

Littleton Conservation Trust



Newsletter

Fall 2009

George and Lucy Yapp Conservation Land Officially Opened

by Donald MacIver

On Sunday September 13th, residents of Littleton and surrounding towns enjoyed a sunny afternoon of trail walking at the opening of the George and Lucy Yapp Conservation Land. After a brief ribbon cutting by Selectman Chair Alex McCurdy and a few words of appreciation for the many who made the recent purchase possible, Cal Yapp informed the group that this, coincidentally, was Lucy's birthday, and how much she would have enjoyed the event. Cal has volunteered to serve as land steward for the newly-acquired conservation land.

Cider from the town's orchard at Nagog Hill Farm was served prior to the tour. Walkers enjoyed the natural beauty and unique landscape features highlighted by guides Rick Findlay, of the Littleton Conservation Trust, and Christa Collins, of the Sudbury Valley Trustees.

The 53.6 acre Yapp Conservation Land is strategically located. It is connected to several other town-owned or conservation properties: Nagog Hill Orchard Extension, Cobb Memorial Forest, and Shaker Lane School Land. The Yapp Conservation Land entrance is just off Newtown Road between Nagog Hill Road and Norfolk Drive.

Parking is allowed on the immediate grassy field. Maps are accessible at the adjacent information kiosk.

Trail signs and improvements will be completed over the next few months. Local carpenter Dana Gray donated his skills and labor to build the new trail head kiosk.

Bonded CPA funds and cell tower lease money leveraged a half-million dollar state grant, making this significant conservation land purchase possible without raising local taxes. The early support of the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager, assisted by the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee, Community Preservation Committee, and the work of two public-interest conservation land trusts, the regional Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT) and the local all-volunteer Littleton Conservation Trust, all contributed to the successful acquisition. The George and Lucy Yapp Conservation Land is a cooperative conservation project by the Littleton Conservation Commission and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' LAND (Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity) Program. The local Conservation Commission will manage the town-owned Yapp property.

SVT, which prepared the successful grant application, will hold a perpetual conservation restriction and monitor the property annually. ■



▲ Selectmen Chair Alex McCurdy (center) opens Yapp Conservation Land by cutting ribbon held by Christa Collins (left) of the Sudbury Valley Trustees and Rick Findlay (right) of the Littleton Conservation Trust

◀ Hannah Wilkinson marvels at the forested surroundings while holding the hand of her mother, Selectman Janet Wilkinson

— Photos by Jane Chrisfield —



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November 2009

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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.

Caring for the Land

by Art Lazarus

The Littleton Conservation Trust conducts an informal conservation land steward program that monitors and maintains 12 of the 21 properties owned by the Littleton Conservation Trust and the Town of Littleton Conservation Commission. The nine smaller properties without stewards do not necessarily need much attention or have entrance restrictions. All 16 stewards are volunteers who are willing to "keep a close eye" on their selected site. Some stewards can only spare a few hours per year and others volunteer several hours per week. Their primary duties are to maintain trails, signs and boardwalks. They remove woody debris from the trails, and pick up trash from trails and parking areas. Other activities are site-specific, such as improving trail drainage, cleaning out birdhouses in the winter, removing invasive plants, and inventorying natural resources. Stewards provide a short annual report of their findings and activities at the end of each year. Essentially, the steward is his or her own boss and is free to do what is appropriate, in consultation with the Conservation Trust.

Current stewards are: Mit Wanzer, Richard Buckles, Bill Brown, Charles Tirone, Rick Roth, Rick Findlay, Carl Rivenberg, Dick Andersen, Kimberly Harriman, Kevin Graham, Jim Campbell, Ann Grace, Ray O'Neil, Fran Meyers, Cal Yapp, and myself.

If you are an adult and you are interested in volunteering as a steward or helping out with special field tasks, contact me or Rick Findlay. ■

If you'd like advance notice of Littleton Conservation Trust events emailed to you, please send your email address to:
doreenmorse@yahoo.com

Save Those Great Photos!

by Bill Brown



The LCT will sponsor a photo contest, which highlights the diversity and natural beauty of Littleton's conservation lands, agricultural lands, and other open spaces. All photographs must have been taken in the Town of Littleton. Candidate photos would include such things as: nature trails, wildlife, scenic vistas, trees, plants, and wildflowers. Contest rules will be posted on the LCT website early next year. ■

Littleton Conservation Trust Membership Form – 2009

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



LCT Supports GACM Community Garden

by Don Maclver

For the second year, the Garden at Church Meadows (GACM) has grown produce and cut flowers for benefit of the Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry. Located along Great Road, in the eastern end of town amidst other farmland, this non-sectarian community garden is located on land owned by the Congregational Church of Littleton. Scouts, youth groups, area public school students working on their community service requirements, church groups, and independent residents from surrounding towns have volunteered their efforts to grow over 1800 pounds of produce for donation to Loaves and Fishes. Since 1983, the Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry (www.loavesfishespantry.org) has served the communities of Ayer, Devens, Groton, Harvard, Littleton, and Shirley.

