

Littleton Conservation Trust



Newsletter

Spring 2005

Tuesday, May 31st Annual Meeting and Dr. Ed Bell Forum

Featuring:

The Stonewall Initiative: Conserving New England's Stone Wall Heritage

presented by Professor Robert Thorson, award-winning author

Come join us for the Littleton Conservation Trust's Annual Meeting on Tuesday evening, May 31st at the Littleton High School Performing Arts Center starting at 7:00PM. Following immediately afterward will be a brief intermission with free refreshments. Then, at 7:30 PM will be the 4th Annual Dr. Edgar Bell Memorial Forum which is expected to draw a large audience. This evening will provide an opportunity to meet and socialize with Trust members, friends, and Robert Thorson, who will autograph copies of his book. This event is free and open to the public.

The featured speaker at the Dr. Edgar Bell Memorial Forum is Professor Robert M. Thorson, award-winning author of *Stone by Stone: The Magnificent History in New England's Stone Walls* (2002) and the recently-released *Exploring Stone Walls: A Field Guide to New England's Stone Walls* (2005). He is also co-author of *Stone Wall Secrets*, an illustrated book for children, a Smithsonian Notable Book for 1998.

Professor of Geology at the University of Connecticut, Thorson holds academic appointments in geoscience, ecology, archaeology, and honors education. Additionally, he has spent more than fifteen years investigating stone walls, which he believes are rural New England's signature landform. His third "full time" job is at the Hartford Courant, where he writes a weekly op-ed column on environmental affairs and essays for its special commentary section called Place.

His talk will overview the cultural messages contained in stone walls, their history, hints and clues for their interpretation, two methods for naming and classifying them, and suggestions for stone wall management. After the talk, he will sign and inscribe copies of his three books, which will be available for purchase. He welcomes case studies and anecdotes about stone wall issues, which are often posted on the website for the Stone Wall Initiative (see <http://stonewall.uconn.edu>).
by Don MacIver

Canoe Trip on Beaver Brook

Littleton Conservation Trust's annual canoe trip is scheduled for **Saturday, June 4, 2005 at 1:30 PM on Beaver Brook**. After a three-year absence we are returning to Beaver Brook—the location of the annual canoe trip before LCT began to explore other local bodies of water. The brook meanders through an expansive wetland meadow populated by a variety of birds. Time permitting, there will be an opportunity to portage into Forge Pond (Littleton's Lake Matawanakee).

All are welcome to add their canoe or kayak for this event.

Directions: Off Route 119, 0.7 miles northwest of Route 495, turn on Beaver Brook Road. Proceed 1.3 miles to where Beaver Brook enters Forge Pond.

Participants are responsible for providing appropriate personal floatation devices for paddlers and passengers, especially young children. Rain date is Sunday, June 5. For further information contact Steven Sussman 978-486-9630 or sussman@alum.mit.edu.



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.



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April 2005**

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Thank You to Our Active Members

The Littleton Conservation Trust wishes to acknowledge the financial support of our active members:

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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



Thank You to Our Volunteers

by Doreen Morse

Over the last year, the LCT has been very lucky to have the help and support of some wonderful volunteers. We thank all who shared their time, energy, and expertise to organize our programs, steward our lands and trails, and run fundraising projects. We can't name you all, but among these many, the following are stand-out volunteers:

Country Fair: Doreen Morse, Henry Harvey, Grant Marley, Don MacIver, Linda Cantillon, and Nancy Penney.

Holiday Bazaar: Pattie Townley, Doreen Morse, Kathy Stevens, Grant and Laura Marley, Thomas and Melissa Spurr, Henry Harvey, Judy White, Ginna Sprong, Karen Terella, and Don MacIver.

Returnable Bottle and Can Sorting: Henry Harvey, Doreen Morse, Tony Jenskysky, Rick Findlay, Frank Vigna, Gerry Cavallo, Keith Crowe, Derek Deprato, Cathy Kristofferson, Barbara Boothby, Ray and Judy Grande, Lynn Roper, Jane Chrisfield, Steven Sussman, Barbara Chapin, Sandy McPherson, Bill McPherson, Grant Marley, Melissa Spurr, Diann Haduch, Sarah and Steve Foss, Kathy Stevens, Marie Mayer, and Alex Levering.

Land Stewards and Trail Work: Art Lazarus, Charles Tirone, Ray and Judy Grande, Rick Findlay, Melissa Spurr, John Lally, Mitt Wanzer, Guy Huse, Rick Roth, Kevin O'Connor, Andrew Bowers, Carl Rivenberg, Dick Andersen, Harry Swift, Henry Harvey, Rita Biagioni, Will Pickariello, Bill Kinch, Dick DesJarlais, Peter Church, Jim and Ann Campbell, and Phillip Kenney.

