

# Littleton Conservation Trust



Newsletter

Spring 2011

## Cobb Land Celebration — Guided Tours, Cook Out, and Nature Games

by Don MacIver

To celebrate the public's completed acquisition of the Cobb Conservation Land, the LCT will host a public open house on Saturday May 21 from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

All are invited to participate at no cost.

Parking will be available long Newtown Road between Nagog Hill Road and Manchester Drive and public access by the adjacent Yapp Conservation Land.

Commencing at 10:00 at the visitors' tent on the Yapp Conservation Land, there will be a formal celebration ceremony recognizing this milestone achievement.

From Noon to 2:00 PM, a grill will be available for cooking whatever you bring to eat. Soft beverages will be provided.

At 2:00PM, the LCT will hold its Annual Meeting which will consist of a review of the year's activities and a short business summary. LCT Members can participate and vote on the organization's business transactions. Others can learn about the LCT and what it does for the town.

Throughout the day, there will be children's nature games and guided tours of the interconnected Yapp, Cobb, and Morrison properties.

### History of the Cobb Property

The Cobb, Yapp, and Morrison properties contain a rich agricultural history that put Littleton on the map. In 1916, Robert C. Cobb Senior purchased the Old Pickard Farm and launched his own farm business, Cobb's Pedigreed Chicks. Cobb is the world's oldest poultry breeding company with many of its leading lines still in existence. They were the first breeder to apply poultry genetics and sold their live chicks via U.S. Mail using the slogan "Chicks with the High I.Q." Cobb's Pedigreed Chicks was so successful that they developed extensive operations on six continents. In 1986, the Cobb business as an international leader in poultry breeding was acquired by Tyson Foods and moved to the South.

This farmland is interconnected to that of the Yapp

Conservation Land and Jack Morrison's orchard, the town's last surviving orchard which is now fully owned by Littleton and leased as Nagog Hill Orchard. Apples were such a significant crop in Littleton that they earned themselves a prominent position in the town seal of 1714 and eventually established the town as the leading U.S. apple exporter to Europe.

Since it's conservation land ownership, LCT has removed chicken incubator houses in disrepair, rusted farm equipment, and broken down vehicles from the forested and overgrown lands. Additionally, LCT laid out trails, built foot bridges, and provided extensive signage to make this land one of the town's most attractive properties.

Spanning over ten years, LCT has been working with the Cobb Family, Sudbury Valley Trustees, and the town to fully acquire available Cobb Conservation lands. Initially a considerable portion of land was gifted to LCT by the Cobb Family Trust, followed by another gift of three more lots to LCT by current resident Emily B. Cobb, a purchase of two lots by LELWD with its transfer to the Conservation Commission, and concluded this fall with the final purchase of the last four lots by the town using CPA funding. The LCT and Conservation Commission share responsibility for the Cobb Memorial Trail extending from Old Pickard Lane to Nashoba Road close to Nagog Pond. Littleton's Community Preservation Committee, Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, Counsel, and the Littleton Electric Light and Water Department all played critical roles in protecting these lands for conservation purposes.

Come meet and mingle with the LCT Trustees, volunteer Land Stewards who monitor and protect the town's Conservation Lands, and land protection staff members from Sudbury Valley Trustees, a regional land trust which significantly assisted the town. Also in attendance will be members of the Conservation Commission and some of the town's other board and committee members who helped secure these properties for conservation purposes. ■



LCT  
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May 2011

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508 Great Road 486-9278

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7 Old Orchard Lane 486-3303

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*Melissa Spurr Newsletter*

[www.littletonconservationtrust.org](http://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.

## Green Exercise: A Walk in the Woods

submitted by Steve Sussman, written by John Swartzberg, M.D.

A few months ago I went on my annual back-packing trip in California's magnificent Sierra Nevada mountains. I usually go with a friend for five or six days, and we do pretty well, considering we're now grandfathers. Though the trips are strenuous, I always come home recharged, physically and mentally. I get a lot out of exercising regularly year-round, at the gym or running in my neighborhood, but I get so much more out of this annual trek. It's not just exercise, or a vacation, or quality time with a friend. What makes it especially restorative is being out in nature.