The LCT has donated \$500 from its agriculture protection fund for this local farming project which promotes community involvement and provides many public benefits. In recognition of GACM's wide

community support and healthy harvest, a Harvest Celebration was held at the GACM field on October 11th. If you are interested in volunteering for next year's GACM community garden, send email to office@ccol.org or call 978-486-3245. ■



LCT Supports SVT and NEFF

by Don Maclver

LCT partners with regional land trusts to help protect the Littleton environment. Recently LCT worked with Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT) for the successful Yapp Conservation Land acquisition and grant funding. This is SVT's second project in Littleton. SVT, a regional land trust with full time staff, serves some 36 communities which drain into the Assabet-Sudbury-Concord river basin. The eastern part of Littleton is in the Assabet River watershed so SVT serves the entire town. SVT holds many properties and provides an active roster of activities. More information can be found at their website at: www.sudburyvalleytrustees.org.

LCT also partners with the New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF). NEFF owns many community forests in New England and Eastern Canada and provides professional forestry expertise in those areas. Headquartered in Littleton, NEFF manages the popular Prouty Woods Community Forest, and co-sponsors walks and workshops with LCT. More information can be found at their website at: www.newenglandforestry.org.

In addition to being members of the LCT, we encourage residents to consider becoming members of these regional land trusts which provide Littleton benefits. LCT will continue to partner with these other land trusts, which often complement our own capabilities and strengths. ■

According to the *Massachusetts Sierran* (Vol 15 No 1), burning large trees to create electric energy - as an alternative to using fossil fuels - may not be wise or "carbon neutral." Massachusetts passed the Green Communities Act and the Global Warming Solutions Act in 2008. Currently, a new utility plant using biomass fuel is being planned for Greenfield, MA. In addition to biomass, the planned facility will also burn construction and demolition debris (which contains lead, mercury, arsenic, and dioxins). An environmental review of this facility has been deemed unnecessary!

Biomass includes large trees, algae, willow, and smaller herbaceous crops. We would like to get rid of invasive plants, such as phragmites, but such plants would be difficult to harvest in the quantities necessary. Inevitably, it would be forests that would suffer the most. We need the living forest trees for CO₂ absorption and O₂ production, wildlife habitat, and public recreation.

There may be some use for small-scale biomass electric generation facilities, but careful environmental review *is* essential. ■

LCT at the Littleton Country Fair

by Don MacIver

On September 11th, a cold and rainy day, LCT exhibited at the Littleton Country at Fay Park. Once again, LCT provided free make-your-own cider using fresh apples donated by the town's own orchard at Nagog Hill Farm. The displayed handcrafted cider press was built by LCT founder Dr. Henry Harvey, an accomplished woodworker. Additionally, LCT provided free notecard printing using nature items and colorful paints. As always, the LCT answered resident questions, displayed illustrated open space maps, and provided helpful literature.

Adjacent to LCT's booth, was the Littleton Country Fair's first Farmers Market with a good representation of Littleton's farmers. The Littleton Agriculture Committee displayed placards describing the advantages of local farming and the history of Littleton farming along with live displays of sheep, fainting goats, and chickens. Additionally a wide variety of produce was available for sale from Nagog Hill Farm, Springdell Farm Stand, Gary's Farm, Springbrook Farm, and the community-based Garden at Church Meadows. ■



Nagog Hill Farm's booth selling locally grown fruits



Photo credit: Richard Carter

Enjoying freshly pressed cider (from left to right) Eva Apfelbaum, LCT Trustee Jack Apfelbaum, and LCT Treasurer Kathy Stevens standing behind the homemade cider press.

Unique Holiday Gifts from the Littleton Agricultural Commission

by Don MacIver

Littleton's Agricultural Commission is selling two local agricultural holiday gifts. The attractive green tote bag is decorated with a Littleton Apple logo and the slogan "Save Our Farms". Also in green is the trendy "Locavore" shirt with Littleton Apple logo on the front and on the reverse side 6 rules for How to be a "Locavore".

