

Littleton Conservation Trust



Newsletter

Fall 2007

Stormy Weather

by Jack Apfelbaum

February 3, 1938. We are at sea. We are on board the 20,000 ton ocean liner, the S.S. Cynthia crossing the North Atlantic. My family and I left Hitler's Germany in January of 1938, traveled to England, and then left Liverpool for America. The storm that hit us in the North Atlantic undid both my mother and sister who went to bed, seasick as can be. My cast-iron constitution at age 13 wanted nothing better than to eat all their meals plus mine. And the churning sea added to my contentment.

The stormy, churning sea entered my life once again in August 1952. I had been working in Newport, Rhode Island. In early summer, my company recalled me to Springfield, MA, but Eva (pregnant with our first) stayed on in the house we were renting on the beach in Jamestown. I soon found a decent house for us to rent in Springfield and brought my wife and baby there. Just a few days after that, a terrible hurricane swept up Narragansett Bay and washed away the beach upon which our house had been built. That included the front of the house as well. We were lucky, the house was not. It was essentially gone.

In recent years, we have seen more hurricanes roll over our shores in ways more violent than ever before. Scientists tell us this is a result of the climate change that is engulfing the world. The statistics are simultaneously interesting and frightening. The visual evidence is stark, obvious, and everywhere. For example, the wonderful state of Montana worries about its particular national attraction, Glacier National Park. Here the famous glaciers are disappearing. Comparisons of current photos with photos taken 30 years ago leave no doubt as to their disappearance. Now knowledgeable climate scientists predict that **all** glaciers in the park could disappear by 2030. That's about the time many of our youngsters will want to start exploring the western part of the U.S.. Unfortunately, they will only find out about glaciers in Glacier National Park from books or from older friends and relatives who were fortunate enough to have seen that sublime landscape. *(continued on page 2)*



Make Merry on December 1 !

Look for the LCT booth at this year's Holiday Bazaar. Among the many nature-oriented gifts available for purchase will be the very popular "bird lovers baskets," nature earrings and other jewelry, stained-glass window light catchers, festive tree ornaments, bluebird houses, conservation land guides, bookmarks, terrariums, and more. Of special interest this year is the LCT's raffle for a cord of seasoned wood.

The crafts are made by LCT Trustees, members of the LCT Friends group, and other community volunteers. This year's LCT Holiday Bazaar coordinator is Trustee Kathy Stevens. ■



Massachusetts "Ag Tag" Promotes Local Farming

by Don MacIver

The purchase of the new Massachusetts Agriculture specialty license plate supports local farmers. The new "Ag Tag" will cost \$40, with proceeds going to the Massachusetts Agricultural Trust Fund. The intent of this fund is to promote programs and services to help Massachusetts farmers introduce innovative practices, market and compete better, and learn new techniques to keep Massachusetts farms more viable. None of the proceeds will be used to subsidize individual farmers or the state's Department of Agriculture. Of the \$40 fee, \$28 is tax deductible. In the initial year, \$15 of that fee can be directed to the LCT as an agriculture-promoting organization, thereby additionally supporting local agriculture through LCT's community efforts in protecting agricultural open space. As a new specialty license plate, 1500 plates must be reserved before they are produced and distributed. This may take as long as a year. Checks will be collected until this quota is achieved and then all reservations and checks will be transferred to the Registry of Motor Vehicles. For more details and to determine if this program is a good fit for you, consult the Mass Department of Agricultural Resources's Web site at <http://mass.gov/agr/agtag/> Spending \$40 for the Mass "Ag Tag" (beyond basic automotive registration fees) is a great way to support local farmers. More than 82% of Massachusetts farms are family-owned and over 95% are small farms. *See the form and submission instructions on page 3.* ■

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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November 2007

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For another example look at the rapidly changing arctic landscape. The sea ice is receding, polar bears are drowning. The forecast is a greatly-reduced polar bear population by 2050. Bears are only one link in an endless chain. Their disappearance will, in time, cause other problems.

