



Westford Conservation Trust Newsletter

WWW.WESTFORDCONSERVATIONTRUST.ORG

FALL 2015

Join us for the Trust's Annual Meeting Thursday, November 5th, 7 pm at Parish Center for the Arts Guest Speaker Rick Roth - The Creature Teacher

Rick Roth, a conservationist and teacher, runs The Creature Teachers, a family-owned environmental and animal education company. His goal is to educate the public about the wonders and diversity of the animals that share our planet. This program is designed for all ages. Instructor Rick Roth will encourage families to get to know these mammals, learn about their natural history, and help develop appreciation and respect for these wild animals that often live in our own backyards. The talk will include live specimens including a fisher cat, grey fox, skunk, flying squirrels, box and snapping turtles, a woodchuck, and more.



Conservation Trustee Award 2015 - The Conservation Trustee Award will be awarded to Crisafulli School Librarian and nature lover Buffie Diercks. Buffie has enthusiastically conducted the Cornell Project FeederWatch program with support from Bill and Marian Harman for all of the Crisafulli School 4th graders for many years.

Business Meeting - A short Trust yearly business meeting will be held from **7:00-7:30pm**. Our guest speaker will follow this brief business meeting. Refreshments will also be served. Hope to see you there!

A message from Westford Conservation Trust President Ron Gemma



Dear Westford residents - For those of you who are unfamiliar with our organization, I'd like to provide a brief overview. 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 for the benefit of it's residents. The Trust is a charitable, 501-C3 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.

Accomplishment Highlights - 2015 has been a busy and fruitful year, I am very encouraged by the accomplishments that the Trust and its volunteer members made this year in helping to fulfill our mission of protecting and preserving open space here in Westford. Here is a list of some of these activities:

- The trust purchased a beautiful 3 acre parcel on Hildreth St. that includes meadow, woodland and wetland. The property has potential as an accessible wildlife sanctuary.
- The Town received the deed for 19 acres of the former Agnew land located at 64 Main Street thereby permanently protecting a section of the Tom Paul Trail. This was an effort encouraged and supported by the Trust.
- The Mile-a-Minute (MAM) Invasive Plant Control Program finished its fifth year of continued decrease in MAM plants due to well managed pulls.
- Supported one Girl Scout Silver Award trail project that was completed and two Eagle Scout trail projects which are in the process of being completed for this year.
- College scholarships were awarded to five Westford Academy graduates.
- 60 miles of trails were consistently maintained and kept free of large fallen trees.
- Mowed the Wildflower/Pollinator Field at the Prospect Hill Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Trailhead markers were installed at 15 trails.
- Supported the Crisafulli School 4th Grade Birding program including supplying bird food and purchasing binoculars.
- Supported Westford Academy Environment Club for their participation in the Mass Envirothon.
- Conservation info tables were provided at five Town events.
- Provided the monthly Westford Wildlife Watch column to the *Westford Eagle*.
- Water quality testing of our major streams and tributaries supported by the Town and "citizen scientists".
- Guided trail walks were held monthly on our "First Saturday of the Month" program.
- Published a new 2015 Trail Guide.

Westford Trail System



One of the many functions of the Trust is to maintain our own trails and help maintain the Town's trails. Westford is fortunate to have an abundance of fine trails to satisfy almost anyone's needs for a "walk in the woods". You can take a short walk from the cul-de-sac in your neighborhood or you can ramble literally for hours on some of the longer or interconnected trails. They can be walked any time of the year but of course snow shoes may be helpful when the snow is deep. The walks can satisfy your needs for exercise and fresh air, a chance to enjoy nature in any season, a little solitude, or any combination of these.



There are over 60 miles of trails available that can be broken down into approximately 26 distinct areas. These areas can range from a single short trail (Snake Meadow Brook), a long cross-town trail (Tom Paul) or to a whole area of inter-connected trails (Nashoba Brook Watershed). The trails can range from level and easy footing to rather steep and more difficult footing. The Westford Conservation Trust's "Westford Trails" guide is a great place to get started. It's available for \$5.00 at the Town Hall Clerk's Office or the Roudenbush Center office, or individual maps are available on our website, westfordconservationtrust.org.



If you are unfamiliar with the trail system and would like to have some help getting started, the Westford Conservation Trust offers a monthly guided walk on the first Saturday of the month all year long. The schedule for the next three walks are described below. Details on later walks can be obtained from the Trust's website.

Of course the trails need some tender loving care, usually at least on an annual basis. The plants and trees along the trail edges keep growing every year and they need to be clipped back to keep the trails passable. Trails also need help when a tree falls across one, a bridge is washed out or other unexpected and/or trail blocking situations occur.

The trails in Westford are maintained by volunteers. Sometimes a person who lives near a trail helps keep the trail passable and reports any problems found. There is also a group of volunteers who on Tuesday mornings all year long meet to provide care to a particular trail that needs it, as well as get a chance to socialize. If you are interested in volunteering to help out on a particular trail or participating in the Tuesday morning trail care group, you can get more information by sending an email to landstewards@westfordconservationtrust.org.

Upcoming Guided Walks

Come and join us for our 'First Saturday of the Month' guided walks or walk anytime on your own. All guided walks are free of charge and run from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. rain or shine. Wear sturdy footwear appropriate to the weather.

