



Westford Conservation Trust Summer 2013 News

www.westfordconservationtrust.org

In This Issue

[Harmans Honored by
Kiwanis](#)

[Student Scholarship
Awards](#)

[Land & Trail Stewards](#)

[Mile-a-minute Removal
Program](#)

[Water Quality Monitoring](#)

[Hildreth Street Field
Succession](#)

[Oh, The Things I've Seen](#)

[Native Pollinators](#)



**Harmans Honored as
Westford Kiwanis Persons
of 2013**

We are thrilled to announce that Trust board members, Marian and Bill Harman, were chosen by the Kiwanis

Dear Diane,

The Westford Conservation Trust's 30th anniversary is approaching in 2014. In anticipation, board members have begun a formal visioning process, evaluating our progress in meeting past goals, and planning for the future. What do you envision for your local land trust? Please think about this, and [email us](mailto:newsletter@westfordconservationtrust.org) at

newsletter@westfordconservationtrust.org

We hope you will join us on the trails and in the field this summer, and please visit our table at the farmers market on August 13th, where we'll host fun activities for kids, and provide information about invasive plants, native pollinators, Westford conservation land, and more. Thanks to our volunteers and members for your continued involvement and support.

Lisa Groves
Newsletter Editor

Mile-a-minute Vine Removal Program

by Lisa Groves



Tired but satisfied after a successful
MAM pull on Providence Rd

as Westford Persons of the Year 2013. Among their many contributions to town, Bill and Marian joined with others to create the Westford Conservation Trust in 1984, and have donated several acres of their own land for conservation. [Read more about the Harmans and view photos](#) of the Apple Blossom Festival, where state Rep. James Arciero presented resolutions from the MA House of Representatives outlining the Harman's contributions. Congratulations Bill and Marian! We love you!

Students Receive Trust Scholarships

by Dawn Matthews

Each year the Westford Conservation Trust presents scholarships to Westford students who show an interest in the cause of conservation. Education and conservation are foremost in the minds of the Trust directors and we hope to encourage the youth of Westford to follow this same passion. Our congratulations go out to the

The Trust's invasive Mile-a-minute (MAM) vine removal program is in full swing this season. Volunteers gather at the two main MAM infestation sites from 9-11am every other Saturday to pull the vines out of the ground. Each session begins with an introduction to MAM and other invasive species in our area, and methods to combat them. We encourage everyone to attend an intro session to learn about these harmful plants, and all are welcome to stay and join the pulls (but not required). For more information visit

<http://www.westfordinvasivespecies.webs.com/>, or email us at invasives@westfordconservationtrust.org Read more about MAM and our removal program in the recent [Westford Eagle article](#).

Water Quality Monitoring Update 2013

by Diane Duane & Kate Hollister

The Stream Team has been busy this season, having completed three sampling dates of our ten regular sites in Westford, along with several special studies along Vine Brook (which drains into Nashoba Brook). Special studies look in detail at streams with unusual chemistry or nutrient levels over several years of water-quality testing. Vine Brook continues to have high phosphorus and conductivity levels, so we are focusing on multiple sites over this season to identify possible sources.

Special thanks to our dedicated volunteers who have worked so hard (and risen so early) each month. If you are interested in helping with water quality sampling, please contact us at

waterquality@westfordconservationtrust.org

To view the Westford Stream Team report of water quality results for 2012 and some preliminary 2013 Vinebrook special study results [click here](#).

Check out the [latest video](#) about what we do and why.

following students who each received a scholarship of \$500:

Amanda Brooks, Aziz Rangwala, Daniel McCall, John E. Gallucci, and William Goodwin

Land and Trail Stewardship by Bill Harman



Stewardship of land and trails is an ongoing project in which everyone is welcome to participate. It's invigorating to be out on Westford's beautiful conservation land and trails, and is of course a useful contribution to the community. Every Tuesday morning, rain or shine, a group goes out to take care of trails, monitor conditions on conservation land, and generally enjoy



Hildreth St Field reclaimed by native wildflowers

Field Succession on Hildreth Street

by Marian Harman

Westford has very little remaining field habitat. Most of the farm land in the northeast is reverting to forest, or is being developed. Field habitat is essential for many species of plants and animals, including insects such as dragonflies and butterflies, and birds such as bobolinks, meadowlarks, several species of sparrows, bluebirds, kestrels, and many others. I have been watching the small farm field on Hildreth St., owned by the Westford Conservation Trust. It was used for growing corn for many years, but in the past three years lay fallow. Dot Mooney, Lenny Palmer and I have been watching the process of wildflowers and native plants reclaiming this field, and it has been fascinating.

