

Littleton Conservation Trust



Newsletter

Spring 2014

Eyes On Owls: Owls of the World

by Don MacIver



Great Horned Owl

To an excited audience of 150 adults and students, Marcia and Mark Wilson presented their lively owl program at the Littleton Performing Arts Center Tuesday evening, June 3rd.

Mark, a highly experienced wildlife photojournalist and biologist presented his stunning photos of native owls while teaching about their biology and behaviors. Following, Marcia, his wife, a highly regarded naturalist-biologist with

a lengthy list of avian field study accomplishments, proceeded to display each owl for close up viewing and photos.

Native owls included a small Saw-whet Owl, pair of Screech Owls, red and gray varieties, the primitive Barn Owl (much in decline in Mass.), the large Barred Owl (remembered by its "Who Cooks for You?" call), and large classic Great Horned Owl. Also displayed was the world's largest owl, the Eurasian Eagle Owl, with its five foot wingspan! The audience was highly entertained with participatory hooting, photo shoots, and considerable questioning. This was the third time LCT hosted the Wilsons,



Screech Owl Pair



Barn Owl

twice with "Eyes on Owls" and once on the Wilson's 19 day canoe venture in the Arctic National Wildlife refuge (replete with stunning photos, artifacts, and live Arctic Owls). The LCT thanks the school administration and Superintendent Kelly Clenchy for their support for use of the Littleton High School Performing Arts Center.

More information on New England owls can be found at www.eyesonowls.com/aboutowls.htm ■

4th Grade Field Trip To Nashoba Woodlands: Yapp and Cobb Farmlands

by Rick Findlay and Kathy Stevens

The third annual LCT sponsored field trip for Russell Street School 4th grade students followed a new format this year at the Nashoba Woodlands Conservation Lands (Yapp, Cobb and Morrison Extension). This Spring we partnered with Rick Roth, the Creature Teacher, who brought several animals that enthralled students and adults alike. Fourth grade teacher Heidi McGregor coordinated with the LCT and other dedicated teachers to once again provide a fun and memorable outdoor educational experience.

Students were divided into two groups, and while one group watched Rick Roth's exciting show on wild animals, the other students walked the forest trails on a "scavenger hunt" for flora and fauna. The Creature Teacher show included a skunk (de-scented), a groundhog, salamander, tree frog, turtles, flying squirrel, and fisher! Meanwhile, on the trail students looked for various plants and wildflowers like lady slippers and ferns, and explored the edge of vernal pools for tadpoles, salamanders and frog eggs. They had fun at Fort Rock and learned about its geological history and searched for rock minerals. Seeing stone walls throughout the forest taught them about how past farming activities have influenced the landscape. Additionally students observed the effects of woodpeckers and other creatures on trees, and sniffed the delicious scent of birch and wintergreen. ■



Rick Roth displaying a rambunctious Fisher, a native weasel



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June 2014**

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www.littletonconservationtrust.org
www.facebook.com/Littletonconservationtrust

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 (gifted from far-sighted residents) on which we manage a public trails system.

Littleton Conservation News compiled by Don MacIver

- ➡ The LCT thanks member Nancy Williams, who recently passed on, for her kindness to remember us in her will, among other local not-for-profit organizations. Bequests are an effective way to leave a lasting legacy for community benefit.
- ➡ Thank you to the First Church Unitarian (FCU) of Littleton which as part of their Share the Plate program, collects a special offering once a month for a needy charitable organization. Based upon one of their fundamental principles, "Respect for the Interdependent Web of All Existence of which We Are Part", sometimes more simply conveyed as "We believe in caring for our planet Earth, the home we share with all living things." LCT was recently selected as a local environmental charity and received an impressive \$589. Last month, LCT working with the Creature Teachers and the Russell Street School leveraged these funds to provide two days worth of quality environmental education for all Littleton Public School 4th grades on field trips to the Nashoba Woodlands
- ➡ LCT gratefully welcomes newsletter editor Betsy Bohling, webmaster and creator Scott Lewis, assisted by Jim O'Neil, and Facebook administrator and creator Karen O'Neil.
- ➡ Goodbye to LCT members and strong supporters Mike Knupp (also former selectman) and Christine Knupp (Hartwell Conservation Land Steward) as they relocate to Sarasota, FL.
- ➡ Thank you to Littleton Town Meeting voters for passing ballot question 1, which allows the town to redirect revenue streams into the current Community Preservation Committee (CPC) Fund, triggering a larger state match. Working in collaboration with the CPC, Finance Committee, and Selectmen, new opportunities will be created to create needed capital funding for both conservation lands and active recreation, as well as funding for historic preservation and affordable housing.

