

Littleton Conservation Trust



Newsletter

Fall 2011

Dr. Ed Bell Forum - A Regional Environmental Forum

Sacred Landscapes and Sacred Memories

Pamela Ellis, J.D., and Rae Gould, Ph.D., Nipmuc Indian Nation

Tuesday, December 13 at 7:00 PM
Littleton High School Auditorium and
Performance Center
56 King Street, Littleton MA
Free admission and open to all

Native Americans were subjected to the Puritan vision of how "Indians" should conduct their lives in accordance with traditional English practices. "Indians" were converted to Christianity and relocated to a series of Praying Villages starting in 1651 with Natick, followed by thirteen others including Hassanamesit (the third in present day Grafton) and Nashoba (the sixth in present day Littleton).

This presentation offers a historical focus on the nature of early Colonial Native settlements and praying villages from the Nipmuc perspective. Serving as an example of a Nipmuc praying village, the role of Hassanamesit will be examined during that period and beyond, through the 19th and 20th centuries. The land forming Hassanamesit Village has passed through the Nipmuc Cisco family and now is the Hassanamisco Reservation of the Nipmuc tribe. This land has never passed out of Native American ownership.

This program is provided by the Dr. Ed Bell Forum, an endowed public education seminar series sponsored by the Littleton Conservation Trust, and is supported in part by a grant from the Littleton Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.



Massachusetts Cultural Council



1920s gathering at the Cisco Homestead at Hassanamisco Reservation Photo courtesy of Nipmuc Nation Tribal Archives

Pamela Ellis, J.D. is the Tribal Historian/Genealogist and Cultural Resources Officer for the Natick Nipmuc Indian Council. Her legal practice specializes in Indian Affairs. She has served on the boards of many Native American non-profit organizations which focus on youth and tribal values. Among her many projects, she organizes the annual 6 hour Sacred Paddle from the Watertown Dam, down the lower Charles River, across Boston Inner Harbor to Deer Island at the end of Winthrop. The Deer Island Memorial Observance commemorates the October 30, 1675 forced relocation and internment of Praying Village Native Americans to Deer Island during the King Philip War. Without adequate food or shelter, over half of those imprisoned died during the bitter winter.

Rae Gould, Ph.D., University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Department of Anthropology. She is the Nipmuc Nation Tribal Historic Preservation Officer and has additionally served as Tribal Researcher, Archivist, and Archaeologist, with a prime focus on Hassanamesit and now current day Hassanamisco Reservation of the Nipmuc tribe. She has directed a variety of research projects and has collaborated in joint research projects with other New England tribes. A major focus of her research is New England Native American history and culture in the post-contact centuries. ■



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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.

Remembering Roger Conant by Henry Harvey, MD

Roger Conant, a life-long resident of Littleton, was owner and operator of the Conant Ironworks which occupied a yellow barn on the site of the present Mobile gas station. Their major product was belt conveyors. They also provided blacksmith products for Littleton farmers.

Roger and his wife, Isobel, lived on King Street where Shattuck splits off. Their large lot dropped off sharply down to a wooded area fronted on White Street.

In 1977, Roger gave 6.75 acres of this back land to the Littleton Conservation Trust as a memorial to his recently departed wife. This land is now called Conant Park. It is the terminus of the Two Brothers Trail that extends back of Pine Tree Park and the library, across King Street, through the Morgan Land and Prouty Woods to the shore of Long Lake.

Roger's long life of over 100 years ended in September 2011. He will be remembered for his love for children and horses. For several years, he and Maria Walker led the 4H Horseback Club. They supervised a group of boys and girls (ages 12- 15 years) in the care of their ponies and horses, often taking them on trail rides on open land in Littleton, Groton and Westford. On one of his long solo rides, his horse fell on him breaking his right femur in several places. I helped the surgeon put in a steel rod and in a few months Roger was riding again.

