



Westford Conservation Trust Newsletter

Spring 2021

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David Ebitson Elected New Trust President

Please join us in welcoming Dave Ebitson as the Trust's new president. Our sincere thanks and appreciation to past president [Ron Gemma](#) who will continue with us as Vice President. Dave has been active in the Land and Trails committee for the last several years. As a former Corporate Director for Global Product Support,



Dave has added additional organizational skills to the Trust. He created a database to track and monitor the condition of our seventy-five miles of trails, eighty-one structures, trail signage, conservation restrictions and also updated the Trust's brochure. You will often find Dave working alongside our dedicated trail stewards maintaining trails. Photo, below, by Bill Harman shows a recent trail

steward crew. Dave is at the far left.

Read more about Dave in his own words: "Our family moved to a quiet area in Westford in 1978 next to the O'Brien Farm. The Police Log usually contained one note concerning cows loose on Carlisle Road. It was an ideal place to raise children and enjoy the country life. I coached a soccer team on Saturday and taught Sunday school classes. I even assisted leading a Scout troop and earned my Klondike Badge for camping in ten degree weather in January.



Like many of us I was traveling for most of my working years. I failed to notice that things were beginning to change in this quaint country setting. Fortunately, a group of conservationists led by Richard Emmet, Tom Paul, Bill Harman and others had the foresight to see the changes taking place in our town. The Westford Conservation Trust was formed in 1984 to begin preserving the trails and land that many residents often took for granted.

Upon retiring a few years ago, I had the good fortune to meet two members of the Westford Conservation Trust at a neighborhood gathering and mentioned to them I had just retired. Steve Smith and Bob Shaw described how they keep busy while enjoying plenty of fresh air, exercise, and stimulating conversation while protecting the woodland and trails in Westford. Showing up at the trail head the next week, I met the most amazing dedicated group of people I have ever worked with. I am grateful for this opportunity to volunteer alongside such a diverse group of people of all ages and backgrounds.

If you are sitting on the couch in need of fresh air, exercise and conversation, [join](#) the Westford Conservation Trust, you will be glad you did."

Let It Be An Oak - Virtual Presentation by Doug Tallamy **Tuesday, June 1, 2021 at 7PM via Zoom**



On Tuesday, June 1st, author and lecturer Doug Tallamy will present his program **Let It Be An Oak**. Tallamy says, "Once we have decided to restore the ecological integrity of our suburban neighborhoods, we need to decide what plants to add to our properties. Oaks are superior trees for suburban restoration projects because of their many ecological and aesthetic attributes." Tallamy will compare oak species to other popular shade trees in terms of their ability to support animal diversity, protect

watersheds, sequester carbon dioxide, and restore lost plant communities. There will be a Question and Answer Session at the end of the presentation. Doug will happily answer questions on oaks as well as other topics such as native plants and invasives. Register in advance for this meeting by clicking [here](#). After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about how to join the meeting.

Doug Tallamy is the T. A. Baker Professor of Agriculture in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware, where he has authored 104 research publications and has taught insect related courses for 40 years. Chief among his research goals is to better understand the many ways insects interact with plants and how such interactions determine the diversity of animal communities. His book [Bringing Nature Home](#), published by Timber Press in 2007, was awarded the 2008 Silver Medal by the Garden Writers' Association. [The Living Landscape](#), co-authored with Rick Darke, was published in 2014; [Nature's Best Hope](#), a New York Times Best Seller, was released in February 2020. His latest book, [The Nature of Oaks](#), was released by Timber press in March 2021. Among his awards, Tallamy received the Garden Club of America Margaret Douglas Medal for Conservation and the Tom Dodd, Jr. Award of Excellence, the 2018 AHS B.Y. Morrison Communication, Award and the 2019 Cynthia Westcott Scientific Writing Award.

A Year of Westford Trails by David Ebitson

The Westford Trail System provides a calming respite for those who find themselves working from home and needing a safe and calming walk during times of high anxiety and stress. A relaxing walk on the trail system provides an escape from the news of the day and the relentless torrent of emails and zoom meetings. Below you will find a few observations from walking our Westford trails. Daily woodland walks provide a glimpse of the serenity nature offers as each season provides a different landscape and the innumerable plants and reveals creatures that we share the earth with.



