

January 2007



www.westfordconservationtrust.org



Editor - Diane Duane

Annual Meeting Recap - Henry David Thoreau Guest Speaker



Thanks to our guest speaker, **Mr. Henry David Thoreau** (impersonated by historian Richard Smith of the Concord Museum). Mr. Thoreau shared his thoughts and presented his journal readings from an 1850's 'Walden' perspective. The audience thoroughly enjoyed his ramblings, opinions and thoughtful observations. Mr. Richard Smith then discussed his role as Thoreau and enabled many of us to consider Thoreau's life and times from a 21st century perspective.



*Thoreau with WCT President
Marian Harman*

Conservation Trustee of the Year - Angela Harkness

The Westford Conservation Trust is proud to announce that **Angela Harkness** has been awarded the Conservation Trustee Award for 2006. It is with great pleasure that the Westford Conservation Trust presents Angela Harkness with the 2006 Conservation Trustee Award. Angela has been a leader in Westford's conservation and planning efforts for many years. She was Co-Chairman of Westford's Master Plan Committee from 1993 to 1995. She was a member of the Master Plan Implementation Committee from 1996 to 1998.



She worked on the Town's purchase of the Picking-Gould property (now Meadowbrook Farm) on Groton Rd. She was instrumental in the Historical Society's purchase of the building which was to become the Parish Center for the Arts. In 2004 and 2005, Angela was a leading member of the subcommittee of the Westford Land Preservation Foundation which raised over \$400,000 of private money to reduce the amount of taxpayer money required to purchase East Boston Camps. This money was raised in under four months time. Since the purchase, Angela has been an extremely hard-working citizen representative appointed to the East Boston Camps Master

Plan Committee.

In addition to all this, Angela, in her role as an attorney, has found the time to advise and work with the Westford Conservation Trust on several of its land projects. Angela, we honor you for the conservation work you have already done, and look forward to your future participation in many more Town conservation efforts.

This beautiful photograph which we are presenting to Angela was taken by Frank Winters, and is entitled "Vespers". It shows Stony Brook, flowing by East Boston Camps in autumn.

WCT Annual Summary *by William Harman, Clerk*

During the past year (our 22nd year as a Trust), the Trust has been engaged in a large number of activities. In the following listing, activities for the year 2006 are summarized in three groups - Education, Land Stewardship and Community Affairs.

Education

We believe that education is one of the most important aspects of the Trust's activities. Many of these educational programs have developed and evolved over a number of years.

Scouting During the year we have fulfilled several requests for making presentations to Girl Scouts and Cub Scouts. We have also spent many hours in guiding and directing Eagle Scouts with their projects. These are excellent opportunities for education about wildlife, plants and nature as well as for guidance on necessary trail work.

Science Fair This year as in previous years, Trust directors and members participated as judges for the Science Fair, at various grade levels.

'Bird Sleuth' Program. The Trust continues to follow the school bird feeder program developed by Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, now known as the Bird Sleuth Program. Along with classroom instruction for all Westford 4th grades, the students make observations and enter these into a nationwide database. You can also access and contribute data at www.ebird.org. During the current year, we provided the financial support to continue the Cornell program. We also installed feeders, plantings, supplied birdseed, and made repairs as necessary. We made presentations to all fourth grade classes. Many thanks to members Shelagh Brady, Bill Morton, Rose-Marie Koester, Bill and Marian Harman for their participation in this program.

Walks and Hikes This year, as in many previous years, the Trust offered a morning Bird Walk with Deb LaRoy and Dick Emmet, and a Wildflower Walk with Elana Schreiber, both in May. As part of the State Biodiversity Days project in June, we provided a "Stream Critters" walk and a Ponding walk, both led by Peter Severance. We also offered several Fall walks as well as weekend hikes in December at Graniteville Woods.

Abbott School trail Trust members Shelagh Brady and Bill Harman, Lenny Palmer and Steve Smith rerouted the trail behind Abbot school, cleared any poison ivy, as well as adding donated wood chips to the trail.

Envirothon The Trust continued to support the MA Envirothon. This year, we donated \$1000 to this program. Westford Academy sends a team of students to compete at the statewide competition

Scholarships The Trust has been offering scholarships to graduating seniors at Westford Academy, to those students who show an interest in the cause of conservation. This year scholarships were granted to three students with a total expenditure of \$2000.

Living Labs This year, the Trust donated \$800 to the Living Lab Project at the Day School. Find out more about Living Lab at www.westford.mec.edu/day

Calendar Project The calendar project is in its second year and is directed by trust member and photographer Frank Winters. This continues to be a great success. This year, Frank has also initiated the sale of note cards with photos of Westford Conservation Lands. A special thank you to Stony Brook Acres (most sold), Westford Realty, Roudenbush, BOA Westford, BB&B and Erics for helping us with our calendars sales.



Stony Brook Acres

Land Stewardship and Trails

We participate actively with the joint committee for land stewardship and trails and with the Conservation Commission, clearing and marking a number of trails each year. To volunteer to be a land/trail steward, contact Lenny Palmer at landstewards@westfordconservationtrust.org

Boundaries We are still in the process of marking all our boundaries. This year we continued to deal with two incursions, which are nearly resolved. We hired a surveyor and installed granite posts to mark a boundary.

Trail Booklet We are continuing to issue a booklet "Westford Trails", with a new printing this year. Several new maps for Lakeside Meadows, Buckboard Dr., Blakes Hill and Beaver Brook trails are already on our website. Thanks to Bill Harman for all his work on this project. You can purchase the *Westford Trails* booklet for \$5.00 at Roudenbush Community Center. Proceeds go to the Westford Conservation Trust.