Roger was a long-time supporter of the Littleton Conservation Trust and with his gift of land became a life member. He will be fondly remembered. ■

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

Littleton Conservation Trust Membership Form – 2011

New Renewal

Date: ___/___/___
(Date determines year of tax deduction)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

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

- | | |
|--|--|
| <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. | |

Please cut out this form and send it to:

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



Nashoba Wetlands

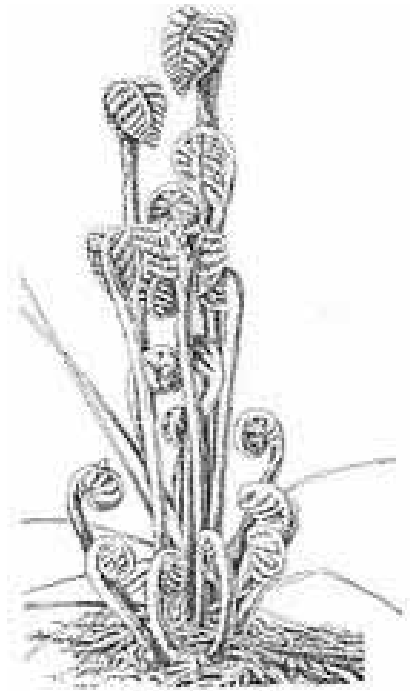
by Art Lazarus

If you enjoy exploring some of the little-known conservation parcels that have interesting features, then you will like the Nashoba Wetlands parcel. It consists of a narrow, 500-foot long peninsula and trail in the much larger 25-acre wooded swamp. Donated to the Littleton Conservation Trust in 1965 by the Kimball and Whitcomb families, it is located on the north side of Nashoba Road between Newtown Road and Nagog Hill Road. The trail begins at Nashoba Road, next to the large "Nashoba Wetlands" sign. Off-road parking is adjacent to the sign.

The nearly-level trail follows the center of the peninsula that is about 7 to 8 feet higher than the swamp. The key feature to be seen and appreciated is the beautiful grove of about 50 young and mature American Beech trees, some up to 20 inches in diameter. In the late fall, the leaves turn a brilliant yellow color and stay on the branches well into the winter. Beechnut shells are scattered everywhere where squirrels and chipmunks feast.

Within and bordering the beech trees are large White Oak, Red Maple, and Black Birch trees. Witch Hazel bushes, also with yellow leaves and yellow fall flowers, have the capacity to shoot their seeds up to 20 feet from the bushes. At the end of the trail, there are bedrock outcrops displaying large white quartzite and feldspar crystals.

The forested peninsula provides an opportunity to penetrate deep into the center of a wooded swamp containing Red Maple and Oak trees with an understory of highly-aromatic Sweet Pepperbush, mosses, ferns, brilliant red Winterberry, Blueberry, and many other specimens of wetland vegetation. This is rare opportunity to see the heart of a wetland without struggling through muck, water, and hummocks. The Littleton Conservation Trust owns the property and Andrea Curran is the Steward. ■



Fourth Graders Conduct Field Studies at Nashoba Woodlands by Don MacIver

This fall, all seven of Littleton's 4th grade classes, made field trips to the Nashoba Woodlands, located at the Yapp and Cobb conservation lands and abutting Shaker Lane School property. Instruction and guidance were provided by the skilled fourth grade teaching team from Russell Street School (RSS), naturalists from Massachusetts Audubon Society (MAS) and the Littleton Conservation Trust (LCT), and volunteer parents and chaperones.

These field trips provided an opportunity for students to become more familiar with the town's conservation lands, and the plants and animals that make their homes in these places. By learning about local habitats on community conservation land, students will become more knowledgeable about their local forests, fields, and wetlands.

Next spring, all fourth graders again, with the same teaching team and naturalists, will revisit these same conservation lands to compare changes seen from season to season. Families are encouraged to explore these properties throughout the year to expand on student experiences.



*Don MacIver and 4th graders studying deer rubs while hiking
Photo by Bill Brown*



The LCT has provided a significant grant to enable all 4th grade students expanded access to environmental education through programs offered by MAS. The collaboration amongst LCT, MAS, and RSS staff provides content that aligns with the Massachusetts State Frameworks curriculum and focuses on science topics learned specifically in 4th grade. The goal of these field trips is to teach students required curriculum in the context of their own backyard, thereby making the lessons more real and imparting a sense of place in their own community.

Students will have the opportunity to explore these sites through its forests, wetlands, and field habitats. Access will be provided to live animals (e.g., owls, ducks, and turtles), geological wonders, soil strata and erosion activity, tree and shrub canopy layers, and animal artifact stations, interspersed with several quick discovery spots with highlights such as deer rubs, special plants, and surprise tree and rock formations.

