



# Westford Conservation Trust Newsletter

WWW.WESTFORDCONSERVATIONTRUST.ORG

SPRING 2011

## Ramblings of a Trail Mapper by Rich Strazdas

**Ramble**, v.i. to walk about casually or for pleasure, to speak or write at length.

Both definitions fit this article. This author is an inveterate hiker who has explored much of New Hampshire's White Mountains, yet has only recently discovered the wealth of trails in his own backyard. Do you know what a cartophile is? One definition says it's a post card collector. I say it's a map lover. What does a map lover do when he belatedly joins the GPS revolution? He finds a void in the on-line map universe and tries to fill it! I've lived in Westford for 28 years, but rarely explored beyond the nearby trails of Grassy Pond. A simple Google search brought me to the Westford Conservation Trust trail site, <http://bit.ly/e1CPrt>. A few months later, I'm a Trust member, I've met a handful of dedicated people, and I'm a budding author!

So, what does an inveterate hiker do in Westford? He starts with the largest trail network in town, the Nashoba Brook Watershed trails. Kate Hollister, recently profiled in the Westford Eagle, prepared an excellent map of these trails about ten years ago, when GPS was just gaining popularity. I was also involved with Boy Scout Troop 195 and their compass/orienteering program. Jake Lauer of Troop 591 had recently completed an orienteering course there, <http://bit.ly/>

[easkKZ](#). So many reasons to explore!

This part of town was new to me, so I decided to take a let's-see-what's-there approach. Using the Trust map as a launching pad, I redlined the trail system. Redlined? That's hike-speak for walking every trail on a map. No exceptions. Feeling even more adventurous, I followed every trail, every footpath, every herd path, human or animal. This brought me well into Acton, into backyards (which I respected), into isolated riparian environments. I saw hikers, dog walkers, horses, a hunter, three(!) abandoned cars, an abandoned road, an automatic camera that records wildlife (in Westford!). It was then that I thought I could contribute to the town's trail map collection.

OK, here's where you find how detail oriented I am. No, not anall! When I take a GPS track of a new

area, I record waypoints (fixed locations) of my path and take a digital picture at each waypoint.



They're both time stamped, so afterwards I can match them and label the waypoints and pictures. This allows me to see my annotated hike (or multiple overlapping hikes) on, for example, Google Earth. Now, GPS data, contrary to common belief, is not terribly accurate. Forty feet is as good as it gets under a canopy. So creating a map is a matter of fudging the data to match the available aerial photography and topographic (contour) data. Westford offers a wealth of geographic information at <http://gis.cdm.com/website/WestfordMA/map.htm>.

You can see topographic maps with two-foot contours! I hope to incorporate my ramblings into the Conservation Trust's online and paper trail maps. There's a lot of work to be done. But for this author, it's a labor of love.



*Check our website for some more photos from Rich's wanderings!*

## Water Quality - You Can Make a Difference!

Protecting Westford's streams is an important mission for the Trust. Here are some important upcoming events!

### Westford Water Department Open House - Wednesday, MAY 4th, 5:30-7:30pm

60 Forge Village Road  
([www.westfordma.gov/water](http://www.westfordma.gov/water))  
Learn about organic lawn care, water conservation, rain barrels and more! We will have a table with info about stream critters and our water quality program.



Jason Duane using pole technique to capture water sample at Trailside

**Water Quality Volunteer Training - Sunday, MAY 15th, 8:00-9:30am** in Acton. Water Quality Volunteers needed! Join the Westford Conservation Trust and the

Organization for the Assabet River (OAR) in protecting our waterways. Westford samples water from Nashoba Brook and Stony Brook monthly from April to November. Contact Peter Severance at [pseverance@verizon.net](mailto:pseverance@verizon.net) for more information.

**...the matter aboght the fish... Tuesday, MAY 17th, 7:15pm**, Fletcher Library. Come join us for a talk about 'Early Settlers & the Natural History of Stony and Nashoba Brooks' and help support Westford's Water Quality Program!