The winter season in our woodland trails offers a quiet, peaceful scene. Many birds have migrated south and various creatures such as black bears and chipmunks are hibernating for the winter months. The new landscape provides many telltale footprints where deer foraged or a rabbit managed to avoid a hungry fox. Life is difficult for creatures who survive the cold nights of New England winters. You may find deer footprints leading to a shallow depression within a thick stand of pine trees where they take shelter and rest for the night. You may find them at the south end of the O'Brien Farm and on the southwest side of Greystone Trail; just follow the footprints in the

snow. The photo shows deer footprints on the ice and snow at Twin Ponds.



Early spring provides a musical and colorful glimpse of what is to come. The vernal pools and ponds become a cacophonous symphony as peepers officially sing their spring welcome in a rousing effort to find mates. If you are fortunate as the evening sun sets, a courtship of Barred owls may join the peepers, eliminating all hope of a restful night's sleep! In spring we find new growth appearing where the sun warms the ground and melts away the snow and ice. The early appearance of skunk cabbage and fiddlehead fern in the wetlands are a definite sign of spring. Should you step on the leaves of the skunk cabbage, you will soon know how it got its moniker. The photo shows a stream at Burns Hill and new spring growth.

With the abundance of surface water and flowing streams we find many Painted turtles hatching and the large snapping turtle on the move after wintering in the mud of the local wetlands. We are truly fortunate in Westford to have eight of the eleven turtle species found in Massachusetts. You may also spot the American Woodcock in the many low wooded wetlands such as the hollows near Vine Brook at Burns Hill or the southwest side at Greystone.

Let us not forget the Blue Spotted Salamanders as they start to hatch in many of the vernal pools in Westford, such as the Adams Trail (part of the [Northern Tadmuck Trails](#)) near Kirsie Circle and the [Beaver Brook Trail](#) near Butterfield Lane. Remember, our Blue Spotted Salamander is listed as "special concern" and is legally protected in the Commonwealth.



The warm days of summer arrive to a landscape teeming with color and activity. Our assortment of wildlife is truly amazing. The Acker Trail along Stony Brook is a favorite place to watch the Blue Winged Teal or the striking Wood Duck build their nests along the banks and hatch their young. The ever present turkeys lead their latest broods to the best foraging areas. The photo shows [Beaver Brook Meadow](#) in the summer. The southern end of the Butterfield Lane Trail ends in a loop against Beaver Brook meadow and is a great vantage point for many nesting birds and water fowl. The endless assortment of summer flowers provides a colorful backdrop to enjoy as

summer days drift by.



The fading daylight of fall allows nature one last colorful performance before the return of the telltale footprints in the snow. The New England fall foliage is indeed breathtaking. Several Westford trails have a distinctive beauty in the fall. You will find the delicate Maple Leaf Viburnum transforming from a green foliage with white blossoms to a translucent mystical shade of violet before winter returns. The photo shows a Maple Leaf Viburnum at the [Frances Hill Sanctuary](#).

Notes from the Trail Mapping Trenches by Rich Strazdas



In March 2021, the Trust published the third printing of the 13th edition of Westford Trails. In 23 months, 600 copies have been distributed, nearly 6 books per week. Who is buying them? You are! New residents, Covid-bound families, people wakening to climate change and change-begins-at-home - all are anxious to discover wilderness in their back yard. This inspires me to keep the [online trail guide](#), which drives the next edition of Westford Trails, up to date.

What is new? You may be surprised to find how dynamic Westford's trail systems are. Storms bring down trees too massive to remove. Beavers do what beavers do. Nature is relentless in reclaiming what is rightfully hers. Man develops and preserves land.

Bill Harman drew my attention to the neighborhood trails on conservation land near Edwards Beach. Those who live on the "tree" named streets in Nabnasset use these trails to access the Ronan McElligott Memorial Playground and Edwards Beach on Nabnasset Lake. There is only a third of a mile of trails, but they traverse an idyllic woodland in a densely developed neighborhood. The ends of Maple, Hemlock and Woodbine all continue into the woods. There is even a stream crossing with an impressive bridge. Look for the trail map at the link above, and add this gem to your bucket list of local trails.

The Long Trail now runs from Tadmuck Road near 495 all the way to Providence Road. How long is it? Long enough to require a car spot, unless you have several hours for a round trip. At the western end, the Devil's Walking Stick Trail, named for the plant specimens with nasty spikes on their trunks, has been reblazed and rerouted where it crosses a small stream. West of the stream, the trail had crossed a meadow which was occasionally mowed, obliterating the trail. The trail now takes a more direct path, and avoids the meadow. There are also minor trails from the pond near Boxwood Road. These connect with the Walking Stick trail and the wide forest road on the west side of the Adams property. Look for these changes in the near future on the Cider Mill Pond map.