Upcoming LCT Events

- 6/24 8 pm "Getting Along with Bears", by Patricia Huckery, NE District Supervisor, Mass Fisheries and Wildlife. LCTV cable rebroadcast of 3/12 LCT presentation. For more information consult www.littletonma.org/LCTV. (see article on page 5)
- 6/28 7-9 am Dustin Nield leads birding field trip at the Hartwell Property off Hartwell Ave. (see article on page 3)
- 7/29 3 pm "Misunderstood Creatures", live animal program by Rick Roth and the Creature Teachers, Town Hall Multipurpose Room, Reuben Hoar Public Library summer reading program, with LCT support. For more information consult Reuben Hoar Public Library website: www.littletonlibrary.org/.

Littleton Conservation Trust Membership Form – 2013 - 2014

☐ New ☐ Renewal

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please provide an email address to receive notification of upcoming walks and conservation-related events.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fiftieth Anniversary Membership \$50 | |
| <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: \$ _____ | |

Please cut out form and send to:

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



To Protect and To Observe

by Dustin Nield

"Our health relies entirely on the vitality of our fellow species on Earth. When we protect the places where the processes of life can flourish, we strengthen not only the future of medicine, agriculture and industry, but also the essential condition for peace and prosperity." – Harrison Ford, Vice-Chair of Conservation International.

Locally, this concept is reflected in the portion of The Littleton Conservation Trust's mission which is dedicated to protecting and preserving local wildlife resources and habitat. Largely, simply preserving the land serves this purpose. However, more can be done. In particular, we have an incredible array of local birds – both resident and migratory. This is partly evident via **ebird.org** – a citizen science project run by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, which leverages local input from "birders" all around the globe to record bird populations, habits and migration patterns. Today, over 80 species of birds have been recorded by local birders at lands overseen by LCT, although this is certainly an underreported representation of the true local avifauna.

With the help of other local birders and nature lovers (that's YOU), we'd like both to collect a better tally of the true bird presence on Littleton Conservation lands and to enhance these habitats for target species via a nestbox program. Species that will benefit from a program like this include grassland birds such as American Kestrels and Eastern Bluebirds, as well as those that rely increasingly on scarce old-growth forests like Wood Ducks, Eastern Screech Owls and Pileated Woodpeckers.

(continued next column)

If you'd like to join some local birders and LCT members to see these feathered friends, learn about using **ebird.org** to start your own "life list", or get involved with the nestbox program, join us for a bird walk at the Hartwell Property on the morning of Saturday June 28st from 7-9 am.

Contact Dustin at dustin.neild@gmail.com for more details.

LCT Website Rejuvenated

by Scott Lewis

Much like a trail crew makes a conservation land more accessible and easier to navigate, volunteers have given our website a new look and made it more useful. Volunteer Scott Lewis, with the help of Jim O'Neil and input from Don MacIver, Karen O'Neil, Kathy Stevens, Bill Brown, Rick Findlay, Art Lazarus and Zach Brown, has updated the LCT website. The new site runs on a content management system that will make it much easier to keep the content up to date and that enables the site to adapt properly to screen sizes from personal computers to tablets and smartphones.

A notable feature of the new site is a consolidated database of trail and steward information that is used to generate an overview table, individual trail pages and an online trail guide from a single source of content. Other new features are a custom Google trail locator map, a calendar for listing upcoming events, and forms for interested volunteers, website feedback and reporting issues encountered on trails. Several more enhancements are under consideration including the ability to join and renew memberships online.

If you haven't visited littletonconservationtrust.org lately, drop by and see the new look and features.

Where is Cloverdale?

by Jim O'Neil and Rick Findlay

As you drive into Littleton on Great Road, from Acton, you may have noticed the “CLOVERDALE” sign. This is the location of Littleton’s newest conservation property. Cloverdale resulted from the recent consolidation of lots formerly held independently by Park and Recreation and the Conservation Commission.



