

Littleton Conservation Trust



Newsletter

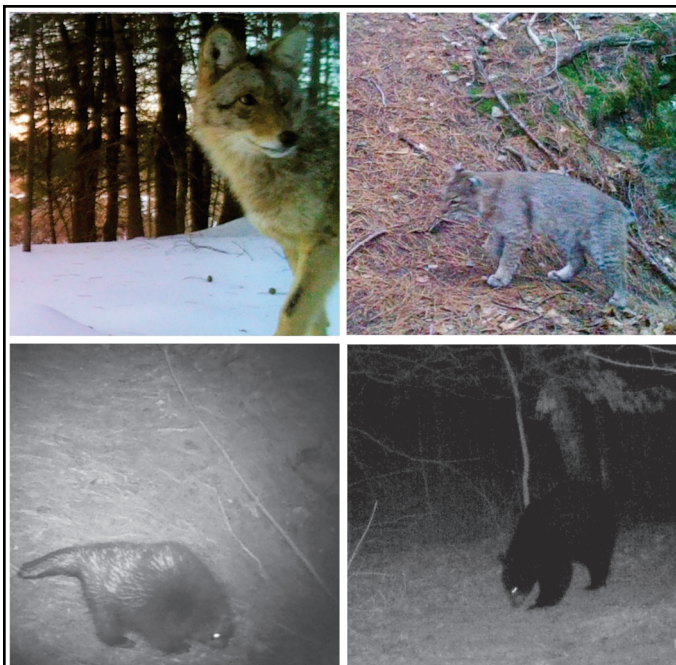
Spring 2019

Smith Conservation Land: Managing the Future by Dan Stimson, SVT, Asst. Dir. of Stewardship

On February 15, Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT) acquired the Smith property, a spectacular 49 acres on Whitcomb Avenue. This was the culmination of a partnership between SVT; LCT, which helped with fundraising and has cared for conservation restrictions here since 1996; and the town of Harvard, which recently purchased the additional 12 acres just over the town line.

With these purchases and SVT's agreement to manage public access for the portion in Harvard, there are new opportunities for public enjoyment and conservation land management. The 61 acres contain beautiful views of the marshes along Beaver Brook, a steep ridge overlooking Black Pond, a cool and dark hemlock forest, rock outcrops, vernal pools, and an old farm field. The varied habitats are home to a diversity of wildlife.

(Continued on page 3, see Smith Future)



Smith Conservation Land is home to a variety of wildlife. Clockwise from bottom left are a porcupine, coyote, and bobcat (taken by Dan Stimson with a wildlife camera on the land), and a black bear (taken by Chuck Faraci with a wildlife camera just off the property).

Protecting & Preserving Your Town's Indigenous Ceremonial Stone Landscape

A Ceremonial Stone Landscape Workshop

Led by Doug Harris

**Deputy Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the
Narragansett Indian Tribe**

Thursday, May 9, 2019, 7-9 pm

Refreshments at 6:30 pm

The Discovery Museum-177 Main Street, Acton

Free, open to all, ADA accessible

Appropriate for ages 12 through adult

This participatory workshop focuses on how to actively protect Indigenous Ceremonial Stone Landscapes (CSLs) in recognition of their cultural significance to the land and Tribes of the Northeast. Mr. Doug Harris, certified Ceremonial Stone Preservationist, will lead the process. The workshop builds on the 2018 "Let the Landscape Speak" presentation, which introduced many townspeople to CSLs and how to identify them. The 2019 program will address how to protect and preserve identified sites with formal agreements.

The goal of this workshop is to begin the process of creating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Historic Commission and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), the Mohegan Tribe, the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation and the Narragansett Indian Tribe. In 2015 these four tribes made a multiple property listing submission to the National Register of Historic Places defining what Ceremonial Stone Landscapes are. An MOU will activate a collaborative

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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

➡ **Jim O'Neil, LCT Trail Crew Coordinator**, maintains a trail worker email distribution list. When work projects are planned, notifications and updates are distributed to its member list. Email JFOneil63@verizon.net.

