

The Rhythm Bones Society
presents

BONES FEST



August 6-9, 2026
Westport, Massachusetts

Welcome to Westport

Welcome to Westport, Massachusetts, where rolling farmland meets the Atlantic Ocean. Settled by Europeans in the 1670s as part of Plymouth Colony, the town was officially established when it split from Dartmouth in 1787. The town was named Westport because it is the westernmost port in Massachusetts. Today, despite neighboring several cities, the town retains a quiet, rural character, with stone walls, salt marshes, and miles of shoreline.

As we gather to share music, we must also recognize that we are meeting on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded lands of the Acoaxet, Pocasset, and Pokanoket peoples of the Wampanoag Nation. We offer this acknowledgement with gratitude for their enduring stewardship of these lands and waters, and with respect for the living Indigenous communities whose history and culture continue to enrich this region.

We hope you'll take some time to explore Westport while you're here and enjoy its natural beauty and hospitality. Welcome—we're glad you're here.

Hello from Your Hosts

Jonathan and I are delighted to welcome you all again to Massachusetts' Southcoast! We've rattled together all over the country and have met plenty of new folks in the 20 years since we last hosted, in New Bedford. Although we've lost a good many friends and mentors over the years, the musical camaraderie and family reunion atmosphere of these Bones Fests remains. We're looking forward to a fun weekend with you all as we honor the legacy of the bones and the mission of the Rhythm Bones Society: to document, educate, and rattle on!

Melissa and Jonathan Danforth

Welcome to Bones Fest XXX in beautiful Southeastern Massachusetts. I am happy to be co-hosting this Event with Jonathan and Melissa Danforth, and we thank those who helped us make this Bones Fest a success. I look forward to seeing everyone who will be in Westport to talk about and play the instrument we love so much. From workshops to jamming to the Flash Mob to the Public Performance this promises to be a fun filled and educational weekend. We hope you will enjoy it.

Dean Robinson

Schedule

Thursday, August 6

4 - 6pm Sign-in and chat at **Townehouse Suites by Marriott**, 41 Old Bedford Rd, Westport MA

6 - 9pm Gather for food, jamming, and continued sign-in at **Backyard**, 140 Charlotte White Rd Extension, Westport MA

Friday, August 7

9am Chat & Rattle with coffee and pastry

10am - 12pm RBS **board meeting**, and at the same time:

10 - 10:45am Beginners' workshop/refreshers

11 - 11:45am Pass-Off Variations

12pm Casual **lunch** provided

1 - 4:45pm **Jamming and Workshops**, including:

Irish session/bodhrán workshop (Dean Robinson)

Bones techniques/stories lightning rounds

Bones exercises (Jonathan Danforth)

Bones-making (Steve Brown)

5 - 6pm dinner provided

6 - 8:30pm Informal performances and pass-offs

Schedule

Saturday, August 8

9am Chat & Rattle with coffee and pastry

10 - 11am Rhythm Bones Society **general meeting**

11 - 11:30 Group Photo at the head of the Westport River, across the street from 17 Drift Rd, Westport MA

11:30 - 12 Flash Mob at the Westport Farmers Market, 856 Main Rd, Westport MA

12 - 2pm Lunch on your own (see list in this program for ideas)

2 - 4:45pm Jamming, informal performances, and workshops including:

Advanced bones rhythms (Kenny Wolin)

Acoustic science and the bones (Steve Wixson)

5 - 6pm Dinner provided

6 - 7pm Cleanup and prep

7 - 8:30pm Public Performance in school auditorium

Sunday, August 9

10am Goodbyes and Brunch at Jonathan & Melissa's place

Bones Players at Bones Fest XXX

Michael Ballard (Newhall, CA) I first learned to play both bones and bodhrán at the Southern California Renaissance Pleasure Faire in 1983 and have been playing ever since. While I particularly enjoy playing with Irish dance tunes, I have also played with classical, mariachi, heavy metal, old-time and hip-hop groups.

J. C. Belleman (Riverside, RI) I'm an intermediate bones player, and also play English concertina, flute and whistle. I'm also an old fart.

Ron and Marie Bruschi (Albany, NY) Ron started playing bones at the suggestion of an old-time banjo playing friend. Ron is a life long lover of traditional dance. He teaches Irish Set Dance (squares) as well as Cajun and Zydeco.

Steve and Jennifer Brown (Winchendon, MA) Steve has been a student of bones playing and a bones maker for many years. He teaches a workshop at the New England Folk Festival every year, has hosted or co-hosted three Bones Fests, and was the first US citizen to win the All-Ireland Bones Playing Championship in 2003.