We would like to express our gratitude to the people of Littleton for their support of the Community Preservation Article at Town Meeting. Thanks to your backing, the preservation of Cloverdale Conservation Area will soon be underway. One of Littleton’s strengths is our commitment to the preservation of farmland, and this is the first area of farmland one sees upon entering our town.



Community Preservation funding will soon enable us to restore this property from a tangled mess of broken trees and invasive vines to the beautiful pastureland and meadow that it was when Irish immigrant John Mannion began farming it in the late 1800s. Mannion and his family members operated “Cloverdale Farm”, and later “Dell Dale Farm”, until the 1950s when it was sold to the Byrne family. Over subsequent years pieces of the farm were gradually sold off and developed for housing. Littleton is very fortunate to own over twenty acres of the former Mannion family farm.

Our vision for the preservation of Cloverdale will be the removal of dead and undesirable trees, stumps, large stone piles and invasive vines and brush. Portions of the area will be graded and re-seeded, ultimately providing a manageable combination of pasture, meadow and open woodland. The area may eventually return to active agriculture/grazing or become scenic parkland with trails and picnic areas. Cloverdale Conservation Area will surely become a beautiful introduction to our wonderful town. ■

Maintaining Existing Littleton Conservation Land

by Art Lazarus

The Littleton Conservation Trust (LCT) Land Stewards maintain and monitor nearly all of the conservation land in town. 15 active volunteer stewards maintain fourteen properties. Four of the 12 LCT Trustees are stewards. Littleton has nearly 1500 acres of protected woodlands, wetlands, and meadows owned by the Town of Littleton, the LCT, New England Forestry Foundation, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In 2013, LCT Stewards made over 600 monitoring and maintenance visits to various properties.

Land Stewards are volunteers who are willing to “keep a close eye” on their chosen property. Duties include maintaining trails, signs, boardwalks, parking areas, removing woody debris from the trails, picking up any trash and removing invasive plants. Often stewards engage walkers in conversation and point out interesting features. Essentially, the program is informal where the steward can perform the duties according to his or her schedule, physical ability and availability. Where assistance or special projects are involved, the steward need only contact the LCT and /or Special Project Team. The Special Project Team of about a dozen men and women work on an as-needed basis. ■



Cloverdale’s many healthy trees interspersed with tangles of invasive vines and shrubs ready for much needed care.



Seed Saving Workshop

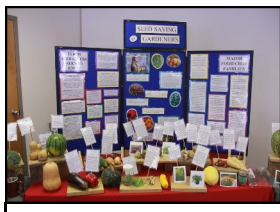
by Kate Kemmis
McLoughlin



Amy LeBlanc

On March 8th, Littleton Community Farm (LCF), together with the Littleton Conservation Trust and Reuben Hoar Library (RHL), hosted a seed saving workshop featuring Amy LeBlanc of Whitehill Farm in Maine.

Amy, a veteran seed saver and organic farmer, led 40 participants through the finer details of planning a garden for seed saving, growing, harvesting, and seed handling. Many vegetable choices were made available and displayed throughout.



Many Veggie Choices



RHL Seed Catalog

It was an engaging afternoon and a great kick-off for Seed Library Littleton. The seed catalog is located at the Reuben Hoar Library. It is open for anyone to borrow, grow, save and return seeds.

The LCF just received its official IRS not-for-profit 501 (c) (3) certification. Congratulations! More information can be found at www.littletoncommunityfarm.com . ■

Thank You E-note for Fourth Grade Field Trip

Displayed is a Thank You e-note from the Russell Street School Fourth Grades for LCT's led field trip this spring on the Yapp Conservation Land. Best seen on LCT's Facebook, are drawings / images of forested trails, lady slippers, native skunk, and happy thankful students outdoors.



Scott Lewis - New LCT Board Member

Scott Lewis, our newest Trustee, was elected at the LCT Annual Meeting on June 3, 2014. Very active with LCT activities in the past. Scott was instrumental in the construction of the Ray Grande Memorial cairn and most recently, he designed our new LCT website. (see article on page 3).