For the first two years, the field grew very little in the way of wild plants. The land seemed exhausted. But last year, suddenly it burgeoned with all sorts of interesting plants. Against all our expectations, most of these plants are not alien invasives but are native. Their seeds must have blown in, or been carried in by birds. So far, our inventory has found seventy different species of plants, only five of which are aliens ([view the list of plants](#)). These plants are hosting a huge variety of insects, which in turn are feeding at least nine different species of dragonflies which we have seen there. And the plants are feeding several butterfly species, and myriads of bees, including lots of honeybees. The insects are also feeding many bird species, and the seeds which appear in the fall will provide birds with lots of winter forage. One of the most exciting birds we have seen

On a recent Tuesday the group happened to include nearly all women, and as luck would have it, the group came to a fallen oak tree that was blocking the trail in the Russell Bird Sanctuary. Normally the Tuesday group does not bring a chain saw, only small pocket saws. There was some debate as to whether pocket saws would be sufficient to remove this tree. The women rose to the occasion and started sawing ([see photo](#)). It was slow going, but eventually the tree was sawed through, then hefted away. Everyone felt a sense of accomplishment, and the trail was restored to its former glory.

If you happen to see a fallen tree or other trail problem, please [email us](#) or call Bill Harman at 692-3907. Also, everyone is welcome to participate, so let us know if you would like to be notified of the next trail project.

there is a beautiful male indigo bunting singing from the top of the highest tree around the field.

Last September there were many fall-blooming plants including several species of asters which we were anticipating. I expect to see changes in the populations of plants over the years to come; some will drop out, some new ones will come in. Of course, we will need to mow the field every year or two to prevent it from becoming forest. Already, the little grey birches are trying to establish a foothold.

You are welcome to take a walk on this land, both the wooded and the field sections. You can park on Wright Lane and walk across Hildreth St. to enter the woods through the green gate by the Prospect Hill Wildlife Sanctuary sign, and walk the trail to the top of Prospect Hill. Or you can make your way up Hildreth St. towards Westford center, and walk around the field, called Pageant Field after the pageant held there at Westford's centennial celebration. If you would like a map of the land or maps of other Westford trails, go to westfordconservationtrust.org.

Oh, The Things I've Seen

by Rich Strazdas

Westford is a boring town where nothing interesting happens. Right? The woods are tranquil, wildlife prefers to stay hidden, and people are too busy to hike the woodland gems around town. Well, if you're a bit different from the norm and are inclined to explore the paths beaten by others, you can, over time, see some rather unexpected things.



Rich Strazdas

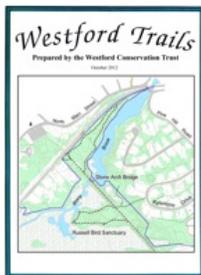
In the few years since "discovering" the wealth of town trails beyond my immediate neighborhood, I've seen a rather limited variety of critters. Many of you reading this know much about birds or amphibians, but that isn't my thing. So I just listen to the birds singing, and am surprised by the rare occurrence of a frog or snake crossing a trail. Turkeys, however, are more common than you might think. They are slow, and not quick to scatter, so you can find them anywhere, at the trailhead, on the path, or moving in groups into deeper woods. Beavers are active throughout town, and they can provide welcome wetland habitat as well as unwelcome trail flooding. There are many examples in town of man versus beaver. A cage

Discover Westford Trails and More on Guided Walks



If you enjoy the natural world, want to learn about Westford trails, wildlife, and history, could use some company, or just need to get out and stretch your legs, consider joining a guided trail walk sponsored by the Trust. Usually held on the first Saturday of the month from 9:00 - 10:30am, these walks are open to all, free of charge, and fun! Additional information and the schedule can be found by clicking [here](#). You may also contact Bill Harman at 692-3907 or harmanwh@verizon.net

Updated and Expanded Westford Trails Booklet Now Available!



around a manmade dam helps prevent beavers from damming the narrow sluice. Or a wide, corrugated pipe under a beaver dam can keep the pond from exceeding a certain depth. There is a fine example of the latter near the Greystone Pond loop trail's northern end. Beavers continually block the pipe and the trail floods every spring. Many hikers, myself included, have cleared the pipe, to the point that there are two large heaps of debris near the opening. On one occasion, after spending many minutes restoring water flow, I caught a glimpse of a large animal splashing into the water up the trail. I firmly believe my furry friend was preparing to rebuild his handiwork the moment I disappeared around the bend!