*Check our website for updated info!*

## Invasive Plant Update *by Ron Gemma*

Our most pressing topic at present is the very invasive **Mile-a-minute** plant. A program to eradicate the known populations (e.g. Lowell Rd & Grey Fox Lane) is being planned to start in early June. The start date will depend on the weather. A general notice for plant pulling will go out for volunteers in late May. There are only nine locations in Massachusetts where this very invasive plant has been found so far. Hopefully we will

successfully eliminate it here in Westford.

Also, some out-of-state and on-line nurseries are selling plants which are considered invasive in MA. Homeowners who are considering purchasing new plants can get a list of the most common invasives from New England Wildflower Society at <http://www.newenglandwild.org/protect/invasive-plants>

## Notes from the President *by Bill Morton*

### National Parks Go Local!

You might have read in the news recently that Roxanne Quimby, the multi-millionaire founder of Burt's Bees personal care products, is planning to donate over 100,000 acres of wilderness in Maine to the National Park Service. She would like to help create a new National Park, adjacent to the 200,000 acre Baxter State Park. If you're like me, and you imagine that you'll never have the chance to donate

thousands of acres of conservation land, why not consider transforming a portion of your own yard into a wilderness area? All it takes is replacing those alien invasive shrubs such as burning bush with native plants, such as a blueberry or Fothergilla. Replace the chemicals that you put on your lawn to prevent weeds with a yearly dose of pelletized corn gluten. Set up a birdhouse or two, or a bathhouse. Let a small portion of your lawn

go unmowed to provide a habitat for fireflies. We may not have 100,000 acres to donate, but we can create dozens of miniature wildlife sanctuaries all around Westford. Wouldn't that be wonderful, too?



# WCT Spring/Summer Walks

All walks are FREE - Please register online at Roudenbush Community Center  
www.roudenbush.org or call 978-692-5511



## Bird Walk (RCC-E7579)

Saturday, May 14, 7:30-9:30 AM



Join Westford birders Lenny Palmer and Marian Harman for an early morning ramble at one of Westford's birding "hot spots". We will search Greystone Pond and trails on Town conservation land, for returning migrants and nesting resident birds. Bring binoculars and wear sturdy shoes. No dogs please. Park in the Greystone Pond Recreation Area parking lot off Russell's Way. For more info, contact Marian at 978-692-3907. FREE - Register online (RCC).

## Wildflower Walk (RCC-E7581)

Sunday, May 22, 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. We hope to find a good variety of spring wildflowers blooming, and will also visit the geological formation known as the "Indian Grinding Stone". Young children and dogs on leash are welcome, but will find the pace is slow. Park at the Cider Mill Pond parking area on Lowell Rd. FREE - Register online. For more info, contact Elana at lahsch@verizon.net.

## "Stream Critters" Walk (RCC-E7907)

Saturday, June 4, 9:00-11:30 AM



Wear your boots or old sneakers and wade right into the brook with Wetlands biologist Peter Severance. Search for all sorts critters like crayfish, dragonfly larvae and other aquatic invertebrates. This activity is fun for the entire family! NO dogs please. Park at Trailside Way (off Powers Rd.) near the bridge that spans Nashoba Brook. FREE - Register online. For more info, contact Peter at pseverance@verizon.net.

## Ponding (RCC- E7909)

Sunday, June 5, 9:00-11:00 AM



Netting creatures in a pond is fun for the whole family. 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—Register online. For more info, contact Peter (*see above*).



Non Profit  
Organization  
Postage Paid  
Permit #86  
Westford, MA

Westford Conservation Trust, Inc.  
P.O. Box 255  
Westford, MA 01886



*Check our  
website for  
sights &  
sounds of  
spring!*

## Join the Trust

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (optional)/Email \_\_\_\_\_

Check here if interested in volunteering for trail maintenance

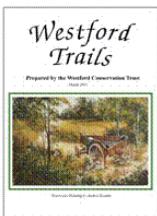
Check here if interested in volunteering for educational efforts

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](http://www.westfordconservationtrust.org)

- \$25 Individual
- \$40 Family
- \$100-500 Friend
- \$500-1000 Patron
- \$1000 Supporter
- Other



## TRAIL BOOKLET

The newest version of the Westford Trails Booklet has been printed and is available for \$5.00 at Roudenbush Community Center and the Town Clerk's office.

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