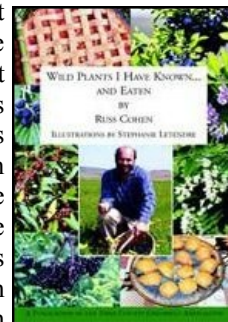
Additionally, Scott's skills as a photographer and his marketing background have been welcome additions to the website and our Facebook page. He is also an active volunteer at Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry. Scott, an experienced marketer, just completed a mid-career additional business and marketing degree. Welcome aboard, Scott! ■

Suburban Foraging

by Gerry Cavallo

The Littleton Conservation Trust along with the Reuben Hoar Library co-sponsored an Earth Day presentation on local edible plants by Russ Cohen. Mr. Cohen said many people who try eating wild plants are disappointed by the taste because they harvest the wrong part or at the wrong time.

For instance dandelions are best eaten before they flower and the tastiest part is the flower bud. Not only are many common weeds edible, invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed and Autumn Olive are quite delicious. The Autumn Olive was planted by the State when Interstate Route 495 was built; this fast growing shrub with copious red berries is now common all around town. The berries, high in vitamin C and lycopene are a favorite of bears, birds and people in the know. Learn more by reading his book Wild Plants I have Known and Eaten.



It is available for \$15 through the Essex County Greenbelt Association, a well-established staffed land trust operating throughout Essex County, at www.ecga.org . All proceeds go to ECGA for the protection of open spaces. ■

Getting Along with Bears

by Gerry Cavallo

If you haven't yet encountered a bear in Littleton chances are good you will as the species continues to spread from west to east. On March 12th the Conservation Trust sponsored a presentation by Patricia Huckery of Mass. Division of Fisheries and Wildlife which focused on how we can coexist with bears.

The main message was that a fed bear is a dead bear. Most of us would not intentionally feed bears however leaving

pet food outdoors, garbage out overnight and accessible bird feeders are all fast food opportunities for bears. Ms. Huckery recommends taking down bird feeders between April 1st and Christmas. The town of Northampton Mass. has had such a problem with bears in town that bird feeders are prohibited all year long. MassWildlife has a great website with more information on black bears and other native mammals at www.mass.gov/wildlife .



MassWildlife
Experienced and Eager Forager

The presentation will be broadcast on the Littleton Cable Channel June 24 at 8 pm (Comcast Ch 8; Verizon Ch 38). ■



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Links to Littleton's 300th

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Tweet to: [@LittletonMA300](https://twitter.com/LittletonMA300)

www.facebook.com/LittletonMA300thCelebration

 This newsletter is printed on recycled paper (20% post-consumer waste)

The Book Corner

These and other donated books can be found at the Reuben Hoar Public Library

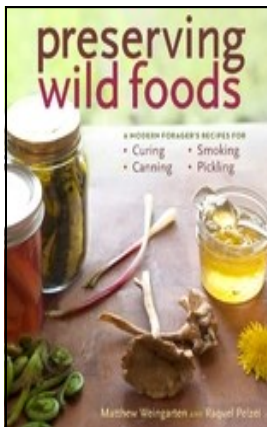
Preserving Wild Foods: A Modern Forager's Recipes for Curing, Canning, Smoking and Pickling

by Matthew Weingarten and Raquel Pelzel

For those looking to learn how to preserve foods, or add some interesting recipes to their repertoire, Preserving Wild Foods is a good sourcebook.

While the emphasis is on wild edibles (think black walnuts, scapes, rose hips, chanterelles, and many others), the preserving of fresh local foods is the main theme. There are five major food source categories covered: from the sea, pastures and

natural border areas, gardens and fields (cultivated), forest and woods, and freshwater banks and wetlands. The author's love of cooking and preserving food shines through in the personal stories that accompany the recipes and instructions, which are easy to follow and accompanied by illustrations and photos. ■



Top Bar Beekeeping: Organic Practices for Honeybee Health

by Les Crowder and Heather Harrell

Top-bar hives are a type of hive created by author Les Crowder that is made of untreated wood with a different structure from the traditional Langstroth-box hive. This book is a comprehensive guide to keeping bees in top-bar hives organically and holistically, and meant for home and hobbyist beekeepers, gardeners and orchardists. With a focus on the honeybees' health, Crowder explains all aspects of his innovative approach to natural hive management for honey, beeswax and pollination. An excellent guide for new beekeepers, as well as experienced beekeepers who want to use an all natural approach to bee health and productivity. ■

Reviews by Kathy Stevens