Going from large to small, dozens of colorful frog species have died off in Central and South America, their death apparently due to skin fungus. But what causes this fungus? According to Alvaro Herrero, a biologist with Costa Rica's National Biodiversity Institute, climate change is raising temperatures thus allowing a skin fungus to enter the places where the amphibians resided. Extinct species now include the Golden Toad, named for its shimmering yellow color, as well as two varieties of the Harlequin Frog.

Global warming is not a new thing, a variety of scientific evidence tells us that both global warming and cooling have existed over the eons and have resulted in various well-known phenomena—of which the most obvious is the disappearance of dinosaurs and the easily discernible changes in sea level. Here in New England, the many beautiful, clear, sand-bottom lakes (especially those found on Cape Cod) are remainders of the most recent ice age when the disappearing ice mass created holes during its departure into the Atlantic Ocean. However, the current global warming scenario is critical to us as it is happening due to human activity and it is happening at such a rapid pace (compared to former periods of global warming) that it will undoubtedly cause unimaginable harm.

The primary causation of this global warming trend is the increasing amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) that is entering the atmosphere. This, as you undoubtedly have heard, causes the greenhouse effect. Simply put, the greenhouse effect is like putting a transparent skin-like a layer of carbon dioxide gas around the earth which admits sunlight and heat into the earth's atmosphere but doesn't allow the same amount of heat to escape, thereby raising the temperature inside the skin.

You can observe the same effect when entering a car on a sunny day, with the windshield oriented towards the sun. The car's inside temperature will be much hotter than the outside, open air temperature as the sun's warm rays can enter through the glass, but once inside cannot escape.

In connection with this it should be noted that the U.S. North East region ranks 7th in terms of energy related carbon dioxide emissions. Here are the rankings: 1: U.S., 2: China, 3: Russia, 4: Japan, 5: India, 6: Germany, 7: Northeast U.S.A.

Various estimates have been made as to the rapidity of global warming, but even relatively conservative estimates should push us to make every endeavor possible to bring the warming to an end or slow it down. In the immediate future to decrease the trend means to decrease the amount of carbon dioxide entering the atmosphere by reducing its entrance from automobile, industrial, and residential fossil fuel consumption.

Perhaps, by acting now, we will be able to stave off some of the more violent storms that have in the very recent past done so much damage (the Katrina story) and in the longer run will prevent sea levels from rising as drastically as climate scientists predict. The options and possibilities for action are many—from preserving forest land to driving less, to keeping our homes and industrial sites a bit cooler, to eating locally-grown foods. The latter would cut down on green house gas production through the reduction of cross country transportation and the processing and refrigeration of raw foods grown far away from the north-east. We have time, but not much, to put into effect strategies to prevent rapid climate change. So, in addition to the above-mentioned ideas, we can individually or as a group join MCAN, the Massachusetts Climate Action Network. An affiliated Littleton organization already exists. ■

Littleton Conservation Trust Membership Form – 2007

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



Birds of Prey Visit Library

by Don MacIver

Raptor rehabilitator, Jim Parks, displays an injured Barn Owl

On August 2nd, the Reuben Hoar Library, with LCT funding, hosted “Birds of Prey,” a fun, family, educational program. In addition to displaying native raptors, Wingmasters taught the attendees about each bird’s unique habits and needed habitat, and how it can be impacted by human activities. Wingmasters, a partnership of two raptor rehabilitators, provides public awareness and appreciation of North American Birds of Prey (for more information, see www.wingmasters.net). The program was coordinated by Children’s Librarian, Diann Ouelette-Haduch, and assisted by staff member and LCT Friend, Doreen Morse. In the photo to the left, raptor rehabilitator Jim Parks displays an injured Barn Owl, one of New England’s native owls. Barn owls are noted for nesting in man-made structures, frequently barns, which provide easy proximity for hunting in large fields. Barn owls are legendary for their ability to hunt and catch small rodents, by sound alone, in the dark of night. Currently, the Barn Owl is a permanent resident only on the islands of Martha’s Vineyard and Nantucket. In winter, they are known to wander away from their breeding grounds and visit elsewhere within the state. ■

Mass “Ag Tag” Application

To reserve your Mass “Ag Tag” write a \$40 check payable to the **Massachusetts Registry for Motor Vehicles**, fill out this form, and send both the check and this form to:

Massachusetts Agricultural Trust, c/o Mary Greendale
P.O. Box 6443, Holliston, MA 01746-6443.

