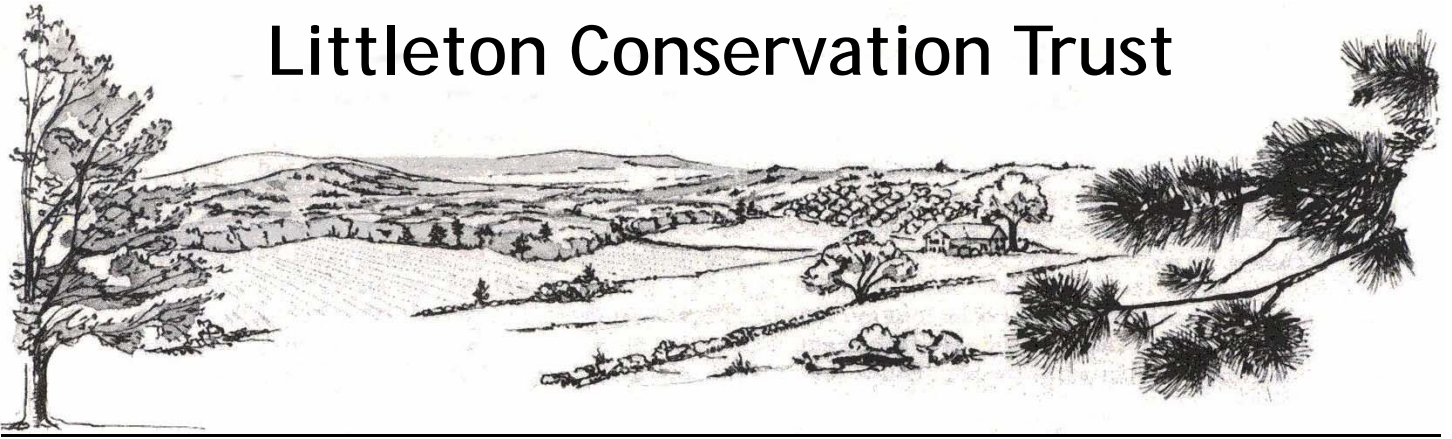


# Littleton Conservation Trust



Newsletter

Autumn 2004

## Improving Conservation Land in Littleton

by Art Lazarus

### The Problem

Most conservation properties acquired by the Town of Littleton and the Littleton Conservation Trust (LCT) are old farmlands that have grown back to woodlands (second-growth forests). As of this year, approximately 1450 acres of land in Littleton is protected. This acreage is split among 20 different parcels, varying in size from 1 to 220 acres. Remnants of old fields still exist but are gradually closing in with shrub and tree growth. Invasive plants like burning bush, bittersweet, and loosteife move in, along with poison ivy, to take over stone walls, fields, and forests. On numerous parcels, although not noticeable to the casual observer, abandoned farm equipment, barbed wire fences, and farm trash is half buried under leaf compost and soil. An accumulation of new litter and trash on conservation properties is kept to a minimum as the properties are kept clean by the regular visits of Land Stewards and helpful walkers. However, vandalism takes a toll on conservation land. Signage and structures like bridges and boardwalks seem to be most often targeted. In Littleton, vandalism is mostly concentrated at the Colonial Drive entrance to Long Lake Park, in spite of numerous patrols per week by Stewards.

### What We Are Doing About It

Efforts by the Land Stewardship Team and other volunteers are focusing on conservation land improvement and restoration. The largest project to date is currently in progress. The Cobb family donated 30 acres of land off Nashoba Road to the LCT in 2003. They also provided a substantial endowment for on-site projects and maintenance. The remnants of the large-scale chicken farm are being cleaned up. Paul Biagioni, a local landscaping contractor, was engaged by the LCT to clean up all metal and wood waste scattered on site at locations identified by the Land Stewardship Team. To date, four roll-off containers have been filled with debris. A one-mile trail has been developed and maintained by Stewards. Boy Scouts plan to build a foot bridge and boardwalk soon.

