



Westford Conservation Trust Newsletter Spring 2016

The Westford Conservation Trust is a private, non-profit, non-governmental organization incorporated in 1984 under Massachusetts law for the purpose of preserving land and other natural resources. The Trust is a charitable, 501(c)(3) organization, for which all donations are tax deductible. The Trust is run by a volunteer Board of Directors. Since its beginning, the Trust has acquired a number of open space areas and trails through both direct ownership and permanent conservation restrictions.

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President's Message



The Newness of Spring

The warming weather, longer days, early blooming flowers, leaf buds on the trees, and birds collecting materials to build their new nests are all reminders of the renewal this season brings and the opportunities to get outside and enjoy it!

We are quite fortunate that here in Westford, we have folks who have taken the time and energy to help preserve so much of our town's natural beauty for our current and future enjoyment.

I also want to thank all of you, our members, for your continued support providing the Trust with the resources to continue our many programs. These include conserving and restoring properties, keeping trails open for public use,

testing our precious water resources, controlling invasive species, providing monthly wildlife reporting and nature articles, working with scout programs, providing scholarships to Westford students who want to pursue an education in natural sciences and conducting monthly guided nature walks.

These tasks all require people to volunteer their time, skills and interests to become a reality.

To help us continue and improve these programs, we need your support! Please consider joining our volunteer team even it is for only a few hours per month. You can find out more information on our web site at westfordconservationtrust.org. Thank you,

Ron Gemma

Quick Links...

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Why So Many Acorns Last Fall? -

by Marian Harman

We like to believe that mammals are the highest order of life, and are in charge of what happens in nature. But, in truth, it is the plants that are in charge of the animals. Did you notice that last year was a banner year for acorn production? Probably you crunched them underfoot outdoors. This overproduction of acorns is called a "mast year." Many animals depend on acorns for winter nutrition.

Mice and chipmunks are among the most voracious acorn eaters. Acorns are high in proteins, fats, and vitamins--perfect winter food packets. White oaks produce the sweetest acorns, as they are not high in tannins. They tend to rot quickly though, so animals eat these first. Red oak and black oak acorns are also very nutritious, but are high in less palatable tannins, so are stored for later winter use. **[Read the complete story about the Oak's master plan.](#)**



Cider Mill Conservation Land and Sheehan's Mill - by Bob Oliphant and Marilyn Day

The Cider Mill Pond Conservation Land consists of three parcels (the Taylor, MacDougall and Agnew parcels) south of Lowell Road and west of Stony Brook Road around Cider Mill Pond, totaling almost 39 acres. The land was acquired for conservation purposes in 1983 and 1984.



Sheehan's Mill c1700 - photo courtesy of Westford Historical Society

The Westford Conservation Trust has established trails that are entered off Lowell Road just west of the road's bridge over Tadmuck Brook. The trails extend south from that point, bending both to the east where they lead to Stony Brook Road and Calista Terrace, and to the west. The trails pass by the so-called Indian Grinding Stone and the foundation of the old mill at Cider Mill Pond owned by Daniel H. Sheehan (1864-1944).

[Read the complete story about the mill, it's subsequent owners, "The Old Coach Road," and pictures of the mill.](#)

Tuesday Hikes - by Bill Harman

We are continuing with regular Tuesday-morning land stewardship hikes. This is getting to be a popular event with large groups week after week. The group photo on the right was taken by Michael Berry while the group was standing next to the stone foundation of the former Sheehan's Cider Mill (next to the pond called Cider Mill Pond). For one thing, it's fun to be outside and to be enjoying the many trails (60 miles) in Westford, and also it's beneficial for the trails and the many conservation lands.



Tuesday Hikers - photo by Bill Harman

[Read the complete story and learn how you can volunteer on the Tuesday Hikes.](#)

From Eyesores to Antiques - by Rich Strazdas

When does someone's trash become a destination? Culture is full of examples of society's castoffs becoming icons of an era. Think urban graffiti. Or the Cadillac Ranch in Amarillo, Texas. If you left a Cadillac on the side of the road, it would attract notice and not remain in place very long. If you managed to leave it deep in the woods, you would earn the enmity of many, including most readers here. But if your nasty deed were to survive decades, it just might become a treasured destination.



"Antique" on the Trail - photo by Rich Strazdas

Life is strange, indeed. [Note that this is not a universal truth. For many years there was a Ford truck cab in Stony Brook just downstream of the Stone Arch Bridge. To great acclaim, Mike Killoran and Joe Greco cleared it in late September, 1996.

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This author has explored most, but not all, of the trails in Westford. In the course of these ramblings, no less than four vehicles were "discovered". One is in the far north of town, two in the far south, and one beyond the border into Acton. Have you seen any of these? Do you know of others? See if you recognize any of these images. Then go explore new trails to discover the others for yourself!

[Click here to see photos of the "Antiques" and maps showing their locations on the trails.](#)

The Trails at Lakeside Meadows - by Marian Harman

Lakeside Meadows, a subdivision built in 1995, on an approximately one hundred acre hayfield, abuts Lake Nabnasset and Shipley Swamp. Because of the sensitivity of the land, so close to water, the subdivision was carefully planned to retain as much open space as possible. Lakeside Meadows includes sixty-eight acres of conservation land, administered jointly by the Town and the Westford Conservation Trust. Much of the open space serves as a buffer along the lake and swamp. A trail system connects various portions of open space. Several of the larger conservation areas of grassland are left unmowed during the summer, to encourage grass-nesting bird species. Numerous nesting boxes are maintained by the residents for nesting bluebirds and tree swallows. **[Read the complete article.](#)**



Shipley Swamp -
photo by Marian
Harman

Guided Walk Schedule May to July 2015

Saturday, May 14, 2016 Spring Bird Walk

7:30 am - 9:00 am

Join Westford Conservation Trust birder Lenny Palmer for an early morning ramble at Westford's birding "hot spot", Emmet Conservation Land. We will search Nashoba Pond and wetland areas on Town and Audubon conservation lands for returning migrants and nesting resident birds. Bring binoculars and wear sturdy shoes as land can be rocky and hilly in places.

NO DOGS please.

Parking: Park in the Town parking lot at the end of Trailside Way off Powers Road.

Walk is free of charge, no sign-up is required.

For more information call Lenny at 978-392-9876

Sunday, May 22, 2016 Wildflower Walk

1:00 pm - 2:30 pm

Join Westford's knowledgeable and enthusiastic Elana Schreiber for our annual wildflower walk. She will take us on a walk on the beautiful Francis Hill Sanctuary where we will search out spring wildflowers.

We will move slowly as we search for plants.

Young children and dogs on leash are welcome but will find that the pace is slow.

Parking: Park along Lowell Road near the entrance to Francis Hill Sanctuary (across from 124 Lowell Rd)

Walk is free of charge, no sign up is required.

For more information, call Elana on 978-692-7906

Saturday, June 4, 2016 Tom Paul Trail (Upper) 9:00 am - 10:30 am

Join Westford Conservation Trust director, Rich Strazdas. who will lead a walk on the upper section of the Tom Paul Trail, following an old colonial road to Blanchard Farms conservation land. We will hike to Blanchard Road, and perhaps Graniteville Road, before returning by the same route.

Parking: Park at Town Hall. Dogs on leash welcome. We will walk on varied terrain with some hilly sections.

Walk is free of charge, no sign-up is required. For more information call Rich at 978-692-2057

No July Walk