

Littleton Conservation Trust



Newsletter

Spring 2010

A Special Place

Story and photos by Rick Findlay

Acquisition of conservation land is largely driven by opportunity. In the case of the pending Cobb Lots purchase, it is driven more by the importance of these lots to the integrity of the open space and to the trail network that surrounds them. Their preservation will surely add 16 acres of beautiful stream and pond side habitat to an already wonderful woodland, but their development would more certainly compromise that same place. If built out, children standing on Fort Rock will be gazing into the back door of a new house and their walk home might be through a neighborhood rather than along the forest trail that now exists. The Cobb Memorial Footpath, which currently meanders through the trees with distant views of the pond, would be confronted with a house and automobiles. The peace that currently prevails, might permanently be lost.

For that reason, the Littleton Conservation Trust pursued the Cobb family and, to our good fortune, they responded generously. They have allowed us to use the existing trail and offered to sell the town the four lots at a reasonable price.

If successful, we will bring together multiple purchases to create one of the finest conservation lands in town. More than three miles of trail are accessible from five different neighborhoods, meandering from one habitat to another with a variety that is truly astounding. We are very lucky and owe our gratitude to the many families who have made this possible, particularly most recently the Yapps, and now the Cobbs. ■



New 65 foot bridge and boardwalk on the Cobb property



Gracie, the dog, enjoys the view of Cobb Pond

Please come to the
special town meeting on
Monday, May 3 and vote
for this special place

Article 3, Special Town Meeting,
"Acquisition of Cobb Conservation Properties"
is supported by the Board of Selectmen and
the Community Preservation Committee.
For more information on the warrant article (with
photos and maps), visit the town's web site:
[www.littletonma.org/filestorage/5754/
COBB_ProposedOpenSpacePurchase.pdf](http://www.littletonma.org/filestorage/5754/COBB_ProposedOpenSpacePurchase.pdf)



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April 2010

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www.littletonconservationtrust.org

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.

Agriculture and You

by Jack Apfelbaum, P.E.

When we first moved to our present house, old Herbie was busy next door gardening away, carefully and lovingly tending his garden through spring and summer. He eventually harvested strawberries, potatoes, peas, etc.. Tomatoes, of course, and plenty of pole beans. He loved gardening right into his old age. He liked putting things into the ground. He loved watching things grow up into edible crops. And he loved picking those crops.

One fall day, I saw him with an armful of just-harvested asparagus. These looked yummy to me and my face must have portrayed a certain desire. Indeed, Herbie must have noticed my eyes fixed on his asparagus for he said without any hesitation, "Jack, you can have anything in this garden. Just help yourself." He even went so far as to say, "You can even have my wife, BUT DON'T YOU DARE TOUCH THE ASPARAGUS." There was no question about it. He was very certain of what he liked!

Well, asparagus, tomatoes or any other crop – I wasn't really very attentive to this whole wonderful agricultural world which can so easily surround us, provided we make the space for it. Yes, provided we make or leave space for it.

Now, I grew up in cities: Hamburg, New York, Washington. Agriculture was something I read about. My first occasion to see real agriculture happened only when I was about twenty-three and on my way from New York City to Denver. A possible job was at stake and I had the opportunity of a long car ride through the mid-west.

We drove for hours on end through rich agricultural lands, wheat and corn. Endless, splendid acres of these crops. My eyes couldn't get enough of them. It all looked like a beautiful forever wave form as the winds made those stalks bow to and fro in a syncopated rhythm. My eyes danced with delight at this wondrous exhibition of nature.

At the time, I had my eye on a job with the US Bureau of Reclamation having successfully passed the required exam to become an engineer in training while in my last year in school. In my big engineering dreams, I saw myself building great dams across mighty rivers giving "civilization" the power it needs.

The disappointment was not long in coming. Now, these many years later I wonder at my ignorance – dams – who wants them? But my alternate appointment to the U.S. Naval Gun Factory in Washington, D.C. seemed no better – design rapid fire anti-aircraft guns in the year 1949 or experiment with ways to keep the windshield of battleships free of ice during their cruises in northern waters.