A Rarely-visited Conservation Area

by Art Lazarus

Some of the Littleton Conservation Trust properties are rarely visited. A few of these have some interesting and unique features that can be seen and appreciated within a few minutes walk from a parked car. One of these properties is the Nashoba Wetlands Preserve, a 25-acre parcel that was donated to the Trust about 40 years ago. About 5% of it is dry land. The rest is mature wooded swamp. The one dry acre is a narrow peninsula extending 500 feet from the parking spot on Nashoba Road into the center of the swamp. A large brown "Nashoba Wetlands" sign marks the beginning of the trail that passes through the center of the peninsula. Unique features of this little known area include:

- A mature American Beech forest with trees up to 26" in diameter. The tree displays beautiful yellow leaves in the fall.
- Extensive amounts of Sweet Pepperbush blossom with delightful aromatic flowers in late July and early August.
- Interesting shrubs include Witch Hazel, which blossoms in late fall, and Hobblebush with colorful yellow leaves in the fall.
- Trees include large Oaks up to 30" in diameter and Black Birch (wintergreen odor and taste under bark) and Red Maple.
- The aromatic tea berry is a significant ground cover
- Bedrock outcrops of granite pegmatite display large crystals of white quartzite and feldspar.
- The forested peninsula provides an excellent opportunity to see the center of a wooded swamp up close without getting wet and muddy.

Nashoba Wetlands is located on Nashoba Road between Newtown Road and Camp Nashoba.

The Littleton Conservation Trust is forty-three years old. In 1962, it began as an obscure group of 12 trustees trying to preserve a few acres of open land in a town that was then mostly farmland and forest. With its 11 dairy farms, including Cobbs Chicks, Herpy's Dairy, the EGG Station, and Chase's Cider Mill—why worry? Robinson, Mattheson, Theodorus, Jim and Dan Pickard, Cobb, Yapp, and Sheridan's productive fields where there for us to enjoy. We felt that they would always be there. Why was there need for a land trust? Although Route 495 had only recently been built, a few far-sighted Littletonians—Herb Sonthoff, Stanley Conant, and others—saw the coming sprawl that would overrun the Trotting Park on Russell Street, turn Herpy's Dairy into a mall, and overrun Sheridan's productive acres with houses. The construction of Route 495 split the town in half, burned or moved thirteen houses (mine among them), and brought permanent noise pollution.

The Trustees persuaded landowners to give open land to the Trust. Edith and Paul Smith gave 11 acres on Beaver Brook off Whitcomb Avenue and urged Bert Webster to give 14 adjacent acres. John Adams Kimball gave a large area of wet woods off Nashoba Road and induced Josephine Whitcomb to do the same. Ruth Frost gave several acres at the corner of Newtown and

Nashoba Roads, and the 96 acre Sarah Doublet Forest with its beautiful trails was given by Fanny Knapp and Edith Jenkins. Roger Conant gave Conant Park off White Street with its trail that connects the Common area to the Middle School and, through the Two Brothers Trail, to Long Lake.

Now with increased prices for open land owners have preferred to keep ownership but grant conservation easements which can preserve the land as swamp, pasture, forest, or farm (according to the terms of the easement). Meanwhile the Town, with Federal and State aid, has preserved open space such as Oak Hill, Newtown Hill, and Bumblebee Park. Also, without Federal aid, the Town purchased the Morgan Land, the Frost-Whitcomb 95 acres with extensive frontage on Long Lake, the Morrison Orchard, the Hartwell land on Beaver Brook, and an easement on a significant portion of the Prouty Estate now owned by the New England Forestry Foundation.

All this has meant changes within the Trust. It has had to grow up. It now has funds for the protection of these easements, a permanent fund to give stability, sophisticated bookkeeping, and membership in the Land Trust Alliance, a national organization whose standards we must now try to achieve. The Littleton Conservation Trust has come of age.

Invasive Aliens – Join the Resistance, Part II

by Rick Findlay

This is the second in a series of articles intended to alert the community to the threat of invasive plants to our biodiversity and the New England landscape. The first article discussed Japanese Knotweed. This article focuses on Burning Bush. Future articles 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)*
- *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 Burning Bush, are extremely persistent and resistant to control.

Burning Bush or Winged Euonymous

Euonymus alatus, commonly known as Burning Bush or Winged Euonymus, is high on everyone's list of invasive alien plants, yet only the most responsible nurseries have stopped carrying it. It arrived from central Asia more than 150 years ago, and recently has become the darling of residential builders and interstate bridge beautifiers.

Burning Bush thrives in full sun where its neon red leaves excite the leaf peeper. It does almost as well in shade. Truly a wonderful plant were it not for its fibrous root mat and its seeds.

The root mat excludes all other plant growth, altering natural plant communities, capable of creating a monoculture in the shrub layer.