Nov. 2015 - Jan. 2016 Schedule - The full schedule is on our website, Facebook page and Roudenbush Brochure.

Saturday, November 7th. A mid-fall walk on the **Burn's Hill Loop Trail**, led by Westford Conservation Trust President Ron Gemma. We will walk on varied terrain from hill tops with excellent lookouts to lowlands with ponds and aquatic plants. The trail is a bit rugged and hilly in places. Wear sturdy footwear appropriate to the weather. Park along Rome Drive near the trail marker. Dogs on leash are welcome. For further information call Ron at 978-692-5668.

Saturday, December 5th. Join Westford Conservation Trust Director Lenny Palmer who will lead a walk through the **Cider Mill Pond** conservation area. We will stop at the top of Little Tadmuck Hill, check out the continuing advance of the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid that is slowly killing the hemlocks and reexamine the "Indian Grinding Stone", with a suggestion of what caused this interesting hole in the granite. Park along Lowell Road at the entrance to the area. For further information call Lenny at 978-392-9876.

Saturday, January 2, 2016 - Enjoy the beauty of the **Emmet Conservation Land** in the Winter "silent season" with Trust member Kate Hollister. Be prepared for snow. Park at the end of Trailside Way, off Powers Rd, in the Town parking area off the cul-de-sac. For further information, call Kate at 978-392-6802.

Westford Girl Scouts blaze Loop Trail by Stone Arch Bridge *by Michael Schultz*



Westford hikers, birders, and outdoors enthusiasts can now extend their hikes along the popular Stone Arch Bridge Trail, thanks to Westford Girl Scouts Kyla Schultz and Katelyn Williams of Troop 85162.

The 7th grade girls were hard at work this summer blazing the overgrown Loop Trail as they worked to earn their Silver Award—the second highest award in Girl Scouts. The Loop Trail is an extension loop at the end of the Stone Arch Bridge Trail that meanders the historic land between Stony Brook and the railroad tracks. Granite anchors in the ground show glimpses of the hustle and bustle from a century ago, when millions of pounds of stone were loaded onto the trains in Graniteville, harvested daily from the village's famed quarries.

“The trail was overgrown, had no visible entrance sign, and had no visible trail markings,” said Kyla Schultz. “This is unfortunate because it’s near the Stone Arch Bridge which brings in a lot of people who were missing out on experiencing this trail which follows the water, allows you to see a beaver dam up close, and has lots of protected lady slipper flowers.”

The Girl Scouts walked the trail with Ron Gemma of the Westford Conservation Trust to discuss their plans, and consulted with Bill Harman before presenting their proposal to the Westford Conservation Commission in several meetings to obtain final approval.

Kyla (on ladder) and Katelyn

“We estimated it would take about 50 hours for the total project—from clearing the trail, to putting blazes on the trees that mark the path, and to order and install new trail entrance signs that we had custom made for the project,” said Katelyn Williams. “The main portion of the project is done, with the trail cleared, marked and re-opened for anyone who wants to use it.”

The girls have completed the project and will report their progress back to the Westford Conservation Trust and the Westford Conservation Commission. They also met with Blanchard Outdoor Adventure Club teachers to add the trail to their after-school program, and then took Blanchard students on a guided hike to experience the nearby trail.

Frances Hill Wildlife Sanctuary *by Lenny Palmer*

Frances Hill rises to 350 feet along the northeast Westford town line with the Town of Chelmsford. On the lower west slope is 30 +/- acres of protected conservation land, the Frances Hill Wildlife Sanctuary. It is comprised of parcels owned by the Westford Conservation Trust, the Sudbury Valley Trustees, and a private Conservation Restriction. The entrances are along Hunt Road, Chamberlain Road and Lowell Road, which has the best on street parking. The sanctuary is a beautiful wooded area, crisscrossed with 1 mile of gentle trails; impressive stone walls at one time defined agricultural fields and pastures and bridged seasonal brooks. There are many species of trees, wildflowers, a vernal pool, a view of a pasture/barn on the Conservation Restricted land, very human tolerant deer and much bird life; it is a great spot for an hour or more walk. The trails are well maintained, good for winter walks, snow shoeing, and cross country skiing. Maps are available on the Trust website, in the Westford Trail Guide and at the Lowell Rd entrance.

Volunteer Opportunities

Newsletter Editor - We currently use MS Publisher 2013 Desktop Publishing software. Duties include text editing of submitted articles, gathering appropriate illustrations and images and designing layout.

Treasurer - Duties include creating an annual budget, keeping accounts updated, generating simple monthly account balance reports and working with our tax accountant preparing annual tax reports.



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Guided Walks



Scout Projects



Invasive Control



Trail Clearing

Join the Trust

Name _____
 Address _____

Phone (optional)/Email _____

Check here if interested in volunteering for trail maintenance

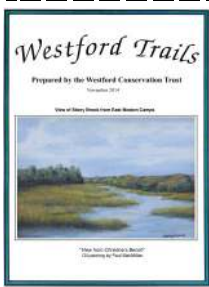
Check here if interested in volunteering

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

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



WESTFORD TRAIL BOOKLET

The newest version of the Trails Booklet is available for \$5.00 at Roudenbush and Town Clerk's office. This version features a cover painting by local artist Paul MacMillan and many drawings by Westford Academy art students.