The Trust last year began a program to consistently blaze all the trails in town. This means many trail networks now have multiple colors. Peruse the online maps to see whether your favorite trail has been upgraded from black and white. Check our [website](#) for more information about the trail blaze system currently in use.

What else is on the horizon? There are trail networks at MIT Haystack, the Collins Conservation Restriction, and Snake Meadow Hill that deserve to be better known. Some of these are semi-public, so it is always a struggle deciding what to include. For sure, it is never boring. Get out there, and bring your family along!

Fighting Litter with Data by Mark Minnucci

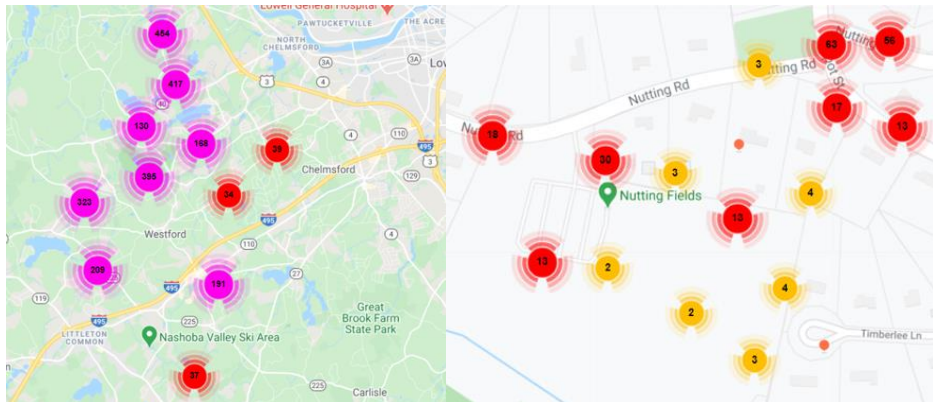
The next time you're driving anywhere in Massachusetts, take a quick glance at the side of the road. I guarantee that you'll see litter. And not just a few pieces of litter, but hundreds if not thousands of pieces

strewn the length of every mile of our Commonwealth. Litter is on our roads, our exit ramps, and in wetlands, forests, and front lawns. It's everywhere and no matter how much you pick up, it seems to come back the very next day. We should just give up and let the litterers win. Right? Oh, heck no!

There is a new weapon in the fight against litter – data! When you pick up one piece of litter, you have picked up one piece of litter. When you pick up one piece of litter and photograph it using the Litterati app on your phone, you have picked up one piece of litter and just made it possible to prevent new litter from being deposited in the future. At the time of this writing, 9,758,667 pieces of litter in 165 countries have been picked up by Litterati users. Here's how you can participate in the movement:

1. Download the free and easy to use Litterati app on your iPhone or Android device.
2. Open the app and photograph a piece of litter with it.
3. Discard the litter properly and tag the photo. Tagging litter is just like tagging your family photos with people's names, dates, and locations.
4. Invite or challenge others to join you. More on this in a moment!
5. Use the recorded litter data to get neighbors, local businesses, companies, community organizations, and governments to implement highly targeted action plans. More on this, too! Keep reading!

I started using Litterati in Westford in February 2021. Since then, 48 residents have joined me in picking up 2,400 pieces of litter. What does that look like? Below is the first ever “Litter Map of Westford, Massachusetts” and a zoom-in view of the Nutting Road area.



Every dot on the pictures above is a photographed piece of litter. Each photograph has the time and location of pickup, type of litter, and the company brand. With this data you will know exactly which companies cause the most litter in our town. The town will know the most useful locations to place trash cans. Volunteer groups will know where to spend their time while having the highest impact on protecting our wildlife. But we can only accomplish this if we work together. We need your help. Once the data is collected it can be analyzed and acted upon. For example, if during a walk you find a number of coffee cups from the same coffee shop in the same spot week after week, you can take action. Visit that local coffee shop and meet the manager. Let them know about the ongoing litter from their shop and ask if they would run an anti-littering campaign in the form of posters or wording their packaging to let customers know about the problem with their coffee cups. Another example might be that you find a number of recycle-able containers littering a particular athletic field after an event but not at another athletic field. On closer inspection, you might find that the litter free field has a recycling bin available but other field does

not. You could take action by bringing the problem to the attention of town officials and ask that a recycling bin be placed at the field with the litter problem.