Andy Chase (Winchendon, MA) Andy Chase is a perpetually distracted multi-instrumentalist from north-central Massachusetts. He found his way to the bones while playing 19th century banjo music. In addition to various flavors of banjo he plays other stringed instruments, and has been known to dabble in concertina and theremin. He can be found online at <https://andychase.net>

Nicole Cooper (Ontario, Canada) Nicole is completely new to the bones and eager to see the best players in the world show their skills.

Jonathan, Melissa, and Emmett Danforth (Westport, MA) Jonathan learned to play from his granddad Percy Danforth, and discovered the world of bones players after meeting Steve Brown in 2001 at NEFFA. He and Melissa hosted Bones Fest X in 2006. Their son Emmett begins his sophomore year at this very school this fall.

Ernie Duffy (Thornton, NH) Ernie learned to play the bones from Elwin "Shorty" Boulet a number of years ago. He passed on the things he knew to Sky Bartlett. He likes to play to polka and fiddle music.

Skeff Flynn (Hedgesville, WV) Skeff has been playing since 2009. In 2015 he hosted Bones Fest XIX, and he is the current executive director of the Rhythm Bones Society.

Mark Fuller (Auburn, ME) Mark plays in jams and at contra dances.

Bruno Giles (Natick, MA) Bruno took a rhythm bones workshop in 2013 with Steve Brown and has been playing ever since. He was co-host of last year's Bones Fest in Natick, MA

Gerry and Janet Hines (Highlands Ranch, CO) Gerry was first exposed to rhythm bones by his grandfather who won many talent contests in the 1940s and 50s. Gerry inherited the ebony rhythm bones he used. In 2016 he and Janet hosted Bones Fest XX.

Wally Jakubas (Hampden, ME) I have been playing the rhythm bones for four years, and I am looking forward to attending my second bones festival. Since the last festival, I have been trying to broaden the types of music I play the bones to. It will be great to see everyone again and participate in some sessions.

Gene Joy (Bristol, RI) Gene's first introduction to Bones was with Steve Brown who was playing Bones with The Greencastle Band and has been a participant for many years in the bones workshops at NEFFA.

Nathan Keyes (Keene, NH) Nathan is an avid fan of percussion and history.

Glen Kidwell (Quincy, MA) Glen learned to bones a little a few years ago at NEFFA, owns 2 pairs, noodles with them a little, and is looking to learn more and gain confidence.

Mary Gunderson King (Hedgesville, WV) Mary doesn't play the bones, but loves to make music with those who do, especially with Skeff. She plays guitar and sings, performs as a duo with Skeff, and is joyful to be with you all again!

Lissa Michalak (New York, NY) Lissa is an anatomist and likes many sorts of bones. She recently pulled her pair of bones out at a professional gig for the first time. She can play with two hands, even.

Darryl "Spike Bones" Muhrer (Columbia, MO) Spike is a stage and street performer who considers himself a dancer as much as a musician. He plays with Irish, Old-Time, Folk, Jazz, and many other types of music. He co-hosted Bones Fest XII in 2008.

Trueman Muhrer-Irwin (Buffalo, NY) Trueman is the son of the legendary Spike Bones aka Darryl Muhrer. He's a casual but enthusiastic player who always enjoys the Rhythm Bones Community.

Evan Lattimore (Camden, ME) Evan was born on Manhattan, raised in Rhode Island, and is currently living in Maine. He is a retired public school music teacher teaching private lessons at the Mid Coast Music Academy in Rockport, Maine. He plays all kinds of percussion instruments wherever he can.

Tim Reilly (Mystic, CT) Tim is a percussionist, bones-maker, scrimshander, and historical researcher. He has played the bones in many countries and on the high seas since 1988.

Dean Robinson (Bristol, RI) I learned to play the bones in 2018 while attending the Craiceann bodhran school in Ireland. My first Bones Fest was in 2023 in New Hampshire, and I am a Co-Host of this year's Bones Fest with Jonathan and Melissa Danforth. I play the bones at Irish music sessions and at performances with the band Fáilte, and have participated in and conducted bones workshops in the US and Ireland.

Dennis Riedesel (Boerne, TX) Dennis picked up the bones while working as a historical re-enactor. He has hosted two Bones Fests in San Antonio, and owns a set of mammoth ivory bones.

Rob Rudin (Boston, MA) Rob's bag of tricks includes playing up to 4 bones in each hand, and he can be seen boning with The Busted Jug Band and radical-traditional band Einstein's Little Homunculus.

Jim Runner (Lock Haven, PA) My grandfather played the bones, but learning to play the bones really requires teaching yourself. Whether alone in the wilderness or on center stage, they are wonderful musical companions. One bones player rarely meets another. We are so few and far between that we all must imagine we are the best in the world. Until we attend a Bones Fest!

Peter Sheppard (Christ Church, Barbados) My grandfather was a real expert bones player, and he taught me when I was about 14. I seldom play, as young people don't really know what it's all about, and the chances to play in public are limited down here. I learned to play with both hands, and use the same bones that my Grandfather used to play with.

