

Spring 2006



www.westfordconservationtrust.org



Town Meeting - Saturday, May 6th

Editor
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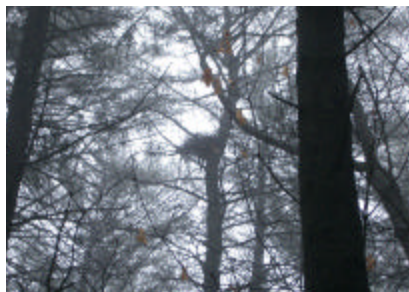
The Trust encourages residents to attend town meeting on **Saturday, May 6th at 10am** at the **Abbot School**. There are several articles of interest on the warrant. The town will be considering a scenic roads bylaw, a vote to appropriate funds for the purchase of the Stepinski parcel, and a vote to expend funds from the CPA fund for various affordable housing projects.

The town will also be considering Article 22, a Wetlands Bylaw Amendment. The Conservation Commission (ConsComm) is asking Town Meeting to approve a bylaw that would better protect our vernal pools. The proposed amendment to our local Wetlands Bylaw would do two important things: it would extend ConsComm's jurisdiction – the “buffer zone” -- from 100 to 200 feet around the pool, and it would extend this protection to “potential” vernal pools as well as vernal pools certified under the state wetlands bylaw.

Vernal pools are important and sensitive components of our environment. To remain healthy, these pools require that land upland to the pools be preserved as habitat for creatures that migrate out of the pools when they dry up. Some Mole Salamanders, especially our state-listed Blue Spotted Salamander, inhabit the forest for more than ¼ mile from the vernal pools. While a 200 foot buffer does not seem like much additional protection, this amendment would double the amount of land to be protected, and make for more environmentally-friendly development. While it takes a lot of work to find and certify vernal pools, the Natural Heritage program has, using aerial photography and remote sensing technology, mapped all the water bodies in the state that might be vernal pools.. The methods they use turn out to be about 90% accurate. This inventory of “potential” vernal pools has turned out to be an extremely valuable tool in managing these resources. ConsComm is proposing that Westford, like Sturbridge and several other towns in the Commonwealth, make the assumption that all such potential vernal pools be considered actual vernal pools unless proven otherwise.



Blue Spotted Salamander in Westford, April 2006



Here's a photo of a Goshawk nest off one of our local trails. Go to our website to learn more about the Northern Goshawk and hear it's call.



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Snake Meadow Hill 40b Project by Peter Severance

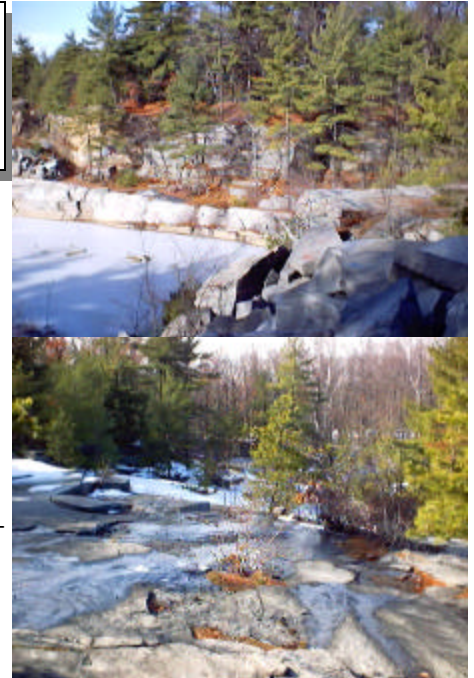
In Westford’s Open Space and Recreation Plan of 2002, Snake Meadow Hill was deemed an “Area of Critical Environmental Concern” because of its size, value as wildlife habitat, historical significance, proximity to other large parcels of open space, and the likely occurrence of rare species.

It was also declared to be a #1 priority site for Affordable Housing by the Town Managers’ Land Use Priorities Committee. And now, the largest development in Westford’s history threatens to severely impact this beautiful property.

Its traditional name is Snake Meadow Hill, but it is often referred to as Cowdry Hill because that’s the name of the abandoned road that runs across its west side. It is largely granite, dotted with some of the oldest primitive quarries in the area. More than 15 vernal pools are scattered across it, harboring Fairy Shrimp, Spotted Salamanders and protected rare species.