These local agriculture-oriented gift items are sure to draw attention and a smile. Available at the Littleton Agriculture Commission booth at the Littleton Holiday Bazaar and at Springdell Farm at 571 Great Road (springdellfarm.com). ■

Make Merry on Saturday, December 5th!



Look for the LCT booth at the Holiday Bazaar held at the Littleton Middle School. We will have a variety of nature-oriented gifts available for purchase as well as conservation land guides.

Back by popular demand, the LCT will raffle a pickup load of seasoned firewood.

This year's LCT Holiday Bazaar coordinators are Doreen Morse and Kathy Stevens. ■

This is the eleventh in a series of articles intended to alert the Littleton community to the growing threat of invasive plants to our precious New England landscape. Plant populations that have been stable, sometimes for centuries, are now spreading uncontrollably. For additional information visit:

http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp//invasive_plants/weeds/index.shtm

Previous articles covered and posted on www.littletonconservationtrust.org include:

- 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*)
- Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*)
- Shrub Honeysuckles (*Lonicera tatarica*, *morrowii*, *maakii* and the hybrid know as *L. x bella*)
- Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*)
- Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)

This article focuses on Black Swallow-wort (*Cynanchum louiseae*). A future article will highlight Porcelain Berry (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*). 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 catching new arrivals or by removing large seed producing specimens. If we do not, we risk losing local biodiversity and the very ‘nature’ we take for granted.

As homeowners, vigilance early can save unimagined energy and money expenditure later. A single plant recognized and removed will protect not only you, but possibly your neighbors and conservation land near you in the future.



Black swallow-wort



Swallow-wort landscape

Black Swallow-wort is a vining member of the Milkweed family with wind blown seed. It is native to the Mediterranean. Shiny dark green leaves attracted American gardeners as early as the mid-eighteenth century. Not long afterwards, botanists were noting the plants ability to move through the landscape. As with so many of the invasive plants now plaguing us, this plant seems to have behaved itself for hundreds of years, only to become very aggressive in recent decades.

As a gardener and amateur botanist here in Littleton for the past 35 years, I didn’t see this plant until four years ago. A patch off of Route 495, that has since grown, was followed by a plant in my own garden a couple of years later. This year, I found two patches on the newly-acquired Yapp Conservation Land. This plant has the ability to displace even goldenrod, itself an aggressive plant, in old fields. Note that the above photograph shows how the patch on Route 495 has spread to the fence and now threatens the town-owned fields on the other side.



Swallow-wort seed pods

Should you discover this plant on your property, try not to let it go to seed. Pick ripening pods and dispose of them with your garbage. Dig out plants or spray with Roundup Pro after flowering, carefully following the label. The internet is a good source of more pictures and information. ■

LITTLETON



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The Book Corner

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

How We Know What We Know About Our Changing Climate, Scientists and Kids Explore Global Warming

by Lynne Cherry and Gary Braasch

This is a book for students and teachers about how science helps us to understand global warming and its consequences for all who inhabit the planet. After explaining the basics of how scientists perform their studies, the book shows how kids have helped scientists conduct research about the environment all over the globe. This book includes research information on a wide variety of plant and animal species and their habitats. After the book deals with finding clues about climate change, it switches focus to how the data are interpreted, and finally gives specifics on what scientists and students can do to help combat climate change. A guide for teachers (referenced in this book's resource section) is available separately. ■

What Can You Do With An Old Red Shoe?

by Anna Alter

This is a fun little craft book about reusing and recycling things that you have around the house. There are twelve simple step-by-step projects, each illustrated with hand-drawn pictures. Projects include making a pillow out of an old t-shirt or a planter out of that old red shoe. Many of the projects require parental supervision or participation, making them fun family activities that teach everyone involved how to reduce waste and create new things out of old stuff that might otherwise get thrown out. ■

Owls of North America

by wildlife and environmental writer Frances Backhouse

This is a book about the elusive birds of prey that fascinate so many people's imagination. The text is packed with information about the 23 species of owls that inhabit North America, including illustrations and descriptions of their anatomy. Additionally, there are beautiful photographs of each owl species. Each species is described in detail, including their appearance, voice, time of activity, roost sites, range, migration, habitat, feeding and breeding habits, and conservation trends. A great book for researchers, or for anyone with a general interest in these magnificent birds. ■

Reviews by Kathy Stevens