Of course, flooding also occurs when there is just too much water. Most trails keep to high ground and have bridges or boardwalks where needed. But occasionally the entire trail is covered in mud or water. Do you know the trail etiquette for a muddy section? Well, you just walk through it! http://www.backcountryattitude.com/mud_walking.html explains why this prevents further erosion.

I've been lucky to see deer in the woods. Once there were six crossing an old forest road. The buck was the last to cross, and we stared at each other for perhaps fifteen seconds before he turned and continued on his way. It's easy to imagine what they're thinking.

Not all playing in the woods involves hiking. There is a zip line across Burges Pond. It was an unexpected find, and I'm sure it's well used by campers. There are playgrounds deep in the woods, sometimes visible from trails. Perhaps you grew up in town and know of one? Hikers like me happen upon them and smile. There are fire pits far from vehicle access. These appear to be playgrounds for older children. Once, while bushwhacking to the far end of a proposed trail, I came across a trail system that looked right out of Camelot or Tolkien. There were stations with lanterns and shelves, kiosks with beautiful essays, and wonderful signposts. Is this your neighborhood? I'm not telling.

Often, I'll follow trails or herd paths just to see where they go. It's proper to observe No Trespassing signs, but some trails continue hundreds of yards without any notice. On multiple occasions I've seen motion cameras, the kind you can order from hunting catalogs. Sometimes they're near a hunter's tree stand. Whether they are there to spot prey or simply to observe wildlife, they're fascinating. Somebody went to the trouble of buying one and setting it up in the middle of nowhere. There's at least a third reason for

We're excited to offer an updated and expanded edition of the Westford Trails booklet, which includes several new GPS-based topographic maps with accurate renderings of trails, streams, ponds, marshes, roads, and other landmarks. The booklet is available for \$5.00 at Roudenbush and the Town Clerk's office. The maps can also be found on our website by clicking [here](#).

setting up a motion camera. One had a business card taped to it. The card was for a Federal Marshall. :-O

What have I *not* seen? Perhaps most noteworthy is very much litter. I find it convenient to carry a plastic grocery bag in my pocket when I start out. Very rarely do I find so much litter that the bag has to come out of my pocket. An exception was one of the fire pits mentioned earlier, where I filled a couple bags with bottles and cans. I didn't start with a couple bags, but as often happens, nature provides a solution. In this case, there were plastic bags among the litter! Unseen, to me at least, have been the black bears that wandered through town in 2012. Perhaps this is just as well, as I'd probably startle one, and would be concerned about a cub nearby. Lastly, I haven't stumbled on a modern day Thoreau. To the best of my knowledge, there is no one in Westford writing the next ***Walden; or, Life in the Woods***.

Send Us Your Photos!



We love to receive your photos of flora and fauna from around Westford for our [Facebook photo album](#). Send your photos in an [email](#), and be sure to identify the subject and include location, date, and your name.

[Find us on Facebook](#) 

Native Pollinators Need Your Help

by Diane Duane

Pollinators are a diverse group that play an important role in helping flowering plants and crops reproduce. According to the USDA, one out of every three bites of food is attributed to the work of bees and other pollinators. Pollinators include mammals, birds and bats but the vast majority are insects such as bees and wasps, butterflies, moths, flies & beetles.



Native Sweat Bee

With the decline in the non-native honey bee populations due to colony collapse disorder, there is a growing interest in our native bees and how we might support their growth and habitat.

You can help by growing your own pollinator garden right in your own backyard! Encourage your town, city or state to consider planting pollinator friendly plants along roads and highways, utility easements and strips of land along industrial parks and commercial buildings.

According to the Xerces Society, encouraging our native bee population includes a few important requirements:

- a diversity of plants including native flowering plants that bloom throughout the growing season
- Nesting sites and sheltered space for hibernation
- Pesticide free habitat with open areas for foraging

Mid summer is a great time to see some native bees out and about on a warm sunny day!

Learn more about our native pollinators at
<http://www.xerces.org>

For a handout about some native plants in our area
for Native Bees [click here](#)

[Forward this email](#)

 SafeUnsubscribe™



Try it FREE today.

This email was sent to diane97@comcast.net by newsletter@westfordconservationtrust.org |
[Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).
Westford Conservation Trust | PO Box 255 | Westford | MA | 01886