



# Westford Conservation Trust Newsletter

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SPRING 2009

## A Closer Look at Land Stewardship *by Bill Morton*

“A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community.” – Aldo Leopold

The concept of stewardship is not new to the parks and conservation movement. Inspiring a commitment to care for the land, feeling that one has a vital role in preserving an area for this and future generations, is one of the fundamental goals of land managers, park rangers, and other individuals and organizations involved in environmental professions. Stewardship is seen as a very deep level of commitment to the land, and one of the most liberating and powerful features of stewardship is that it is open to all – regardless of level of knowledge (though knowledge of environmental systems, botany, or zoology can enhance stewardship), or age, or location, or level of education.

Usually when people refer to stewardship, they are referring to tangible actions such as trail maintenance, eradicating invasive species of plants, purchasing land for conservation (or putting it under conservation restriction), or providing education programming to inspire people to participate in environmental causes. All of these efforts

are important and laudable aspects of land conservation and stewardship, and I would encourage every one of us to think of new and more effective ways to accomplish these goals.

But there is a quieter, and less noticeable, form of stewardship. This form of stewardship includes small and large decisions that are made by us every day which can have an effect on our local environment. It starts by making small changes – such as deciding to reduce the size of the lawn in your yard. Or deciding to start a compost pile outside the door closest to your kitchen. You might buy a rain barrel, or install a low-flow shower head. Continuing along the path, you might decide to start taking more walks in your neighborhood – observing and delighting in the changing seasons, getting in touch with the world outside your house, car, and office. You might look into better maintenance of your home’s wastewater system. Traveling along this continuum, you might notice that you are changing



the way you look at your yard, your neighborhood, your town. You might have more of an appreciation for a small patch of woods at the end of the street, or the unmowed area at the back of your lot, or the vernal pools that share your yard. Another decision which you might reconsider: adding more pavement or other impervious surfaces to your yard. There are just a few examples of the decisions you can make.

All of these decisions will be barely noticeable to anyone else – and won’t win you any honors or awards. You might not be held up as an example for the community, and you might not be invited to sit on any powerful committees. But if you start making changes, and make them a lifestyle, you will be joining a quiet, peaceful revolution which is going on all around us. And you will be a better steward of your land.

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## Family Time Outdoors *by Carol Wing*

### *The Slifer Trail*

Spring is here! Time to unplug the Wii and get the family outside! In less than 30 minutes, you can enjoy a refreshing walk through the woods, right here in Westford.

The Slifer Parcel is one of Westford's small but shining gems. In spring, this land features gorgeous rhododendrons that burst with color in late May/early June. Birds abound. Picnic tables offer snack opportunities, with one that overlooks sparkling Keyes Pond.

Kids will love the colors and textures they can find along the easy trail. They will be drawn to the many different types of trees and bushes growing, each with their own personality.

There's even a tree with a hole in its trunk for the curious to look through. A small stream is funneled under the trail, the perfect spot to watch leaves or twigs scuttle in one end and drift out the other into a small pond frequented by beaver and otter. The end of the figure-8 loop skirts Keyes Pond with a view from above, plus an old

pump and boathouse to explore (but carefully, please!) The trail is marked and easy to follow. It meanders through both wooded areas as well as open terrain. It is fairly flat and well maintained, great for all family members. Park in the cleared lot just off the corner of Keyes Road and Gould Road. There are stone pillars marking the entrance, which is easily seen from the road. Bring a snack to relax and enjoy, but please carry out whatever you bring in. Enjoy!

## Trust Walks for May and June



*All Walks are free of charge and run rain or shine. Check our website for more info and updates!*

### **Saturday, May 2, 9-11 AM, Millstone Hill Hike**

The hike will leave from Keyes Road, about a tenth of a mile before the Tyngsboro / Westford town line. Follow Gould Road off Route 40, and in about a half mile, bear to the left onto Keyes Road. The trailhead is about four tenths of a mile ahead on Keyes Road. Parking will be at the trailhead, or along the side of Keyes Road where there is space. We will hike up Millstone Hill, on the MIT land, and see what the view looks like from the radio towers. Then we will return to our vehicles by a separate route, visiting Haystack Observatory if the group wants to go there too. The hike is moderate and hilly. For more info: contact Paul Cully at 978-692-2498 or [pac4patriot@comcast.net](mailto:pac4patriot@comcast.net).

