

Spring 2004



www.westfordconservationtrust.org



Editor
Diane Duane

Vernal Pools

Trust member **Lenny Palmer** (along with 9 other Westford residents) is currently attending the Westford Conservation Commission Vernal Pool Education Program run by the Mass Audubon Society Ecological Extension Service and funded by a grant from Mass Electric. The program consists of classroom and "hands-on" field sessions at existing and potential vernal pools on Town lands. This program is intended to train individuals about the ecology of these special wetland areas and the process for obtaining state certification, which provides a higher level of protection for them under existing laws and regulations.

According to Lenny, vernal pools can be certified by observing organisms that only breed (obligate species) in these temporary water habitats. These 'obligate' species include Wood frogs, Spotted and Blue-spotted salamanders (rare species), Fairy shrimp and others. Vernal pools are defined as "confined basin depressions with no permanent flowing outlets with no reproducing fish populations". Other organisms that use vernal pools but are not restricted to them for reproduction (facultative species) can also be used in the certification process. These include Spring peepers, Gray tree frog, Green frog, Spotted turtle, Painted turtle, Leeches, Water scorpions and many others. The Massachusetts Natural Heritage Program verifies submitted evidence of a pool and lists it in their Vernal Pool data base which then becomes available to the public.



On a dark, rainy night toward the end of March, we got THE phone call—tonight is the night! Marian sounded the call for all interested Trust members who might like to come with her and Bill to check out the salamander vernal pool spring migration. Hopefully we would see some spotted salamanders during their annual migration from cozy underground winter retreats. With raincoats and flashlights in hand, we trekked through some conservation land trails, and voilà, the first thing we knew, we could hear the spring peeper frogs and the wood frogs loud 'duck' calls - steering us toward a few upland vernal pools! Looking through water filled with duckweed and icy bits, we saw something yellow, and YES - we were thrilled to see our first yellow spotted salamander! A few feet away, we heard the tiny peepers and saw lots of wood frogs. What a great way to spend a rainy spring night! You can check out some of these photos and sounds of the peepers and wood frogs at our website.

For more information on vernal pools, take a look at the Reading Memorial High School's Vernal Pool Association website at www.vernalpool.org



Blue Spotted Salamander.....Yellow Spotted Salamander.....Wood Frog.....OH MY!!

Have you taken a photo of some wildlife right here in Westford?



We'd love more material for the website

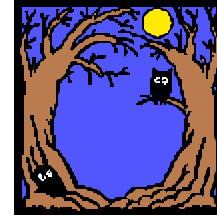
flora and fauna gallery. If you'd like to share your photo, go to our website and follow the instructions on the Gallery page.

Westford Wildlife



Have you heard my call while walking on one of our lovely Westford trails?

Here's a photo of a Barred Owl taken in the afternoon on Dec 30, 2003 near Westford Center (courtesy of Westford resident R. Bradley Potts). Go to our website at www.westfordconservationtrust.org and listen to the call of the Barred Owl.



East Boston Camps Fundraiser—Volunteers Needed

East Boston Camps, located on part of a 300+ acre property in the middle of Westford, needs money to help keep it functioning as a camp for inner city children. Nestled on “some of the last undeveloped woodlands in a town that has seen its population jump to 21,000 or about 50% in the last decade.... It's possibly the most important piece of open space in the town”, said Town Manager Steve LeDoux in a Boston Globe interview last summer. To help the camps maintain this existing use of such a large parcel of undeveloped land, the Trust is planning to participate with this fundraising event, which will be held the **weekend of June 26-27th at East Boston Camps**. The Trust will also be presenting a \$1000 check during this event to help support the camp operations. The fundraising committee is in need of **volunteers** to lead nature walks (or create a nature walk of your own), raking and clean up, help with organization and help with the planned activities etc. If interested in this very important event, please email **Sarah Fletcher** at sfletcher@roudenbush.org or call Marian at 978-692-3907 (MarianHarman@aol.com)

