

News

and

Views

Winter 2003
Editor, Kathy Deschenes



Annual Meeting Recap

It was another successful annual meeting! We had a great turnout thanks to our guest speaker, John McCarter. John has been tracking wildlife for more than twenty years and is among the region's leading authorities on animal tracks and signs. He presented a fascinating slide show of his tracking experiences and told so many great stories about his time in the wild. John also stuck around after the meeting and chatted with anyone who had questions.



Conservation Trustee of the Year

This year's recipient was Dick Emmet. Dick was one of the original founders of the Westford Conservation Trust, about 18 years ago. But Dick's activism for the benefit of the community didn't start then. He and his wife Alan had already acquired and permanently protected 99 acres of woodland, near Texas Road --- an area that has subsequently become the main part of the Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary. He was a member of the School Committee, the Board Of Selectmen, and subsequently a member of the Conservation Commission. Dick was also active in representing the town in the earth removal that was to create what is now "Nashoba Pond". Dick, who is an accomplished birder, expanded and refined his birding notes and published *Westford Bird Notes*. Dick was on the staff of the Conservation Law Foundation -- a very active and creative organization. He has been on the board of directors of Maine Audubon and is currently a director of Massachusetts Audubon. Dick and Alan provided the town with an additional donation this year of conservation land. We are so happy that Dick is a member of our Trust and, indeed, our town.

Tom Paul - Honorary Director

Tom is a founding Director of the Westford Conservation Trust, and held the position of Director from 1984 to 2002. Tom was also President of the Trust from 1988 until 1995. During this time, Tom obtained several valuable parcels of land for the Trust, to the public benefit of all the residents of Westford. He is also responsible for the certification of over 70 vernal pools. In 1994, the Conservation Commission named a trail after him in honor of Tom's unflagging interest and labor on behalf of conservation projects in town. Tom also instituted the Trust's scholarship program and has personally awarded these scholarships each year. Tom was also a member of the Westford Conservation Commission and headed the first and second Open Space Subcommittees. ***Please join the Trust at the George Rogers Fire Station on Town Farm Road on February 20th at 8:30 pm as Tom presents a fascinating look at the Old Growth Forest problem in Alaska.***

WCT Annual Summary

by William Harman, Clerk

The activities of the Trust have grown considerably over the years. The current year was quite active.

EDUCATION

A new and successful project this year was the birdfeeder program for the three elementary schools. Working with the school administration, the Trust bought and installed bird feeders, and supplied the birdseed and binoculars. This is a program in which the students regularly monitor birds and report bird observations to a nationwide database via the internet.

We continued our program of nature walks for 4th grade. This year the walks were at the Abbot School, including many 4th grade classes, led by volunteer teachers who were organized by Amy Gust.

The Trust conducted Spring walks in coordination with Roudenbush, which included a Bird Walk, led by Dick Emmet, and a Wildflower Walk, led by Elana Schreiber. The Trust also participated in the state's Biodiversity program in June by organizing a Stream Critters walk and a Ponding session led by Peter Severance, and a Bird Walk led by Lisa Clark.

The Trust continued the tradition of awarding a \$1000 scholarship to a Westford Academy student. This year's recipient was Ryan Janoch.

The Trust supported the high school Envirothon with a \$1000 donation, and prepared a new brochure for a town-wide mailing in April. We also issued newsletters throughout the year for members, and developed a new and expanded web site (www.westfordconservationtrust.org). Also Trust leaders provided nature walks for scouting organizations throughout the year, and Marian Harman presented a slide program of wildflowers to the Westford Newcomers Club.

LAND STEWARDSHIP

The Trust received a new parcel of conservation land, which was donated by Dick and Alan Emmet. This land adjoins the Wilson Conservation Land and significantly increases the total land area now protected as a natural area.