➡ **Littleton Trails**, a public Facebook group is an interactive site to share stories, photos, and observations of Littleton's conservation lands and area wildlife. See www.facebook.com/groups/639049749490984

➡ **LCT Walks** will be announced on the Littleton Conservation Trust website, listed in the Littleton Conservation Trust events calendar, and automatically sent to the Littleton Conservation Trust email list. Sign up at www.LittletonConservationTrust.org/contact-us/subscribe/

LCT Calendar of Free Events - May through August

5/4	10 -11:30 am	Kids Walk to Fort Rock from George & Lucy Yapp Land, Guided Walk
5/9	6:30 - 9 pm	Protecting and Preserving Your Town's Indigenous CSL, The Discovery Museum, 177 Main Street. (See page 1)
5/11	1 - 3 pm	SVT led Spring Wildflower Walk at George & Lucy Yapp Land. RSVP on SVTweb.org program calendar page.
6/1	10 am - Noon	George & Lucy Yapp Conservation Land and Cobb Memorial Forest, Guided Walk
6/8	9 - 11:30 am	Annual Bird Nest box Walk, Guided Walk
8/20	7 pm	Multi-purpose Room, Town Administrative Building, LCT sponsored Rick Roth Creature Teacher Program for Littleton Library supporting Summer Reading Program. (outside if weather good)

See LCT webpage for more details and updates for these walks/hikes and events. See SVT BioBlitz Discovery Days at the Smith Property on page 5.

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteer for LCT: littletonconservationtrust.org/get-involved/volunteering/
Volunteer for municipal Sustainability Committee (many "green projects" including upcoming ZWD): www.littletonma.org/sustainability-committee

LCT Welcomes New Newsletter Editors

Elizabeth Leaver is an editor who has lived in Littleton with her family since 2001. Liz works full-time at a small marketing company and on the side enjoys editing manuscripts, newsletters, and other publications.

Melinda Hobausz works in textbook publishing and enjoys hiking on conservation properties with her dogs. She has volunteered for various publishing efforts in town and assists on the Conservation Land Trail Crew.

For donations under \$1,000 we also accept credit card payments online at: littletonconservationtrust.org/donate

Littleton Conservation Trust Membership Form — Spring - 2019

☐ New ☐ Renewal ☐ Gift Membership

Date: ____/____/____

Name: _____

(Date designates tax deduction year)

Address: _____

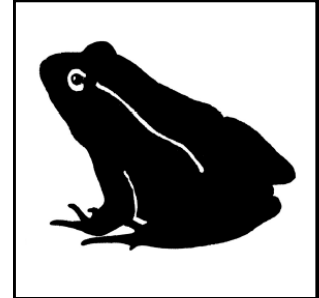
Phone: _____ Email: _____

*Please provide an email address to receive notification of upcoming walks and conservation-related events.
Checks should be made out to the "Littleton Conservation Trust " or just "LCT".*

- | | |
|--|--|
| <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 on preserving my own land. | |

Please send form to:

Daedra Jones, Treasurer
Littleton Conservation Trust
PO Box 594
Littleton, MA 01460



(Smith Future, continued from page 1)

There is work to do to improve and maintain habitat health, though. Like many other natural lands, invasive species and a changing climate threaten the diversity and resiliency of the habitats here.

Our Stewardship team has been getting to know the land - gaining a better understanding of the habitats and the challenges of maintaining and improving them. It is obvious that one section of forest in particular needs attention. The aging plantation stand of red pine on the east side of the road is in poor health and succumbing to invasive Oriental bittersweet. Forest stands like this one with very low species diversity and a lack of an understory are more susceptible to disease and pests, and won't be able to rebound from a disturbance like a large storm. The plantation of tamarack is at a similar risk. The abundance of invasive plants throughout the former agricultural lands requires intensive control efforts.

During our visits we also see reminders of how special the land is. To help plan for public access, I maintained a wildlife camera at several locations. The results were quick and exciting.

(Continued on page 4, see Smith Future)



SVT's Laura Mattei led a discussion about the newly purchased Smith Conservation Land at a recent management planning meeting. Members of SVT, LCT, and Harvard Conservation Commission were joined by neighbors.

LCT Awarded Grant for Preservation of Native American Ceremonial Stone Landscapes

As a first step in pursuing permanent protections for the 98-acre Sarah Doublet Forest and Nature Preserve, funds will assist in supporting a federally-recognized tribal ceremonial stone preservationist and ceremonial stone landscape (CSL) research contractor to map and assess the Native American Ceremonial Stone Landscape on the property in accordance to National Register of Historic Places Standards. Dan Boudillion of the Littleton Historical Society, who is providing extensive expertise, is working closely with the LCT and its consultants.

Named after the last Native American resident of the property, the Sarah Doublet Forest and Nature Preserve is the core of what was once the Nashobah Praying Indian Village/New Town Indian Village, an important cultural and natural landscape. The exploration of historic significance will guide subsequent community efforts to permanently protect the site.