At the recently acquired 88 acre Hartwell Family Memorial Preserve, some old farm debris remains partially hidden and is scheduled to be removed by volunteers with the help of the Highway Dept.. Mowing of open and grassy areas has already been done by volunteers. Efforts are being made to restore and widen grasslands for increased biodiversity and aesthetics.

At Long Lake Park, the Highway Dept. removed a large pile of old rusty farm equipment several years ago. The Highway Dept. and a landscape contractor, Kevin Woolhizer, perform annual mowing of the 13-acre grassland adjacent to the AT&T tower. This is the largest unaltered grassland in town. Gradual widening of the grassland to the limits of the surrounding stone walls will create additional acreage to the field. This year, the Natural Resource Conservation Service of the USDA, is providing some funding and technical assistance for this grassland restoration project to introduce native grass species. Efforts will be made to reduce the rapidly spreading poison ivy. Another smaller grassland project occurs at Sarah Doublet forest.

Partially-covered, old rusty barbed wire is common in several conservation areas. Timing for removal depends on the number and diligence of volunteers. Since barbed wire has been used for 130 years, there is plenty out there waiting for careful removal.

### Results

The long-term, multi-dimensional, and informal program of improving conservation land is in progress. Improvements include cleaning up old debris, creating more grassland, improving wildlife habitat, increasing vegetation diversity, reducing vandalism, and removing invasive plant species. Although much remains to be done, efforts to date are substantially improving these unique and special places in Littleton. ■

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### In Memory of Eunice Morrison

The Littleton Conservation Trust would like to dedicate this issue of our newsletter to Eunice Morrison, whose quiet dedication and cooperation allowed the Town of Littleton to conserve Nagog Hill Orchard and accompanying lands. It would not have been possible without her conservation ethic and patience. We are eternally grateful.

The Littleton Conservation Trust (LCT), distinct from the Town's Conservation Commission, is a private land trust formed in 1962 to promote Littleton's rural character; to preserve its water, plant, and wildlife resources and its unique views; and to provide environmental education. The LCT is caretaker of over 300 acres of property (all gifted from far-sighted residents) on which we manage a system of trails for public use.



LCT  
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## The Fisher — Another Wild Resident of Littleton

by Melissa Spurr

If you catch a glimpse of a largish animal with dark brown fur and a bushy tail passing through your neighborhood or along Littleton conservation lands, you will be one of the growing numbers of Littleton residents who have spotted a fisher.

Fishers have thick, dark brown fur with a grayish cast on their heads. They average in length from 2.5 to 3.5 feet from nose to tail and weigh anywhere between 3 to 18 lbs. (Males are larger than females.) They have a broad head with a pointed snout and small ears. They walk plantigrade (that is, with the entire sole of their foot touching the ground) and have partially retractable claws.

Fishers, sometimes called fisher cats, do not catch fish nor are they in the cat family. Fishers are mustelids, related to mink, weasels, skunks, and otters. It is unknown where their common name originated. One theory is that the mink's habitat of fishing was mistakenly attributed to the fisher.

Instead of fish, the fisher has a diverse diet, preying on small mammals, porcupine, birds, carrion, and fruit. Fishers are so well known for their ability to hunt and kill porcupines that the timber industry has reintroduced the fisher to many parts of the U.S. to control porcupine populations. (Porcupines often kill or damage small trees.)

Fishers inhabit mature forests, preferring those with high canopy closure (that is, continuous overhead cover). A combination of logging, historic trapping for its fur, and other factors led to a severe contraction of the fisher's range across the United States and Canada. In the eastern United States, the fisher has recovered much of its range, as a result of strict trapping regulations, return of forest from abandoned farmlands, and reintroductions.

Fishers are mostly solitary animals. Males have a home range of 50 to 150 square miles. Females have smaller ranges of 1.5 to 25 square miles. They communicate primarily through scent marking. Fishers mate in the spring (after the females give birth) and, like most other mustelids, have delayed implantation with gestation of nearly a year. Fishers give birth to 1-5 young in a den made within a rock crevice or hollow tree.

While primarily nocturnal, fishers sometimes are abroad during daylight. They are good climbers and swimmers. They are generally thought of as secretive and are rarely observed. In parts of their range, this is changing as populations re-expand and they become habituated to human presence.