This year the Trust established a boundary committee to determine and monitor the boundaries of our conservation properties. The directors have come to realize how important this is. We realize how that conservation land which we have worked hard to acquire, in some cases with a high monetary cost, may be lost due to inattention. We surveyed and marked the eastern boundary of the Lambert wildlife sanctuary, and identified the boundaries of the Wilson conservation land so that we could locate and construct a new trail entrance from Preservation Way. We also continued work on the boundary relocation with an abutter on Drews Crossing. After two years of work, this boundary change has been completed and is now recorded in the Registry of Deeds.

Several Boy Scout projects were coordinated with the Trust where we provided funding or consulting support. One was Bobby Silva's project constructing granite benches at the top of Kissacook Hill.

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WCT Annual Summary

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Another was Barrett Bilotta's trail improvements and granite bench construction at the Trust's Prospect Hill Wildlife Sanctuary on Hildreth Street. Also, Derek Lyman constructed an outdoor classroom of granite benches at Day School.

TRAILS

Several new trails were constructed and marked this year. New trails in the Wilson Land now connect Preservation Way with Audubon and town-owned land to the south. Another new trail is located just north of the Stone Arch Bridge, and a third is a beaver-detour trail to bypass a huge beaver dam on Boutwell Brook. New trail signs were installed in several locations, including a large wooden sign for the trail to Mystery Spring.

The Trails Booklet was updated and reissued and is available for purchase at Roundenbush. This is an expanded issue and includes a number of new trail maps, some submitted by Boy Scouts and some by trail stewards.

WILDLIFE MONITORING

The Trust continued to actively monitor wildlife and plants. Articles written by Marian Harman are printed in the Westford Eagle every month, listing the current sightings by numerous contributors all over town. Also, last winter the Trust sponsored a tracking program by John McCarter in East Boston Camps.

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

Although the Conservation Trust is separate from town government, the Trust monitors current town affairs as well as state and national affairs. Marian Harman has regularly attended meetings by NMCOG regarding an inventory of conservation land in area towns, and several Directors and members are active members of the Stony Brook Watershed Advisory Committee. Trust members have been active in the town's updated Open Space Plan, which was completed this year, and in the Stony Brook Stream Team. The Trust is also a regular contributor to the Bay Circuit Alliance, the Mass. Land Trust Coalition and the Land Trust Alliance.

WCT Scholarship

Each year the Trust presents a Scholarship to a Westford Academy student who shows an interest in the cause of Conservation. If you are interested in applying, please speak with a WA guidance counselor to obtain the correct forms. 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 monthly meeting time has changed!

Due to a scheduling conflict at the George Rogers Fire Station on Town Farm Road, the Trust is now meeting on the third Thursday of the month instead of the first. The time remains the same (7:30 pm) and we do not meet in the months of July and August. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Marian Harman at marianharman@aol.com or call her at 692-3907.

Massachusetts Envirothon by Liz McGuire

High School students are busy preparing for the 2003 Massachusetts Envirothon, an environmental program designed to stimulate an awareness of the interdependence of natural resources within the environment. Teams comprised of five students represent their school or organization in a statewide competition on May 1st testing their knowledge of aquatics, soils, wildlife, habitat management, agriculture, and a current issue. For the 2003 current issue students will determine a significant and achievable step that their community can take to strengthen their local food system.

For the past eight years teams from Westford Academy have acquired numerous awards for their high scores and excellent research on topics including open space protection, stormwater management, community waste disposal systems, and biodiversity. Last year the Westford Academy team surveyed the presence of exotic plant species in town and researched options to control phragmites and purple loosestrife in the Snake Meadow Brook wetlands. For the 2001 competition the students researched and recommended improvements to stormwater management in the Nabnasset area to protect Nabnasset Lake and the adjacent underground aquifer.

Trust President Marian Harman has served as a judge and encouraged the Trust's sponsorship of the MA Envirothon. If you would like more information on the program, or would like to help prepare high school students of today to become environmentally aware decision makers of the future, please contact Liz McGuire at 978-692-9395.



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