Name as appears on registration: _____

Street address on registration: _____

City/town: _____ Zip code: _____

Current auto registration number: _____

Registry office nearby: **Leominster**

Agricultural promoting organization:

Littleton Conservation Trust, P.O. Box 594, Littleton MA 01460



You all know the most-used trails: Oak Hill, Sarah Doublet Forest, Prouty Woods. There are also some trails that are less-used but very worthwhile.

Bumblebee Park is well-known for its winter sledding by town kids. It is located at the corner of Harwood and Foster. Go in the gate and climb the larger hill on the left. From the top, you will find a trail leading out to a kind of promontory. Go back 30 yards and try again. There is a trail leading down the hill on the Foster Street side around the base of the hill and back to the rear of the property, along a red maple swamp and skirting a small pond. This trail lets you out onto Harwood Avenue, but you can back track and take a deviating path leading to the gate. A pleasant half-hour ramble.

Another short walk is off Nashoba Road, in from Newtown Road on the left into the Nashoba wetlands. This 500-foot trail leads surprisingly to a fine beech grove (over 50 beech trees) and some bedrock outcroppings. This land was given to the Trust by John Adams Kimball, who persuaded his neighbor, Josephine Whitcomb, to donate an abutting 11 acres. In late summer, the highly aromatic sweet pepper bush is in blossom. During the fall foliage season, the massive grove of huge beech and black birch trees provide a gorgeous display of golden colors.

Another longer trail links Conant Park off White Street, runs in back of Pine Tree Park housing, back of the library, across King Street at the Congregational Church, into the Town's Morgan property. From there, it joins the Loop Trail of the New England

Forestry Foundation, up the hill into Prouty Woods, and ends at Long Lake. This "Two Brothers Trail" pays homage to Don and Roger Prouty (brothers who made the trail possible) and to the hills formerly known as the Long Lake Brothers. From Conant Park to Long Lake and back is close to three miles.

Hartwell Family Memorial Preserve is well-known because it was formerly used for cross-country skiing and later for paint-ball games. The usual approach to this parcel is from Hartwell Avenue where there is ample parking. An alternate approach is near the Russell Street bridge over Route 495 where a paved driveway leads to the former Karplus farm, now controlled by the Littleton Water Department. There is parking for two or three cars. A well-kept trail leads across meadows and through old apple trees, across a small bridge, along the top of an esker, and finally to a large open field on the right and Beaver Brook on the left. The trail leads across an old stone bridge, over the brook, coming out into the more familiar part of the Hartwell property. ■

Detailed maps and descriptions of all 20 conservation properties in Littleton are published in the Guide to Conservation Land of Littleton, available for \$6 at the Reuben Hoar library.

Bird Watchers Take Notice!

There has been a major southward movement of winter finches: Pine Siskins, Evening and Pine Grosbeaks, Red and White Winged crossbills, Red Breasted Nuthatches and Purple Finches. To learn more, go to: www.Massbird.org



Dr. Henry Harvey (right) and an enthusiastic volunteer press apples into cider at the Country Fair

Make-your-own cider at the Country Fair

by Don Maclver

Highlighting the LCT's booth at the September 8th Littleton Country Fair was the "Make-your-own-cider" activity. Fair-goers were invited to make and sample fresh cider. The three step process was to cut up fresh apples, pulverize them with a crank operation, and press down the mash to extract the sweet cider.

Dr. Henry Harvey, LCT Trustee and wood maker, brought his homemade cider press. Having purchased the cast iron crank and press mechanics, Henry designed and crafted all the other wooden components to make a fully-functioning cider press. Henry instructed others in how to use it. Next to Henry in the photo is Evan, a very enthusiastic volunteer, who spent hours helping others with cranking and pressing.