Well, graduation, various engineering jobs, and finally teaching engineering

(Continued on page 4)

Littleton Conservation Trust Membership Form – 2010

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



Share Your Photos With Us by Bill Brown

We're looking for a few good photos...The LCT is sponsoring a photo contest to highlight the diversity and natural beauty of Littleton's conservation lands, agricultural lands, and other open spaces. Here are some guidelines for photo submissions:

- The photo captures an image taken in the Town of Littleton
- The subject of the photo should be something that is conservation-related, such as nature trails, wildlife, scenic vistas, trees, plants, and wildflowers
- The photo must be a recent photo. You can submit any photo you take between now and August 31, 2010. To include all seasons, you can also submit a photo that you took last fall and winter, since September 1, 2009.
- For all contest rules and instructions for how to submit a photo, visit the LCT website:
www.littletonconservationtrust.org

Give Now for Prouty Woods

As the Campaign for Prouty Woods closes in on its goal to retire the original purchase borrowing, a 1 for 4 matching grant increases the value of each donation. The match runs through the end of the fiscal year, April 30.

The Littleton Conservation Trust supports NEFF and hopes that you will too. Please give generously and specify "for Prouty Woods":

New England Forestry Foundation
PO Box 1346
Littleton MA 01460

Sign Up Now for Creature Camp

Once again, the Creature Teachers will be holding Creature Camp up on the Sarah Doublet Forest this summer. The forest affords the kids a wonderful opportunity to explore many different habitats from vernal ponds to classic New England woods. In addition, they get to learn about native and exotic animal species and experience handling everything from toucans to alligators!

The camp is a half day program running from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm Monday through Friday as well as a special nocturnal event on Thursday evenings at 8:00pm. The nocturnal program includes a walk on the trails to see what kind of nocturnal creatures we may see, a Creature Teachers nocturnal program performed by the kids, and a campfire complete with roasted marshmallows.

Week long sessions start July 12th and run through Aug 20th. For more information, contact the Creature Teachers at 978-952-0020. ■



*Creature Teacher Rick Roth
with a kinkajou*

While enjoying the beautiful spring weather, try a walk along the winding trails in the Sarah Doublet Forest. One of the unique attractions of this property is a small historic hard rock quarry, which is about a 10-minute walk from the parking lot. The quarry site offers a convenient location for resting, meditation, picnicking, or just looking around at the birds and trees. From the parking lot, follow the Jenkins-Knapp trail to the Wunnahu Loop trail. The quarry is about 600 square feet in size and is probably 100 to 150 years old. The rock is composed of horizontally bedded granite gneiss. The "gneiss" refers to granite literally squeezed by heat and pressure well over 500 million years ago. The rock displays elongation and streaking of its mineral components. The near horizontal bedding and natural jointing makes it easier to cut and remove blocks. The workers made four-



Vertically fractured granite slabs at the Sarah Doublet Forest quarry site

inch deep holes, six inches apart in a row by driving in a star drill, by hand. When the row was completed, metal "feathers and wedges" were pounded into the holes to make the rock split vertically to meet the horizontal natural joints. Slabs up to about two feet in thickness were extracted and used for house foundations, doorsteps, and small bridges around town. Drill holes and wasted slabs are still easily visible at this site. The laborious process of quarrying by hand and horse was quickly replaced by the increased use of ready mix concrete and concrete blocks in the early 1900's.

Similar larger and smaller quarries were common in our region. Several of these, including limestone quarries, are in protected locations. This particular quarry is one of the many interesting features that can be seen and appreciated in Littleton's 21 unique conservation areas. ■

Agriculture and You

by Jack Apfelbaum, P.E.

(Continued from page 2)

led me by a somewhat circuitous route to what is now the University of Massachusetts/Lowell and living in nearby Littleton.

Teaching was a dream job and I enjoyed many aspects of it. It was also a very demanding job, as the students were both good and demanding. Consequently, our home environment was important to me both in its nearby aspect, i.e. our small garden and in its further reaches, the green environment that the town of Littleton provides.

It was shortly after our arrival in Littleton in 1971 that we were invited to a party with Don and Carey Prouty, Drs. Bell and Harvey and their spouses, and some other very nice folk. It was not long after meeting Don that he said to Eva and myself, if you ever want to walk up to the lake, just help yourself.

We often took him up on his offer walking in what is now Prouty Woods, enjoying that nearly 100 acre estate in all seasons. It always refreshed us as we made our way past the

green area part of which is now experimental forest cared for by NEFF, through more open fields, then woods until at last we ended up at Long Lake.