This nature stuff may sound touchy-feely (very "Berkeley") but there's real science behind it. Lately researchers have been looking at what happens to our brains and bodies when we're walking in a forest, in the mountains, or by the sea. The study of such "green exercise" usually falls under the umbrella of environmental psychology (or ecopsychology). The Japanese, in particular, have been studying what they call "forest bathing" (*Shinrin-yoku*)—that is, spending time in nature for therapeutic effects.

Studies have found, for instance, that people do better on tests involving memory or attention after trekking through the woods than after walking in a city. People have increased vitality (that is, physical and mental energy) and a greater sense of well-being after walking through a tree-lined river path than after walking indoors. Other studies have even found that patients in hospitals tend to recover more quickly when they can see trees from their windows.

The proposed benefits of walking in nature include giving the brain a respite from the multi-tasking of everyday life. If you enjoy hiking, you know that you become more aware of your surroundings—the sounds, smells, colors. Time slows down. Somehow this refreshes the brain and makes thinking clearer. Japanese researchers have found that walking through forests can help reduce stress, lower blood pressure and heart rate, and improve various aspects of immune function for any-where from a few hours to a few days afterwards—while walking in a city does not. They suggest that various airborne chemicals emitted from plants may play a role.

All it takes is 5 to 20 minutes in nature to boost mood and energy levels somewhat, some research has found, though longer forays produce greater benefits. Other studies indicate that there's a "third-day effect"—a special stage of relaxation and mindfulness that occurs after a couple days of hiking. I consistently experience that on my trips. Being out of the range of cell phones and email helps.

Not everyone enjoys hiking or can do it, of course. Other activities—by the shore or even in a city park—may be your thing. Find what kind of environmentalist you are, and enjoy. ■

*Reprinted with permission: John Swartzberg, M.D., Chair, Editorial Board, UC Berkeley Wellness Letter, December 2010*

## Littleton Conservation Trust Membership Form – 2011

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



## The Showy Boulders

by Art Lazarus

Why would anybody want to read an article about a couple of old, grubby boulder? Because it helps us to learn, appreciate, and enjoy the excellent diversity of natural features around us in our conservation areas.

Searching for unique and unusual landscape features has held my interest for many decades. Here, in Littleton's 21 conservation areas, there are many unique and interesting features. Among them is one I found this winter in the Yapp land, located off Newtown Road. There are two boulders about 30 feet apart, each about 2 cubic yards in size, that are pure white. Similar, but smaller, boulders are scattered to the top of a small hill where many of them are included in an old stonewall. These boulders are composed of large, pure-white quartzite and plagioclase feldspar. Together these minerals are classified as pegmatite. It appears that the last glacial ice advance (acting like a giant bulldozer more than 15000 years ago) plucked these chunks from a bedrock formation nearby or many miles away somewhere to the north. The stream of boulders is lined up in a north/south orientation, indicating the direction of ice movement.

To find the boulders, start at the kiosk, proceed across the field to the trail going into the woods on the right side of the field and follow the trail as if you want to go to the Morrison Orchard Extension. After walking about 10 minutes, proceed across a new short boardwalk and up a very small hill. The first boulder is very close, on your left. The second one is about 30 feet up hill from the first boulder.

I call out this feature for those who like to seek out and find odd points of interest in the forest. Items like this are great for children to pique their interest in the natural sciences. Growing up in Waltham and wandering in the woods resulted in my lifelong interest in geology, which turned into my career as an engineering geologist. ■

## Upcoming Guided Hikes

Saturdays 9:00–11:00 AM

6/18 Long Lake Conservation Land  
Register at [ajlazarus@verizon.net](mailto:ajlazarus@verizon.net)  
or call 486-0261

7/16 Sarah Doublet Forest  
Register at [donaldmaciver@yahoo.com](mailto:donaldmaciver@yahoo.com)  
or call 952-2706

If you'd like advance notice of Littleton Conservation Trust events emailed to you, please send your email address to:  
[Info4LCT@gmail.com](mailto:Info4LCT@gmail.com)

Like climate change awareness today, in 1961 a change in the climate of opinion occurred: a greening of the way we see the earth and our place in it. There were many, varied influences. In 1934, my arts & crafts teacher in school, Roger Tory Peterson, produced his *Field Guide to the Birds*, starting a whole new style of nature publishing. In the 1950s, Marion Stoddart organized a clean-up of the Nashua River (called by some the "Nausea River"). The Sudbury Valley Trustees was organized by Alan Morgan and others to preserve open land. Environmentalism was in the air. Ecology became a common word.