The cider operation, similar to past LCT Country Fair activities, was provided as a free nature-oriented activity for children and the young-at-heart. The LCT booth also sold Littleton Conservation Land Guides and wooden bluebird houses, provided information about the town's open space and other conservation matters, and answered questions.

Nagog Orchards, the town's own orchard, which is privately leased and professionally managed by Charles Auger, kindly donated four bushels of Littleton-grown McIntosh and Golden Ginger apples in support of LCT's local agriculture/ nature-oriented operation.

The orchard runs a "pick-your-own" operation and sells high-quality fruit to wholesale and retail outlets. The orchard is known for its peaches, pears, a wide variety of apples, and raspberries. ■

This is the seventh in a series of articles intended to alert the community to the threat of invasive plants to our precious New England landscape. Previous articles covered:

- Japanese Knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*)
- Burning Bush (*Euonymus alatus*)
- Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbicullatus*)
- Japanese and European Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii* and *vulgaris*)
- Glossy and Common Buckthorn (*Frangula alnus* and *Rhamnus cathartica*)
- Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*)

This article focuses on Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*)

Future articles will highlight the following species:

- Shrub Honeysuckles (*Lonicera tatarica*, *morrowii*, hybrids)
- 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, often by birds. All can colonize to the exclusion of native flora, and some are extremely persistent and resistant to control.

Our goal is to make readers aware of the problem and to encourage them to participate in a solution by cleaning up their own properties and helping out in their neighborhoods. Littleton has an opportunity to set back the onslaught of invasive plants by acting now to reduce seed output. If we do not, we risk losing local biodiversity and the very ‘nature’ we take for granted.



“If a leaf is pulled from a Norway Maple twig, the petiole where it was attached will exude a milky, latex-like substance.”

If you’d like advance notice of Trust events emailed to you, please send your email address to:
dannmorse@yahoo.com

The Norway Maple has long been a staple for street tree planting throughout the United States and Europe. Unfortunately, today in this country, it is a threat to forests of all sizes thanks to its ability to out-compete other trees and suppress native vegetation. This maple’s dense canopy, fibrous surface roots, prodigious seed production, and extended growing season make it a threat to all plant forms (and a lousy lawn tree as well).

On a practical level, isolated city or suburban trees are not a threat because seed (or samaras) are spread by wind and don’t travel far. If a tree lies within a few hundred feet of undeveloped land, however, you can count on seedlings eventually finding their way to it. The state of Massachusetts has banned the importation of Norway Maples after 2009, allowing growers to profit from existing stock.

Young Norway Maples are hard to distinguish from our Sugar Maple, however a simple test works well during the growing season. If a leaf is pulled from a twig, the petiole where it was attached will exude a milky, latex like substance. The Sugar Maple’s leaf will not.

Norway Maples are most easily spotted in the late Autumn landscape when their yellow leaves stand out in the otherwise bare forest . . . a good time to mark them for cordwood. ■





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Littleton, Massachusetts 01460

It's time to renew your membership!
(see page 3)

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

The Book Corner

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

Golden Wings and Hairy Toes:
Encounters with New England's Most Imperiled Wildlife
by Todd McLeish

Golden Wings and Hairy Toes is a collection of engaging stories about the adventures of essayist Todd McLeish as he works with biologists and conservationists researching, monitoring and protecting 14 of New England's most rare and endangered flora and fauna. The variety of species studied represents a true cross-section of wildlife in our region including mammals, birds, insects, plants and fish - from whale, lynx, turtle and bat, to birds, dragonfly, fish and wildflowers.

McLeish offers scientific information about each species in a very accessible way, and clearly conveys the complexity of an individual species' relationship to their environment. He also addresses the impact of human behavior on the ecosystems upon which we all depend, and it's not always bad! For instance, the lynx benefits from the clear cutting of forests, and excellent bird habitat has been created as an unintended result of power line corridors. McLeish is optimistic about our ability to meet the challenges facing the planet, and the endangered species many people are working extremely hard to save. An inspiring read.