Both Dr. Ed Bell and Dr. Harvey conveyed the importance of the Littleton Conservation Trust in preserving large green, wooded, or agricultural tracts in Littleton. Their warning was strong: if we aren't careful agricultural land will disappear and the town will change character. FOREVER. We have to fight to keep land open both for ourselves and our children and our children's children. Once gone, it's gone for good.

Their advice given nearly forty years ago seems as pertinent today as ever. So let's keep open space open, let's keep on preserving land. Let's not let development take away what naturally belongs to all of us. ■

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

This is the twelfth 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:

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*)
- Black Swallow-wort (*Cynanchum louiseae*)

This article focuses on 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.



Porcelain Berry

Porcelain Berry is a perennial vine related to, and closely resembling, our native grape. Distinguished by its pale, porcelain-blue berry, it is not common in Littleton. I have only seen it on the NEFF property. Like Bittersweet, it has the ability to climb over and smother shrubs and trees. It can grow fifteen feet a year and the seeds can remain viable in the soil for many years. Detection and treatment of early invaders is important because of the opportunity to control or even eradicate a species in an area before it becomes established (like Bittersweet).

When not in fruit, Porcelain Berry vines can be differentiated from grape vines by stem pith, which is white in the Porcelain Berry, brown in the grape. The bark on a grape vine peels off in strips, where on the Porcelain Berry, it does not.

Should you discover this plant on your property, try not to let it go to seed. Pick ripening berries and dispose of them along with your garbage. Dig out plants or cut them close to the ground and paint the stump with a Roundup or Brush-Be-Gone concentrate. Carefully follow the herbicide’s label. ■

\$10,000 Invasive Plant Cleanup

The Littleton Conservation Trust recently received a grant to control invasive plants and restore habitat on 6 acres of their Sarah Doublet Forest. The federally funded Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) grant is a boon to land stewards increasingly overwhelmed by invasive plant growth. Littleton homeowners are urged to learn to identify and remove target species early to avoid expensive professional remediation later. Working as individuals we are helping not only ourselves, but also our neighbors, to avoid this increasingly frustrating experience.

LCT and the Conservation Commission have joined the SUASCO CISMA, a watershed-wide group dedicated to fighting invasives. An early benefit of membership will provide workshops for the identification of the next wave of invading plants. Included on the list is Kudzu, already found in the state. Anyone interested in taking a workshop this spring and monitoring the Yapp/Cobb area should contact Rick Findlay, 978 486 8482. ■

LITTLETON



CONSERVATION
TRUST

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Littleton, MA 01460

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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

Rewilding The World: Dispatches from The Conservation Revolution by Caroline Fraser

Just as we in Littleton are saving valuable green spaces and connecting wildlife corridors like the Yapp and Cobb lands, there are many projects around the world aimed at stopping the destruction of natural habitats and migration corridors through conservation and restoration known as "rewilding".

In *Rewilding The World*, author Caroline Fraser reports on the efforts on every continent to restore habitats on the scale needed to support the wonderful diversity of life on the planet that is threatened by human activity.

In this engaging book, Fraser describes how biologists and environmental activists are using innovative methods of saving species by restoring habitats, taking down barriers and reviving migration corridors, thereby helping humans better coexist with the natural world. The many challenges facing these efforts are not glossed over, but rather met head on with examples of how communities and countries are working together to overcome their differences and create a sustainable conservation ethic.

With numerous tales of specific species (both flora and fauna) threatened with extinction, as well as those already gone, this book shows us the importance of saving wild places, and in turn ourselves. ■

Our Choice: How We Can Solve The Climate Crisis by Al Gore

This new book from former Vice-President Al Gore is a follow-up to his book *An Inconvenient Truth*. It is written for young readers, ages 8-14. In it, Gore explains the various facets of climate change in a way that is very accessible to kids, and offers specific ways they can help make a better future for humankind and the Earth. The book is loaded with pictures, diagrams, and graphs that are easy to understand and which add a dynamic real-life quality to the subject matter.

All aspects of climate change are addressed, from the need for carbon-free energy (like solar, wind, and geothermal) and new energy delivery and storage systems, to understanding how land usage and the number of people on Earth are part of the equation. Gore describes specific ways that everyone can help things change, providing an upbeat assessment of the future potential for a balanced climate.

This is a great book for introducing young readers to the issues of climate change. It also offers new insights and actions for those already interested in this important environmental challenge. ■

Reviews by Kathy Stevens