### **Sunday, May 17th, 2-3pm, Family Walk at Deer Run**

One hour easy walk around ponds near Main Street. Park at Swede's Crossing. No strollers, dogs on leash only. For more info contact Carol Wing: [carol.wing@comcast.net](mailto:carol.wing@comcast.net)



### **Sunday, June 7th, 8:00 p.m., Full Moon Family Night Walk- Grassy Pond**

Join Trust Director, Bill Morton, for a peaceful walk under a full moon. We will listen for sounds of insects and animals, and maybe even spy a nocturnal creature or two. No strollers. Bring a flashlight. Meet at the Grassy Pond parking lot on Plain Rd. For more information contact Bill at: [williamc.morton@gmail.com](mailto:williamc.morton@gmail.com)

### **Saturday, June 13th 10am-11a.m.- Family Walk to Millstone Hill and Haystack**

About 1 hour easy to moderate walk, no strollers, dogs on leash only. Parking for Haystack is along Keyes Road, just before the Westford/Tyngsboro town line. There is a cleared area about 50 yards before the trailhead, and there is also parking at the town line, where the school buses and town trucks turn around. Otherwise, there are some edges of the road where a car can pull off and park. For more info. contact Carol Wing at: [carol.wing@comcast.net](mailto:carol.wing@comcast.net)

### **Friday, July 10th, 8:30 p.m., Full Moon Family Night Walk- Stone Arch Bridge Trail**

Join Trust Director, Bill Morton, for a peaceful walk under a full moon. We will listen for sounds of insects and animals, and maybe even spy a nocturnal creature or two. No strollers. Bring a flashlight. Park on Coldspring Rd. next to the Stone Arch Bridge sign. For more info contact Bill at: [williamc.morton@gmail.com](mailto:williamc.morton@gmail.com)



## Happy Trails—an Interview with Trust member Steve Smith

*WCT member Steve Smith has lived in Westford since 1971. Steve is a business consultant who enjoys a leadership role in management of the Appalachian Trail both in Mass and as part of the national management board.*

### **When did you first become active in the Trust?**

After retiring in 2005, I heard about the Tuesday morning group and just started doing it! I really liked going out in the woods every Tuesday morning, doing trail work exclusively that first year—I just love it! In the winter, it is just walks—not trail work, however, this year was different—after the ice storm, we did quite a bit of picking up.

### **How did you hear about the Trust?**

I've been a member since the 1970's, but became active in 2005 after retiring. I knew Bill Harman and heard about the Trust activities from him. I never got active in the Trust because I was so active elsewhere—AMC, Berkshires for the AT Conservancy—so active that I put as much time as I could into that. I didn't realize how rich the Westford trail system was—I had no clue! I thought the Tuesday morning Trail Crew was a really good idea.

### **What type of experience do you bring to the Trust?**

I've had a lot of training in trail work - maintenance & trail building. I've been doing this since



*Here's Steve (second from left), as part of the Deer Run' Project Crew*

1979. When I started as a trail adopter in the White Mountains, which is a type of section trail steward, we did about 4 miles at first, then started on 2 different trails with my friends-it was a lot of fun! I hiked all my life until that point. I actually climbed the 100 highest mountains in New England (4000 footers of New Hampshire (46), then the other 4000 footers of New England, (64), then just climb another 36 and you end up with 100 bagged peaks! So that was when trail work became my passion.

I consider myself to be a trained and expert volunteer manager. I've worked with the AMC as coordinator for the Whites—110 volunteer, 110 sections. How do you recruit, train, retain? I think it is important to get Trust volunteers recruited, trained, supported and rewarded.

### **What should the Trust focus on in the future?**

I do think that stewardship of town and trust owned land can be developed more. Beyond trail maintenance, there are really only a few people who are involved with this. I think focusing on that land right



*Steve on the AT with another volunteer maintaining land boundaries*

now and taking care of it is a big deal. Right now, I am responsible for stewarding a 1000 acre corridor of the AT in the Berkshires. The National Park Service purchased land over 20 yrs ago to make a corridor for the trail to protect its wilderness character wherever we could. My job is to manage this protective buffer land following stewardship standards of the National Park Service. I recognize what it means to steward the land.

### **What do you enjoy most about your experiences with the Trust?**

I really trust the people on the board and enjoy doing what I love in Westford. This is my relaxation! I have so many other responsibilities with the AT - it's just like a job!

When I go out on Tuesday mornings, it's just fun - it's relaxing! I don't really have responsibility, I can do work, kibitz with fellow volunteers, and help decide which trails to do next. I was quite surprised at how many trails Westford had, how beautiful they were, and how much open space is available (to the public). I think this is thanks to intelligent planning by town boards and activists.