My request to you is to join me in a challenge – the Westford 10k. It is a call to action to photograph and pick up over 10,000 pieces of litter in Westford by the end of 2021. To join, all you need to do is download the Litterati app and enter in challenge code 615012. Then get outside and start photographing (and of course disposing) the litter in our community. If you're reading this, but are not a Westford resident, then I ask you to create a challenge using Litterati for your own town.

For your safety when picking up litter, we suggest:

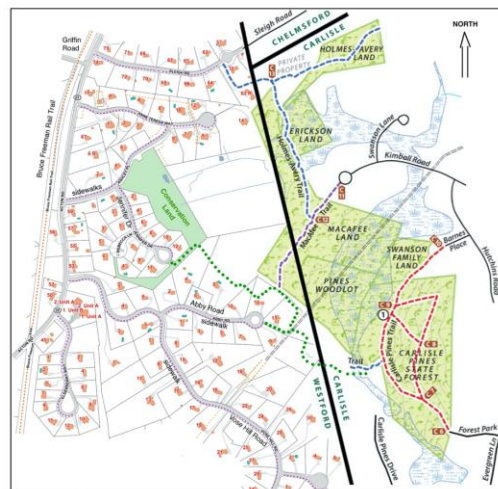
- Wear gloves – a pair of rubber/work gloves will keep your hands safe and clean.
- Don't go into the street to pick-up litter; stay on the sidewalk or roadside.
- Be watchful for any unsafe litter or sharp objects – if you can't see what is in a pile of litter, use a stick or tool to make all items visible before picking up anything with your hands.
- We recommend wearing a reflective safety vest so that you can be more visible to motorists.

We can't solve our litter crisis by picking up one piece at a time or chastising someone caught in the act. But we can solve the problem if we collect data and study the larger system of litter in our towns. I'm inviting you today to be an unapologetic optimist with me. I'm inviting you to download the Litterati app and join me in the Westford Litter 10k. Let's make a lasting change in our community. For more information, feel free to contact me at mark.minnucci@gmail.com. You can also follow the links below to learn more about Litterati:

- <https://www.litterati.org/stories>
- https://www.ted.com/talks/jeff_kirschner_this_app_makes_it_fun_to_pick_up_litter?utm_campaign=teds_pread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

Hike to the Tall Pines in Carlisle by Bill Harman

The Tall Pines in Carlisle are not far from Westford. It's possible to hike there from Westford trails. The accompanying map shows a trail starting from the end of Abby Road in Westford (11 Abby Road), going over the town line into Carlisle and directly to the Carlisle Pines State Forest. If you take that hike, you will find the connecting trail be to a pleasant woodland walk by old stone walls and far from any houses. When you reach the Tall Pine, you will be on well-groomed trails among very tall trees – an unusual and pleasant experience. Most of the trees are White Pines, with some Hemlocks. Some trees are very large in diameter as well as tall. I recommend boots for this hike because of several wet places, and a stream crossing as you enter the Carlisle Pines State Forest.



It's possible to continue the hike into a loop, returning to Abby Road from a different trail (the MacAfee Trail). The main trail through the Tall Pines ends at a short road, Barnes Place. Walking straight ahead, you turn left onto Hutchins Road (a quiet road), and then left onto Kimball Road (also quiet). That road ends at a circle where the MacAfee Trail begins at the far side of the circle. Around the mid-point of the MacAfee Trail is a possible turn-off to the Holmes-Avery Trail, which is another entry point from Sleigh Road in Westford. This trail and the nearby Holmes-Avery Conservation Land were donated by Joe and Susan Avery. Joe was active in the Westford Conservation Trust years ago when he and his wife lived in that area.

Spring Bird Walk

May 8, 2021

7:30 – 9:00 am

Location: Emmet Conservation Land - meet at Trailside Way town parking area, Westford MA

Join Westford Conservation Trust birder Lenny Palmer for an early morning ramble at Westford's birding "hot spot", Emmet Conservation Land. 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 as the ground can be rocky and hilly in places. No dogs please. Park in the Town parking lot at the end of Trailside Way off Powers Road. Walk is free of charge and no sign-up is required. Masks are required. For more information, contact Lenny at 978-392-9876



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