Trail Signs Land and Trail signs were replaced where needed.

Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT) The Trust is adding an additional layer of protection of our land properties with additional CR's with SVT. Total cost to the Trust for 2006 was \$6,500.

Eagle Scout Projects The Trust is continuing to work with Eagle Scout candidates whose projects involve trails or wildlife. We continue to help coordinate and support these projects. We also distribute a list of ideas for possible future projects.

Community Affairs

East Boston Camps Several Trust members are actively monitoring and participating in the EBC Master Plan Committee. Trust member Paul Cully is one of the land stewards at East Boston Camps.

Newspaper For many years, the Westford Eagle has been publishing monthly articles called "Wildlife Watch" written by Trust president Marian Harman. Each article includes, among other things, reports of wildlife sightings around town, contributed by many observers. Marian continued to publish these articles in 2006, and it appears that the readership following is steadily growing as well as the number of contributing observers.

Web Site Our webmaster, Mike D'Antuono, has updated our website, providing an exceptional site with easily accessible information. Check out our new trail maps online!

Calendar The trust has printed the 2007 WCT Calendar thanks to Trust member and photographer Frank Winters. This year, photos have been used from several sources including the Nashoba Valley Photo Club.

Water Quality Testing A group of Trust members participated in early morning water quality measurements at 9 sites in Westford each month from May-October. Dissolved oxygen and other characteristics were measured. Funding for testing was approved by the ConsComm and Selectman and data was compiled and shared with the Organization for the Assabet River (OAR), using their protocols and making our work DEP and EPA certified.

Coordination with other Organizations Many other organizations in Westford have activities that overlap or interact with our Trust. We are working to coordinate our interactions with the Conservation Commission, and the Land and Trail Stewardship Committee, which was jointly created by the Conservation Commission and the Conservation Trust. This fall, we collaborated with WestNET for the third annual bicycle **Tour de Westford**, featuring stops at some of the conservation lands in town. Thanks to trust members who volunteered to help on that day. We also support the **Bay Circuit Alliance** (Bruce Freeman rail trail). We are regular members of the **Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition**, attend the annual conference in Worcester, and have benefited from their legal advice on several occasions. We are regular members of the nationwide **Land Trust Alliance (LTA)**, and have recently voted to support their new standards and practices. We already follow the majority of these standards and have identified several issues where we plan to make changes as suggested.

Land/Trails Stewardship Report Diane Duane described activities of this committee. This year was a regrouping year for the committee. We lost some stewards but also gained several new volunteers for the Emmet Conservation Land, Greystone, Tom Paul Trail, and Tadmuck Swamp trail. Land Stewards and Trust members have been quite active clearing and creating several new trails in town. This summer, trust members worked to create trails on the public easements around Blake's Hill Rd and Rome Dr. We now have a new trail from Boston Rd. to Blakes Hill Rd, as well as a new trail from Blake's Hill Rd. to the nearby beaver pond and two old stone bridges. Another group revitalized the Snake Meadow trail that was an Eagle Scout project 5 years ago. We are also working with Eric's Garden Center to clean-up the town owned land at the trailhead of the Peace Trail. We worked with nine Boy Scouts for their Eagle Scout projects- all very impressive! The committee would like to re-stain existing wood signs at the beginning of some trails. Please contact us if you would like to help (check our website).

Flora/Fauna Report Marian Harman presented a summary of the year's sightings of birds and other wildlife as well as plants. For the year 2006, there were 96 reporters and 1,304 reports. Some interesting sightings included a Goshawk crashing through a window on Crown Rd. chasing a small bird, Bluebirds observed drinking sap from a silver maple on Broadway St. in January; Peregrine Falcon reported at Hayrick Lane; Snow Geese reported on Stony Brook in March; Young bear seen crossing Texas Rd. in August ; Several moose sightings in May, July and October, and sighting in June on Jelly Rd. of a rare Boreal Chickadee. To report a sighting, send your email to fieldreport@westfordconservationtrust.org or call her at 978-692-3907.

Treasurer's Report Shelagh Brady presented a summary of the Trust's financial status. The expenditures of 2006 to date were about \$10,000, with an operating budget of approximately \$15,000.

Annual Meeting - Elections

Peter Severance, representing the Nominating Committee, presented nominations for the open positions of Directors and officers. The following were elected:

Directors: Dick Emmet, Bill Harman, Bill Morton, Carol Wing. **Associate Directors:** Paul Cully, Michael D'Antonio, Rose Marie Koester, Ron Deschenes, Elizabeth McGuire, Frank Winters and Mark Tincknell.

Clerk: William Harman. **Treasurer:** Shelagh Brady. **Vice President:** Bill Morton (to replace Dick Emmet who is stepping down as VP but remaining as a Director). Marian expressed appreciation to Ron Deschenes and Mark Tincknell for their years of service as Directors.

A Winter Walk—MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Monday, February 19th 9am-11am East Boston Camps:

Peter Severance, leader

Westford resident and trust member Peter Severance will lead this vacation week walk. Bundle up for some winter adventure and discover who lives in this lovely forest. We hope to see tracks of mammals in the snow or mud. Meet at Depot St. entrance to the camps, right across from Stony Brook farm stand.

Free, but please register with Roudenbush (#RCC E3348) by calling 978-692-5511 or online at www.roudenbush.org



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Go to our website and check out
some kid friendly nature songs!