

Fall 2003



Westford Conservation Trust Newsletter

Join us for the Trust's Annual Meeting

Editor - Diane Duane

When: Thursday, November 6th at 7:30pm

Where: Parish Center for the Arts, Westford Common

Speaker

Westford Resident Tom Teller will present a slide show about an intrepid group of explorers who took a 1300 - mile sea kayak journey in the Gulf of Maine. The purpose of this journey was to raise awareness and caring about the ecology and cultural legacy of this vast international watershed and to demonstrate low-impact coastal recreational practices, safety, and stewardship principles. Tom states, "We wanted to help people understand what the Gulf of Maine is: its oceanography, its shoreline, its watersheds, its habitats, its people and places. It was an ecological and cultural awareness trip. We hoped that in traveling slowly, by kayak, expedition members would gain and convey to others a sense of the Gulf that can not be gained by other means of travel - a personal, immediate, and intimate sense of time and place". Please join us for this beautiful visual and musical presentation. Program is open to the public and is free of charge. Refreshments will be served. The Parish Center is located on Lincoln Rd. at Westford Common. For more information call Marian Harman, 978-692-3907.



Conservation Person of the Year

Every year the Trust presents an award to a person who exemplifies the spirit of Conservation in the town. Who will be this year? Come to the meeting and find out!



Blandings Turtle

Annual Meeting

(continued from page 1)

Business

Since this is our biggest meeting of the year, the Trust also conducts a little business as well. Reports will be presented by the Treasurer, Secretary, and the Land/Trail Stewardship Committee. Our bylaws state that elections for Directors, Associate Directors, Clerk, and Treasurer be held at the Annual meeting as well.

Enjoy

Refreshments will be provided. Bring your curiosity and enthusiasm for a fun and enjoyable meeting. Hope to see you there!



Eastern Box Turtle

Education

The Trust continues to support our successful **birdfeeder program** at each of the three elementary schools as part of the classroom feeder watch. This is our 3rd year supporting and working with Westford school librarians and 4th grade teachers to implement and monitor a Cornell program where fourth graders use bird feeders outside their school to learn more about science and nature. Bird sighting reports go to Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and to Marian and are published in the Westford Eagle in her Flora and Fauna report.

The **Living Lab** at the Day School which is currently being built, will now begin a Living Lab Extension at the Abbot School. The PTO will be building benches for the extension, and the Trust will be putting in a bird sanctuary with bird feeders and plantings along with the goal of having the students involved and helping with its creation.

Volunteers are needed for this project. Please contact Marian at 978-692-3907 if interested.

Turtle Project Update

Four reports of turtles on the Massachusetts Endangered Species list have been received. A Box Turtle was reported in the northwest section of town. In a visit to the area near the Colburn's conservation land, a Blandings Turtle was sighted from a distance (twice, in fact, by two different people). In the last few weeks, a rare Wood Turtle, approximately 25 years old and the third one in Westford, was found in the south western part of town. The turtle has apparently settled into its over wintering spot, and has been joined there by a Spotted Turtle, both apparently enjoying the sandy bottomed stream common in the area. Most of the turtle reports have been snappers and painted turtles. A presentation by Hyla Ecological on native turtles was filmed and will be shown on the local access cable channel (Channel 8). The Turtle Project is a joint effort of the Trust and the Westford Environmental News and Action Committee (WENAC).

Did you know?

WCT helps to preserve and protect open land, water resources, wildlife and other natural resources.



Special Town Meeting—Tues. Nov 4th

The Trust opposes Article 1, supports the concept of Article 3, and Supports Articles 11 and 12.

Article 1 - Community Preservation Act Fee Reduction

This article will attempt to reduce the Community Preservation Act's contributions from 3% to 1%. Since we are one of the few towns that have passed a CPA, we are currently able to acquire 100% of state matching funds. This has enabled us to raise a greater amount of funds for open space purchases than would otherwise be available. Taking advantage of the 3% contribution on your tax bill adds to this amount significantly. For homes assessed at \$150-\$250,000, the CPA tax amounts to about \$15/year. We have also seen how important this fund has become now with the current and potential issues of land use for East Boston Camps and the Stepinski Land (and other future large parcels of open space). The trust has taken a position against reducing the CPA to 1%. Please vote to oppose this measure at Town Meeting.

Article 3 -Commercial/Industrial Growth Management Bylaw

The proposed bylaw would cap commercial and industrial development projects at a total of 200,000 square feet of building space per year and establishes a maximum building size of 150,000 square feet. Developments that meet a more stringent 75% open space requirement are not affected by the caps. The goal of this article is to accomplish smart sustainable growth over a number of years so that the town's infrastructure has time to keep up with the commercial/industrial growth. The Trust supports the general concept of the proposed Growth Management Bylaw.

Articles 11 and 12 -Stepinski Land Acquisition

These Articles address the appropriations of \$700,000 from CPA funds and \$500,000 from Water Dept. funds to be used towards the purchase of the 107 acre Stepinski parcel. The goal of this article is to develop a new town well, acquire and preserve land for water resource protection, open space, and passive and active recreation. The Trust voted unanimously to support the use of these funds for this important land purchase. These funds will come out of already available funds and will require no new appropriations.

Trust Activities

East Boston Camps—the Trust voted to support this very important cause by donating \$500 for their fund raising project. This will help to ensure that the camp stays open at least for another summer. George Fletcher called Marian to enthusiastically thank the Trust for their support.

May 2003 Town Meeting—In May, the Directors of the trust voted to oppose Articles 24, 25, 26 & 27 for the land swaps allowing the town to put in a by-pass road through the proposed Gutierrez Industrial Development (off of Rte 225 and 110) . Several trust members were also active in speaking to the issue at town meeting. The bypass road would be put right between two documented vernal pools- destroying a great deal of valuable wetland and upland habitat for the animals which use the pools. Also, it would put a huge amount of traffic onto a scenic, rural rd—Concord Rd. The trust continues to be interested and involved in this high impact project.

Trail Steward/Boundary Committee—Tom Spuhler has been heading up the Boundary Marking Committee with the goal of eventually surveying all trust land parcel boundaries. We are actively working on trail maintenance and stewardship, as well as abutter issues that involve trail incursion and trailhead problems. The Land Stewards committee has made a presentation to the Conservation Committee to propose future Eagle projects. Requests for such Trust projects are becoming more frequent. We are currently working on a projects 'booklet' for interested scouts.

“We urge you to attend Town Meeting and hear the discussions on these and other important articles”



Yellow spotted salamander

A big thank you to associate director **Michael D'Antuono** for all his ongoing efforts, hard work and creativity as our webmaster. You can check out the site at www.westfordconservationtrust.org

Our website provides lots of information - here are just a few examples:

- Easy access to local trail maps , online trail guides and trust newsletters.
- Learn the difference between land owned by the trust and conservation restriction land.
- Send your favorite flora and fauna photos to Mike for our photo gallery.
- Check out an online posting of Westford's Open Space Plan - Land Inventory Map.
- Submit a field report of any interesting plant and or wildlife you've seen here in Westford.

Trust Meetings—Please join us for our monthly meetings. All members and other interested individuals are invited to attend the Westford Conservation Trust monthly meetings. Meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month (except January where it will be Jan 8th) and begin at 7:30 P.M. at the Rogers Fire Station. You can contact us at info@westfordconservationtrust.org or 978-692-3907 .

Volunteers - More people are needed to help with plantings and creation of the Abbot Bird Sanctuary this upcoming November. We also need volunteers who are willing to present to the 4th grade classes about our Cornell bird feeder program. Please contact Marian at 978-692-3907 if interested in any of these wonderful activities!



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