The Freedom's Way National Heritage Area is the primary grant sponsor of this project. Having been awarded \$5,000, the maximum grant amount allowed, LCT now needs to raise another \$6,000 to meet the preservation project's anticipated \$11,000 full cost. Freedom's Way Heritage Association is the nonprofit local coordinating organization that serves the 46 communities within its National Heritage Area and derives its funding from the National Park Service. For more information on Freedom's Way, please see www.freedomsway.org ■



(Protecting & Preserving, continued from page 1)

stewardship relationship for the identification and protection of the Indigenous Ceremonial Stone Landscape, leading to greater knowledge of your town's Indigenous culture and ways to protect sites of significance.

This workshop is primarily funded by the Littleton Cultural Council and the Freedom's Way Heritage Association's Hidden Treasures program. Additional funding and sponsorship is provided by local hosts consisting of the conservation land trusts from Acton, Boxborough, and Littleton, and the Friends of Pine Hawk, an archaeological study group which meets at the Acton Memorial Library. This workshop will be repeated at the Harvard Public Library on 4 Pond Road on June 18th, 6:30 - 8:30 pm. ■



(Smith Future, continued from page 3)

At the first location, I was rewarded with daily photographs of a porcupine coming and going from its den. The same spot also yielded raccoons, deer, red fox, gray and red squirrels, mice, and even a bobcat! Coyotes, rabbits, flying squirrels, and another bobcat were photographed elsewhere, and a neighbor shared a great image of a black bear visiting his backyard at the edge of the land. We used this better understanding of wildlife movement to design trail placement and balance recreational access with habitat protection.

To continue this learning process, we invited stakeholders to offer their input. We asked neighbors, representatives from Harvard Conservation Commission and LCT, and others with knowledge of the property what they knew and valued about the land, what concerns or optimism they might have associated with changes there, and what threats and opportunities they see while looking toward the future. This conversation kicked off the more focused management planning process. We've prioritized forestry work to remove that compromised red pine stand and foster the return of sugar maple and other native species. A trail route has been identified, and volunteer work days to move us closer to opening the property have begun. Conversations have started about how to best manage some of the old agricultural lands, with the possibility of bringing back pasture or crops. Plans to continue LCT's efforts to control invasive species at the property will be incorporated.

We look forward to learning more about the land and partnering with LCT to implement management efforts, but especially to inviting you to visit, as well. A series of discovery days on the land and at nearby conservation areas kicks off on May 4 and culminates with an all-day BioBlitz on June 22. Visit www.svtweb.org/calendar to sign up, and stay tuned to hear from both SVT and LCT about additional volunteer opportunities and trail openings in the near future. ■

Amphibian Brigade: A Rainy Night in Spring on Fort Pond Road

by Amy Green



Blue Spotted Salamander
(an endangered species)

Last March I was observing a vernal pool, and when I came out at around 10 at night and drove down Fort Pond Road I was appalled by how many road kill frogs and salamanders I saw. So I finally decided to do something I've been meaning to do for years and get a crossing brigade together. These brigades are set up to help amphibians across roads when they are migrating to their vernal pools for breeding. I partnered up

with the Acton Natural Resources Department and with the help of the Littleton Conservation Trust and Acton Conservation Trust, was able to get the word out. In a matter of a week or two we had almost 100 people signed up to help out if they could. It was an amazing response.

Species like wood frogs, peepers, and spotted salamanders spend most of the year and hibernate in upland woods. But as the snow melts, they start moving toward their vernal pools so they can meet up, breed, lay their eggs, and then head back to the woods. On rainy nights in late March or early April, when the



Father holds salamander as daughter
illuminates and takes photo

temperature is above 40 degrees, they can sometimes move seemingly all at once—so it's an ideal time to get a group out there to help them across the roads safely. We had pretty good luck this year and on March 29 and 31, about 30 people helped about 400 frogs and salamanders

cross. I was impressed that so many people came out after dinner on a cold rainy night to help these amphibians out, walking up and down Fort Pond Road with their flashlights! At last count we helped 235 wood frogs, 62 peepers, 81 unidentified frogs, 14 spotted salamanders, four blue spotted/Jefferson complex salamanders, and one red backed salamander who had decided to join the fun. There were still 90 dead frogs and one dead salamander, but that's a huge improvement over last year.

(Continued on page 5, see Amphibian Brigade)

SVT BioBlitz Discovery Days at Smith Property



Sudbury Valley Trustees

On May 18th and June 1st SVT will be holding educational programs, Discovery Days, at this property to help attendees build identification skills.