Keep in mind that fishers are wild animals. When startled, fishers may react aggressively to a perceived threat. Make sure you keep garbage, pet foods, pets, and domestic fowl secure to avoid attracting fishers too close to your home.

It is exciting to have such fascinating creatures living in our neighborhood, but is also important to respect their wildness and observe them only from a distance. ■



Fisher (*Martes pennanti*)

©Erwin Bauer



## Littleton Conservation Trust Membership Form – 2005

New       Renewal

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
(Date determines year of tax deduction)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual: \$25  | <input type="checkbox"/> Family: \$ 40       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend: \$100   | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporter: \$ 250   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron: \$500   | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor: \$1,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: \$ _____   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gift to Permanent Fund: \$ _____                              |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Please send me information about how to preserve my own land. |  |

(Provide your email address if you want to receive notification of upcoming walks and conservation-related events.)

Please cut out this form and send it to:

Kathy Stevens , Treasurer  
Littleton Conservation Trust  
PO Box 594  
Littleton, MA 01460



## Membership Information – Time to Renew Now

by Don MacIver

### Tax Deductible Status

The Littleton Conservation Trust is a private, all volunteer 501(c) (3) non-profit public-interest charitable organization. Your membership and any additional donation to the LCT are fully tax deductible. When you either join or renew your current membership for the upcoming calendar year, you can determine the appropriate year for your tax deduction.

### Changes to the Membership Form

Starting this month, the LCT will renew all memberships to run with the calendar year. This will simplify our record keeping tasks. We hope it will also make it easier for you to remember when to renew. Your 2005 membership donation, dated and sent on or before December 31<sup>st</sup> 2004, is tax-deductible for the 2004 tax year.

In addition, the LCT has raised the donation levels for the *Individual* and *Family* member categories to be consistent with those of many other local land trusts and conservation organizations. These new levels reflect the membership donations of many current LCT members. All membership donations and other gifts are gratefully accepted and appreciated.

### Special Membership Events

In addition to knowing that your membership is being used to protect Littleton's open space, as a member you benefit with priority sign-up for special field trips. Past field trips have included migratory bird watching trips in Littleton and at the Plum Island and Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuges. Another trip is planned for Cape Ann.

We are also planning our first annual "LCT Member Thank You Picnic" for June.

### How Your Membership Donation is Used

All (100%) of your membership donation is used to:

- **Provide free public access to LCT-managed lands.**
- **Educate the public about Littleton's natural heritage** via organized walks, hikes, bird watches, an annual canoe trip; a comprehensive conservation land guide with maps provided at cost (also available online at <http://www.LittletonConservationTrust.org>); conservation opportunities and funding for Eagle Scout projects; an annual environmental education program with all net proceeds donated to the middle school science program; over 150 conservation-oriented books donated to the Reuben Hoar Library; and this bi-annual newsletter which goes to all Littleton residents and local businesses.
- **Promote the protection of open space for the benefit of people and wildlife.** In some cases, the LCT has used funds to acquire professional services such as surveyors to determine land boundaries, lawyers to assist the town with last minute fine-tuning of a conservation land acquisition town meeting article when sufficient resources were unavailable, appraisers to document land fair market value to assist the town in securing state grants for acquiring critical conservation lands such as the Prouty Woods Community Forest and Long Lake Park, and landscape specialists to remove heavy debris and undertake major maintenance requiring special equipment.
- **Acquire conservation lands in Littleton** which the LCT protects and manages through a volunteer team of Land Stewards. ■

This is the first in a series of articles intended to alert the community to the threat of invasive plants to our biodiversity and the New England landscape. This article focuses on Japanese Knotweed. Future articles, to be published in the local newspaper, will highlight the following egregious but controllable species:

- Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)
- Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica* and *frangula*)
- Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*)
- Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*)
- Tartarian Honeysuckle (*Lonicera tatarica*)
- Burning Bush (*Euonymus alatus*)
- Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*)
- Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)

All of these plants are alien or exotic to this region. They have few natural enemies to keep them in check, and most spread at a prodigious rate. Many colonize to the exclusion of native flora, and some, such as Japanese Knotweed are extremely persistent and resistant to control.