Now the developer proposes to build 248 one-, two- and three-bedroom units. We are faced with almost 200 more children in our school system, and the breaking up of one of Westford’s crown jewels. More information is available at www.westfordwild.org.

(*ed note: please note that the Trust has not yet taken a position on this project).



Cowdry Hill has old granite quarries and several vernal pools.

Photo Exhibit of Westford’s Natural Beauty

Trust member **Frank Winters** is a Westford based landscape and nature photographer who has been capturing the natural beauty of Westford’s conservation land for the last few years. He seeks to express the beauty and spirituality of nature in the tradition of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. Frank designed the Trust’s 2006 calendar featuring his photographs. He also won first prize at the recent PCA Art Event. Many of the photos in this exhibit were in the calendar, others are candidates for the 2007.

This exhibit will be on view at the **Parish Center for the Arts gallery**, located at 10 Lincoln Street in Westford, from May 1– June 30, 2006. The gallery is open on Sundays between 12 and 2 p.m. and whenever there is an event at the Parish Center. There will be an **opening reception** at the Center on **Saturday May 6th** between **2 and 5 pm**. Refreshments will be served.

Note cards of Frank’s beautiful photos are now available for purchase at Roudenbush Community Center, Upscale Resale (434 Littleton Rd.) and Stony Brook Acres Farm Stand (3 Plain Rd.) with sales benefiting the Trust.

Did you know?

“Trees improve water quality, resulting in less runoff and erosion. This allows more recharging of the ground water supply. Wooded areas help prevent the transport of sediment and chemicals into streams.”

-USDA Forest Service

Spring Walks

Bird Walk (RCC-E2420)

Saturday, May 13, 7:00-9:00 AM



Join birders Deb LaRoy and Dick Emmet. Explore Westford's largest piece of conservation land in search of resident and migrant birds. This will be about a two mile walk over level but rough ground. Wear appropriate footgear. Bring binoculars if possible. No dogs, please. Meet at the end of Trailside Rd., off Powers Rd. At the cul-de-sac, continue on a short dirt driveway to the Richard Emmet Land parking area. FREE - Call Roudenbush Community Center to register.

Wildflower Walk (RCC-E2423)

Sunday, May 21, 1:00-2:30 PM



Join Westford's Elana Schreiber on a walk on the beautiful Acker Land trail which borders Stony Brook across from East Boston Camps. We will search for spring wildflowers. Walk is appropriate for the whole family, about one mile long on level ground. Dogs on leash are invited. Meet across from the Stoney Brook Acres Farm Stand on Depot St. FREE - Call RCC to register.

"Stream Critters" Walk * (RCC-E2425)

Saturday, June 3, 9:30-11:30 AM

Wetlands biologist, Peter Severance, will lead an exploration into Nashoba Brook in search of anything which lives in a stream. This walk is fun for all ages. Wear tall boots or sneakers that can get wet, if you'd like to wade in.



Meet at the Mass Audubon parking lot, Concord Rd. across from Banbury Drive. FREE - Call RCC to register.

Ponding * (RCC- E2428)

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



Wetlands biologist, Peter Severance - leader. Wade into a pond in your boots or sneakers and catch frogs, small invertebrates and many other critters. All materials provided, just bring your curiosity. Parking will be on the north side of Concord Rd., across from #224. Please park directly on Concord Rd., pulling to the side as much as possible. The group will then proceed across the hayfield to the pond. FREE - Please call RCC to register.

**The last two walks are part of the State Biodiversity Days project. Please send all your wildlife observations for that weekend to Marian Harman at fieldreport@westfordconservationtrust.org*

All walks are FREE. Please Call Roudenbush to register (692-5511) and reference the corresponding code for the walk.

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 or steward helpers for the **Tom Paul Trail**, as well as **Snake Meadow Brook 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



Join the Trust

Name _____

Address _____

Phone (optional)/Email _____

Check here if interested in volunteering for trail maintenance

Check here if interested in volunteering for educational efforts

Please make tax deductible check payable to : **Westford Conservation Trust**

Please mail to : **Westford Conservation Trust P.O. Box 255**

Westford, Ma. 01886

Or join online at www.westfordconservationtrust.org



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Westford Conservation Trust
P.O. Box 255
Westford, Massachusetts 01886



Go to our website and
check out the sounds
of a local vernal pool!