The Discovery Days are a mandatory prerequisite for participation in a larger BioBlitz that will occur on the Smith Property on Whitcomb Ave in Littleton

and other properties in the area on June 22nd. Learn more about SVT's BioBlitz Discovery Days

here: www.svtweb.org/be-part-bioblitz

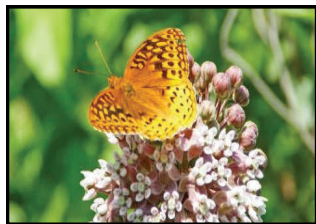
Participants in the Discovery Days and expert naturalists are invited to take part in a BioBlitz across the High Ridge. The High Ridge is an area of high ecological importance at the borders of



Bird BioBlitz on May 4th
7 am - 10 am
Horse Meadow Knoll
Harvard

Harvard, Littleton, and
Boxborough.

We need your help to
document all the special



Plants and Pollinators
BioBlitz on May 18th
10am - 1pm
Smith Property
(on Whitcomb Ave.)

species that are in the area. Anytime during the day, come to one of our designated sites and use the iNaturalist app (see iNaturalist.org) or a pen and paper to document what you find! At the end of the day, you will be invited to come share your observations for the day. ■



Herps and Aquatics
BioBlitz on June 1st
10 am - 1 pm
Smith Property
(on Whitcomb Ave.)



March 19, 2019: Dan Stimson used an automatically triggered wildlife camera to photograph this bobcat at SVT's Smith Conservation Land in Littleton.

(Amphibian Brigade, continued from page 4)

So why do this? Besides the fact that it's just fun to catch frogs, it's important to protect and preserve these vernal pools as much as possible. The numerous pools along Fort Pond Road have been cut off from much of their upland habitat by the road, and the amount of road kill that I had seen shows what kind of impact a road near a vernal pool can have. Especially this time of year, these amphibians are an important part of the food chain before leaves bud and insects appear.

Now we will be moving on to watching the egg masses grow and develop. This year we're hoping to certify the vernal pools on the Sarah Doublet property near Fort Pond Road (as well as over at the SVT Smith property). There will still be movement as the adults move away from the vernal pools and again as the young leave the pools later this summer. Then next

year we can do it all again! I'm hoping to expand the crossing brigade, so if you know of any areas where there are a lot of frog and salamander road kill, please let me know. And if you want to get on the e-mail list for alerts next spring, you can contact me at agreen@littletonma.org. ■



Wood Frogs in Amplexus

Vernal Pool Field Studies



Stephen DiFlorio, Oak Meadow Montessori School Teacher/Naturalist, leads vernal field trip on Cobb Property.



Scott Smeyers, Oxbow Associates Senior Scientist, displays male (L) and female (R) tree frogs. Watch and hear the male make its loud high-pitched peep.

See www.youtube.com/watch?v=TfdC_5Hocww
Photo credit: Bill Duane, Westford Conservation Trust

Littleton
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***Protecting & Preserving Your Town's
Indigenous Ceremonial Stone Landscape***
Thursday - 5/9/2019 at 6:30 pm
The Discovery Museum - 177 Main St, Acton



*Turtle Effigy
(An example from
Killingworth, CT)*

See Page One



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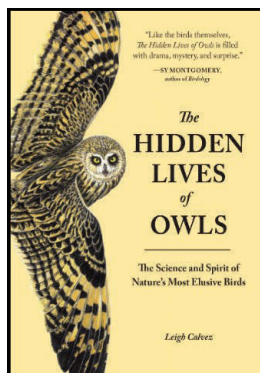
The Book Corner *by Kathy Stevens* *LCT donated books can be found at the Reuben Hoar Library*

The Hidden Lives of Owls

by Leigh Calvez

This is not a guidebook for identifying owls, but rather a celebration of these birds, which are common enough yet rarely seen because they are mostly nocturnal.

Each chapter profiles one of eleven types of owls, from saw-whet to great-horned. There are no photographs, but Calvez describes encounters with each owl, as she accompanies a variety of biologists and avid birders to observe, measure, weigh, and band the birds in the wild.



The result is an in-depth description of her subjects: their calls, how they nest, what they eat, and their behaviors, as well as a history of the study of these magnificent birds. At the end, Calvez includes a list of websites for those who wish to learn more about owls. ■

Farming with Native Beneficial Insects by Eric Lee-Mader

The book's title is self-explanatory, with easy-to-understand sections providing all you need to know. The first part uses color photos to help you identify insects that perform a variety of functions such as recycling nutrients, providing pollination, and attacking crop pests. Benefits to using this system are saving money, reducing or even eliminating the need for insecticides, and supporting other wildlife by providing food.

One chapter explains evaluating beneficial insect habitats, and also demonstrates how to design and maintain new habitats by planting native wildflowers and providing areas such as brush and rock piles for the insects' winter habitat and reproduction. The book gives extensive examples of wildflowers, conveniently separated out by region. The overall goal is to improve crop yields by identifying and promoting the beneficial insects on your farm; keeping the environment unpolluted is a bonus. ■