**Japanese Knotweed**

Japanese Knotweed is native to eastern Asia and was introduced to this country in the late 19th century. It is a bamboo-like plant growing in stands up to 9’ tall with unlimited potential spread. It needs full sun to thrive. Its seed is not generally viable, but once established has a good chance of a long and flourishing life. Its primary means of reproduction is through underground rhizomes, some as long as sixty feet. It is frequently spread by gardeners moving the roots while trying to eliminate it. It loves a compost pile. Transportation of contaminated soil is often responsible.

Although common in New England, it is most threatening to riparian habitat where root fragment dispersal has created expansive populations. Along sections of the Connecticut River it has crowded out native flora and fisherman alike.

Littleton should try to eliminate all Japanese Knotweed, but concentrate on the drainages that lead to our brooks and ponds. Stands need to be cut three or four times a year for several years for any real chance of success. Herbicides, such as Roundup, may be helpful but should not be used near water. Yearly monitoring of stands well into the future is important.


There is a lot of information on the internet. We urge you to get to know the enemy and join the resistance. Although the State and Federal governments are addressing the problem, we as individuals and neighborhoods have the only real chance of significant control. ■

**Did you know that your workplace might allow you to make charitable donations through payroll deductions and/or might allow your employer to match your donations? Check it out and see if you can double your contributions!**

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**The Knotweed Prize!**

As an incentive, the LTC has created the Knotweed Prize, \$100, funded by a generous Trustee. It will go to the first Littleton family, group, or individual who successfully renders a former patch (25’ x 10’ minimum) sprout free for one full growing season (no soil removal). If you are interested in participating, registering a patch on your property for someone else to attack, or would like to add to the prize, please drop the LCT Secretary a note at PO Box 594, Littleton. ■




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*Japanese Knotweed (Polygonum cuspidatum)*

**We Need Your Help!**  
Volunteers Needed to  
Sort Returnables in December



The LCT has signed up to sort returnable cans and bottles at the Transfer Station for the month of December. This fund raising program, shared by the Town’s many non-profit groups, can raise a considerable amount to support our educational and land stewardship programs. We are looking for people willing to give two hours of their time during December to sort returnables at the Transfer Station during its hours of operation. It is not difficult, although it is outdoor work and it will probably be cold. If you can help, please call Doreen Morse (978-486-8292) to sign up for a time slot. ■

Early morning overcast sky gave way to partial sun as a group of twenty hikers (members of the Learning-in-Retirement Association) gathered at the Prouty Woods Community Forest in Littleton. After dousing themselves with insect repellent, the group departed on Wilderness Road, bordered by an open field on one side and forest on the other. The road became steeper and soon entered the woods with dense growth of ferns on both sides. The road serves as a long driveway to a substantial house at the top a hill with a magnificent view to the northwest. The house is closed and is currently undergoing renovations. The adjacent two-story carriage house is open for exploration. A one-hole pit toilet in the carriage house appeared to be in good condition, although none of the group tested it out.



Another interesting feature of the hilltop area is a field stone circle surrounding a rock-lined seat dug into the ground with partly used candles on an adjacent rock shelf. We speculated that this might be a meditation site or the locale of mysterious ceremonies.

Proceeding down the other side of the hill we reached the shore of Long Lake. The Prouty family, the former owners of the land, had a private beach and boat ramp on this otherwise undeveloped part of the lake. The Littleton town beach and lakeshore homes were visible in the distance. This was a convenient place to rest and enjoy the dried apricots supplied by Dorothy Sussman who was not able to participate in this somewhat strenuous hike.

The next segment of the walk ran along the lakeshore to the intersection with the Two Brothers Trail. At this point there was the option of returning the way we came or continuing through the woods over the top of the hill. Everyone chose to take the more difficult route. The uphill challenge was successfully met and provided a healthy aerobic activity for all.

On the last portion of the hike our leader experienced some uncertainty in finding the trail back to the starting point. After scouting out a few alternatives, we found our way across an overgrown meadow onto the path that took us back to the parking area. We arrived at our vehicles just as the Littleton Firehouse siren sounded the noon blast.