One of the most popular areas is the Fort Rock to Foot Rock site. Fort Rock is a huge, glacial erratic stone with numerous crystal formations. From weathering, it is split with many fractures, allowing walk through paths and supporting varied plant growth. It has also served as a popular play fort for many neighboring children over many generations. Foot Rock is another large rock which is split from the growth of a penetrating tree. From the side, the tree profile looks like a giant's foot resting on the rock's surface. ■

*Students seeking crystals as they wind their way through
Fort Rock, a fractured glacial erratic*

Photo by Christine Raine

\$50,000 for 'Weed Control'? Out of CPA funds?

A recent notice in the Boston Globe that the town of Harvard was voting to use \$50,000 of CPA funds for weed control caught my attention. A little research turned up 39 CPA-funded invasive species control projects in towns such as Chelmsford, Sudbury, Lincoln, Concord, and Weston. There are those who might consider it a waste of money, but I am convinced that it is a “pay now or pay later” situation, with costs escalating with time. Delay will ultimately flirt with the tipping point beyond which control is unsustainable financially and the landscape, something from which to flee.

At the Annual Meeting of the SUASCO CISMA, the regional group to which the Town Conservation Commission and LCT belong, we were treated to presentations of a number of community projects. One was a WHIP Grant similar to what the Trust is doing at Sarah Doublet Forest, and others were volunteer efforts. The most impressive was an Eagle Scout project designed to control Mile-a-Minute Vine in Westford. The Scout, Aziz Rangwala, organized nine teams, each with their own leader, to pull the nasty plant throughout the summer and early fall. Volunteers from other towns, including myself, helped to control a very significant infestation. Here in Littleton, five two-person teams worked to control a much smaller plot, one of only a few in the state. It is the fact that there are only a few locations statewide that makes early detection and eradication by citizens, such as you, so important. Sightings of Mile-a-Minute Vine can be



Mile-a-Minute vine

reported to me at 978-486-8482 or to the MDAR Plant Pest Hotline at 617-626-1779. These projects will need to continue for five or six years until all seed in the soil has germinated. Volunteers are always welcome.

Readers can learn about the problem plants in our community by reading this column in previous newsletters available on the Trust’s website, www.littletonconservationtrust.org. Additional information will be available at www.cisma_suasco.org as that website is developed, and numerous other sites will respond to an online search for 'Invasive Plants'. ■



Studying a Barred Owl in its natural habitat

Photo by Christine Raine

**Make Merry on
Saturday
December 3rd!**



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.

LITTLETON



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

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The Book Corner

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

Tar Sands Dirty Oil and the Future of a Continent By Andrew Nikiforuk

This eye-opening book takes a critical look at the ongoing and escalating extraction of the hydrocarbon resource bitumen, commonly referred to as “tar sands”, in Alberta, Canada. Author Andrew Nikiforuk delves deeply into the process and politics of the big oil companies’ methods of extraction, as well as the related social and environmental impact. These tar sands are touted as Canada’s key to becoming the world’s second largest oil exporter, but serious questions exist as to how sensible and economical it is to extract and refine this hydrocarbon that is literally like tar in its raw state. To refine it into a useable product requires large quantities of water and energy, producing a lot of pollution before it is even burned as a high carbon content energy source. The resulting impacts to the environment and local people are tremendous. Nikiforuk looks at all aspects and true costs of bringing this product to the U.S. and the world to feed our ever-growing energy needs. As the oil companies and our government now look to bring this fuel source south from Canada (via a huge pipeline through the Midwest) for distribution, we should all look more closely at the potential impacts we face from this “dirty oil”. ■

A Blessing of Toads A Gardener’s Guide to Living with Nature By Sharon Lovejoy

A Blessing of Toads is a collection of essays from author/illustrator Sharon Lovejoy’s “Heart’s Ease” column in *Country Living Gardener* magazine about the joys of gardening and observing the delights of nature in our own backyards. Lovejoy’s essays offer engaging anecdotes about her love of gardening and other outdoor endeavors, along with her informative (yet relaxed) instructions for creating gardens teeming with life. Lovejoy invites her readers to build gardens that attract the things that help keep it healthy and brings that “buzz” of life that draws us outdoors. Included is advice on what to grow to attract birds, butterflies, bees, dragonflies and more, as well as how to naturally deal with “pests” like skunks and moles. She shares ideas on a wide variety of “how to” projects, like making outdoor and indoor window boxes for growing goodies year round, making bird feed and unusual bird feeders, making potpourri, and much more. This book will provide you with information about the things you need for starting, maintaining and using your garden’s bounty. Lovejoy’s enthusiasm will inspire you to get out and appreciate all that gardening has to offer. ■