Land/Trail Stewardship Steering Committee - Volunteers Needed

The Land/Trail Stewardship Committee is looking for another Westford Conservation Trust member to join their committee. The committee is responsible for keeping track of properties, dealing with land steward issues, acting as liaison for the Trust and/or Conservation Commission on trail issues, creating an annual newsletter, and organizing occasional meetings or get togethers for land trail stewards. If interested in joining this committee, becoming a Land Steward or learning more about us, please call Kate Hollister at 978-392-6802 or Tom Spuhler at 978-392-1456 or email us at landstewards@westfordconservationtrust.org

Mass Audubon Baltimore Oriole Project 2004

Mass Audubon is instituting a citizen science project for this spring and summer. They want everyone to be on the look-out for Baltimore Oriole nests. Orioles are a fairly common neo-tropical migrant, but are on the decline. Most people know of a least one nest in their area. If you see one being built or used, please call Marian Harman at 978-692-3907 or email her at MarianHarman@aol.com and she will see that Mass Audubon gets the list of nests found in Westford.

Spring Walks



Bird Walk (AS4W-BWA)

Saturday, May 8, 7:00-9:00 AM



Join Westford's foremost birder, Dick Emmet, for a bird walk on Audubon and Town - owned conservation land. Trail is rocky so wear sturdy shoes - about 2 miles. We promise to get you back in time for town Meeting. Bring binoculars. No dogs please. This walk is limited to a maximum of 30 people. Meet at the end of Texas Rd. by the Conservation land sign. CALL RCC TO REGISTER.

Wildflower Walk (AS4W-WFW)

Sunday, May 23, 1:00-2:30 PM



Join Westford's Elana Schreiber for a wildflower walk on Westford Conservation Trust land. Wear waterproof shoes in case of mud and long pants in case of poison ivy. About ½ mile, gentle grade. Meet at the Francis Hill Conservation area sign across from 120 Lowell Rd. Park near the white gate. CALL RCC TO REGISTER.

“Stream Critters” Walk (AS4W-SC)

Saturday, June 5, 9:30-11:30 AM



Wetlands biologist, Peter Severance, will lead an exploration of Vine Brook and its “critters”. Fun for all ages. Wear shoes that can get wet if you'd like to wade in. Meet at the Audubon parking lot, Concord Rd. across from Banbury Dr. CALL RCC to REGISTER.

Ponding (AS4W-PA)

Sunday, June 6, 9:30-11:30 AM



Wetlands biologist, Peter Severance, will lead an exploration of a Westford pond and its inhabitants. Wear shoes that can get wet if you'd like to wade. Fun for the whole family! Park on Concord Rd. across from 224 Concord Rd. CALL RCC TO REGISTER.

All walks are FREE. Please Call Roudenbush to register (692-5511) and reference the corresponding code for the walk. If you need further information, call Marian Harman at 692-3907 or email her at MarianHarman@aol.com

Trail Stewards Needed

For the past several years, trail clearing and land stewardship have been coordinated by the Conservation Commission and the Conservation Trust. We have been fortunate to have many dedicated and outdoor-minded 'trail stewards' who take on the job of clearing and maintaining a particular trail. Currently, we could use new stewards for the Peace Trail, Greystone, Tom Paul Trail from Graniteville Rd. to Cold Spring Rd, and the [new] trails between Chamberlain Rd and Buckboard Dr. If you are interested in a particular trail, helping with trail work in general, or would like more information, please contact Tom Spuhler at 978-392-1456 or Kate Hollister at 978-392-6802 or email us at landstewards@westfordconservationtrust.org



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 third Thursday of each month and begin at 7:30 P.M. at the Rogers Fire Station on Town Farm Road. There are no meetings in July and August. You can contact us at info@westfordconservationtrust.org or 978-692-3907 .



Westford Conservation Trust
P.O. Box 255
Westford, Massachusetts 01886

Non Profit
Organization
Postage Paid
Permit #86
Westford, Ma