

Spring 2005



www.westfordconservationtrust.org



East Boston Camps Update

*Editor
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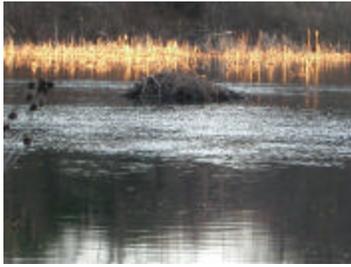
Congratulations to the wonderful townspeople of Westford for their unanimous vote of approval to purchase this 286 acre gem. Trust members were active in guiding more than 200 people on trail walks at East Boston Camps during a two month period. The Trust was also active in supporting the fundraising efforts of the Westford Land Preservation Foundation, by donating \$15,000 toward the purchase of the EBC land. The town of Westford is now the official owner of East Boston Camps land! The East Boston Camps Master Planning Committee has started working on developing the Master Plan for the future use of the land. Anyone interested in attending the planning meetings can call the town manager's office for the place and time.

New England Green Start *By Marian Harman*

The motto for New England GreenStart is "Feel good about your electricity." Mass Energy Consumer Alliance, a nonprofit energy supply company, supplies electrical energy which is generated from renewable power sources. At this time, GreenStart 100% gets its power from biomass (19%), small hydro (75%), solar (1%) and wind (5%) resources. These percentages will change, of course, in the years to come. Air emissions from those using this program are significantly less than the regional average. Emissions of carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxide, and sulfur dioxide are less than a third of the average for power generated from coal, oil and gas. Regular electric customers get 80% of their power from fossil fuel and nuclear power, none from wind and solar power. The user of GreenStart 100% will pay a bit more for his or her concern for the environment - about an extra 2.4 cents per kWh. As more people switch over, and as more sources of renewable energy come online, this price difference should diminish. Since Mass Energy is a non profit, 54% of your increased payment is tax deductible. You are billed through your regular electric company. The bill shows your regular payment, and your additional payment to Mass Energy.

Mass Energy also supplies Bio-Heat, a combination of 90% low-sulfur heating oil and 10% refined soy bean oil. This is a cleaner burning fuel that leaves less sulfur and soot in the furnace, is less toxic, produces fewer greenhouse gas emissions, and less smog-forming air pollutants. Mass Energy also provides grants to low income residents for their winter heating costs.

To learn more about GreenStart or to sign up for these programs you can go to Mass Energy's web site at www.massenergy.com, or call at (800) 287-3950. By the way, if you happen to be a member of Mass Audubon, indicate this to them. This will ensure that a portion of the proceeds are directed to energy efficiency improvements at Mass Audubon wildlife sanctuaries and nature centers.



Beaver Lodge at Stony Brook

Living with Beavers



Beaver dam at Stony Brook



Its all about beavers, but how much do you really know? Go to our website and try your hand at some beaver busting word puzzles!



A recent presentation on “Coping with Beavers” was given by Mike Callahan of Beaver Solutions (www.beaversolutions.com), an organization that has dealt with hundreds of beaver management situations since 1998. This program was co-sponsored by the Ayer Conservation Commission and the Nashua River Watershed Association (NRWA).

Mike first discussed the history and biology of beavers from their near extinction in the early 1700’s fur trade and land clearing, to their reintroduction in the 1930’s, to today’s issue of an increasing beaver population and their efforts to reclaim areas closer to human development.

The average beaver colony (about 6-12 beavers/family) usually inhabit about a half-mile length of a stream, and establish one large pond where they will build their lodge. The priority for a beaver colony is the ability to flood a large flat area by building dams and to have an adequate food supply (they are herbivores, enjoying tree bark, aquatic plants, and leaves to name a few). Beavers feel safest in the water, and this need is the main reason that beavers build dams to create ponds. Beavers prefer constrictions in the stream flow – thus their propensity toward blocking culverts. They use sticks and mud to build dams and lodges, and do not hibernate; they actively cut trees and shrubs and place these sticks in the mud around their lodge for food in winter.

Benefits: Beavers are considered a **Keystone** species - their ability to create wetlands supports other species such as other mammals, waterfowl (i.e. great blue heron, wood ducks), river otter, fish, turtles, birds and plants. Beaver ponds control downstream flooding, recharge the drinking- water aquifers, remove pollutants from water (wetlands slow down water flow and allow sediments to settle, which means cleaner water downstream) and also create vital habitats, open space and biodiversity.

Problems: Some common beaver problems involve flooding damage from a beaver pond (created by damming). These include blocked culverts (*a culvert is a sewer or drain crossing under a road or embankment*), damage to or loss of valued trees and plants, ineffective sewer systems, flooded basements, and flooded properties.