## Water Quality Monitoring Update *by Peter Severence*

We are entering our fourth full year of water quality monitoring. Based on our sampling, there is ongoing concern that runoff is elevating levels of nutrients in all of our brooks. Gilson, Reed and Tadmuck Brooks all show elevated levels of Nitrates, and Vine, Nashoba and Tadmuck Brooks have elevated levels of Phosphates. Stony Brook itself is relatively clean, but shows some degrada-

tion when it leaves town compared to measurements taken where it enters town from Littleton. The new Comprehensive Master Plan calls for an expansion in our efforts to monitor the quality of our waterways.

We need Volunteers to help with sample collections. We collect once a month in the early morning hours. Training will begin in early May. Please



*Water quality volunteer Bill Duane at Keyes Brook in February*

email [pseverance@verizon.net](mailto:pseverance@verizon.net) if you would like to join us and come to our next meeting!

## 2009 Massachusetts Envirothon *by Liz McGuire*

The Massachusetts Envirothon is an environmental education program for teams of high school students that culminates in a competitive event in May. Students choose to participate in the program as it is not part of their school curriculum. Throughout the 2008/2009 school year, the Envirothon Committee has hosted a coach's workshop and three full-day student workshops to introduce participants to the topics of soil, water, forestry, wildlife and the 2009 current issue, "Renewable Energy: Getting it Right, Ecologically & Economically".

To prepare for the current issue teams are challenged to research renewable energy and look at ways that the switch to clean energy can be accomplished in an ecologically and economically sound way in their own communities. Wide ranging community research is encouraged, including field study, interviews with scientists, advo-

cates, local officials and residents, internet and library search, map reading and visits to town hall. Many teams take what they learn and apply it to a community action project.

At the state competition in May, each team will present their current issue findings and recommendations to a panel of judges composed of natural resource managers, local and state officials and environmental advocates. A highlight of the experience is the interaction between the teams and the judges when the scoring is completed. Teams also have a chance to share their current issue research and community action projects informally at a lunchtime



“roundtable” session. The team with the highest score overall will represent Massachusetts at the Canon Envirothon to be held in August at the University of North Carolina.

**The Westford Conservation Trust** is a sponsor of the Massachusetts Envirothon and several Trust members have participated as volunteers. To learn more about the program, visit [www.maenvirothon.org](http://www.maenvirothon.org)

**TAX HELP REQUEST:** The Trust is looking for someone to help us with tax preparation for non-profits for next year (2009 taxes). Please contact Marian Harman at 978-692-3907 if interested!

# WCT Spring Walks



## Bird Walk (RCC-E5595)

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



Join Trust members Lenny Palmer, Dot Mooney and Marian Harman for an early morning ramble at Westford's birding "hot spot". 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. NO dogs please. Park in town parking lot at end of Trailside Way, off Powers Rd. FREE but please register with Roudenbush online (RCC).

## Wildflower Walk (RCC-E5596)

Sunday, May 17, 1:00 pm-2:30 pm



Westford's top wildflower expert, Elana Schreiber, will lead us on a pleasant walk through a beautiful parcel of Town conservation land, and around pristine Greystone Pond. Park at the Greystone Pond Recreation Area off Russell's Way (which is off Rte. 40). FREE - but please register with Roudenbush online.

## "Stream Critters" Walk (RCC-E5597)

Saturday, June 6, 9:00-11:00 AM



Wetlands biologist, Peter Severance, will lead an investigation of the critters which live in a stream. This popular walk is fun for all ages. Be prepared to wade right into the stream to catch the 'critters'. You can wear old boots or sneakers. NO dogs please. Meet on Trailside Way (off Powers Rd.). FREE - register online.

## Ponding (RCC- E5598)

Sunday, June 7, 9:00-11:00 AM



Netting creatures in a pond is fun for the whole family. Leader and Wetlands biologist Peter Severance will help us find and identify many different sorts of critters from those found in a brook. You can participate in both the Ponding and Stream Critters activity. Wade right in with boots or old sneakers. Park on Concord Rd., right across from 224 Concord Rd., and proceed across the hay field to the pond. FREE but please register with Roudenbush online.

**All walks are FREE. Please Call Roudenbush Community Center to register at 978-692-5511 or online at [www.roudenbush.org](http://www.roudenbush.org)**



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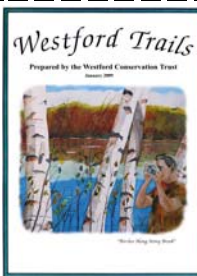
Phone (optional)/Email \_\_\_\_\_  
 Check here if interested in volunteering for trail maintenance  
 Check here if interested in volunteering for educational efforts

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

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- \$25 Individual
- \$40 Family
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### TRAIL BOOKLET

The new version of the Trails Booklet has been printed and is available for \$5.00 at Roudenbush and the Town Clerk's office. The painting on the cover was done for us by **Bob Frank** (who won an award for one of his paintings at the PCA art show).