Writing from my own experience, the young plant is not bad. As it gets older and larger, however, it starts to produce seed in prodigious amounts. The birds love it and carry it afar. At first I noticed a seedling here and there. Then one day they were everywhere, sometimes growing thicker than my lawn. I cut them and mowed them but they came back stronger than ever. The venerable specimens at the head of my lawn became cordwood, but did they die? No. Did the seeds stop sprouting? No. It appears that they are viable for an indeterminate period. I bought a new and better weed whacker, and then there's mulch . . .



The real problem is the seeds. My plants (they came with the house) have spread their progeny well beyond my property. In the fall, an embarrassing hue in the landscape intensifies as I

approach home. Migrating birds have taken the seed who knows how far.

Mitigation methods include pulling and fall or winter cutting, when cut surfaces can be painted with an herbicide (Roundup at 30 -35% has been recommended).



Littleton Conservation Trust – Spring 2005 Activities

Unless otherwise stated, pre-registration is not required.
All walking trips require sturdy boots or shoes, personal water supply, and insect repellent if desired.

Date	Time	Activity Description	Leader
5/21 Sat	7:30AM	Bird Walk at Prouty Woods Community Forest— NEFF Community Forest Discovery Days (See NEFF events website for other activities at Prouty Woods later in the day)	Grant Marley NEFF
5/31 Tues	7:00—7:20PM	LCT Annual Meeting at Littleton Performing Arts Center / Littleton High School	LCT Trustees
5/31 Tues	7:30—9:30PM	Dr. Edgar Bell Forum at LPAC/LHS: The Stone Wall Initiative: Conserving New England's Stone Wall Heritage	Professor Robert M. Thorson
6/4 Sat	1:30—3:30 PM	Beaver Brook Canoe Trip (as part of Littleton Biodiversity Days)	Steve Sussman (call 486-9630 for questions)
6/7 Tues	7:30AM	Tree Identification Walk (as part of Littleton Biodiversity Days)	NEFF
6/18 Sat	9:00—11:00AM	Littleton's Top Ten Non-native Invasive Plants Identification and Their Management Walk (as part of Littleton Biodiversity Days)	Rick Findlay (call 486-8482 to sign up and for details)
6/18 Sat	12:00 Noon	LCT and NEFF Joint Membership Picnic and Various Activities at Prouty Woods/ NEFF Headquarters. (Hot grills will be provided for your personal cooking. Bring your own food.) Afternoon Wildflower and Fern Identification Walk (as part of Littleton Biodiversity Days)	LCT, NEFF
6/25 Sat	9:30AM	Exploring Littleton Area Stone Walls (meet at municipal parking lot by firehouse)	Art Lazarus and Don MacIver

The Littleton Conservation Trust (LCT), New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF), and the municipal Littleton Conservation Commission are local co-sponsors of *Littleton Biodiversity Days* activities from June 4 through June 18. The state sponsor of Biodiversity Days is the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC).

For more information, contact Doreen Morse at 486-8292. Also see the following web sites:

- NEFF at <http://www.newenglandforestry.org>
- LCT and its trail guide at <http://www.LittletonConservationTrust.org>
- NEFF MACC and statewide Biodiversity Days at <http://www.maccweb.org>

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

For a calendar of area events, workshops, and conferences that have to do with land and water resource protection, smart growth, sustainability and related subjects, visit Townboard.org

LITTLETON



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The Book Corner

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

A Natural History of Ferns by Robbin C. Moran

The author, Robbin Moran, is curator of ferns at New York Botanical Gardens. His book is not a guide to ferns, it is not set up for fern identification, nor is it limited to the New England area. The book addresses ferns world wide, and is a complete look at the fern from its life cycle, its distribution, its classification, and its interactive history with mankind. The book is complete with glossary and colored pictures. The most interesting presentation, to this reader's thinking, are the chapters dedicated to specific ferns and their interesting characteristics and history. Did you know there is an aquatic fern which can double its size in two days—a property which allowed it to threaten the livelihood of over 80,000 people in the 1980's? Did you know that ferns can live in desert heat; that there are iridescent ferns and ferns as big as trees? *A Natural History of Ferns*, is a readable, truly interesting book for those interested in plants. It probably presents the reader with more information on ferns than one knew was available!

Review by Doreen Morse

Exploring Stone Walls: A Field Guide to New England's Stone Walls by Robert M. Thorson

This recently released guide is a complete "do it yourself kit" for anyone who desires to gain a quick and thorough understanding of stone walls or wants a practical means to characterize them for good land stewardship. Thorson presents stone walls as rural New England's signature landform. The guide is ideally formatted to accompany one on either serious field study or countryside tourist forays. Amply photo-illustrated, this volume contains clear explanatory text appropriate for the general public. It is replete with appendices containing maps, additional resources for further study, an annotated list of helpful tools and field equipment, a new simple stone wall classification key, and even a life list of stone wall types for the reader to check off as they go.

This enjoyable new volume provides a smart and manageable guide. It is bound to prove a valuable asset for any land use manager, conservationist, history preservationist, countryside stroller, or casual tourist.

Review by Don Maclver