Trapping: In 1996, quick kill traps were restricted. Passing a trapping course and obtaining a state license is required to trap beaver. Trapping season is currently from November 1 – April 15. If there is a threat to human health & safety, one can trap outside this time frame as long as a permit is obtained from the local board of health. Trapping is used selectively, depending on the situation. Trapping to relocate beavers is not allowed in Massachusetts, therefore the beaver must be euthanized once it is caught.

Flow Devices: A flow device is a man made system that prevents or controls beaver damming activity. The blocking of culverts by beaver is common - the beaver is stimulated by the flow of water to dam the culvert. The use of culvert fences is one solution to this problem (beaver solutions has had a 97% success rate). These fences create a long perimeter, which the beaver does not like. As the fenced area gets bigger, the movement of water at the edges decreases, thereby discouraging them. Beaver dams on the beaver pond can be managed by the use of beaver dam pipes—a polyethylene pipe designed to create a permanent leak in the dam and prevent beavers from detecting the flow of water into the pipe. This ensures that water will not rise above a certain level in the pond. Typically, beavers need 3 feet of water or more. Anytime you breach a dam, you need approval from the BOH and the Conservation Commission (threat to human health & safety). Mike stated that this is a losing battle, as the adult beaver will come out at night, inspect the dam, feel for leaks, and repair any damage by the next day. For more info on beavers, go to **Mass Wildlife** at www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw

Spring Walks

Bird Walk (AT5W-C1)

Saturday, May 14, 7:00-9:00 AM



Join Westford's foremost birder, Dick Emmet, for a bird walk on Audubon and Town owned conservation land. Area is fairly level but rocky. Wear sturdy shoes and bring binoculars. No dogs, please. This walk is limited to 30 participants. Meet at town parking area, end of Trailside Rd., off Powers Rd. FREE - CALL RCC TO REGISTER.

Wildflower Walk (AT5W-C2)

Sunday, May 22, 1:00-2:30 PM



Join Westford's Elana Schreiber on a walk on the John Gagnon Nature Trail at Kissacook Hill, in search of spring wildflowers.. Hike is short but steep. Wear sturdy shoes. Meet at the Day School, N. Main St. FREE. CALL RCC TO REGISTER.

"Stream Critters" Walk (AT5W-C3)*

Saturday, June 4, 9:30-11:30 AM



Wetlands biologist, Peter Severance, will lead an exploration of Vine Brook and its "critters". This walk is popular with all ages. Wear tall boots or sneakers that can get wet, if you'd like to wade in. Meet at the Audubon parking lot, Concord Rd. across from Banbury Drive. CALL RCC to REGISTER.

Ponding (AT5W-C4)*

Sunday, June 5, 9:30-11:30 AM



Wetlands biologist, Peter Severance, will lead an exploration of a Westford pond and its inhabitants. Wear tall boots or sneakers that can get wet, if you'd like to wade in. Fun for the whole family! Meet across from 224 Concord Rd. FREE, CALL RCC TO REGISTER.

**The last two walks are part of the State Biodiversity Days project (this year run by the MACC, Mass. Assoc. of Conservation Commissions). Please send all your wildlife observations for that weekend to Marian Harman (marianharman@aol.com), so she can include them in what she sends the Biodiversity Days coordinator.*

All walks are FREE. Please Call Roudenbush to register (692-5511) and reference the corresponding code for the walk. If you need further information, call Marian Harman at 692-3907 or email her at MarianHarman@aol.com

Trail Stewards Needed

For the past several years, trail clearing and land stewardship have been coordinated by the Conservation Commission and the Conservation Trust. We have been fortunate to have many dedicated and outdoor-minded 'trail stewards' who take on the job of clearing and maintaining a particular trail. We currently have a need of a steward for the Lakeside Meadows trail. If you are interested in a particular trail, helping with trail work in general, or would like more information, please contact Lenny Palmer at 978-392-9876 or Kate Hollister at 978-392-6802 or email us at

landstewards@westfordconservationtrust.org



*Go to our website at
www.westfordconservationtrust.org
and listen to the call of the eastern
bluebird...*



Trust Meetings—Please join us for our monthly meetings. All members and other interested individuals are invited to attend the Westford Conservation Trust monthly meetings. Meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month and begin at 7:30 P.M. at the Rogers Fire Station on Town Farm Road. There are no meetings in July and August. You can contact us at 978-692-3907 or **info@westfordconservationtrust.org**

Did you know? You can check the website to view our newsletter in color!



Westford Conservation Trust
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*Follow these bird prints to our
website for some great info!*