Bruce Strong (Billerica, MA) Bruce first found out about bones from Mr. Brown at the New England Folk Festival (NEFFA) in the late 80's and has been trying to learn how to do them ever since. He thinks he's getting there.

Cliff Teixeira (Bristol, RI) I attended last year's fest in Natick and enjoyed myself. I just returned home from attending the Craiceann Bodhrán Summer-school on the Aran Island of Inis Oírr in Ireland. I brought along my bones and got to play them at the evening pub Trad sessions. I was the only one playing bones and had a great time playing the one hand style that is common in Ireland.

Bridget Verveat (Bath, ME) I just bought my first two pairs of bones at NEFFA, and I have been having fun playing and experimenting with them since then. I've really enjoyed sharing them with friends; they are so fun and intriguing and unique and full of history, and I am so happy to be a proud owner and novice player of some bones!

Rowan Wallace (Newton, MA) Rowan is 12 years old. He encountered bones at NEFFA this year and is interested in learning more. He is attending with his family, Joy and Drew.

James Weitlauf (Bath, ME) I am a bones and banjo player originally from Mystic Connecticut. I was introduced to the bones while working as a chanteyman at Mystic Seaport Museum and learned an immense amount about bones playing from Tim Reilly. There is a mysticity surrounding the bones that I just cannot get enough of.

Steve Wixson (Signal Mtn, TN) Steve is our webmaster, archivist, and the editor of our newsletter, *The Rhythm Bone Player*. He has hosted two Bones Fests. For many years he was secretary/treasurer of the Rhythm Bones Society as well. He consistently searches for innovative ways to play the bones.

Kenny Wolin (northern VA) I've been a percussionist and resident bones player with "The President's Own" United States Marine Band since 1997. I met my wife Teri at Bonesfest X, I proposed to her on stage at Bonesfest XIII, we hosted Bonesfest XIV with a Bonesfest wedding, and celebrated our 12yr anniversary with some of you at our home at Bonesfest XXVI in 2021.

Teri Wolin (northern VA) I began playing bones in 2004 at the urging of my music students. I learned to play bones by watching Mel Mercier's VHS and joined the RBS later that year. I am a multi-instrumentalist and vocalist originally from Buffalo, NY.