The Road Washed Out In Spring:
A Poet's Memoir of Living Off the Grid
by Baron Wormser

The Road Washes Out In Spring is the memoir of Baron Wormser, Poet Laureate of Maine, about his life in the woods of Maine during the back-to-nature movement of the 1970's. He and his wife lived "off the grid" with no running water or electricity (yes, they even had an outhouse) for nearly 25 years. They raised children and learned what it means to get along without many of the luxuries we take for granted. Interweaving his thoughts on poetry and literature with observations on his life in the natural world, he tells the charming stories of his experience, and his interactions with neighbors, friends, and family. It wasn't always an easy life, but Wormser seems to truly relish the intimate connection he feels with his surroundings.

This book offers a look at the hard, consistent work it takes to stay comfortable in the harsh environment of New England without things like hot water from the tap, a refrigerator to keep food fresh and cold, and a switch for turning on lights and heat in the house. Wormser's stories and style are quite engaging, and his observations of people and his reflections on the essentials of life are insightful.

Reviews by Kathy Stevens



Prouty Woods Community Forest

Please help support an environmental legacy for Littleton!

Forest Conservation • Education • Recreation

New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF) acquired Prouty Woods as its new headquarters in 2003, preserving and enhancing a valuable community resource. This move brought a recognized regional land trust to Littleton. NEFF owns nearly 233,000 acres throughout New England and has conserved an additional 1.13 million acres through conservation easements—including the two largest forestland easements in the United States.

Prouty Woods is more than a piece of land—it promises the New England way of life will live on beyond your lifetime, and the forest will remain for your children to enjoy. We are directing our energies toward retirement of the remaining \$769,000 debt for the purchase of the Prouty property.

What would you give to preserve this important resource for Littleton and surrounding towns?

Community Resource

Prouty Woods' 107 acres has been blessed with a long history of careful management. The property includes a variety of marked hiking trails that are connected to an expanded trail network maintained by the Littleton Conservation Trust. The forest is open to the public for hiking, nature observation, forestry tours, and natural history education. In the winter, the trail network is available for snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Many local groups—including Littleton schools, scout troops, and Littleton Parks and Recreation—take advantage of this community treasure. The main house is NEFF's headquarters, providing working space for the staff and a large meeting room available for local groups.



Long Lake

All trails lead to the property's 1,600 feet of shoreline on Long Lake. Ideal for wildlife observation, the shoreline is especially nice because the Town of Littleton has protected much of the shoreline on the lake. The opposing shore to the south of Prouty Woods is the Town's Long Lake Park. Protection of Prouty Woods helps to ensure the Lake will remain unspoiled.

Wilderness Hill

The highest point of the property is Wilderness Hill, with stunning views to the north and west, as far away as Mt. Monadnock in New Hampshire. This location also includes the William A. King Education Center, a two-story facility which serves as meeting space and a forest conservation education site. The King Center also provides a home base for The Camp at Prouty Woods, a summer nature exploration program for children in grades six through eight, operated by the Littleton Parks and Recreation Department. Prouty Woods serves as an outdoor classroom with hands-on activities that encourage participants to connect with the natural world around them.



PROUTY WOODS COMMUNITY FOREST CONTRIBUTION FORM

YES! I want to help maintain and enhance this valuable community resource.
Enclosed is my contribution.

Name

E-mail

Address

Phone

City

State

Zip Code

(Please check the appropriate box)

- \$50 \$100 \$250
 \$500 \$750 \$1,000
 \$2,500 \$5,000 Other _____
 This gift is anonymous.
 Enclosed is my company's matching gift form.

THANK YOU !

NEFF is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.
Gifts are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law.

Please make checks payable to NEFF and mail with this form to: PO Box 1346, Littleton, MA 01460
Phone (978)952-6856 • Fax (978)952-6356 • info@newenglandforestry.org • www.NewEnglandForestry.org