In 1959, Littleton found itself split by Route 495 which foreshadowed commercial development of Littleton's farms, orchards, and forests. Aware of this probable future, Herb Sonthoff called together a group of concerned citizens: Stanley Conant, Don Prouty, John Adams Kimball, John Morrison, Bill Whitcomb, Paul Smith, and several others. The Town had organized a Conservation Commission, but this group felt that a private, non-profit trust could act more quickly and give tax advantages, not otherwise available, to land donors. Consequently, they organized the Littleton Conservation Trust and signed its By-Laws written by Don Prouty May 12, 1962. Bennett Sanderson shepherded the Trust through the long process to become recognized on March 7, 1966 by the IRS as a 401(c)3 tax exempt trust.

The original trustees were Stanley Conant, President; Lois McWilliams, Secretary; Leslie Nelson, Treasurer; Ray Bradley; Francis Flaherty; Ray Gehling Jr.; Hurd Willett,; Herb Sonthoff; and myself, Henry Harvey. I am the only original trustee still on the board.

Early donors of land were: John Adams Kimball, who on May 20, 1964 gave 11 acres of wet forest land off Nashoba Road. He later persuaded his neighbor, Josephine Whitcomb, to

donate 14 adjacent acres on September 10, 1965. These are now called Nashoba Wetlands. Paul and Edith Smith gave the Trust 10 acres along Beaver Brook, and later protected part of their field with conservation easements. They also persuaded their neighbor, Bert Webster, to sell 11 acres on the brook for \$10.00 an acre on Oct 24, 1964. Ruth Frost gave a plot at the corner of Nashoba and Newtown Roads. Six years later, in 1973, her family gave 9 acres of wet meadow on the other side of Nashoba Road. Lois McWilliams was instrumental in arranging for two large hilltop properties to be given to the Trust. These properties form the Sarah Doublet Forest, now 93 acres with several fine hiking trails and a cottage. This was a gift by Fanny Knapp of 50 acres on Nov. 3, 1975 and 39 from her friend, Edith Jenks, Feb. 10, 1976. At the top of the hill, 6 acres were reserved until the donors died. The house has been enlarged and refurbished by caretakers, Rick and Karen Roth.

Over the years, others have given land to the Trust, namely: Virginia Sprong (Holly Park and later 37 acres of high meadow behind her house adjacent to Newtown Hill conservation land), Roger Kanniard (lands off King Street and Hartwell Avenue), TIDAN DEV, Lewis & Palmer (Whitetail Woods off Spectacle Pond Road), Emily Cobb (lots near Cobb Pond), and Jon Dunn (Bumblebee Park Extension of Harwood Avenue).

Now the Trust manages 21 areas totaling 285 acres and holds 5 conservation restrictions on an additional 80+ acres. Art Lazarus and stewards he has recruited, maintain trails on 9 of the Trust properties and also many of the Conservation Commission properties including Oak Hill, Long Lake Nature Reserve, Hartwell Land, Morrison Extension, and lands of the Cobb Estate. Get your copy of *The Guide to Conservation Land* available at the Library and go hiking! ■

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## LCT Snowshoers on Wilderness Hill Summit

by Don MacIver



Henry Christle, Linda Christle, Karen O'Neil, Jim O'Neil, Margaret Low, Don MacIver

On Sunday, February 6<sup>th</sup>, the Littleton Conservation Trust led a group of 15 on a snowshoeing hike of the Prouty Woods Community Forest.

Taking advantage of the warm sunny afternoon and the deep snows, the group hiked to the summit of Wilderness Hill, yielding spectacular views of the Wapack Range to the northwest, and along the Loop Trail connecting the Two Brothers Trail of the Morgan Property to Long Lake's Prouty Landing, and back to the trailhead on carriage roads and fields. On return, the group relaxed with hot chocolate, shortbread, and cookies. ■

## Taking Stock

It has been eight years since we first brought the issue of invasive plants to the attention of Littleton readers. This column has highlighted a dozen or so of the worst species for our location, including Japanese Knotweed, Oriental Bittersweet, Burning Bush, Buckthorns, Multiflora Rose, Norway Maple, Shrub Honeysuckles, Barberries, Autumn Olive, Garlic Mustard, Black Swallow-wort, Porcelain Berry, and Mile-a-Minute Vine. You can find these articles at [www.littletonconservationtrust.org](http://www.littletonconservationtrust.org).

