its apple orchard inspiring its name and reflecting Bronson’s ideals. It is best known as the place where Louisa May Alcott wrote and set Little Women, and today remains remarkably preserved, offering visitors an authentic glimpse into the family’s life and literary legacy.

<https://louisamayalcott.org/home>

End of Conference Events

6:00 - 9:30pm Unofficial Wrap-up Cookout on the Assabet River
\$25/person all inclusive. Hosted by Peter Alden and the Hammonds.
Details will be available at the registration table at the Annual Gathering.

POST CONFERENCE EVENTS



<https://thoreauwabanaki.org/>

Celebrating the Maine Woods!

The Thoreau-Wabanaki Trail Festival celebrates the past, present, and future of these North Woods, in partnership with the Wabanaki people and in commemoration of naturalist Henry David Thoreau's three trips into the wilds, two of which were launched from Moosehead Lake with Penobscot Guides Joseph Attean and Joe Polis. His journeys into nature forever informed his life and writing, and transformed the nation. Today, his words are quoted world-wide, the Maine woods sought for its many human benefits. The relationship to the land is not just aesthetic but one of spiritual connectedness to the Natural world. Distinctive places like this create an awareness of and sensitivity to the amazing gifts left to us.
~ Penobscot Elder Butch Phillips, Greenville, 2007

The eternity which I detect in Nature I predicate of myself also. I am reminded and reassured that I am the heir of eternal inheritances ~ Henry Thoreau, 1856

OUR MISSION ~ To encourage the understanding, appreciation, and stewardship of Maine's unique cultural and natural heritage; Inspire spiritual renewal in the North Woods for all Maine residents and visitors. 2026 programs are made possible in collaboration with the Town of Greenville, Katahdin Cruises/Moosehead Marine Museum, Shaw Public Library, The Thoreau Society,

Destination Moosehead Lake, the Maine Office of Tourism, Maine Woods Forever, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, The Depot historic train station, individual contributors, and many volunteers.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22

Spiritual Essence Of The North Woods, 7:30-11:30 am with Maine Guide Wendy Weiger & Harvard Divinity Professor Charles Stang

Penobscot Sense Of Place & The Birch Bark Canoe, 12:30-3:30 pm with Penobscot Cultural Director James E. Francis, Sr. & Penobscot Guide Jason Pardilla

Henry David Thoreau, Ken Burns Film Screening & Discussion, 7 pm with Director/Filmmaker Erik Ewers, Historian James E. Francis and John Kucich

THURSDAY, JULY 23

Moosehead Foraging Walk, 8:30-10 am with Maine Master Wilderness Guide Alexandra Conover Bennett
Living In The Landscape, Birch Bark Canoe 1-5 pm

Moosehead Lake Canoe Trip To Mt. Kineo, Thurs-Fri. with Master Maine Guide Kevin Slater & Penobscot Tribal Historian Chris Sockalexis
All About Maine Bears, 7 pm with Maine Bear Expert Caitlin Drasher

FRIDAY, JULY 24

Living In The Landscape, 9 - 11 am with Master Maine Wilderness Guide Alexandra Conover Bennett & Ecologist Amity Wilczek
Story Of Mt. Kineo, 11 am (time may change) with Penobscot Tribal Historian & Archeologist Chris Sockalexis

Busy Demons, Swampers, and Insolent Men; Henry Thoreau and the People of Maine, 11:30 am - 1 pm with Thoreau Historian Richard Smith
Ecology of the Moosehead Region, 3 - 4:30 pm with Ecologist Amity Wilczek & Master Maine Wilderness Guide Alexandra Conover Bennett
Traditional Summer & Winter Camp Exhibition, 3 - 5 pm

Unsettling Thoreau: Native Americans, Settler Colonialism And The Power Of Place 7 pm with the author, Professor John J. Kucich, Thoreau Society President

SATURDAY-MONDAY, JULY 25-27

Penobscot Ways In The Woods & Waters with Penobscot Nation Cultural Keepers

International Conference

Convened by Antonio Casado da Rocha (University of the Basque Country), Henrik Otterberg (The Thoreau Alliance) and François Specq (University of Lyon)

Several More Lives to Live Thoreau on Leaving, Returning, and Renewal

In September 1847, Henry David Thoreau left his cabin at Walden Pond after two years, two months and two days. Reflecting on that decision, he wrote: "I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live." In 2027, we mark the 180th anniversary of that departure, a moment that invites renewed attention not only to Thoreau's retreat, but to what comes after it.

This international conference proposes to explore Thoreau as a thinker of transition. While Walden is often read as a paradigm of withdrawal, Thoreau's own framing emphasizes movement: leaving, returning, and renewal. The experience of retreat is not an endpoint, but part of a broader cycle through which individuals and communities transform themselves and re-engage with the world.



The theme resonates in a particularly meaningful way at Arantzazu Sanctuary, situated at 700m in the heart of the Basque Country. For centuries, the Franciscan community of Arantzazu has cultivated a space of contemplation, intellectual life, and cultural production. This conjunction offers a unique opportunity to think about the dynamics of departure and renewal across different contexts. What does it mean to leave a place that has shaped one's way of life? How do practices of retreat, whether philosophical, spiritual, or ecological, translate into new forms of engagement? What kinds of personal, social, and institutional transformations are made possible through such transitions?

We invite contributions that address Thoreau's work and its contemporary relevance through the lens of leaving, returning, and renewal. We particularly welcome interdisciplinary approaches that connect philosophy, environmental humanities, anthropology, religious studies, political theory, architecture, local history and social practice.

Arantzazu (Oñati, Gipuzkoa), 3-5 June 2027

International Conference

Convened by Antonio Casado da Rocha (University of the Basque Country), Henrik Otterberg (The Thoreau Alliance) and François Specq (University of Lyon)

Several More Lives to Live Thoreau on Leaving, Returning, and Renewal

For more information, please visit <https://aktibait.eus/several-more-lives-to-live/>

Please submit your Abstract/Proposal with title & description, no longer than 300 words, by **October 15, 2026**, to henrik.otterberg@thoreausociety.org

Possible themes include, but are not limited to:

- The philosophical meaning of leaving in Thoreau's work.
- Returning from Walden: re-engagement, responsibility, and public life.
- Renewal as a personal, social, or ecological process.
- Retreat and its afterlives: from solitude to community.
- The relationship between contemplation and action.
- Sacred places, sanctuaries, and their transformations.
- The cultural landscapes of monastic communities.
- Thoreau's religion: spirituality, transcendentalism, and religious critique.
- Simplicity, frugality, and alternative forms of living after Walden.
- Democratic and ecological renewal inspired by Thoreau.
- Walking, returning, and inhabiting place.
- Thresholds, endings, and new beginnings.



Sponsored by:



Zientzia, Unibertsitate
eta Berrikuntza Saila

Arantzazu (Oñati, Gipuzkoa), 3-5 June 2027