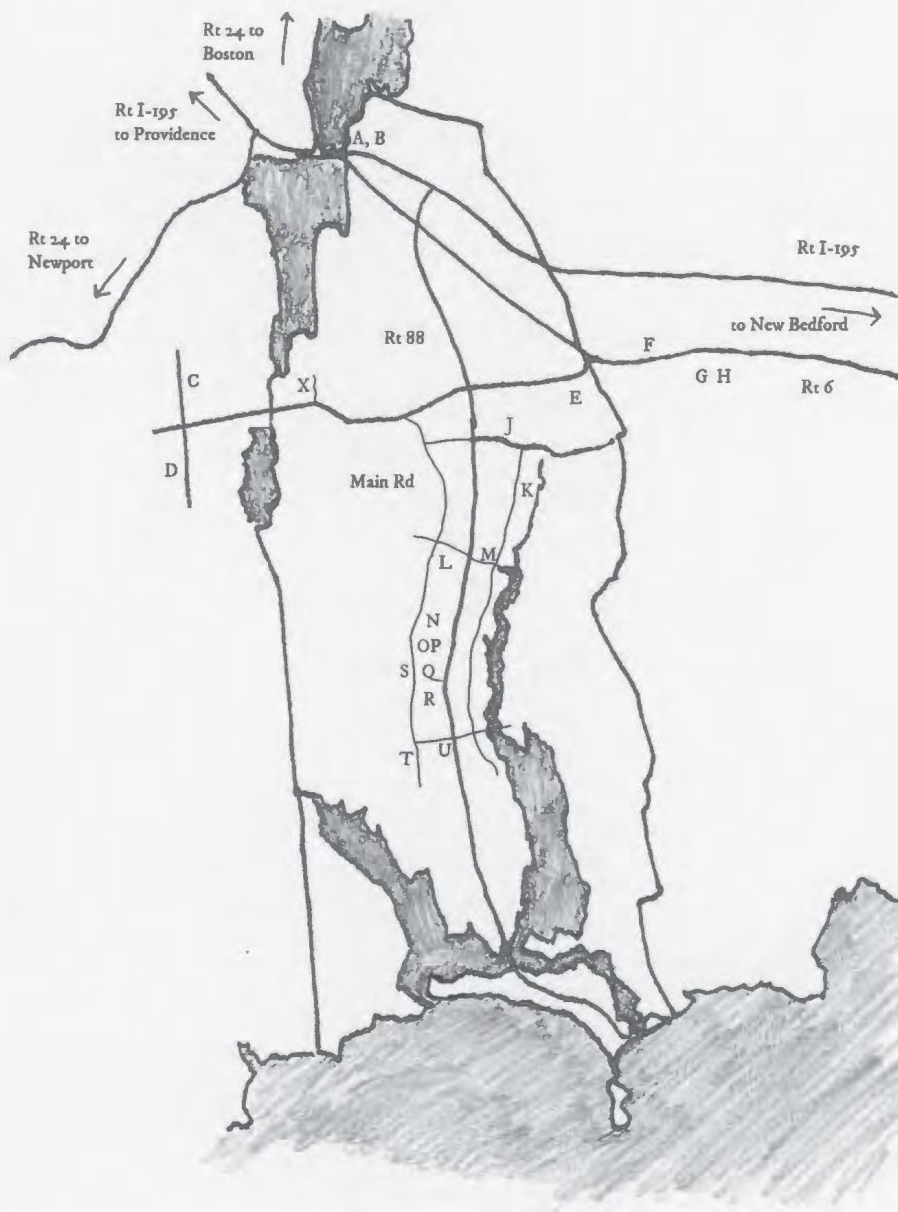
Food Local to the Fest

- B:** The Galley Grille, 66 State Rd (next to Marriott hotel)
- C:** Moose Cafe, 1160 Stafford Rd, Tiverton RI (300 flavors of soft serve ice cream)
- D:** Pine House, 13 Crandall Rd, Tiverton RI
- E:** Lexi-Lu's, 1133 American Legion Hwy
- F:** Cask & Pig, 780 State Rd, Dartmouth MA
- H:** Persy's Place, 715 State Rd, Dartmouth MA (next to Best Western hotel)
- L:** Bittersweet Farm, 438 Main Rd
- M:** Backyard, 140 Charlotte White Rd Ext
- N:** Wild Honey Cafe, 670 Main Rd
- O:** Village Pizza and Ice Cream, 760 Main Rd
- P:** Stonewall Tavern, 778 Main Rd
- Q:** Lees Market, 796 Main Rd (upscale supermarket with ready-to-eat options)
- S:** Partners Village Store, 865 Main Rd
- T:** Ten Cousins Brick Oven, 977 Main Rd
- U:** Handy Hill Creamery, 55 Hixbridge Rd

Important Fest Locations

- A:** Townehouse Suites by Marriott, 41 Old Bedford Rd
- G:** Best Western Dartmouth, 737 State Rd, Dartmouth MA
- J:** Westport Middle High School, 400 Old County Rd
- K:** Westport River, across from 17 Drift Rd
- R:** Westport Farmers Market, 856 Main Rd

All addresses in Westport MA unless otherwise specified



Thank You

Westport Community Schools, especially Kim Ouellette (head of custodial services, Laura Charette (WMHS principal), and Chris Nunes and Liam Sullivan (music faculty who have helped us out with the audio and lights in the auditorium)

Frontside Factory, who made our T-shirts this year



East Bay Printing & Copying

Backyard Westport

Riccardis

Cask and Pig

Tom and Hank Poitras

The Rhythm Bones Society

Percy Danforth

Those Bones Players who have come before us

S	G	Y	L	A	T	E	M	Y	V	A	E	H
O	M	O	T	T	O	B	B	O	N	E	S	C
R	C	W	N	N	E	G	Y	P	T	H	Z	T
H	I	O	A	U	Q	P	A	S	S	O	F	F
T	T	A	I	B	M	U	L	O	C	H	Y	C
E	S	Z	R	R	O	H	T	A	H	J	R	H
J	A	W	A	H	S	M	I	R	C	S	F	L
E	L	T	T	A	R	F	W	U	A	T	R	E
V	P	P	E	E	R	I	B	S	S	T	H	F
L	L	E	G	A	R	G	O	U	O	E	Y	E
G	R	E	E	N	S	B	O	R	O	W	T	L
P	B	G	V	A	S	S	U	M	E	O	H	I
D	O	N	Q	U	I	X	O	T	E	C	M	X

Bones

Rattle

Pass-Off (without the hyphen)

Ribs

When Spike Bones plays Craftsman wrenches

Goddess who was worshipped with bone clappers

_____ bones are made of wood

Ev _____ hosted the first Bones Fest

_____ are a bones-like instrument played in parts of Switzerland

Percy Danforth grew up in the District of _____

Earliest novel describing playing crockery shards like the bones

Shakespeare character who says "Let us have the tongs and the bones!"

Town in NC where the first Bones Fest was held

Jonathan plays in a band called The _____

Joe Birl made patented bones made of _____

Often heard at NEFFA bones workshops: " _____ the position!"

Rhythm

Gragell

Egypt

Scrimshaw