During this time we have seen a growing concern at all levels of the private and public domain. In recent months alone, I have heard from Girl Scouts here in Littleton, a multi-town group in the Adirondacks ([www.noknotweed.org](http://www.noknotweed.org)), and the Baystate Roads Program, a cooperative effort of the Federal Highway Administration, Massachusetts Department of Transportation and the University of Massachusetts. Last year Littleton and the Trust joined the SuAsCo CISMA, a watershed-wide group led by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, Mass Audubon and the New England Wild Flower Society, among others. There is no shortage of concern and ‘resistance’.



*A tangle of Oriental Bittersweet*

At the same time, I have watched as roadsides and hedgerows throughout our town have slowly succumbed to the stranglehold of Bittersweet and Poison Ivy (native), energized by rising CO2 levels. I have also visited homes, out of control and far beyond the energy and means of their owners.

On a brighter note, LCT is using its Federal WHIP Grant to clean up a part of Sarah Doublet Forest. My own property, which triggered my mania in the first place, is finally getting under control. I can now get back to gardening for fun.

I am also very encouraged by a neighborhood project to reclaim town-owned land surrounded by Grist Mill Road. What was once a worthy entrance to our town, a view of pond and pasture, has become a tangle of dead and dying trees. There are many obstacles to a full restoration, but people are stepping forward, and I am very hopeful.

Ultimately it will be each of us, working alone and together, that save our landscape and ecosystems. Towns nearby have organized ‘Garlic Pulls’, a one day effort each year to prevent flowering Garlic Mustard from going to seed. I have considered ‘Knotweed Razings’, along the lines of ‘barn raisings’, where neighbors helped each other with a task too big for themselves alone. It will require some creative thinking. Eventually the town will have to join the effort, starting by again attempting the control of Poison Ivy. New town costs are scary, but we will eventually have to pay, now or later, and later will be that much more expensive. ■



*Autumn olive takes over the landscape*

## LCT Annual Meeting

Yapp Conservation Land

Saturday May 21, 2011

2 – 2:30 PM

LITTLETON



CONSERVATION  
TRUST

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## The Book Corner

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

*Nature Guide to the Northern Forest*  
*Exploring the Ecology of the Forests of New York,*  
*New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine*  
by Peter Marchand

In his new guide to northern forests, former professor of natural sciences and well-known nature writer Peter Marchand gives us more than the usual nature identification guide. By including a history of how the northern forest landscapes developed since the ice age, and explaining the functional relationships between organisms and their environment, he brings a deeper understanding of the ecology of these forests. This book looks into the ways in which nature and human culture have influenced the growth of forests, as well as explaining the succession of its plant and animal life. The key natural communities of the region are described, accompanied by beautiful color photos for identification of the signature species. The influence of seasonal cycles on the flora and fauna are also covered, along with a look into the effect that climate change may affect the northern forests. A great book for those interested in developing a deeper understanding of the forest they observe. ■

*Atlas of Rare Birds*  
by Dominic Couzens

This is a nature guide of a different kind. *Atlas of Rare Birds* is a book that offers not only a vast array of visually appealing photos of 50 rare and endangered bird species from around the world, but also more than 60 color maps of where they are found and informative stories about their existence and survival. The book focuses on some remarkable species not seen for many years (even centuries), some with back-from-the-brink success stories like the California Condor, and others like the Sooty Falcon that face imminent threats from various factors. The stories presented of efforts around the world that have helped save some species are inspiring and sometimes surprising, like how bird-cage birds can actually be helpful to the survival of their species. The global scope of this atlas offers birdwatchers, ornithologists, and conservationists an excellent look at both the individual plights of these rare birds, and the interconnectedness of the issues they face around the world. ■

Reviews by Kathy Stevens