A freshly mowed meadow, partially in shade, beckoned the hungry hikers to their picnic lunch. Lawn chairs were arranged in a large circle, and the meal was accompanied by pleasant conversation. ■

## The Book Corner

These and other books donated by the LCT are available at the Reuben Hoar Public Library

***IPM For Gardners: A Guide to Integrated Pest Management***  
by Raymond A. Cloyd, Philip L. Nixon, & Nancy R. Pataky

This book is a guide to integrated pest management (IPM), a system of strategies to reduce the use of pesticides in garden food and flower production, as well as general landscaping. This is a comprehensive book that includes 48 pages of color photos of different plants and their common pests and diseases. These photos help the reader identify specific problems. The book is well organized and easy to follow, beginning with background information on plants, pests and diseases, followed by a comprehensive look at the four basic strategies of IPM: cultural, physical, mechanical and biological.

There are also several useful appendices at the end of the book, including a glossary of terms, a list of suggested reading, common and scientific names of pests and diseases (for those of us who don't know enough Latin!), and a handy metric conversion chart. So, if you are interested in learning about IPM as a means of reducing or eliminating the use of pesticides on the food you grow or flowers you nourish, check out this book. See for yourself how a little bit of know-how can help keep your piece of the world safer and cleaner for you, and your children and pets. ■

Review by Kathy Stevens

***Solving Deer Problems***

by Peter Loewer

Peter Loewer has written for many garden magazines, he is the author of *The Wild Gardener*, and he hosts his own radio show on gardening. He writes from both a naturalist's and a pragmatists view point in this manual on deer control. As we humans absorb more of the deer's habitat, we need to find the best answers to how we can best live amongst each other. The book gives a well-balanced overview on deer population and history and attempts to present what can be done on a local and individual level to control them. "There are solutions but they are not always cheap, and like life in general they work most of the time—but there are no guarantees". The book presents information on ticks and Lyme Disease, tips to avoid car/deer accidents on the road, and non-fencing tips to keep deer from your garden and landscaping. There is an extensive chapter on the best types of fencing and a chapter on the best repellants. For this reviewer, the most useful chapter detailed an extensive listing of plants (from annuals to trees) that deer do not like to eat. The end of the book has a bonus chapter on living with moles, voles, rabbits, woodchucks and chipmunks. If you are having deer (or other critter) problems, then this book is a "must read." ■

Review by Doreen Morse

LITTLETON



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**It's time to renew your membership!**  
*(details on page 3)*

 This newsletter is printed on recycled paper (20% post-consumer waste)

### Littleton Conservation Trust Events



#### LCT at Country Fair

The Littleton Conservation Trust made a strong presence at the recent Country Fair at Fay Park on September 11<sup>th</sup>. A full complement of information on open space and the Trust's activities, organized and staffed by Trustee Don MacIver, was perused by fair goers. Blue bird boxes were available at a very reasonable price. Long time Trustee, Henry Harvey provided both assembled and kit-form bird boxes made entirely by him in his workshop on Wilderness Road. Birder and new Trustee, Grant Marley was on hand to provide information on blue birds and the box's proper placement. Trust Secretary Doreen Morse, assisted by members Linda Cantillon and Nancy Penney, provided help for fair goers to create their own colorful leaf printed note cards. This first time, free spice of Fall fun was enjoyed by over 70 children and adults. In addition, participants were encouraged to participate in a drawing for five beginner Tree Guides which were mailed to the winners. Watch for the LCT at next year's Country Fair. ■

**Happy Holiday Fair**  
**December 4th**  
**9AM—3PM**



Watch for the Littleton Conservation Trust table at the coming holiday fair on Saturday, December 4th. This is the first time the LCT will make an appearance at the holiday fair and we hope you will stop by. We hope to have some interesting items for sale, along with various informational offerings. The fair will be held in the auditorium of the Middle School on Russell Street. ■

LCT Secretary, Doreen Morse, reminds Littleton folk that she is happy to email you advance notice of Trust events. Please send your email address to her at [dannmorse@yahoo.com](mailto:dannmorse@yahoo.com)